

# Female Perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

---

Dr Nicola Graham-Kevan  
University of Central Lancashire  
& Mittuniversity, Sweden

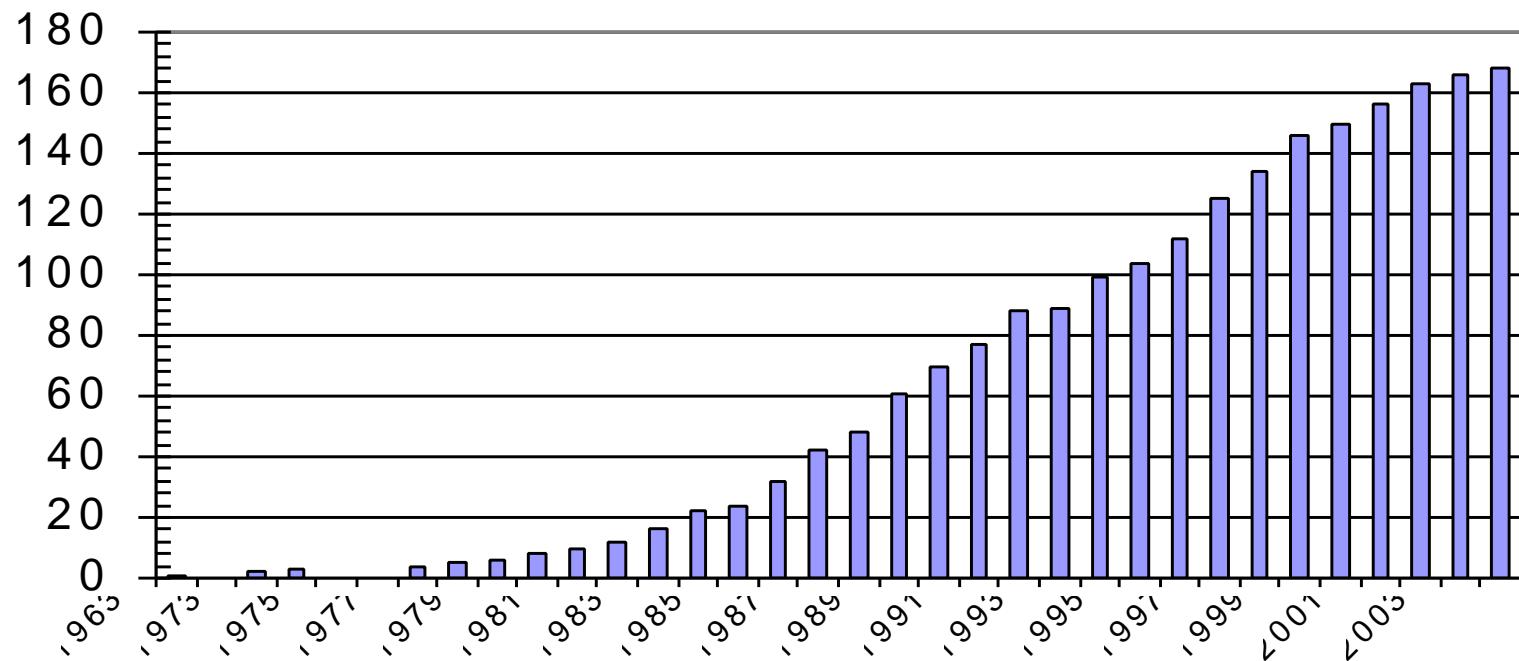


# Overview

- Evidence for sex similarity of IPV
- Motives for IPV
- Risk factors for women's domestic violence
- Trauma and abusive personality
- Treatment
- Conclusions

# Straus (2008)

CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF STUDIES SHOWING SIMILAR  
RATES OF ASSAULTING A PARTNER  
BY WOMEN AND MEN



# Evidence on Sex-Similarity

- Archer (2000) Meta-analysis use of IPV, combining the results of 82 studies (approx 65,000 men & women)
- Archer (2006) cross-national meta-analysis
- Fiebert's 2007 bibliography > 200 studies
- Longitudinal studies (e.g. Daly et al., 2000; Ehrensaft et al. 2004; 2006; Giordano, et al., 1999; Moffitt et al., 2001; Serbin, et al., 2004), See Dutton, 2007 for a review
- Counter evidence? **Sample on your DV** e.g. Dobash & Dobash (2004)

“...many, if not most women arrested for intimate partner violence are victims of abuse who may have been acting in self defense”

