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*“I HAD NO IDEA HOW PAINFUL IT
WOULD BE”*: MALE VICTIMS OF COERCIVE
AND CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR

Dr Liz Bates
(and Dr Julie Taylor)



AIMS OF THE TALK

Consider men's experiences of coercive control

Explore post-separation abuse and recovery

Consider implications for legislation

Barriers to help-seeking

EMERGENCE OF MALE VICTIMS

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

Some of the traditional gendered models haven't allowed for male victims

“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”
(Johnson, 2008)

Common criticisms

Verbal and Physical
Aggression

Control

Lack of retaliation

MEN'S EXPERIENCES (BATES, 2019A)

VERBAL AND PHYSICAL AGGRESSION

“...throwing anything she could get her hands on from tv remotes to ornaments. I used to get punched, slapped and kicked as well”

“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.”

“70% of the time it would be verbal with shouting and threats. 30% would involve violence. Normally when I was unaware. Sleeping or in the shower, bath or toilet.”

“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”

“I grew up witnessing DV towards my mother and so I would never lay my hands on a woman”

“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. Unfortunately that is true. It eventually got to the point where I would just cover my face and not even try to restrain her.”

SEXUAL VIOLENCE WEARE AND BATES (2019)

Physical Violence:

And another one when I lost my virginity. I'm a Catholic, who kept his virginity for marriage. She took it by beating me till I gave in then played with me till I got hard – Study 1, 147.

She started trying to have sex with me and I told her I did not want to as I was drunk and very tired and felt sick. She didn't take that as an answer and started hurting me, forcing herself on me, hands around my neck, telling me I would do it or she would kill me – Study 2, 997.

When vulnerable

I was subjected to several sustained sexual assaults after being handcuffed to the bedframe while asleep – Study 1, 118.

My ex-girlfriend pinned me down on the bed whilst on top of me – Study 2, 207.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE WEARE AND BATES (2019)

Coercive control – denigration and derision

‘Putting me down in demeaning ways very common ... Names, jealousy, leaving for chunks of time with no idea where also occurred on occasion’ – Study 1, 001.

‘She used repeated threats of suicide as well as insults and degrading comments to force me into a position where I felt I had to have sex – Study 2, 530.

Coercive Control – manipulation of contraception

Several times she manipulated me to have unprotected sex. I didn't want to – Study 1, 088.

My ex-girlfriend pinned me down on the bed while on top of me. She covered my face with a pillow and choked me. She removed the condom and continued then at the point of orgasm didn't move. She did this every time we had sex until she became pregnant – Study 2, 207.

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"

CONTROL OVER PERSONAL FREEDOM

“She had to know everything thing I did at work. She'd pester me until I told her. There were no activities without her.” (P11)

“My phone was monitored, phone calls listened in to. I was constantly questioned where I was going or had been” (P28)

“If I was out with work colleagues for social events she would continually call or message, sometimes up to 40 times in the space of a few hours. She had to know who I was with and where I was or what time I would be home. If I didn't arrive at that time she would go crazy and scream, swear and shout or attack me, lashing out and slapping me or clawing me.” (P57)

MANIPULATION AND ISOLATION

“Used son, even before he was born, against me to control my behavior. Said she knew he was the only thing I truly loved and would use him to get me to do what she wanted, that she'd never let me see him if I left her.” (P89)

“Threatened to slit her throat and daughters if I didn't come back” (P152)

“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.” (P41)

“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.” (P20)

DENIGRATION AND HUMILIATION

“The verbal abuse would go from name calling, to making fun of my looks, to insulting my friends, to telling me our child wasn't mine.” (P9)

“She wouldn't let me sleep – it was torture, she would stand over my bed at night and say nasty things and I would have to get up early for work” (P26)

“...little things like criticism and jealousy became more common place until the point of being told how unimportant I was.” (P50)

FALSE ALLEGATIONS

“I have never attacked her or fought back at all. I have tried to restrain her at times to prevent her from attacking me...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” (P120)

“...she used false allegations of child abuse to have me removed by family court from my children's lives for around the 5 months it took to have the allegations shown to be baseless, and this aided her alienating efforts.” (P117)

GASLIGHTING

“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.”

“It absolutely occurred. I would put something somewhere and she was the only person who could have moved it or would have because the kids would have never touched it. when I couldn't find it, she would find it somewhere that wasn't even close to where I was sure I left it. She would tell me I was the crazy one”

“ I would begin to doubt my own sanity and perception of reality.”

