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## Athlete Domestic Violence: contaminating acts and the violation of self-boundaries

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## **Chapter X**

# **Athlete Domestic Violence: Contaminating Acts and the Violation of Self-Boundaries**

**Helen Owton and Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson**

### **Abstract**

This chapter explores the experience of one female athlete named Bella, who was groomed and then sexually abused by her male coach during her childhood; abuse which then continued into adulthood and an ongoing intimate relationship. Bella's story is presented as an example of how sexual abuse can continue beyond childhood so that the relationship between abuser and abused becomes more complex, and may develop into Athlete Domestic Violence (ADV). Competitive sporting environments can provide a unique socio-cultural context for sexual abuse, exploitation and ADV to take place initially, and then to persist, often through the power invested in the coach. Some argue that a coach developing a romantic relationship with an athlete is never appropriate because the coach holds a structural power advantage over the athlete. In this chapter, we draw on a process of 'collaborative autoethnography' as our research approach. Drawing on Goffman's theorisation of the "territories of the self" and the ways in which these might be subjected to violation via contaminative acts, we analyze some of the interactional encounters between Bella and her partner/abuser.

**Key words:** collaborative autoethnography; athlete domestic violence (ADV); intimate partner abuse and violence (IPA&V); Goffman

## **Introduction**

This chapter explores the under-researched area of Athlete Domestic Violence (ADV).

Currently, there do not seem to be any definitions offered for what athlete domestic violence entails, and we discuss below some of the issues surrounding domestic violence, and what has been termed intimate partner abuse and violence. Firstly, Katherine Starr describes ADV as a situation in which an athlete (not just professional/elite) is in a (perceived) “relationship” with a coach which can involve the athlete being of consenting age or not.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of age, because of the professional standards (e.g. the duty of care) required by a coach, developing a romantic/sexual relationship with an athlete is not appropriate because the coach holds structural power advantage over the athlete.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, we argue that ADV is where the athlete finds themselves in an abusive relationship with a partner where they experience “any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behavior, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.”<sup>3</sup> Abuse includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

Given some of the definitional issues and complexities surrounding “domestic abuse”<sup>4</sup>, Starr further explains why an athlete might remain involved in an ongoing relationship, despite the harm and abuse she is experiencing:

The competing athlete has something at risk, for example, dreams of being an Olympian, a college scholarship, playing time or financial gain. There is a complex 'hook' keeping the athlete engaged in a relationship even when abusive and unhealthy. The athlete has to make decisions for the family, the team and the coach. When speaking up about the abuse, the athlete could be subject to retaliation from the team if there is a perceived threat of their dreams being compromised as a result of the coach removal; the parents that sacrificed everything to make sure that the child-athletes dreams are fulfilled or the coach that convinces the athlete that the only reason for her/his success is because of the “coach.”<sup>5</sup>

Domestic abusive relationships are complex and much research outside of sport and physical activities can help to assist with this understanding. As we have noted elsewhere,<sup>6</sup> what are deemed to constitute ‘domestic abuse’ and ‘domestic violence’ vary considerably, and at the level of terminology a panoply of terms exists. For some researchers, ‘violence’ fails to evoke the intense emotional and psychological aspects of abuse, whilst descriptors such as ‘domestic’ and ‘family’ in relation to abuse/violence may obscure who actually initiates and/or perpetrates the abuse/violence and whether it is uni- bi- or multi-lateral. For our purposes here, intimate partner abuse (IPA) refers to any abusive act deemed to have the intention, or perceived intention, of generating fear, causing physical injury, intimidation, disorientation, denigration or emotional or psychological pain to an intimate partner. Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to any act deemed to have the intention or perceived intention of causing physical injury to an intimate partner. The term Intimate Partner Abuse and Violence (IPA&V) is often used, and Athlete Domestic Violence (ADV) refers to an athlete in an intimate relationship with a

coach where they experience these abusive acts, as defined above. In many cases, of course these forms overlap and/or are perpetrated simultaneously.

