

# Domestic Violence: Its Effects on Disabled Women and on Children

Dr. Mary Allen,  
University College Dublin.

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# International Statistics

- In WHO Multi Country study (2006) between 15% (Japan city) and 71% (Ethiopia) of women reported being **physically or sexually** assaulted by an intimate male partner at some point in their lives. 54% in Ethiopia reported abuse in past year, 10% in Brazil.
- EU studies estimate that between 20% and 25% of women have experienced abuse from their intimate partners.

# National Crime Council/ESRI 2005

- Lifetime prevalence of 29% for women and 26% for men –physical, emotional or sexual abuse- minor or severe.
- 13% of men and women experienced physical abuse of either a minor or severe nature.

# National Crime Council/ESRI 2005

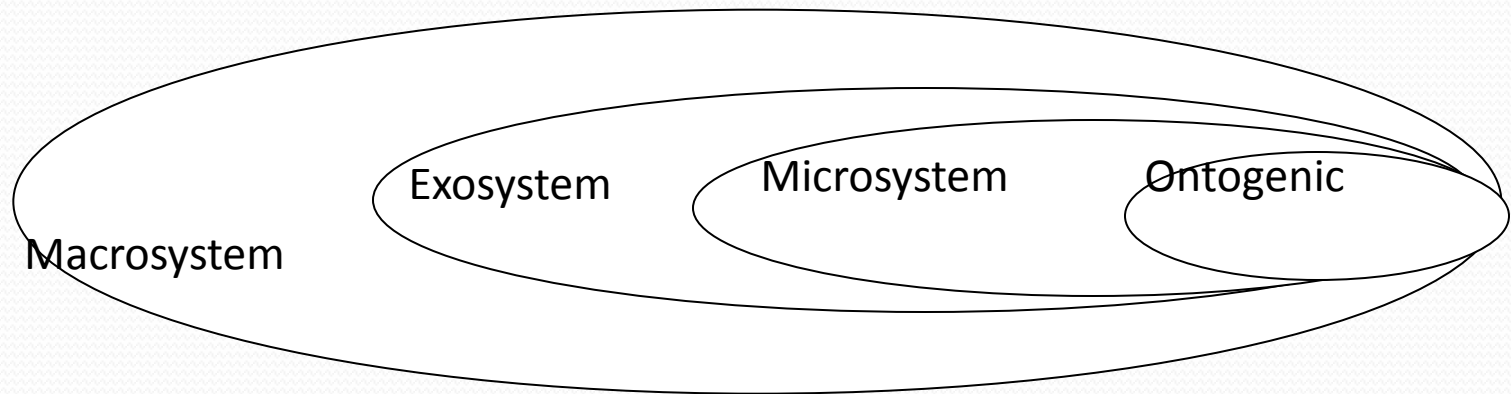
- **15% of women, 6% of men**, experienced severely abusive behaviour of a physical, sexual or emotional nature. (Lifetime prevalence)
- 1 in 11 women (1/25 men) severely physically abused:
- 1/12 women (1/90 men) sexually abused:
- 1/13 women (1/37 men) severely emotionally abused.

# Theories of Causality

- Feminist: Unequal Marital Power/patriarchal discourses:
- Socio Cultural: Stress/poverty/ethnicity.
- Social Learning: Hx of family violence.
- Family Systems: High level of marital conflict/communication skills deficit.
- Intra-individual: substance abuse/psychopathology/head injury

# Integrated Ecological Framework

- (Heise, L,1998)



# Risk Factors for man's risk of abusing partner

- **Societal:** - Traditional gender norms/social norms supportive of violence.
- **Community :** - Weak community sanctions/Poverty/Low social capital.
- **Relationship:** - Marital conflict/Marital instability/male dominance in the family/Economic stress.
- **Individual:** heavy drinking/young age/depression/low academic achievement/witnessing/experiencing violence as a child.
  - Heise,L and Garcia-Moreno,C (2002)