(Henning, Jones, and Holdford (2003)

	Any violence	M F	F M	M F
Population surveys	16.3%	13.8%	28.3%	57.9%
Community samples	47.0%	17.5%	22.9%	59.6%
School & college samples	39.2%	16.2%	31.9%	51.9%
Female orientated clinical samples	70.6%	13.3%	14.4%	72.3%
Treatment/ Military/ Male perpetration	99.9%	43.4%	17.3%	39.3%

# One sided IPV

- Where one sex is the sole perpetrator, it is more likely to be a woman than a man (Anderson, 2002; DeMaris, 1987; Dunning, 2002; Gray & Foshee, 1997; Morse, 1995; O'Leary, et al 1989; Riggs, 1993; Roscoe & Callahan, 1985)

# Why Would a Women Attack a Man?

- She may believe he will show restraint (Archer, 2006; Felson, 2002; Kantor, et al, 1994; Sorensen & Telles, 1991)
- Research suggests that men are more aware of their own states of physiological arousal than women.
- When negative affect during conflict increases men withdraw, whereas women (being less aware of their own arousal) respond with increasing pathological criticism and belligerence (e.g. Levenson, et al., 1994)

# Women's beliefs about their IPV

(Sherrill et al., 2011)

- **Just reacted** 25% : "I didn't think, I just did it"
- **Nothing would happen** 60% "he wouldn't fight back" "he just let's things go"
- **End aversion** 55%: "I just wanted to get out of there" "I thought he would leave the room"
- **Modify Partner's behaviour** 55%: "I knew it wouldn't hurt him, but I knew it would get his attention"
- **Increase compliance** 33%: "he tried to talk to me so I pushed him away and I was like 'let's go'
- **Communication** 25% "I wasn't trying to hurt him. It makes you get your point across"
- **Alter emotional state** 25%: "I thought he would be mad at me"
- **Partner retaliation** 15%: "shove me back"
-

## Behavioural Control: Cross-sectional Studies

- Lack of sex-differences in controlling behaviour:
- Graham-Kevan & Archer (2005; 2009) 399 men & 951 women
- Replicated: Bates & Graham-Kevan (in press) 25,000 men & women
- LaRoche (2008) 24,000 men and women
- Meta-analysis of controlling behaviour (Graham-Kevan, Archer & Coyne, in preparation)

# Motives (Leisring, 2012)

- Coercion:
  1. Dominance & Denigration = To show anger; retaliation for emotional hurt; stress
  2. Restrictive engulfment: Jealousy; stress; get partner's attention
- IPV
  1. Minor & severe = to show anger, retaliation emotional hurt; inability to express self verbally, stress, Least endorsed = protect self from physical harm (approx 4% or less)

See Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012 for a review

# Why don't men leave?

(Hines & Douglas, 2012)

- Concerned about the children: 89%
- Marriage for life: 81%
- Love: 71%
- Fears may never see kids again: 68%
- Thinks she'll change: 56%
- Not enough money: 53%
- Nowhere to go: 52%
- Embarrassed: 52%
- Doesn't want to take kids away from her: 46%
- She threatened to kill herself: 28%
- Fears she'll kill him/someone he loves: 24%

# Responses to Women's IPV

- Unlikely to get arrested (e.g. no injuries to victim 1% women arrested v 52% men; Minor injuries 23% women v 81% men (Millar & Brown, 2009))
- Treated like victims
- Female 'batterers' significantly more likely to express beliefs that it is acceptable to hit than male batterers (Simmons & Lehman 2004)
- Women externalise blame (Holdforth, 2005)

So if women are:

- Equally likely to use IPV
- Be classified as Intimate Terrorists

What is driving this behaviour?

# Conduct Disorder (Moffitt et al 2002)

- Women identified as having conduct disorder 3 years prior to perpetrating partner violence were:
  - a) more likely to become involved with violent men
  - b) but regardless of whether or not their partner hits them they hit their partners
- The results for women were the same as for men