As has been noted,<sup>7</sup> IPA&V is extremely complex, not only in terms of its dynamics but also how it is presented, and by/for whom. It can be extremely difficult, for example, to ascertain the incidence, prevalence and nature of such abuse and violence due to methodological, reporting and recording differences, and lack of identification of whether the violence was unilaterally initiated or responsive/defensive. Some researchers have found IPA&V to be asymmetrical in terms of men's violence to women, on dimensions of frequency, severity, and consequences for the victim/survivor and their well-being,<sup>8</sup> and the greater likelihood of women being injured and repeatedly beaten by male partners. Additionally, some feminist theorists suggest that "domestic violence is the result of patriarchal ideology in which men are encouraged and expected to control their partners".<sup>9</sup> Gender symmetry and asymmetry debates continue, however, with the overall picture indicating that women and men, heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, gay,<sup>10</sup> and trans,<sup>11</sup> across age, physical ability, socio-economic and ethnic background, perpetrate abuse and violence.

Maureen McHugh and Irene Hanson Frieze call for more in-depth, qualitative studies into experiences of abuse and violence.<sup>12</sup> In this chapter, we seek to address this research lacuna in a specific area, by focusing at the micro-level of a particular case of ADV. In the domain of sport, Michael Flood and Sue Dyson argue that increasing links have been made between sport and violence against women.<sup>13</sup> Research has, for example, highlighted a link between major football tournaments and an increase in domestic abuse<sup>14</sup> and IPA&V, which suggests that individuals with more traditional or conservative attitudes towards gender and sexuality, such as those attitudes often condoned and emphasised in sport, are also more likely to condone domestic violence and sexual assault.<sup>15</sup> Whilst sport is often seen viewed as an arena for children to learn what are deemed 'positive' norms and values, the "darker side of sport" often remains undisclosed and under-researched.<sup>16</sup> Whilst there have been breakthroughs for victims of child sexual abuse (CSA),

with an increased number (71%) of reported cases of CSA in the UK,<sup>17</sup> domestic abuse in sport remains a taboo topic for many. A growing body of research<sup>18</sup> investigating abuse in sport however, suggests that competitive sporting environments provide a unique socio-cultural context that offers possibilities for sexual abuse and exploitation to take place. In sport, the specific danger is the amount of *power* invested in the coach.<sup>19</sup>

In the case of Bella (white, middle class, able-bodied), who was groomed and sexually abused from the age of 13years,<sup>20</sup> it became evident that if the sexual abuse continues to develop as an intimate domestic relationship then it becomes more complex and can develop into ADV. Here, Bella's story provides us with an under-researched perspective, *the perspective of the abused*, which we analyze theoretically via Goffman's interactionist framework, focusing in particular on his conceptualisation of the "territories of the self".

### **Theoretical framework: Territories of the Self**

In Erving Goffman's work, the conceptualisation of what he terms "territories of the self", exemplified in *Relations in Public*,<sup>21</sup> offers a powerful analytic tool for exploring aspects of IPA&V and ADV. Violation of these territories, via various means such as "contaminative acts", which Goffman includes amongst the mortification processes described in *Asylums*,<sup>22</sup> are highly pertinent to Bella's case. In *Relations in Public*, for example, Goffman argues for eight distinctive territories of the self, which are socio-culturally and situationally-contingent. Four of these are particularly salient in addressing IPA&V and ADV, and relate to (in Goffman's own terminology): 1) personal space; 2) the sheath; 3) possessional territory; and 4) information preserve. We describe these in detail below, and in relation to our findings we analyze how some of these territories were violated by Bella's abuser via three specific means of contamination: a) violation of information preserve; b) physical contamination; and c) interpersonal contamination.

**Personal space:** for Goffman, this relates to: “The space surrounding an individual, anywhere within which an entering other causes the individual to feel encroached upon”.<sup>23</sup> This is a kind of spatial envelope surrounding an individual in her/his everyday life. The amount of space required by individual social actors is both culturally- and situationally-contingent, depending, for example, on cultural norms, and the degree of familiarity, closeness or intimacy of co-participants in the particular interactional milieu. The violation or breaching of personal space represents the violation of societal expectations, and an unwelcome intrusion into a person’s self-boundaries. Such intrusions were a regular and frequent occurrence for many victims of IPA&V, and for Bella in her experience of ADV.