IMPACT OF THEIR EXPERIENCES

(BATES, 2019B)

“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” (P141)

“It is over and has been for 18 years but I live it as if it happens everyday due to my PTSD...I am disabled by my mental illnesses now and I am housebound. It destroyed my life and robbed me of a future. That is how it impacted me, I fear.” (P8)

“I feel alone. I have little to no friends left” (P75)

IMPACT OF THEIR EXPERIENCES AS FATHERS (BATES, 2019B)

“4 years after I am struggling to have a relationship with the children due to parental alienation.” (P40)

“The whole experience of frequent separation from my daughter and being cynically and clinically alienated from her for almost two years was worse than any bereavement or loss I have experienced before or since.” (P33)

“I was scared to leave because I did not want to leave my son alone with her and she threatened to keep him from me and I worried the courts might enable that.” (P89)

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.” (P1)

“Forty (40) years of verbal/mental, physical, and property abuse...It never changed and in fact became worse until she divorced me.” (P3)

“I cannot afford to go anywhere, I'm in my 60's...am very ill and I only get a small retirement” (P8)

“I also know that I was close to suicide and I lost a few male friends to suicide and a couple of my friends male parents did too. I think men blame themselves if their lives are not good” (P6)

POST- SEPARATION



Escalation of abuse (e.g., Jaffe et al., 2003)



Stalking (e.g., Douglas & Dutton, 2001)



Custody dispute and divorce



Parental Alienation (syndrome)



Impact on children (e.g., Callaghan et al., 2015) and children's voice

POST-SEPARATION ABUSE: HARASSMENT

BATES (2019C)

“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)

POST-SEPARATION ABUSE: PA

“And it’s so simple, it’s so easy really, it’s just she knows they’re the most important thing for me therefore here we are, you know, we’ve just got to use it” (P11)

“you know the thing about the silent treatment that was her constant thing. Where she would just give me the silent treatment, or she would... my son is six years old he was five when all this happened and she would speak through him when she was angry with me” (P4)

POST-SEPARATION ABUSE: 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)

IMPACT OF EXPERIENCES

“I don’t know how I survived that time because it was just unbelievable” (P3)

“I will not have a partner because I can’t trust anyone” (P2)

“I had trouble sleeping, I was quite anxious at times, sometimes I just was quite isolated, depression...” (P12)

“yeah erm I was diagnosed with PTSD when I was 30. Erm and I have severe agoraphobia with panic disorder now” (P6)

NEW STUDY (BATES & TAYLOR, 2019)

N=143 anonymous online questionnaire

Preliminary analysis reveals similar themes around:

- Manipulation of the children and parental relationship
- Harassment
- False Allegations
- Manipulations of systems e.g. Family Court, CAFCASS
- Ongoing detrimental impact to their and their children's mental health

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

“Son is showing increasing (early) signs of stress - migraines, fear of dark and places he's unsure about, and what might be early signs of panic attacks (he's now 14yrs old)”

“Since she moved out she has continued to stalk me.”

“Post separation, I have been visited 3 times by the Police due to false allegations from my ex wife...I was surprised how each time I was assumed to be guilty simply because I am a man and the complainant was a woman”

“Continued harassment... 50,60,70 texts per day, same number of calls. Hell on earth”

“...one time she said she "could claim I raped her" that thought terrified me beyond belief.”

ISSUES WITH LEGISLATION

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”.

POST- SEPARATION “RECOVERY”



Photo elicitation study ($N=16$)



“Recovery”

