

**Male Victims of Interpersonal Abuse: How to Best Break the Barriers and Toxic
Masculinity Men Encounter When Seeking Services and Suggested Guidelines for Agencies
When Offering Services to Men.**

Approved by: *Dr. Cheryl Banachowski-Fuller* December 13, 2021

**Male Victims of Interpersonal Violence: How to Best Break the Barriers and Toxic
Masculinity Men Encounter When Seeking Services and Suggested Guidelines for Agencies
When Offering Services to Men.**

Senior Seminar Research Paper Presented to the Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Science in Criminal Justice

Rebecca Demars

December 2021

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my husband Dave for being my biggest supporter and fan. Without your support, faith, and love, I would not have gotten this far. I would also like to thank Cindy Sweetnam for supporting me throughout this journey with so much encouragement and bolstering my confidence when I needed it. Thank you to Dr. Fuller for reminding me that this journey would be tough, but worth it in the end; you never let me stop seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. And last but not least, thank you to my mom and aunt Sandie for showing me what a strong woman looks like and teaching me that tenacity, strength, and courage are built. You both have taught me so much through the years and have believed in me even when I did not. Thank you for your unconditional love and support; I would not be the woman I am today without either of you.

Abstract

This research paper was written to explore and organize the research on male victims/survivors of intimate partner abuse. Our society has constructed gender roles and has decided how each of those looks. Unfortunately, children are exposed to toxic masculinity, and before they reach adulthood, decide what traits a real man should have. This construct leaves a door open for those abused men to feel as if they are less of a man and for others to see them that way as well- creating implicit and explicit biases.

The biases that male victims face show up anywhere from informal- friends and family- to formal- law enforcement and the courts- avenues. When coming up against biases, it can be difficult for a male victim to understand that they genuinely are indeed a victim. Not naming the abuse for what it is can cause revictimization and further trauma. Creating trauma-informed practices and gender-neutral initiatives can help combat toxic masculinity and help male victims of intimate partner abuse get the help they deserve.

This paper will suggest questions that need to be asked when creating new programs and initiatives- or female-centered programs opening their doors to male victims, as this will help create a positive healing space for all victims. Above all recommendations that will be made, trauma-informed practices should be the most critical aspect of any agency- as this meets all victims where they are at in their process.

TABLE OF CONTENT

VI. Outline

APPROVAL PAGE.....1

TITLE PAGE.....2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....3

ABSTRACT.....4

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....5

I. INTRODUCTION.....7

 A. Statement of the problem.....7

 i. There is a need for male victim-centered programs with components that use trauma-informed practice as well as helping identify implicit bias within those responding.

 ii. Purpose of the Study.....8

 i. To show the lack of research and resources that male victims face. While some of the barriers and issues that all victims of IPV face, there are biases, stigmas, and toxic masculinities that are unique to male victims.

 iii. Significance of the study.....9

 i. There is little research on male victims of IPV and limited resources for those who seek services. By integrating anecdotal and qualitative research, this paper will recommend best practices to help include male victims in services/resources.

II. Literature Review.....9

 A. IPV Definitions.....10

 B. IPV Statistics.....12

 i. Physical violence.....12

 ii. Sexual assault/abuse.....13

 iii. Stalking.....14

 iv. Homicides.....14

 C. The barriers to identifying as a victim.....15

 i. Facts surrounding Male victims and reporting.....16

 ii. Implicit bias and its consequences.....18

 iii. Female Victim-Centered Systems.....18

III. Theoretical Framework.....19

 A. Social Learning Theory.....20

 B. Labeling Theory.....21

IV. Program evaluations.....23

 A. The Family Place.....23

B.	Taylor House.....	23
C.	Valley Oasis.....	24
D.	Domestic Abuse Intervention Services.....	24
V.	Suggestions and recommendations.....	26
i.	Support groups.....	27
ii.	Chat/text lines.....	27
iii.	Emergency shelters.....	28
VI.	Conclusion.....	29

It is a disservice to all victims when male victims are not recognized nor offered the help they deserve. This paper serves to provide guidelines and recommendations to minimize the need for male victims of IPV to identify themselves and seek the services they want and need.