# Gender role attitudes

- “Studies have found that men who abuse their female spouses tend to be less egalitarian and more traditional than non-abusive men (Forgey 1999)
- Traditional sex role attitudes have been found to be powerful predictors of attitudes supporting marital violence. (Crossman et al, 1990, Finn, 1986)
  - Wife abuse was found to be highest in US States where structural inequality in economic, educational, political and legal institutions was greatest. (Yllo & Straus 1990)

# Kimmmel's Distinctions

- **“Instrumental” Violence**- goal oriented to maintain power and control
- **“Expressive Violence”** – an expression of family conflict.

“Motivation for violence matters”. (Kimmmel, 2002)

# Typologies of Domestic Violence

- **“Patriarchal Terrorism”**  
(motivated by male power and control)
- **“Common Couple”**  
Violence includes both male and female initiated violence-other stressors besides power issues.  
(Johnson 1995)
- **“Violent Resistance”**  
self defence, primarily by women
- **“MVC”=mutual violent control-** little known about this.  
(Johnson and Ferraro, 2000)

# Silence

- “Women are less likely to tell someone within a year: only half of women, compared to about three quarters of the men, told someone within a year”.  
(NCC, p.77)

# Intimate Partner Violence

... A process whereby one member of an intimate relationship experiences vulnerability, loss of power and control and entrapment as a consequence of the other member's exercise of power through the patterned use of physical, sexual, psychological and/or moral force.

(Coker et al, 2003, p260)

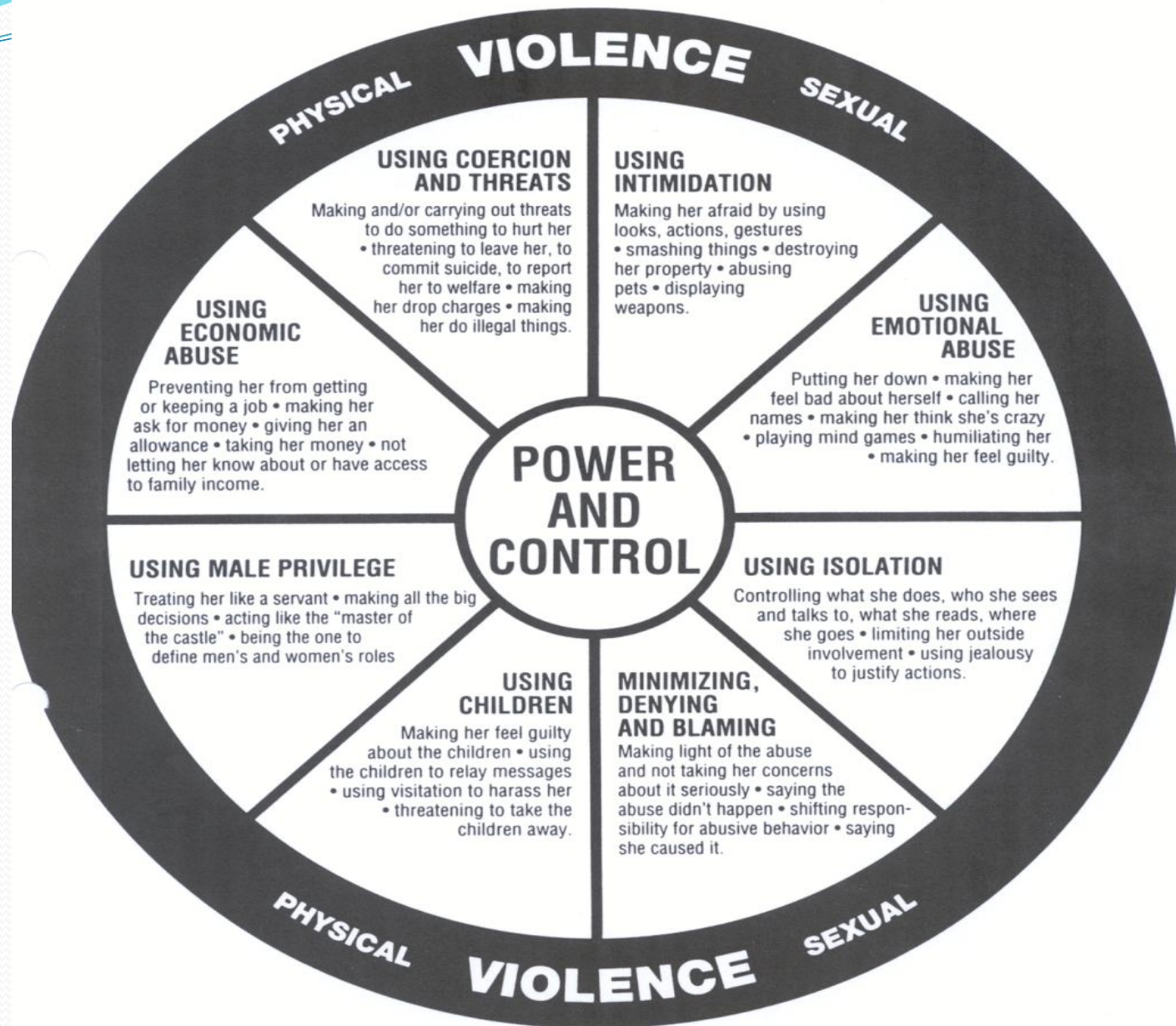
# Coercive Control (E.Stark,2007)