**The sheath** is Goffman’s term for a person’s bodily surface and clothing. He highlights how different parts of our bodily sheath are accorded different degrees of sensitivity and also ritual respect, with the face and “private parts” generally warranting greatest concern and respect. Our skin is experienced as the outer boundary of the self, so that the touch of a person or objects that are unwelcome, or not invited to touch, can be experienced as an intrusion into the most intimate realm of personal space.

**Possessional territory** is defined by Goffman as: “Any set of objects that can be identified with the self and arrayed around the body wherever it is”.<sup>24</sup> Those subjected to IPA&V or ADV often find their possessional territory violated, their possessions disrespected, damaged or even destroyed.

**Information preserve** Goffman portrays as: “The set of facts about himself (sic) to which an individual expects to control access while in the presence of others”<sup>25</sup>. This information includes a person’s “content of mind”, her/his biographical information, and also contents of pockets, handbags, documents, letters, and so on.

All the above territories of the self may be subjected to violation (including within IPA&V and ADV), and Goffman describes three specific dimensions of contamination, in his work,

*Asylums*. Here, he portrays a range of mortification practices imposed upon inmates of “total institutions”, such as prisons or military organisations, and which involve contamination and contaminative acts of various kinds. As he argues, “on the outside [of a total institution] the individual can hold objects of self-feeling - such as his (sic) body, his immediate actions, his thoughts, and some possessions - clear of contact with alien and contaminating things”.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, within total institutions, these territories of the self are subjected to surveillance, and often to regular and routinised violation, including contamination. Goffman identifies three forms of contaminative exposure: i) violation of information preserve; iii) physical contamination; and c) interpersonal contamination. These forms of contamination emerged strongly in Bella’s account of her relationship with her coach, who subsequently became her partner.

We now describe the research approach adopted in investigating and constructing Bella’s account of being subjected to child sexual abuse as a young athlete; abuse that subsequently continued in an intimate, domestic relationship.

### **Collaborative autoethnography**

Much research on sexual abuse in sport has been undertaken via traditional approaches (e.g. experimental, questionnaires) or via analytical cross-case analysis.<sup>27</sup> With this in mind, we respond to the call for more layered and in-depth accounts of ADV from Starr.<sup>28</sup> Given the nature of the existing relationship between the researchers and Bella, the sensitive topic and the collaborative perspective of the research, Bella’s case lends itself well to a process described by Cathy Zanker and Michael Gard as collaborative autoethnography.<sup>29</sup> Helen Owton engaged in a similar writing process to *community* autoethnography and *co-constructed* narratives, which views relationships and narratives as jointly-authored, incomplete, and historically situated.<sup>30</sup> Care was taken to acknowledge and respect alterity and seek to preserve some intersubjective distance<sup>31</sup> between Bella and



ourselves as researchers. Given this stance, critical reflexivity was crucial in this collaborative autoethnographic process to guard against seeing to ‘merge’<sup>32</sup> with Bella and her story, and to address ‘relational ethics’ that are heightened for autoethnographers.<sup>33</sup>

In the account that follows, we present Bella’s story as extended narratives, seeking to preserve the integrity of her account and the identity of those involved, which is subsequently discussed and emplaced within our theoretical and conceptual framework. We seek to engage the reader in the experiences of ADV so that they might react from the different positions they occupy. The selected representations are designed to stimulate and encourage multiple interpretations that invite and allow readers a greater interpretive open-ended freedom to form their own conclusions, so that they are able better to understand Bella’s experiences as they transfer this understanding into their own lives.<sup>34</sup> To render the account more direct, we have chosen to write in the first person, and begin with a poem based on Bella’s narrative.

### **Masking**

Years spent thinking,

Nobody believing,

Anything...

Nobody’s policing,

Rogue’s getting

away with anything.

It’s been so easy for me,

To hide away what people don’t see,

Habitual staging allowed me to be,

An expert at masking; acting happy

Nobody cares; me  
care free.

Emotions, memories blocking,  
Good compartmentalising.

A *BLURRING*,  
this BLEEEEEEDING.

Flashbacks re-emerging.  
Of pain and suffering,  
Year's hiding,  
Easily masking.