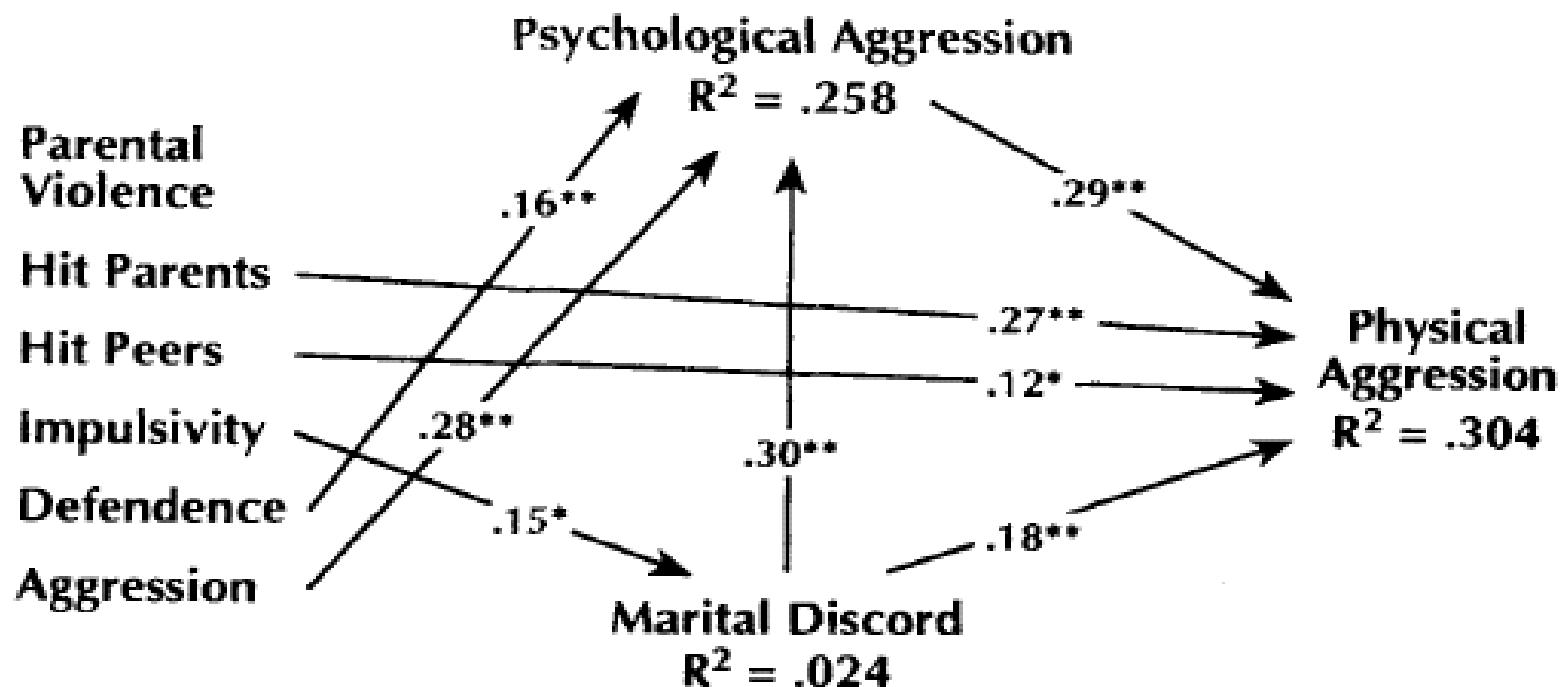
- Characteristics of IPV in females
  - approval of the use of aggression,
  - excessive jealousy and suspiciousness,
  - a tendency to experience intense and rapid emotions,
  - poor self-control.

# The New York Children in the Community Study (Ehrensaft, et al., 2004)

- Exploring the effects of parenting, exposure to domestic violence between parents (ETDV), maltreatment, adolescent disruptive conduct disorders (CD), and substance abuse disorders on the risk of violence to and from an adult intimate partner
- CD & ETDV      IPV

- “Personality disorder trajectories.”
  - A failure of personality disorders to diminish from adolescence to adulthood predicted IPV in both sexes.
- Women with a pattern of distrust, interpersonal avoidance, unusual beliefs, and constricted affect were more likely to assault intimate male partners.

# Women's IPV (O'Leary et al., 1994)



**Premarital  
Assessment**

**18 Month Assessment**

**30 Month  
Assessment**

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Figure 3. Trimmed path model of the development of physical aggression in wives.