Introduction

Statement of the Problem.

For this paper, intimate partner abuse (IPA) is used instead of interpersonal violence (IPV). There are many layers to abuse that victims experience, as will be discussed in this body of work.

IPA is an issue that knows no race, class, or gender. However, when asked what they imagine IPA looks like, most people picture a woman cowering in a corner with a man standing over her; that is not always the case. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2020), IPA is a global problem, with more than 13 million men affected through physical violence, sexual assault/abuse, and stalking. While it is true that women and girls see a disproportionate amount of IPA, the abuse is not gendered.

According to the Nations Center Against Domestic Violence (NCADV, 2017), twenty people are harmed by IPA in the United States alone every minute. Of the ten million persons injured by IPA, "nearly 1 in 10 men in the United States has experienced rape, physical violence, and stalking by an intimate partner." Of the 1.2 million victims served in 2017 by the Family Violence and Services Act (FVPSA), 89,000 were male.

While it is true that men are victims of IPA, the services offered throughout the U.S. are typically centered towards women, as they are disproportionately victims of IPA and grew from the women's lib movement (NCADV, 2017). However, with little to no awareness and research surrounding the issue, male victims remain silent and feel they have nowhere to turn. Unfortunately, the gendering of IPA victims perpetuates toxic masculinity and feeds into myths surrounding male victims, and helps to create and keep barriers in place for reporting and

service-seeking male victims. A sample of those barriers can include but is not limited to shame, stigma, lack of awareness of being a victim, and not being believed (Stiles et al., 2017).

The biases, or societal conceptualizations, have been seen and felt when male victims attempt to share their stories and seek services (Luthada & Netshandama, 2019). Often, male victims feel as if they must endure abuse as society has deemed them "unmanly" for allowing themselves to be abused. Those that have attempted to report the abuse to authorities say they felt as if they were not believed and were left feeling unsupported and treated as if they were the abuser themselves or must have done something to provoke or deserve such (Morgan & Wells, 2016; Luthada & Netshandama, 2019; Barrett et al., 2020; Mulder et al. 2019). Victims have stated that they felt different about the abuse because they are a man; even though they disliked the term "victim" because they felt that society and the systems, such as the courts and law enforcement, treated them differently. Morgan & Wells (2016) stated that they saw trends such as police not taking calls seriously or recording information, or when they did, there was no offer of follow-up support or a hotline. They would need to call their lawyer for any follow-up.

Purpose of the Study

This paper is not intended to lessen the abuse of any victim but rather to bring to light male victims and their experiences because ignoring male victims is a disservice to all victims of IPA. This research paper aims to examine and explore previous studies conducted on male victims of IPA and what the barriers to reporting have looked like. The research will include how law enforcement treats the male victims that do come forward and how men identify themselves

in the role of victim. Suggestions will be made for guidelines and awareness campaigns to help break the stigma, myths, implicit bias, and toxic masculinity that men face as victims of IPA.

Significance of the Study

This research paper will argue that there should be more research into male victims of IPA and awareness campaigns and inclusive services. The approach will support the research that evaluates the success of gender-inclusive programs and trauma-informed care (Technical Assistance Guidance, 1in6, and Connections). Successful programs will then be combined with the best trauma-informed practices to suggest best practices for inclusive victim-centered services.

