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Violence
towards an intimate partner:
Placing a magnifying glass on
abused women's experiences
with support services



Giving Women a Voice

- 15 interviews (as part of larger study)
 - 3 Aboriginal women
- Women victims are no homogenous group – observable differences in victimisation and circumstances



Themes that emerged

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Lethal violence

- Fear of being killed
- Homicide/
Suicide ideation

Concern for children

- Pregnancy
- Endangered Children

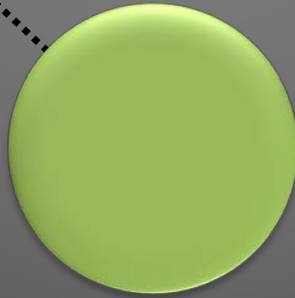
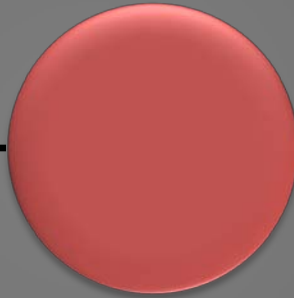
The role of AOD use

- Self-medication
- Retaliation



Lethal violence

- Fear of being killed
- Homicide/
Suicide ideation



Fear of being killed (1)

- Laura (Aboriginal):

He used to throw a machete against me and once almost chopped my left hand with it.

Q: Did he ever threaten to kill you?

A: (interviewee laughs) – oh yeah! A few weeks ago he tried to strangle me with his bare hands.

Fear of being killed (2)

- Jane

I said that I am leaving you I am not taking this anymore – he jumped out of the bed grabbing me by the head, got me down to the floor and twisted my head around screaming 'I kill you, I kill you, you whore'. He did this until my 8-year-old and my 2-year-old came in. I thought he was going to kill me... the kids were crying and really scared. As soon as he let me go I went to call the police....

Fear of being killed (3)

- Emma

I had to call the police to save my life. This happened many times... I was sent to a women's shelter...[but] feared that my partner would hunt me down.... [He] made me so scared of him and I thought he knew every move I made... Oh, how many times I wished he did [kill me] because then I would not have to face another moment of how great he is and how small and worthless I am. I cannot run...I never know...today I am alive.

Fear of being killed (4)

- Ashleigh (Aboriginal)

Q: Did he threaten to kill you?

A: He has done that, yeah. I don't remember the circumstances, but I know he was drunk at the time. I was really concerned and worried that he might.

Q: So, it was a serious threat?

A: Yeah, yeah, he is not really predictable when he is drunk, you know. He is not, really. He has been drunk on numerous occasions and has been threatening me like that. It had come close, I mean it was that push.

Homicidal ideation

- Kelly

Q: Have you ever thought about killing your husband?

A: I have indeed, many times. I have been very angry for all he did to me, but my mother always said why would you go to jail and lose contact with your children. He made me so angry. I thought often how easy it would be to strangle him when he is asleep. I guess, its because of the control and power thing. He succeeded in trying to punish me in every angle. He even went to see my sister. He tries very hard to put my own family against me.

Suicidal ideation (1)

- Adele

The stress of living was just unbearable at times. Living in constant fear, not being able to do anything right... I would take abuse for he would not abuse J*, so he would not receive it. Sometimes I caught a fight like that (snipping with finger). It got to the point where I was contemplating suicide. I didn't feel I was a suitable mother, being constantly told it was my fault and knowing that smoking pot is affecting my son.

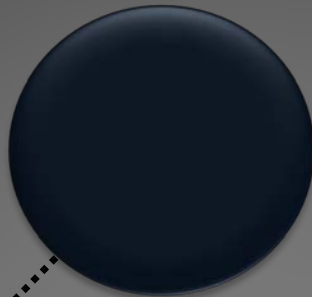
Suicidal ideation (2)

- Jane

I just snapped, I've just had enough of everything and in a mode of madness I just took the tablets...

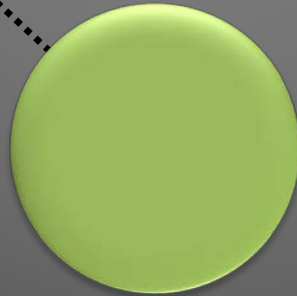
- Laura

...I have taken overdoses through the situation, I have tried to commit suicide, that was the only alternative to get out of it...