- “A growing body of literature emphasizes how control, manipulation, isolation and the other tactics that comprise coercive control inhibit women’s self-direction, compromise their liberty and cause a range of harms that are not easily subsumed under safety concerns.”
- “”Control” subsumes this broad range of limitations on speech, movement and social connection, objective constraints such as control over money, information, and decision making...I use the overarching term *intimidation* to encompass a range if tactics that supplement violence and are also employed to induce fear and humiliation.”

# Partners' Construction of Meaning

- ...he'd tell me it was my duty to be at home and to look after him and (daughter).
- She's mine, she's the mother of my children, like I was his property. If anyone else will have you, I'll take you to your grave.
- He said I had no opinion in his decisions, in what went on in the house, that he was the master of his house.

- Like you're mine, you're not to talk to this person, you're not to do that.
- Men don't do shopping, those were his words- men don't clean the house. Wouldn't take the kids out or anything...That's for a woman, what else would you be doing? That's what you should be doing
- He had me in any way he chose fit..he felt that he had 100% control over me and he felt justified.
- He didn't like the fact that I was spending time with the kids, or not spending it with him.



# Impacts of Intimate Partner Violence

- Fear
- Physical Injuries
- Self harming (including suicide)
- Addictions
- Exhaustion
- Loss of preferred identity
- Entrapment

# Reasons Why Some Women Stay

- Economic Dependence- nowhere else to go;
- Fear of increased violence;
- Structural barriers- courts, social services;
- Wanting to keep the family together;
- Guilt, shame, isolation, exhaustion, unpredictability.
- Meaning of relationship.

# Sources of support: (NCC 2005)

- Friend(s): 49%
- Family: 43%
- GP: 17%
- Gardai: 22% (29% (W) 5%(Men))
- Solicitor: 16%
- Counsellor: 18% (22% (W) 9% (M))
- Told nobody: 33%

# Responding to Domestic Violence

- Those who are separated or divorced are 448% more likely to have experienced minor incidents of abuse, and 2010% more likely to have experienced severe abuse:
- = suggests that abuse leads to separation/divorce (more so for women than men).


# Post Separation Violence

- 76% of women who have separated from abusive partners suffer post-separation violence.
  - 76% verbal/emotional abuse, 41% serious threats, 23% physical violence, 6% sexual violence.

(Womens Aid, England, 2002)

- Women are at greatest risk of homicide at the point of separation or after leaving.