How *stupid!* No use,  
Memories embodied, always still there,  
of abuse  
no escape,  
exposed, laid bare.

### ***My woman***

“I think you should stop competing” he announces in the café where we’ve stopped for lunch with his boys. I burst out crying and he laughs.

“Jeez, I didn’t realize you’d be all upset about it” he chuckles with his friends. I keep crying so he changes his tact and puts his hand on my shoulder, “I just don’t want *my woman*

competing like that” he says quiet but sternly, “Do you understand? I just can’t have *my woman* getting hurt and what if you get your face mashed up. I couldn’t have that”

I’m completely gutted. I was just getting good, *really* good and think I could have gone all the way. I don’t understand at all. I feel thrown into a pit of unknown despair. I’ve been talked about as an upcoming star; the last competition I had, the world champion had congratulated me even though I had lost because it had been so tough.

I was just beginning to ‘come into my own’ and was thriving on it. I had spent all this time, since the age of 12 getting to this point – it was flowing, I was in the zone now! Why stop? I’m completely confused. He obviously didn’t anticipate how distressed I would be at this news. I’d never thought about how much I could get hurt; I just enjoyed it, enjoyed the skill, and I now feel that he’s embedding a fear in me that means that if I did compete again and something painful happened to me then he’d just say, “I told you so”.

“Obviously, you can still *teach*” he offers. This eases me a little but I just feel so much loss and that so much meaning has just been taken away from me, so simply – just like that! At *his* word, *his* control. He continues the conversation and tells us all about examples of serious injuries.

“Remember this one guys who just fell and he broke his neck and now he can’t walk!” he says, “What if that happened to you? You could get seriously injured. You could get your *face* mashed. Now you’re *my woman* – I just can’t have that”. I nod solemnly as I feel thankful for not being injured so far. He’s obviously just trying to protect me but I’m just so downhearted about it. I feel that he’s taken away a part of me; a part of me that gave me strength. He’s dangled the possibility of competing for England in front of me for years and now he’s taking it away. He used to be the one who told me that I needed to learn how to look after myself in case a stranger who would want to rape me should attack me. He said he

would be angry with me if I didn't fight back, he'd said. He'd said that if I'd been attacked and I'd fought back then he'd be able to live with it, but if not...

Here, Ray seeks to exert ownership and control over Bella (aged 20yrs), drawing on his power over her through sport, as her coach, to curtail her growing sense of power as an athlete, which he may find highly threatening. Sport can provide women and girls with a sense of control and power, and physical cultures and practices can be generative of relative freedom and personal empowerment.<sup>35</sup> Whilst some sports can enable women to engage actively, assertively, challenge gender norms and become empowered, this demonstration of (purportedly) 'masculine' behavior can be threatening to others, particularly to an abuser who wants to have total power *over* an athlete.<sup>36</sup> Whilst sport as a 'hook' is a complex dynamic of power, the power Ray had over Bella through using sport as a 'hook' renders her even more powerless as he takes the choice of sport away just when she feels that she is at the top of her game. By rendering her more powerless, he can violate her sense of empowerment within herself that she may have gained via her involvement and growing competence in sport. Bella seemed to have a strong sporting identity, which meant that she may well have experienced threats to her sporting involvement as direct threats to her sense of self. Bella described how sport, which she experienced as a protective spatial envelope surrounding her in her everyday life, was contaminated by him. Subsequently, and perhaps not surprisingly, Bella now has an ambivalent and difficult relationship with sport. The next section considers Goffman's notion of violation of 'informational preserve'.

### **Throwing money**

We're getting ready for a night out and we head into town, into a local pub. Ray enjoys drinking, showing off and parading round the busy pub with me 'hanging' off his arm like a trophy. Then, towards the end of the evening, I get tapped on the shoulder.

"Ello Bella!" Nigel says.

I turn and hug him.

"Aw hey! How are you?" I exclaim over the noise. I turn to see Ray glaring at me with a sinister scary smile.

"Um... er, this is Nigel" I say to Ray.

"Alright mate!" he says sternly shaking his hand strongly and arrogantly.

