

# THE BATTERER AS PARENT

Lundy Bancroft

# KEY CONCEPTS

- 5 million children per year witness a violent assault against their mother
- Children exposed to batterers show higher rates of a tremendous range of measures of childhood distress
- Boys who are exposed to batterers have a dramatically higher rate of growing up to be batterers and sexual assault perpetrators

# KEY CONCEPTS

- Batterers expose children to multiple sources of psychological injury
- Batterers often present as good fathers in public
- Children of battered women are also at increased risk outside the home (e.g. dating violence, sexual assault, substance abuse, delinquency)
- Domestic violence is present (often unidentified) in 40-60 percent of the child protective and juvenile justice caseload

# KEY CONCEPTS

- Battered mothers face complex choices and multiple risks
- *Any* action taken by a battered mother to improve her circumstances involves risks for her children and for herself
- Leaving the abuser sometimes makes conditions worse rather than better for her children
- In most cases, pressuring or requiring a battered mother to leave will do more harm than good

# BATTERER PROFILE

Consistently true:

- Coercively controlling, intimidating, often including social isolation
- Entitled / Self-centered
- Believes *he* is the victim
- Manipulative / Good public image

# BATTERER PROFILE

Consistently true:

- Disrespectful, Superior, Depersonalizing
- Punishes, retaliates
- Finds his abusive behavior rewarding
- Mentality of ownership, objectification

# MYTHS ABOUT MEN WHO BATTER

- Skill deficits
- Psychopathology
- Poor, ethnic minority

# Batterers' Style with Children

- Authoritarian
- Under-involved, neglectful, reckless
- Good under observation
- Currying favor
- Psychologically abusive

# Batterers' Risk to Abuse Children

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

- 49% of batterers
- 7x more likely than a non-batterer
- Correlated with level of physical abuse of partner
- Other indicators; level of control, substance abuse, rigid belief system, abused as a child

# Batterers' Risk to Abuse Children

- **SEXUAL ABUSE**

- 6x more likely than a non-batterer
- Correlated with presence of violence towards partner but not with severity
- Other indicators; high entitlement, self-centered, use of children to meet his own needs, manipulative, seeing children as personal possessions, substance abuse, low involvement in infant care

## Impact on Family Dynamics

- Undermining of mother's authority
- Interference with mother's parenting
- Use of the children as weapons
- Sowing of divisions

# Post-Separation Risks

- Homicide
- Abduction
- Stalking
- Violence
- All of the above in connection to visitation

# Post-Separation Risks

- Losing custody to the batterer
- Unsupervised visitation for the batterer
- Abuse through litigation
- Ongoing serious damage to mother-child relationships

# Post-Separation Risks

- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse by the batterer
- Learning attitudes and behaviors that lead to domestic violence aligning with the batterer
- Loss of resources for resilience

# Post-Separation Risks

- Interfering with children's recovery, sabotaging children's therapeutic relationships

# Mothers' Protective Strategies

- Most battered women make efforts to protect their children.
- These efforts are often not immediately apparent to outsiders, including professionals.
- A mother's efforts to protect her children can, paradoxically, result in increased danger and injury to her and to them.
- Leaving the abuser does not necessarily make conditions better for her children, and often can make things much worse for them.