(Lees, S. 2000)




“However multiple attempts to leave also can be perceived as women’s attempts to reshape the relationship and decrease violence while conveying to the abuser that separation is an option”.


Peled, E. et al 2000

# Crisis, Coping and Change

## (Adapted from Kelly, L. 1995)

- **Managing the situation:** finding, or accepting, an explanation for the incident which allows for a future.
- **Distortion of Perspective:** routines and thought processes are affected by having to manage the abuse – it becomes her responsibility.

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- **Defining the Abuse:** means locating herself as someone who is being victimised and her partner as abuser.
  - **Re-evaluating the relationship:**  
Coping strategies now take on new meaning; leaving, temporarily or permanently, becomes easier to contemplate.

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- **Ending the relationship:** this is a process- not a once off event. Complicated by lack of resources, racism, further violence, etc.
  - **Ending the violence:**  
this may not be possible. 70% of most serious violence occurs post separation.

# Resistance

- A response is a volitional act that demonstrates judgement, imagination and will; an effect is the strictly determined product of a previous event/cause. A response is a social, communicative act that plays a part in on-going social interaction; an effect is an end-state, the last link in a causal chain.

# Language of Effects and Language of Resistance.

- Language of effects misrepresents victims' responses to violence, conceals victims' resistance, and portrays victims' as passive recipients of abuse.
- Resistance is a response to violence and cannot be encoded in a language of effects.

# Language of Resistance

- *What did you say to him when he wanted you to do that? (Language of resistance)*
- *Had you ever argued with him about that issue before ? (Language of resistance)*
- *What were you thinking when you decided to go along with him for 'peace sake'? (Language of resistance).*
- *Describe what changed when you didn't do what he wanted you to do ? (Unique outcome question).*
- *What else did you do that made life easier for you ? (Unique outcome question).*

# Women most vulnerable to abuse

- Pregnant women: 25% assaulted for the first time during pregnancy:
- Women with mental health problems: Up to 64% of hospitalised female psychiatric patients have histories of being physically abused as adults.
- **Women with learning difficulties- makes them more vulnerable:**
- **Disabled women have a higher risk of assault, sexual abuse and rape than other women. It is important to ask disabled women about violence perpetrated by their spouse/partner.**

# Children and Domestic Abuse

- Being aware of the violence as witnesses or overhearing it;
- Intervening to protect their mother- either directly risking assault themselves, or indirectly by seeking help;
- Being encouraged to support/participate in the abuse and degradation of their mother.

• Kelly,L. 1996

# Listening to Children (Hogan and O'Reilly, 2007)

- Many of the children, particularly the eldest sibling in the family, spoke of having a very close relationship with their mother, one where at times they experienced themselves as being overly responsible for the safety of their mother and their younger siblings.
- A key finding in relation to younger children was how acutely aware of their mothers' feelings they were.
- Evidence of 'over-parentified child'.
- "Wrecking their heads" and "going mad with it all".

- “I think that's the main thing it does- it robs you of your childhood because even as kids, we were always aware that we couldn't have our friends staying over, for example, because we didn't know how he might be on a given night or anything”.
- As teenagers, they become violent themselves, become pregnant at an early age, take drugs and drink, attempt suicide or become seriously ill.
- The research shows how reluctant children of all ages and backgrounds, living with domestic violence are of speaking about it, even with their closest friends.
- Living in a small community, being middle class, mitigate against women leaving, even for short periods of time.”

# Sources of Support (Hogan and O'Reilly, 2007)

- The primary source of emotional support for each of the children was their siblings. Even young children supported and comforted each other.
- For some, the refuge provided them with the time and support they needed.
- Some of the teenagers and mothers spoke quite clearly of the fact that a refuge service was not the service they wanted. Rather, they wanted a community based, drop in support and advice service.