It will also be argued that campaigns for Domestic Violence Awareness are gendered towards female victims, thus helping to perpetuate the myths, stigmas, and stereotypes surrounding IPA. Although the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 was enacted to help criminalize IPA, it has since been

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review is divided into five sections. The first section defines intimate partner abuse (IPA) and the terms used in the specific research. The second section explains IPA statistics and has four subsections. The first subsection describes the physical violence aspect of IPA. The second subsection explains what sexual assault/abuse of male victims by an intimate partner looks like. The third subsection explains what the stalking of male victims looks like. The fourth subsection explains what homicides of male victims of IPA look like, and the anecdotal research is given for the state of Wisconsin. The third section describes

the characteristics of a male victim. The fourth section examines the barriers that men face when they identify as victims of IPA and has two subsections. The first subsection examines myths surrounding male victims. The second subsection examines implicit bias and its consequences for male victims. The fifth section examines the lack of male victim services and has three subsections. The first subsection discusses historical evidence of female victims of male perpetrated IPA. The second subsection examines explicit bias in law enforcement. The third subsection examines female victim-centered courts and how they can be biased regarding male victims.

Research Definitions

This section of the literature review will define the terms used in this paper so the reader can understand the written content. Terms and definitions were retrieved from governmental and dictionary websites.

FTP, forced-to-penetrate, is a term used to describe when a man is forced against their will to penetrate another person either through force, Coercion, or completed alcohol/drug facilitation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). Men are FTP others through

Implicit bias is a type of bias that occurs unintentionally and affects judgments, decisions, and behaviors. This bias affects how society interacts with male victims (National Institute of Health, 2017).

Intimate partner abuse. The CDC (2020) defines IPA (intimate partner abuse) as "a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner (or a former partner) to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner." It can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions". While IPA describes the

term physical violence can take the form of slapping, biting, pushing, shoving, and psychological aggression in the form of intimidation - to name a few.

NIPSVS is the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. The survey was first launched in 2010 by the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control to survey and assess adult women and men that have been victimized by sexual assault, domestic abuse, and stalking (CDC,

2018).

Sexual Coercion uses pressure to wear down another to engage another into performing some type of sexual act that they do not want (NIPSVS, 2018).

Rape is any unwanted anal or oral penetration through physical force or threats of physical harm and includes the victim being intoxicated and unable to give consent (NIPSVS, 2018).

Stalking is a pattern of threatening or harassing behaviors that are unwanted and fearful against the victim, or there may be a perceived threat against someone close to the victim based on the perpetrator's behavior (NIPSVS, 2018).

Toxic masculinity is defined in the Oxford dictionary (2021) as behaviors and stereotypes associated with and expected of men and is regarded as harming men and society.

Unwanted sexual contact is defined as any unwanted sexual experience that involves touching but not sexual penetration- kissing, groping, fondling, or being grabbed (NIPSVS, 2018).

STATISTICS

This section of the Literature Review will show the statistics for male victims of IPA. While there are many statistics about female victims of IPA, the information about male victims remains largely unexplored. The following information will help put those numbers into context.

IPA

For most of society, IPA is considered a problem that happens to women and girls, where men and boys are the perpetrators. However, according to Mappin et al. (2013), empirical studies have shown that women assault their intimate partners at a very similar rate for the same reasons; power and control, perceived errors, and or expressing anger.

According to the NIPSVS (2018),

- One in three men, or approximately 37.3 million men, has experienced IPA at some point in their lives, with only one in ten, or 12.1 million, reporting the victimization. This under-reporting is due to unbelievability, stigma, lack of resources, and toxic masculinity.

With that said, that is over

- 38.1 million men in the United States have experienced some psychological aggression from an intimate partner in their lifetime. Often the aggressions are the same as what is seen with female victims of IPA, but due to the biases in society, they are not viewed the same; often unbelieved.

Male Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse

One study (Hines et al., 2015) found that a female abuser engaged more relational aggression than men.

Of the different subtypes of Intimate partner abuse,

- 8.2% of men experienced contact sexual violence, 31% experienced physical abuse (14.9% experienced severe physical aggression), and 2.2% victims experienced stalking.
- According to the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV)(2018), of the 1.2 million IPA survivors that were served by the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), 89,000 identified as male. Unfortunately, this number does not reflect the actual population due to under-reporting.

