

“I HAD NO IDEA HOW PAINFUL IT WOULD BE”: MEN’S EXPERIENCE OF POST-SEPARATION DOMESTIC ABUSE

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AIMS OF THE TALK

Consider men's experiences of violence

Focus specifically on post-separation abuse and recovery

Consider implications for legislation

Barriers to help-seeking

EMERGENCE OF MALE VICTIMS

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

MEN'S EXPERIENCES

Hines, et al. (2007): callers to DAH

Men too suffer the mental health problems that are associated with IPV (e.g., Próspero & Kim, 2009; Hines & Douglas, 2011).

Comparison of abused men to abused women, rather than non abused men (e.g. Herzberger, 1996)

Bates (2019a) anonymous survey of 161 men

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”

“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”

“Left me with vision loss in one eye...Symptoms of Brain injuries and PTSD”

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

BATES (2019C)

Exploring post-separation experiences of abuse from men who have experienced violence and control from a female partner

N = 13 interviews, analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

VERBAL AGGRESSION AND DENIGRATION

“One night, she just kept me up all night calling me names...she would stand by the bed and berate me while I was trying to sleep” (P4)

“there was never a good word. I was just yeah, horrible, pathetic etc...I was just dirt basically...so infrequently to start with then they build up frequency till it became the default position. Although just to mess with your head, there were just occasions where you know there would be a glimmer of what used to be there, which might last an evening or might last an evening or something.” (P7)

PHYSICAL AGGRESSION

“the last time she hit me was with a phone, a big solid phone that she broke over the back of my head. I had to go to the hospital for that and apparently I almost died...She left me bleeding on the floor that day” (P6)

“she bit me you know with all her strength... and then there was blood everywhere and I was absolutely beside myself” (P5)

“erm she just came up behind and stabbed me in my erm in my left arm and that cut all the way through my arm and came out the other side erm and then I had two more further stab wounds on my back and erm yeah you know I sort of didn’t really know what to do I was you know blood was going everywhere you” (P14)

CONTROL

“I mean she developed a thing where she would actually take off her wedding and engagement ring. I would first sort of notice that they had gone. Erm and it was kind of way I realised in retrospect, that she had a sort... kind of reiterating that threat, so she would take them off and leave them off for sort of days or weeks...that would always sort of strike fear” (P7)

“So little by little she was taking little bites of, I suppose my space if you like, and the things I wanted to do or the people I wanted to be with and all that and even you know, it became quite difficult also to spend time with my family and for the children to spend time with my family... (P11)

POST-SEPARATION ABUSE: HARASSMENT

“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”