Concern
for
children

- Pregnancy
- Endangered children



Concern for children (1)

- Violence during pregnancy

Adele: He hit me to the ground and into the stomach. There was lots of name calling going on. He said that the baby was sucking all the life out of me – he was never excited about my pregnancy.... He was angry that I was pregnant, I think. He wanted the baby but life would certainly have been easier if he did not have the complication of me being pregnant.

Concern for children (2)

- Children are endangered/victimised

Adele: ...he came behind me and choked me before he threw me forward. I landed very closely to where my son was sitting in a high chair ...I was crying, sitting on the couch, my 2-year-old son in my arms when he put a knife to my throat screaming that it was all me, I was the cause of these actions and it was my fault he was doing that to me. I was thought he is going to kill me, but suddenly he went to have a shower...

Concern for children (3)

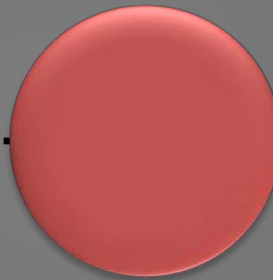
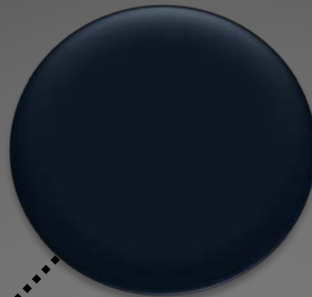
- Children are endangered/victimised

Simone: He ran off with our 2-year-old daughter. Said he would take her out for a day to give me a day off. I remember going to the cinema that day, not suspicious at all...After looking for them for a long time I was absolutely terrified...he phoned me shortly after saying he was in NSW...[and] I would never see her again...I thought he was going to kill them both...

Concern for children (4)

- Madeleine (Aboriginal)

You know... violence is bad. It is bad for us and for the kids. Kids have nightmares from hearing mum and dad fighting and arguing. I know that it is no good for the kids. We should really think of the kids. It is no good for the kids to watch their parents...its hurting them too, you know...



The role
of AOD
use

- Self-medication
- Retaliation

The role of AOD use (1)

- Madeleine (Aboriginal)

There are a lot of problems with drinking... a lot of girls drink and do girls, you know, many, many of them do.

Why?

To be able to take it all, you know... when there is payday, he wants your money to buy drugs. If you refuse to give him money, he bashes you – so what do you do? It's always the same... you also drink and take drugs. It is always the worst when payday comes.

The role of AOD use (2)

- Ashleigh (Aboriginal)

... there have been times when we both had been drinking and my partner has come at me ...it has gone so far as he tried to rape me a couple of times. ...And then he would wake up the next morning, still half drunk and I am feeling a bit scared because I don't know what is going to happen and I am angry... I've got so much to say and I have this built-up anger in me I want to get it out of me... He gets upset and away we go again – there is just no stopping...

Retaliation (1)

- Corina

He would just start to punch me on my arms, kick me on the legs, and... I would punch back....I did not want to be defenceless and thought that by punching back I could get to stop him, but he usually hit even more and so I learned to take what he dish. I never had broken bones or things like that. Of course I had lots of bruises from my neck down, occasionally on my face. But because bruises could be covered up, he purposefully avoided to bash me so that people could see it.

Retaliation (2)

- Ashleigh (Aboriginal)

I retaliate when I get angry, definitely...I have been pushed to the limits and actually did a bit of jail time... you can only take so much over a period of time and if you push too much that you are so lashing out you will end up hurting that person that's coming at you...

I guess he was pushing me over the fence and so I was throwing the knife at the end of the day... it wasn't the alcohol but it was that there was so much anger..

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"Out there in the snow and rain,
with all those cats? Are you kidding?"



Culturally appropriate services

- Different services for Aboriginal women

Self-help groups

- Mistrust of agencies – fear of having children removed

Family support

- Intergenerational transmission needs to be addressed

Women's expressed unmet needs

Let us **listen** to your voice