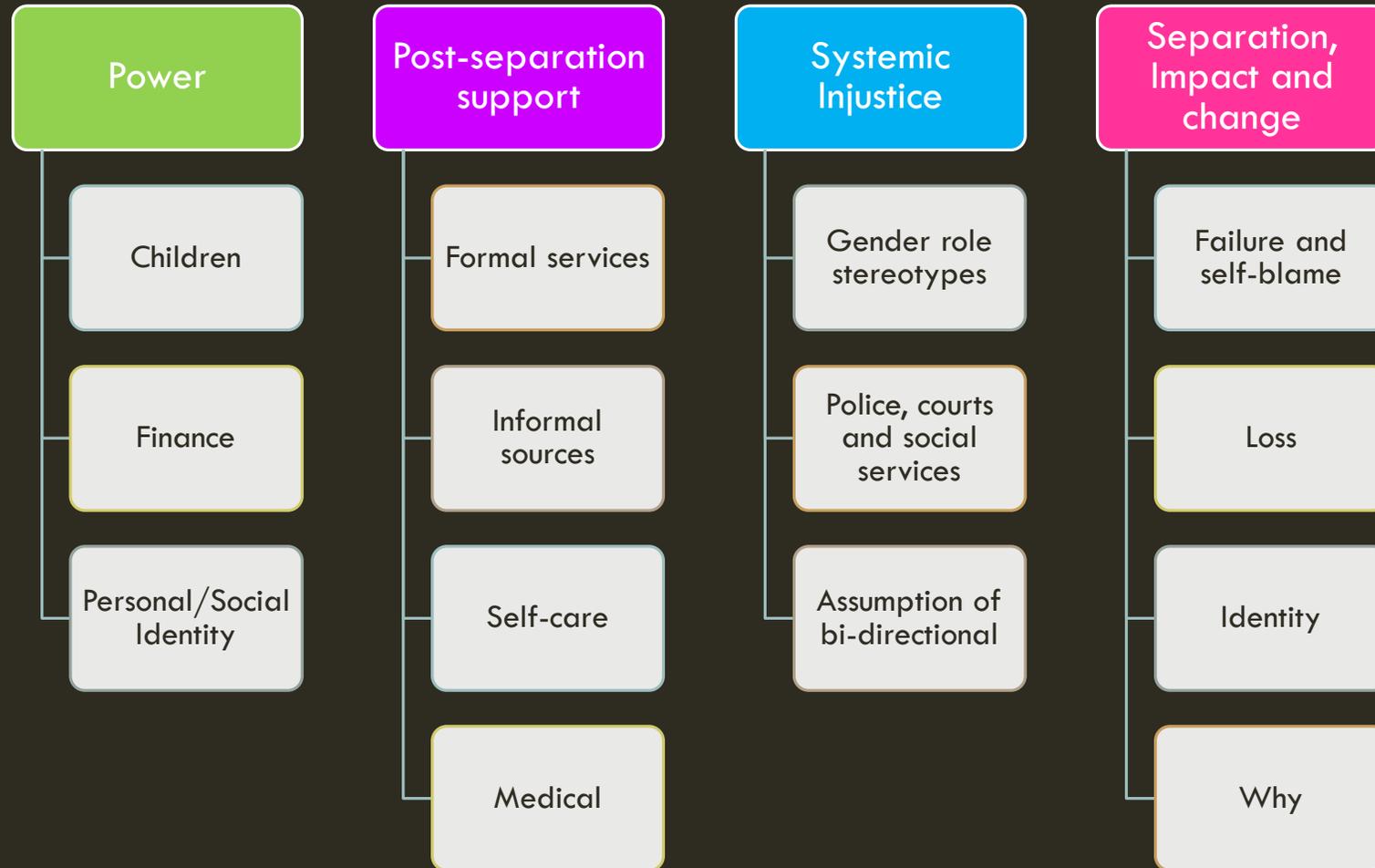


Coping, moving on, living
with...language



Individual, social and systemic factors

THEMES



POWER

“Yes. I know, it’s, it’s funny, you could go long periods of time with everything ok, and then it would all fall apart again. And quite often there was a, an affair in there at that point, erm and [sighs] I wouldn’t say I... yeah I would say, I did stay, I stayed for the children. I didn’t maybe understand I stayed for the children but... it was made abundantly clear to me if I left I would not see my children ever again.” (P6)

“eventually she err, she was pregnant with NAME, my daughter, and that just opened up a whole new avenue of control. Erm... it was you know [stutters], you know, ‘You can’t leave. Don’t leave me’, you know, ‘You can’t leave me, or you’ll never see her’ and this that and the other, and it was... [Sigh].” (P8)

SELF-CARE

“I went into that place absolutely broken from what that girl did and I came out of the other side and I was like well do you know what? There is nothing wrong with me at all” (P1 talking about seeing therapist)

“This is a picture of erm, I think you pronounce it Helms Toot, erm, it’s in Dorset. Erm, and one of the things that the therapist said to me was erm, you need to get out into nature. Erm...you need to be in fresh air and erm, walking. Walking’s very good for you, and, and fresh air” (P2)