## Childhood Bullies to IPV (Connolly et al. 2000a & b)

- Women identified as being bullies during childhood IPV as adults (2000b)
- Poor conflict resolution, negative interactions & controlling behaviours in friendships related to same behaviours in later intimate relationships (2000a)
- Suggests a stable coercive interpersonal style

- Girls bully girls & boys equally
- Some incidents are attention seeking

“Girls who attract boys attention by calling them names, physically attacking them or taking their belongings may be learning how effective these strategies compared to positive strategies” (p. 92, Pepler et al., 2004)

## Emotional Regulation (Linder & Collins, 2005)

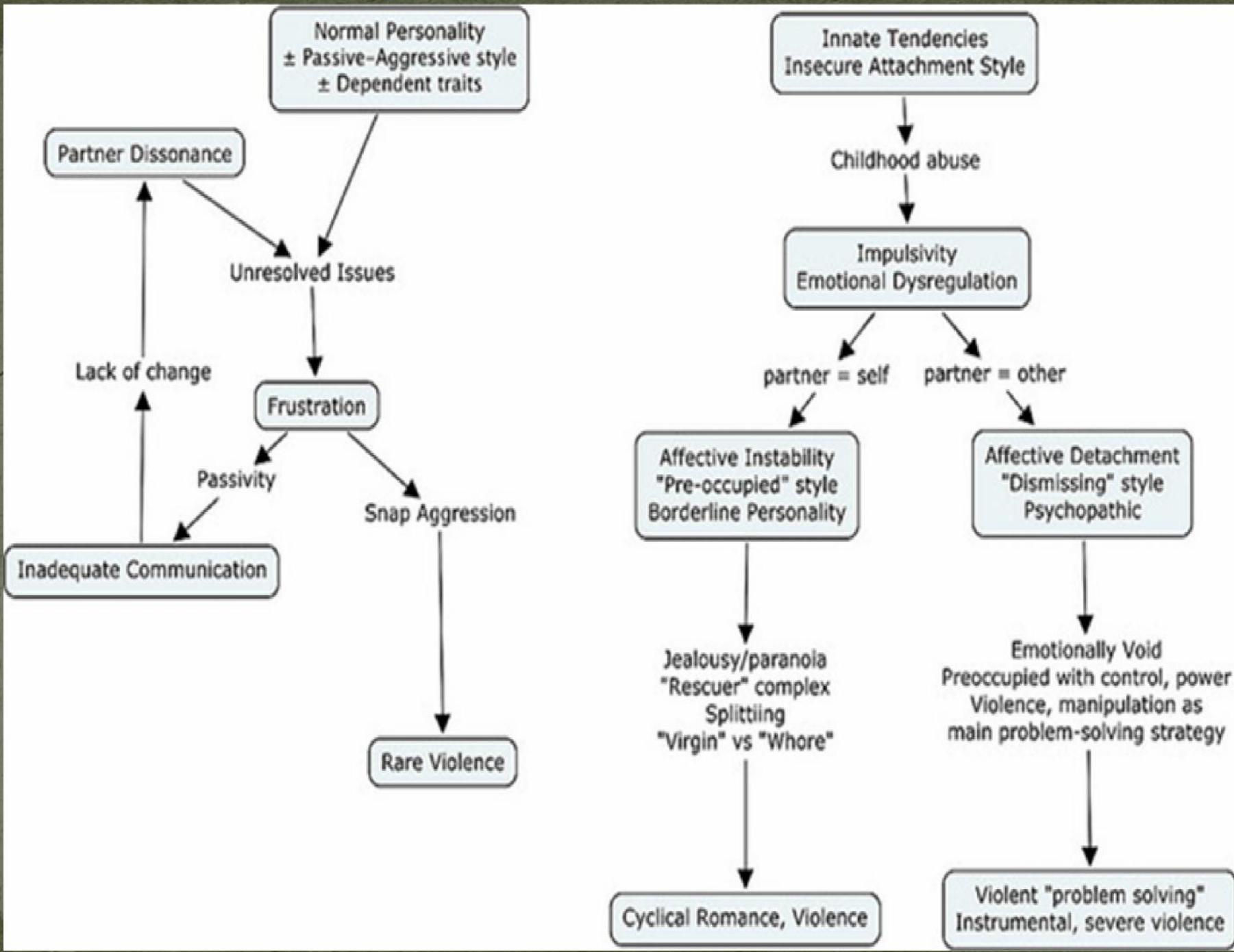
- Minnesota Longitudinal Study Parents & Children: 180 followed from prenatal
- ‘At risk’ population due to poverty
- Children fail to learn to regulate their emotions &/or develop overly emotionally dependent interpersonal styles
- Need to regulate emotional proximity controlling behaviour      IPV

“...deficit skills in regard to managing conflict & negative emotions in intimate relationships may be rooted in familial experiences & may persist into the close relationships of adults...”  
(p.259)

# The Oregon Youth Study

(Capaldi, et al., 2004)

- Women's prior antisocial behaviour and depressive symptoms predicted both their own abusive partner behaviour, as well as their male partners' abuse.
- Notably, the women's characteristics were predictive over and above the contribution of their male partners' antisocial characteristics.