Sexual Assault

According to NIPSVS (2018), in the United States alone,

- A quarter of all men, or 27.6 million, experienced sexual violence in some form in their lifetime.
- Nearly 7.9 million men have reported that they were MTP (attempted or completed) by someone at some point in their lives.
- An estimated 2.6 million men stated that they had been a victim of attempted or completed rape in their lifetime;

- Approximately 19.9 million men reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact in their lifetime.

Stalking

Stalking is not only a person being physically followed by another but can also include the following (NIPSVS, 2018):

- Unwanted text messages, phone calls, and hang-ups
- Unwanted emails and or messages through several different social media platforms
- Leaving strange or potentially threatening items for the victims or someone close to them to find
- Using global positioning (GPS) items to locate the victim
- They were sneaking into or onto the victim's property to do things that would scare the victim or let them know that they were there.

According to the organization In6 (2021), the gender myths that society absorbs about males and their masculinity, especially regarding their sexuality, are picked up early in boyhood and carried through to manhood. This gendered socialization can make it extremely hard for male sexual assault/abuse victims to heal, as healing starts when a victim can name their trauma. Moreover, for men, that can be different, as they are taught not to name or show their emotions as doing so is being vulnerable, and vulnerability is a weakness.

Homicide

Unfortunately, homicide at the hands of an intimate partner is not uncommon. In 2018, End Abuse, WI, reported that domestic abuse claimed 47 lives in Wisconsin alone. Of those 47, 7 were male victims killed by either a current or former intimate partner. For the sake of this paper, the author did not include those killed by someone other than an intimate partner.

BARRIERS TO IDENTIFYING AS A VICTIM

It was not that long ago that IPA was seen as a family "issue" and was not spoken about outside the home. Fortunately, there are campaigns from various organizations such as the CDC, National Domestic Resource Center, and End Abuse, WI - to name a few- that bring to light the epidemic that has plagued our nation for decades. Unfortunately, that often does not pertain to male victims, as most research into victims of IPA is limited to female victims (Hogan et al., 2012). For men, the thought of being named a victim brings shame and embarrassment; many men are taught through their lives that their masculinity is tied to emotions. According to the Cambridge dictionary, "Big boys do not cry," "Take it like a real man," and "Man up" are just a few of the toxic terms men and boys can and do hear from the time they are old enough to comprehend, and often leads to shame and denial. "Toxic masculinity" does not just affect men. It affects all people. Hogan (et al., 2012) noted that some counselors found it challenging and frustrating that their male clients found it difficult not to discount the abuse they suffered. They felt that accepting victimization denied being an abuser and enhanced their shame and secrecy. The counselors found that the lack of recognition that men can be victims of IPA impacted the

client. Their willingness to recognize and accept their victimization marginalized their masculinity (Walker et al., 2020).

Social support plays an integral role in helping to name abuse and support survivors' resiliency. However, the stigma surrounding male victims is a deterrent, as gender-role conflict, fear of retaliation from the abuser, distrust of the system, and disbelief that they are a victim (Barrett et al., 2020), as well as the use of children, victim-blaming and emotional abuse (Morgan & Wells, 2016). While it is true that these experiences are not specific to just men, the social perception of their masculinity changes how those experiences are perceived, which often leads to non-or under-reporting to law enforcement.

Facts Surrounding Male Victims and Reporting

The fear of not being believed about suffering abuse at the hands of a woman has been noted as one of the reasons male victims do not report. Victims have stated that officers have made comments such as "wow, she must have been a big woman to be able to hurt you." Questioning men's masculinity feeds into the toxic masculinity and further victimizes and perpetuates the myth that men cannot be victims. Whether implicit or explicit bias, the biases nevertheless have a damaging effect on a victim. As Allen-Collinson (2009) stated, boys are taught that "real men do not hit back" and are therefore expected to walk away from an abusive relationship. However, that leaves a man vulnerable to abuse, or if he should defend himself, then there is the possibility that it will be turned around, and he will be labeled the abuser. One victim noted that as he was defending himself, his abuser lost her balance and fell onto a couch,

hitting her head. She then called the authorities and claimed that he had hit her; this was the victim's biggest fear that turned to reality.