# Impacts on children (1)

- Varies with age, gender, resilience etc.
- Undermines developmental needs for safety and security (attachment difficulties-disorganized/insecure )
- Social problems (poor social skills, secrecy, shame, isolation)
- Poor educational performance/ or overcompensating by immersing themselves in study
- Low self esteem
- PTSS symptoms (bed wetting, school avoidance, fear, anxiety).

# Impacts on Older Children

- Passive aggressive behaviour
- Delinquency , bullying
- Behavioural –externalising(boys)  
internalising (girls)
- Substance abuse
- Leaving home
- Early pregnancy
- Poor attachment as adults.

# Impact on Parenting

- Loss of self confidence:
- Inability to bond and form a relationship with the child
- Feeling undermined as an individual and a parent:
- Feeling emotionally and physically drained:
- Not knowing what to say:
- Emotional distance between parent and child:
- Inability to deal with children's behaviour:

# Impact on Parenting Contd

- Lack of financial support/poverty:
- Potential to take out frustrations on the children:
- Inability to provide appropriate boundaries, structures and security to the children:
- Home environment not conducive to support educational needs.

# Social Work Involvement (Hogan and O'Reilly, 2007)

- Some mothers actively sought social work support, but the mothers we spoke to noted that the social worker did not offer to meet directly with their children, basing their assessment on what the mother told them.
- The mothers.. with experience of social work involvement were extremely critical of the social work response, noting a complete absence of support.
- One woman was extremely happy with the social work response – appears to be based on the direct response of meeting with her daughter and supporting mother herself.

# Social Workers perspectives

- “As a social worker, you are well aware of the effects of long term violence.. That mightn't be your primary focus right now..Dad throws his weight around and every so often and throw mum a wallop and the kids hear this and see it. But that is not going to change right now. Right now, we need to deal with school”.
- “So if its very bad, we would be saying to Mum, ‘Look, your choices are very limited..the man has to go, or the violence has to stop. You make that decision with us or we have to step in... And take a much more heavy hand”

# Social Workers perspectives

- Communication from social work departments was identified as poor, and a lack of support services commonplace.
- Lack of resources and overstretched social work teams were identified as the main reasons for the poor responses.
- This social worker recommended the creation of a social work post dedicated to domestic violence and to act as a liaison between refugees and community care.

# Social Work Responses

- Focus on Risk to Children. ('Structural Problem').
- Focus on Mother's responsibility to 'protect' despite violence to her.
- Avoidance of violent men.
- 'Grooming' of workers by violent partner.
- Use of minimizing language.
- Seeing man sometimes as 'cornerstone' of family.

# Social Work Responses

- Lack of training/awareness of dynamics of domestic abuse.
- ‘Atrocity story’ (Humphreys, 2000).
- ‘Bifurcation of responses’-need for interagency responses.
- ‘Family’ discourse.