# The Concordia Longitudinal Risk Project

(Serbin et al., 2004)

- The Aggressive females had elevated levels of depression and anxiety disorder by late teens.
- “When they married, their children had higher health risks, and the aggressive girls had become aggressive mothers, exhibiting maternal childhood aggression and having children who had more visits to hospital emergency rooms for treatment of injuries”.

# Comparison of Personality Traits & Disorders of Women and Men Arrested for Domestic Violence (Simmons & Lehman 2004)

- Women are more likely to demonstrate elevated: Histrionic, Narcissistic, Compulsive personality traits
- Women are less likely to demonstrate Dependant personality traits
- Personality Disorders: 71% of the women and 26% of the men scored high on 1 or more of the 11 personality scales

# Animal Abuse

- IPV Perpetrators who abuse animals may be demonstrating a pervasive style of interacting with their environment
- General population: 0.28%
- Female perpetrators: 17%
- Female AA psych & phys IPV ( $d=.34$  &  $d=.36$ )
- *Female AA frequent severe psych & phys IPV ( $d=.32$  &  $d=.46$ )*

## Female Perpetrators Characteristics (Dunning, 2002)

- 62% threatened suicide & 59% threatened homicide
- 52% alcohol & 35% drugs
- 46% mental illness
- 92% history of childhood trauma

## First 100 women entering Chiswick Shelter 1971

- 62% of the women were violence prone v 38% were battered (see also Gottman et al., 1995)
- 64% of violence prone women had experienced violent upbringings (v 20% of battered women)
- BUT 76% of the battering men in this survey came from violent childhoods

# ‘What Works’

- Understand the behaviour who are interested in
- Identify risk factors likely to be criminogenic
- Conduct individualised assessment of need
- Target **dynamic** need/risk factors
- Use responsive techniques
- Target multiple needs
- Appropriate intensity
- Behavioural
- Skills based
- Therapists sensitive & constructive

# Retraumatisation



# Domestic Violence & Trauma Sequel (Dutton, 2008)

- Unstable sense of self (Shengold, 1989)
- Inability to modulate arousal (van der Kolk, 1987)
- Externalising of blame (Lewis, 1971)
- Identification with the aggressor (A. Freud, 1942; Carmen, Rieker, & Mills, 1984)
- Attachment insecurity (Bowlby, 1969; 1973)
- Cognitive distortions (Dodge et al 1996)
- BPO (Dutton, 2008)

# Trauma Effect on Children

- Restricted affect  
*Source: van der Kolk (1987).*
- Limited cognitive problem solving skills  
*Source: Dodge et al. (1995).*
- Arousal dyscontrol problems  
*Source: van der Kolk (1987).*
- Insecure attachment  
*Source: Cicchetti & Barnett (1991).*

# Observed in Perpetrators

- Restricted affect  
*Source: Dutton (1984).*
- Blaming orientations  
*Source: Dutton & Starzomski (1994), Eckhardt et al 1998.*
- Extreme arousal patterns  
*Source: Gottman et al. (1995).*
- Insecure attachment  
*Source: Dutton et al. (1994).*

Inner Strength Women  
medium/high risk



# Example Inner Strength

## Difficulties

---

1. Restricted affect
2. Blaming orientations
3. Extreme arousal patterns
4. Insecure attachment

## Inner Strength

---

1. Emotional vocabulary
2. Resilience, perspective taking
3. DBT - mindfulness, self soothing, radical acceptance
4. Learning history

- Moffitt et al put it “ the argument that women’s abuse perpetration in the community is too trivial to research could prove to be tantamount to arguing that smoking in the community is too trivial to research and scientists should focus on cases of lung cancer” (Moffitt et al., 2001, p.69)

# Conclusions

- Women's risk factors appear similar to men's
- However:
  - Women's violence in general and IPV in particular is trivialised, ignored and excused
  - Women not helped to manage their aggression
  - CJS not proactive
  - Men expected to 'put up with it'
  - Men not believed
  - Children stay with mother