"Hey" Nigel says cheerfully shaking his hand appearing oblivious to his attempts to scare him. He turns back to me and tries to chat to me. I'm petrified that Ray will figure out that this is my friend that I slept with so I try to 'play it cool' and chat with him whilst maintaining a bit of a distance. But Nigel touches me, taps me affectionately like we used to when we were good friends. I've not seen him for a few months since leaving college.

"So what are you up to?" I ask, sipping my drink.

"Oh, you know, I've been away for the summer sailing! It's been great fun!" he replies and brags about his adventures. They have a bit of a laugh but I'm careful not to 'flirt' too much; I've got *him* breathing down the back of my neck.

"Aw it's great to see you Bella!" he says hugging me again. It feels warm and it's nice to see an old friend. "Catch up again in a bit!"

He turns away and I look back at Ray who seems to be waiting for me to finish.

"So, *who was that?*" he asks me accusingly.

"Um... er, you know, Nigel a friend from college" I say nervously.

"Hmmm", he says smirking. "You *fucked* him I bet"

I blush.

“I *knew* it!” he says feeling and enjoying the power he now has over me. I hang my head shamefully and I feel the warm joy of seeing Nigel, seeping out of me.

“How could you fuck that?” he says riling with his face getting redder, “He’s not even athletic! Look at his fucking saggy arse!”

I hang my head in silence.

“That’s *the* guy isn’t it?” he continues.

I nod silently with my head still hanging to the floor. I sense his temper boiling more and more as he drinks more and more.

“You’re a *fucking* slag!” he shouts quietly close in my ear.

“He’s just a friend” I say quickly looking up.

The night starts blurring and the thing I know is that I find myself outside with Ray shouting at me on the street. They’re waiting for a taxi.

“You were fucking flirting with him! How do you think that makes *me* feel?” Ray shouts. “You made me look fucking stupid!”

“I wasn’t, I, I, I didn’t, I didn’t mean...” I try to defend. “He’s just a friend...” I turn to walk in the direction of anywhere but near him.

“That’s fucking bollocks!” he says shouting. “Yeah that’s right! *Fuck* off!”

I stop and turn. “I need some money to get a taxi” I say changing my tone. “I want to go back to my Mum’s”.

“*Fuck* off!” he shouts coming towards me.

Scared, I turn and carry on scampering away. There are fights starting outside the pub in the other direction.

“Here you go! You fucking *slag*!” he shouts from close behind. Suddenly I feel immense pitters of pain, like hard pieces of rock hitting the back of my head. *Clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk.*

“Owwwwwww!” I shriek falling to the floor and wrapping my hands round the back of my head.

“That’s all the money I got!” he shouts.

I look down, shrieking and sobbing, and see coins scattered on the pavement.

“Owwww!” I continue cowering on the pavement. As I start desperately scraping up the coins, he walks by and throws a five-pound note down at me.

“For *fuck’s* sake!” Ray sighs sinisterly. “You’re *pathetic*”

I watch the five-pound note float down beside me among the rest of the coins. He storms off down the hill towards the bed-sit and leaves me sitting on the cold pavement scraping the bits of shrapnel. Humiliated, I start thinking survival. I have the keys to the bed-sit as well so I quickly run on ahead of him.

I run and run and run.

I get to the top of the hill where there’s a phone box. I race to the phone box and use the coins to call my Mum but she doesn’t answer. The street is dark, cold and empty and a fearful shadow of fear consumes me. I collapse in the phone box. Then I look up and see him walking past me. I think quickly and irrationally.

“*Wait!*” I cry.

Frantically, I chase after him feeling like I have no other option.

As outlined above, according to Goffman<sup>37</sup> information preserve relates to personal information about the self (e.g. a person’s “content of mind”, her/his biographical information, and also contents of pockets, handbags, documents, letters, etc.), which a person wishes to keep private in the presence of certain others. Here, Ray violates Bella’s information preserve vis-a-vis her prior relationship with Nigel, bringing this forcibly into a more public domain against her wishes. He then “blows things out of proportion” to use this information against Bella in order to

generate fear, disorientation, and denigration and cause emotional and psychological distress and pain. Allied to this emotional distress and pain, is the sudden physical pain of having objects thrown at her, pelting and damaging the protective “sheath” of her clothing and skin. Bella (aged 18years) experienced this as an intrusion into the most guarded realm of her personal space. Goffman’s work on vulnerability and danger analyses in detail the violation of a range of personal territories. In *Relations in Public* Goffman identifies that information and conversational preserve, decision-making turns, personal space and claims to space as well as biographical details which we can usually choose to reveal or conceal according to the situation, can be intruded upon.<sup>38</sup> In the above narrative, not only does Bella experience the violence of objects thrown at her body in a denigrating and hostile fashion, she also feels intensely an invasion of her personal space and information preserve.