“I went for a nice, a nice run this morning, a ten kilometre run. I run through a local university um, it’s good meditation. I’ve always enjoyed exercise, um it, it lets my mind go um, so I think that’s um, that’s a key life boat for me right now” (P4)

FAILURE AND SELF-BLAME

“But err, I don’t see one of, one of my children, that to me is a complete failure, I feel like a complete failure as a father. How could I not get through to her, I probably will never see her again” (P6)

“But I have abandoned him, haven’t I? I have left him in that situation” (P9)

“I suppose it was a erm...a relationship in which I was dominated. Erm it is something that I recognise that I have allowed myself. Erm I played my part in allowing that. Erm and understand a little bit more about myself following the relationship.” (P15)

LOSS

“that’s the most powerful physical representation of how this process feels that I’ve ever seen or heard of. It’s just like being hollowed out. It’s just like being a big man with a small head and no insides”(P3)

“I’ve never felt such absolute devastating loss, and I couldn’t, I couldn’t work that out. I just knew that it was highly likely that that I take, that I might give up.” (P13)

GENDER ROLE STEREOTYPES

one of my friends was quite badly assaulted by his, by his partner, his ex-partner. And, through like the most ridiculous of circumstances. He ended up being prosecuted for it. Erm, yeah and I remember the kind of injustice of erm the CPS pushing this sort of ridiculous sort of tale through from this girl. She had, you know she claimed that she had broke her arm, she had broken bones, but there were no x-rays or anything like that to corroborate. And, regardless of this lack of evidence this poor lad was put through the mill, will he lose his job, will he go to prison and this went on for a very very long time. And, one of the things erm she said to me on the night that we broke up was erm was “right, well I will give myself as black eye and we all know who the police will believe” and that one, that one just completely broke me. Because every time I heard a car outside the house, I was right that it. That was the one thing, that was the one comment that cut me the most and because I knew she was right. (P1)

BARRIERS TO HELP-SEEKING

Men (universally) are less likely to seek help

Stereotypes, labelling and stigma around domestic violence/IPV.
“Stigmatized identity”

Women are victims and men perpetrators

Powerful and longstanding gendered discourse influences policy, practice and funding.

These factors combined may serve to treble stigmatise help seeking for men victimised by women.

Studies tell us that male victims and their children experience significant mental health, physical and social consequences from victimisation

WHAT THE BARRIERS RESEARCH TELLS US SO FAR..

Sources of help were unhelpful (Machado, Hines & Matos, 2016).