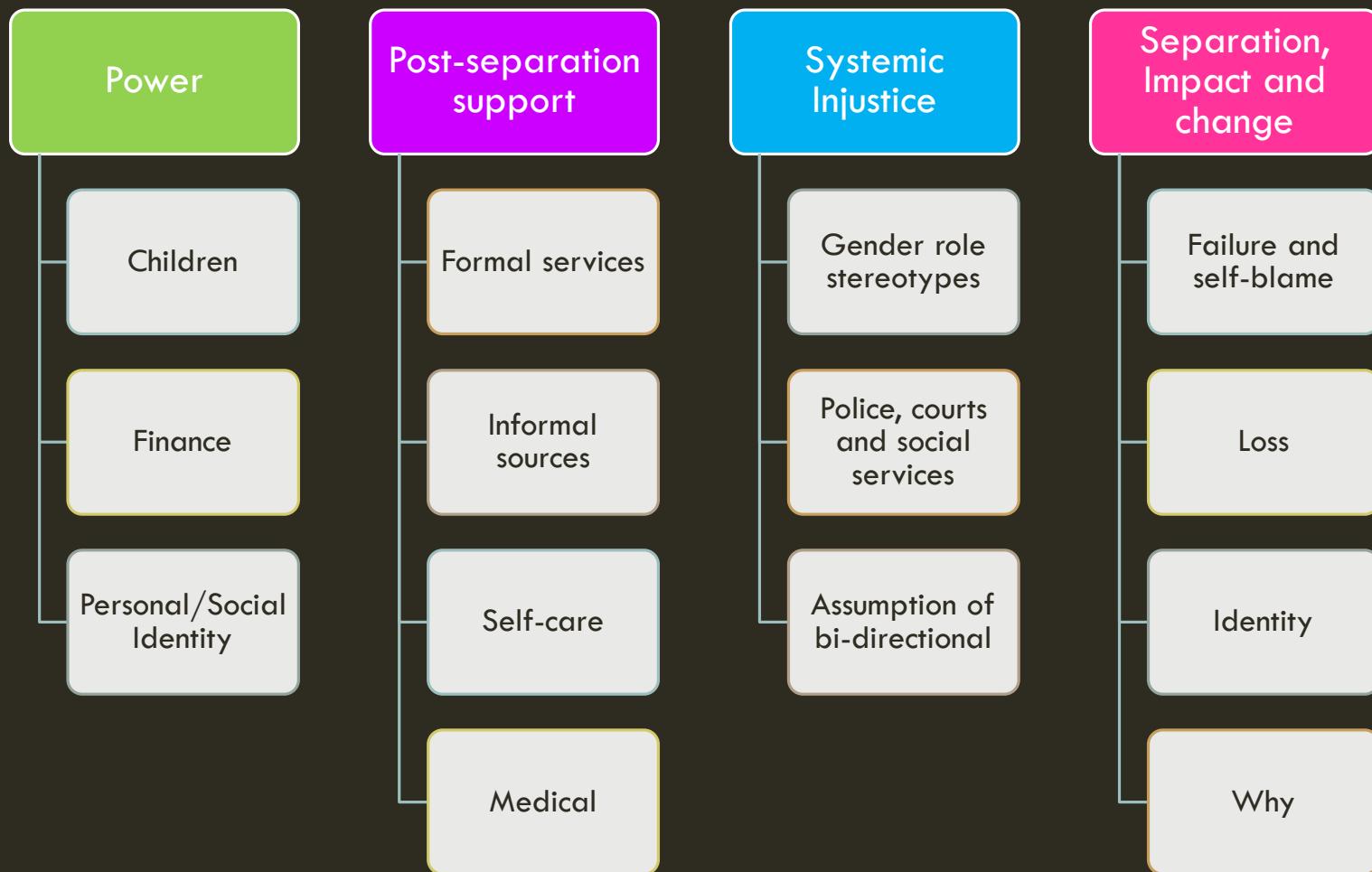
Photo elicitation study ($N=16$)

“Recovery”

Coping, moving on, living with...

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) do not seek help (e.g. Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Tsui, Cheung & Leung, 2010)

Stereotypes, labelling and stigma around domestic violence /IPV. “Stigmatized identity” (Overstreet & Quinn, 2013; p3; Goffman, 1963)

Women are victims and men perpetrators (e.g., DeKeseredy, 2011; Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Fagan & Browne, 1994; Hunnicutt, 2009; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2003). Powerful and longstanding gendered discourse influences policy, practice and funding.

These factors combined may serve to trebly 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 (e.g. Hines & Douglas, 2011; Tsui et al.,2014)

WHAT THE BARRIERS RESEARCH TELLS US SO FAR..