### **My baths**

I feel a sense of physical and mental relief as I slip into my hot steaming bath. The weight of hypervigilance lifts as I lie back and exhale deeply. It is not long before *he* comes sneaking up on me to find out what I am up to. *He* struts in and sits importantly on the toilet with his newspaper. I analyze him and the horrid, tense feeling I have just felt by the interrupting presence of his grotesque, macho, hyper-masculine aura. I suddenly think that he looks old, fat and ugly and it is this creature who has just rudely intruded on *my* bathing sanctuary to ruin it by making a stench; *his* stench, like a dog marking *his* territory.

These baths are *me* time, I get to have with *myself*, where I have recently been having thoughts about the frightening future I might continue to have with *him*. Hearing about my sister having children, and thinking about whether I’d like children has made me think about what I was like as a child, what sort of parent I would like to be and what I would like for *my* children. I’ve been starting to feel depressed about it.



“It’s weird isn’t it? I mean you’ve known me since I was 12. That’s weird, isn’t it?” I ask curiously, “You were my instructor and you were married. That’s wrong isn’t it?”

“*What?* Oh my god. Don’t start that shit! How dare you make me feel like that! Me? A paedophile? I only came in for a crap!”

He washes his hands and checks himself in the mirror. I watch as I notice his cold blue eyes burn with anger. *He* then glares at me, tuts, shakes his head ‘twat’ he snidely mutters. I jump as he storms past and that angers him even more.

“Oh don’t flinch as if I’m some kind of wife beater!” I go back to staring at my toes playing with the taps. I start feeling sadness, but *I* don’t get upset. I don’t really feel anything. I wonder if he’s always been that old, fat and ugly. I wonder how I found myself here so far away from anyone with no friends, no family and a lonely, superficial, fearful way of life with an abusive and violent ‘predator’. He turned me against my family, my friends and won’t allow me to have any friends here. I have nobody to talk to, to confide in, or to question about whether this is *normal*. He makes everything sound so *normal*. He makes me feel stupid for even *questioning*. He says he “tamed” me.

Yet, now I wonder how *normal* it is to get thrown coins at your head, to get spat at, to get criticised, ordered about, intimidated by scary stories of his violence, fulfil all his sick sexual fantasies and get routinely raped.

Initially, I was so *flattered* by his attention, but I was so vulnerable and young and just didn’t know, I just didn’t recognize the signs... bit-by-bit things get so normalised. And I *needed* his attention. I *needed* to please him. I did *anything* for him... I *needed* a father figure... but just not one like him. I just *needed* to be loved. And now I think about how weird it is for a sports coach, a married man to fancy a student half his age. I didn’t realize he was abusing his duty of care. I felt *special*. He *told* me I was *special*.

I don't feel special now. I feel like I have been so used and abused... by *him*. *He* abused his position of power.

Escape feels too late now... I feel trapped. So trapped! I have nobody to talk to. It feels like there is no way out. Not now.

Here, at the age of 23 years of age, Bella's personal and private space of her bathroom and her own bathing privacy are invaded by Ray against her wishes. She experiences this invasion as an unwelcome intrusion into her own created sanctuary where she was attempting to construct boundaries of her private self. According to Goffman, in the general interaction order, "private parts" warrant greatest concern and respect from others,<sup>39</sup> which makes the above incident an invasion of the most intimate realm of personal space, particularly given that Bella is naked in her bath, and thus devoid of the outer protective layer of the "sheath" in the form of clothing. Furthermore, not only is the invasion visual, but also olfactory: Ray contaminates the pleasurable and safe olfactory space of Bella's bath with the stench of his bodily waste; he imposes his smell upon her, without permission, thus violating her bathing sanctuary and personal space. As noted above, Goffman portrays a range of modalities of violation, and these include the intrusion of bodily excreta and the odours of these, along with, for example, tainted breath and body odour.<sup>40</sup> Bella was thus subjected to the above excreta-contaminative experience, leaving her feeling defiled by Ray's imposition of his bodily waste and smells.