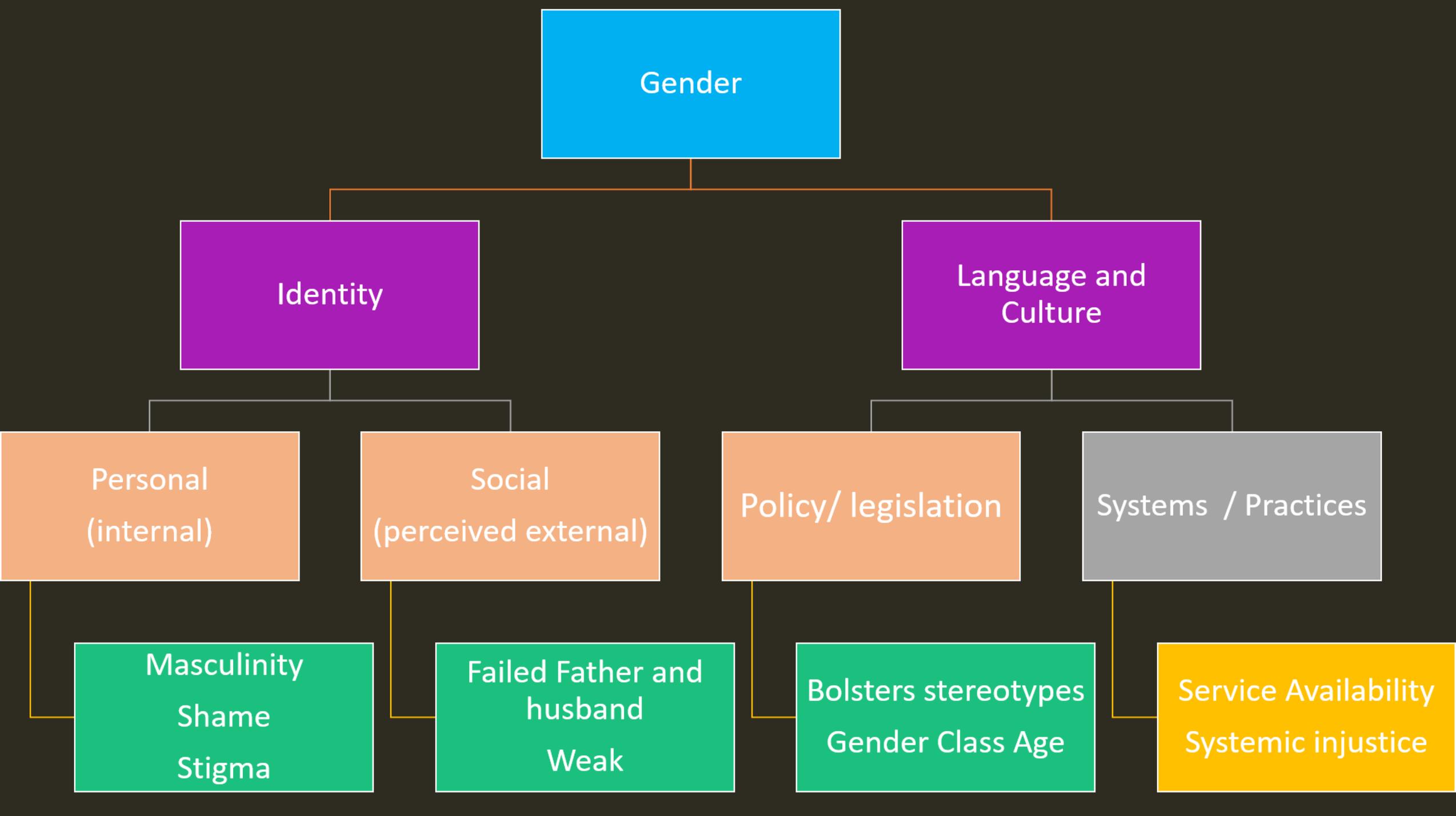
Gender stereotyped treatment (Machado, Santos, Graham-Kevan & Matos, 2017)
potential for secondary victimisation (see Campbell, 2005).

Accused of being perpetrators and referred to batterer programmes (Cook, 2009).

Douglas and Hines (2011) formal IPV agencies & police as the least helpful sources of support. A lack of validation of their experience and judgement of their legitimacy as victims.



SUMMARY



Gender

Identity

Language and Culture

Personal (internal)

Social (perceived external)

Policy/ legislation

Systems / Practices

Masculinity
Shame
Stigma

Failed Father and husband
Weak

Bolsters stereotypes
Gender Class Age

Service Availability
Systemic injustice

Personal Identity

Social Identity

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.

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

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.

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.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

| Policy | Systems and Practices |
|--|--|
| <p data-bbox="63 378 611 492">That I would be believed but the policy is all about women</p> <p data-bbox="63 571 573 742">David Cameron “Absent fathers are as bad as drink drivers”</p> <p data-bbox="63 821 624 999">Publicity and recognition that men are victims too, in policy and practice</p> <p data-bbox="63 1078 547 1185">Recognition that men are victims too.</p> | <p data-bbox="657 378 2484 678">Some confidence that safeguarding systems are interlinked, that doctors would talk to social workers, that schools would be involved and that each party would be given a fair hearing but the sad reality is that the medical, educational, legal and social services first priority at all times is to ‘cover their own ass’ every other issue is entirely subordinate to self preservation to the detriment of the people they purport to put first.</p> <p data-bbox="657 756 2305 806">The police immediately & aggressively arresting me, whilst letting the actual tyrant go?</p> <p data-bbox="657 885 2076 935">There should be consequences for organizations that don't offer help to men</p> <p data-bbox="657 1013 1745 1063">Its cultural, system is designed to blame the male</p> <p data-bbox="657 1142 2331 1242">It's the woman portrayed as victim, posters, webpages, all deal with women as victims of Domestic Abuse</p> |

DOMESTIC ABUSE HELPLINE FOR MEN

“ ...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)

FUTURE RESEARCH

Walking to Recovery (with Deb Powney, Julie Taylor and Niki Graham-Kevan)

Parental alienation work (with Ben Hine)

Older men work (survey launched with Nikki Carthy at Teeside)

THANK YOU!

Any questions?

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