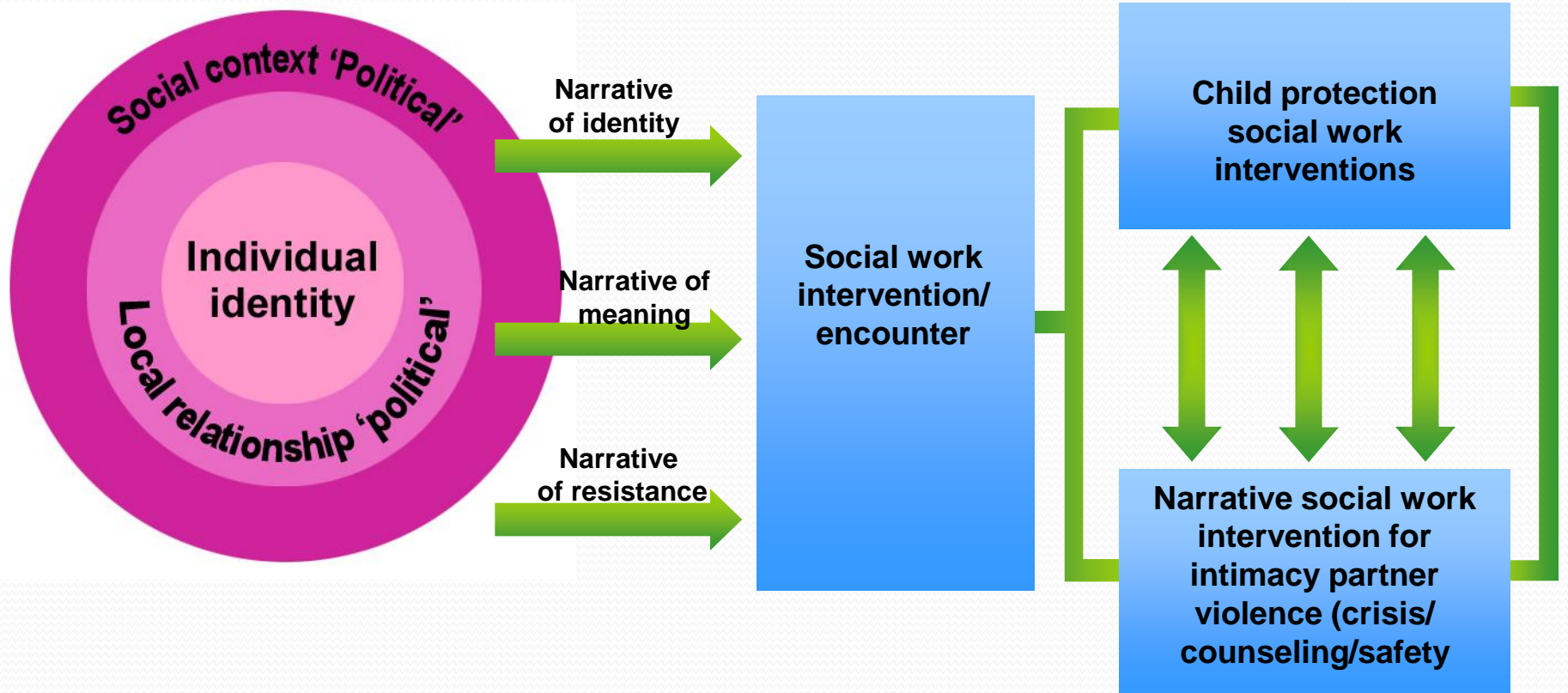
# Recommendations: (Buckley et al, 2006)

- Build a comprehensive data base of the existing services for children and young people:
- Provide direct services to children and young people who have previously or are currently experiencing domestic violence. (Active consideration of child's views re. contact.)
- An early intervention/prevention approach should be developed. (Schools, Gardai, Voluntary agencies.)

# The Power of Puppets

- Chris Burke : [chrisburke@gracieproductions.com.au](mailto:chrisburke@gracieproductions.com.au)
- Aims:
  - To raise awareness about the nature of DV and its links with emotional abuse, physical abuse and neglect of children.
  - Change attitudes and behaviours and promote alternative parenting practices which nurture and support emotional and physical well being of children.

Figure 12.4 : Social Work Encounter



- Majority of women are in favour of maintaining contact-believe that it is in the best interest of the children. (Hester et al, 1994, Mullender et al, 2000)
- Research evidence suggests that contact with a violent father post separation is complex and potentially dangerous. (Radford and Sayer, 1999, Saunders and Barron, 2003)

# Risks and Disadvantages

- Separation can result in an escalation of violence- risk of serious injury:
- Man continues to be abusive and threatening to mother:
- Children witness psychological, physical and sexual abuse of mother.
- Children become part of the abuse (messages, encouraged to abuse etc.)

# Post Separation Contact

- ‘There is no evidence to suggest that children benefit from having continued relationships with men who are violent’.
- Research on the effects of post-separation contact on child outcomes is largely quite pessimistic....outcomes are negatively influenced by the severity of the violence exposed to.  
(Buckley et al, 2006, Stover et al, 2003.)