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

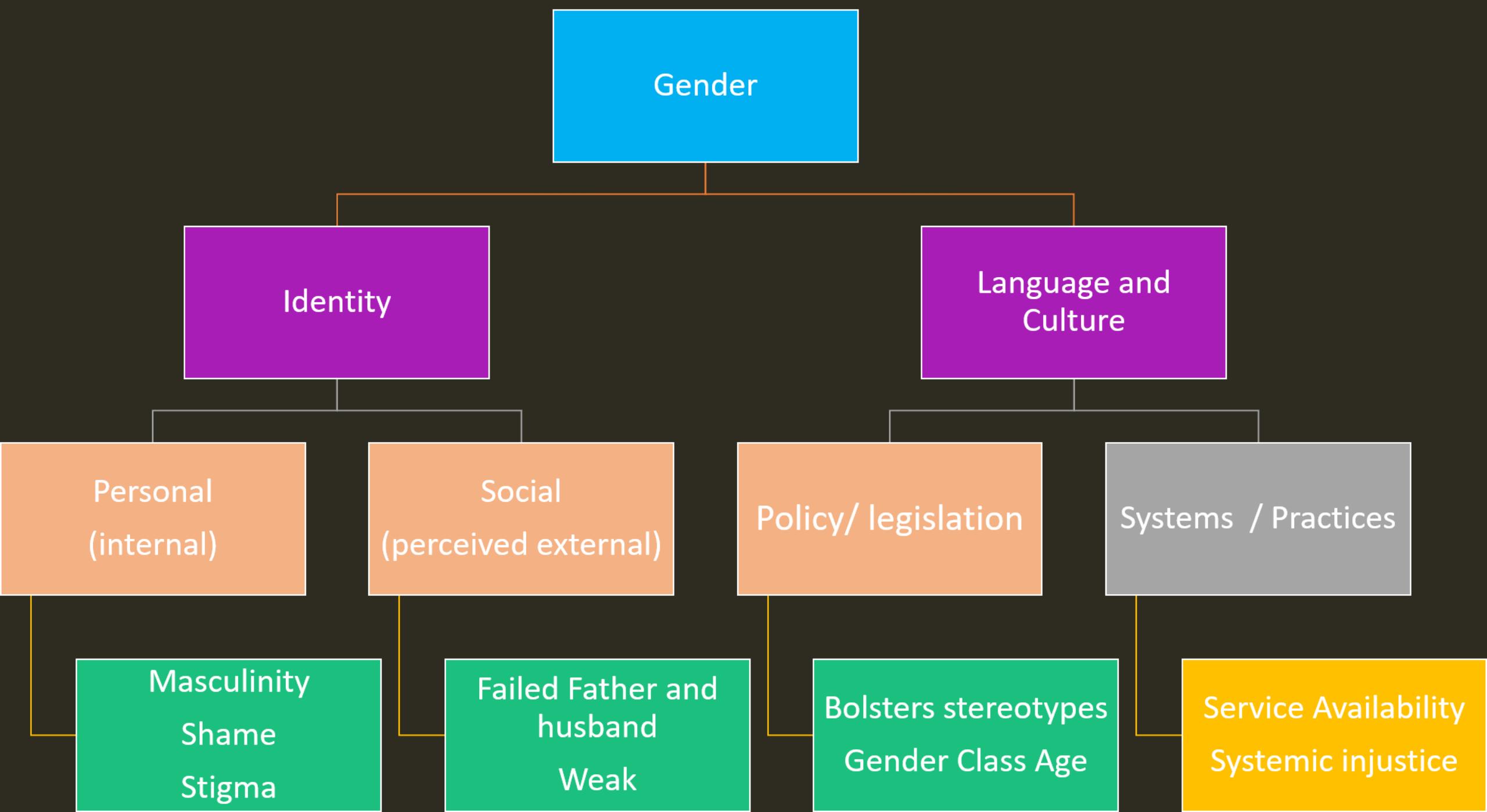
Gender stereotyped treatment (Machado, Santos, Graham-Kevan & Matos, 2017)
potential for secondary victimisation (see Campbell, 2005).

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



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 ensuing 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

That I would be believed but the policy is all about women

David Cameron “Absent fathers are as bad as drink drivers”

Publicity and recognition that men are victims too, in policy and practice

Recognition that men are victims too.

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.

The police **immediately & aggressively arresting me**, whilst letting the actual tyrant go?

There should be consequences for organizations that don't offer help to men

Its cultural, system is designed to **blame the male**

It's the woman portrayed as victim, posters, webpages, all deal with women as victims of Domestic Abuse

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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Bates, E. A. & Taylor, J. C. (2019) "I had no idea how painful it would be": Male victims experiences of "recovery" from intimate partner violence. *Manuscript in preparation*.

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