### ***My Pussy***

I try so hard to make him happy; I'm constantly trying to please him but I find it hard to please his sexual needs. Sex is excruciatingly painful and he won't take no for an answer.

It's been getting worse and worse recently and I have to wince and scream silently as he 'has his way' with me. I feel so used and sore.

"Come on" he persists at me. He'll start with the winging, then the sulks, then the physical pressure, going on and on and on... and I *always* dread waking up to the 'morning poke'. I've started jumping out of bed before he wakes up and if I can be dressed beforehand then I'll be a bit safer. I think I have thrush and have some cream but nothing helps.

"If I put cream on my dick then it'll help you" he says persuasively through a deeply embedded pressurizing voice. I believe everything he says – I always have and who can I ask anyway? We've moved so far away from my family and he's told me how unsupportive they are to me anyway. He always makes so much sense to me so I start believing that he can make me better by having sex with me even though I have to stop myself from crying with the pain.

After sex, he leans over and puts his hand between my legs, grabs it firmly and says, "This pussy is *mine*. It's mine."

Similarly, Goffman's notion of physical and interpersonal contamination can be applied here to understand Bella's IPA&V. As Goffman argues, the amount of space required by individual social actors is both culturally- and situationally-contingent, depending, for example, on cultural norms, and the degree of familiarity, closeness or intimacy of co-participants in the particular interactional milieu.<sup>41</sup> Ray's claim over Bella's body, including her "private parts" represents the invasion of the most intimate realm of personal space. Bella experiences Ray's unwanted penetration of her as a violent act of physical contamination of her most intimate personal space<sup>42</sup> and a violation of her self-boundaries. As shown above and throughout Bella's account (aged between 18-24years), such intrusions were a regular and frequent occurrence in her experience of ADV.

## Closing points

In his conceptualisation of the territories of the self, Goffman explores how individuals hold rights (both legally enshrined and more informal) and expectations in regard to self-preserves. He argues that individuals should be wary against violations of territories of the self, which can be visibly fixed or geographical and some situational or idiographic.<sup>43</sup> From Bella's account, the following emerged as salient examples of invasions of territories and her personal space via:

- Violation of information preserve
- Physical contamination
- Interpersonal contamination

The implications of such violations and contaminative acts for Bella's identity and self-hood are highly deleterious and damaging, for, as Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson highlights, "Routine and explicit disrespect for violation of such territory may thus be regarded in many ways as an assault on selfhood."<sup>44</sup> As previous accounts by Bella have shown<sup>45</sup> these narratives invite an aesthetic reading in which readers become co-participants in the creation of meanings and contribute their own questions, answers and experiences to the story as they read and resonate with it. Indeed, we hope that readers experience the story as affecting one's own life and find in that affect a certain truth of one's life.<sup>46</sup> We note that whilst there are risks to this approach because it destabilizes reader's preconceived assumptions about gender and power and taboos in sport, we are in agreement with others<sup>47</sup> that the risk of *not* sharing these kinds of "hidden" narrative and reflecting on them seems to be a much greater risk to take. Like Kitrina Douglas and David Carless,<sup>48</sup> we hope the story reveals the complex and significant power dynamics in the relationships that exist and in ways that uncover and explore taboo and silenced issues in sport. Lastly, we hope that readers and those working in

sport settings share Bella's story with others, with the intention of promoting change and shaping policy in practice at the individual and institutional level. For example, recommendations for practice could include the need to discuss, explore, question and examine intimate relationships between coaches and athletes more openly (e.g. child protection training). Given the considerable lack of knowledge in this specific field, we call for more qualitative research into ADV, to learn more about the prevalence of this phenomenon, to examine the relational dynamics and to explore the effects of ADV in more depth.

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