Allen-Collinson (2009) notes that male victims are not defending themselves for fear of further exacerbating the attack. One victim noted that if he had attempted to restrain his abuser from attacking him, it would have caused her to become more upset and do it some more. The idea that a man may not stand up for or defend himself during an attack shows how ingrained perceived masculinity is in our western society. This perception can lead a victim to feel emasculated even further and avoid expressing his fears- whether it be to a friend or family member, or authorities. Some victims would go so far as to ignore the abuse, laugh it off, especially in front of other men. This leads to questions of whether or not this is to avoid further stigmatization or the need to deny themselves a victim- thus feeling less vulnerable, as a vulnerability in men is seen as a weakness and is not acceptable. Some victims have stated that when they speak about the abuse, they suffer at the hands of their intimate partners, people in the community look down upon them, and other men look at them as worthless (Luthada, 2019).

Other victims stated that their abusers would insult them before their children to emasculate them further, keeping them in the relationship. Walker et al. (2020) stated that victims feared losing their children. Between children, financial stability, and pressure from friends and relatives to make the relationships work, most male victims feel that the children would be harmed more if they left than if they stayed in the abusive relationship (Luthada, 2019). Although the IPA may be private, there may very well be internalized stigma that comes from societal roles. As society dictates what is perceived as usual "male" and "female" roles, that too will influence reporting. Masculinity in our patriarchal society is linked to power and leads to victims controlling how their situations appear to others, thus reducing their perceived

vulnerability (Walker et al., 2020). It is imperative to understand where male victims are coming from when accounting for their abuse. This mindset will be instrumental when approaching ideas for reducing IPA stigma campaigns (Eckstein, 2015).

Implicit Bias and its Consequences

Implicit bias can come from anyone, including the victim, abuser, law enforcement, and courts. This bias affects how one sees and interacts with a male victim and how victims view themselves. Walker et al. (2020) reported that male victims underreport due to a lack of trust in the police. Their abusers capitalize on the secondary abuse by threatening to call the police and report them as the abuser. This maneuver relies on the assumption that law enforcement and the courts will assume that the abuser is the victim because they are female, leading to administrative and legal abuse. This revictimization can leave victims feeling isolated and alone, often leading to depression that affects many aspects of their lives. While female victim-centered programs help shed light on this depression and help cope with the emotions, they also name and normalize. The same cannot be said for men, as even when they disclose the abuse, they tend to be criticized as weak. Male victims state that their friends often laugh at them when they tell them about the severe abuse their female abusers use. (Hines et al., 2015).

Female Victim-Centered Systems

Male victims find themselves ridiculed and mocked by law enforcement, who, due to implicit biases, tend to believe the victim was to blame; he must have done something wrong for her to take the children and leave. Not being believed kept several male victims from reporting,

as well as threats of being arrested themselves if they kept making allegations, as women do not abuse men- it is just not done (Walker et al., 2020; Hines et al., 2015). Men also fear their female abusers using the court system to hurt them further, especially regarding their children. Female abusers have been manipulated to courts to gain full custody, pressed for restraining orders, and had their victims arrested through false sexual or physical abuse (Walker et al., 2020).

The gender norms that underpin IPA make it difficult for male victims to trust the police, but they also make it difficult for police to trust male victims' sincerity in their victimization. According to Hines et al. (2015), judges grant restraining orders sixteen times more often in female victims, even if there is more severe abuse in the case of male victims. Hines et al. also found that several domestic violence agency workers did not believe male victims, no matter how severe the abuse. The disbelief caused workers to turn away victims and shame them, often telling the victim that the abuse was his fault or the actual abuser. In the same study, it was shown that several high-profile publications for child custody assessors provide guidelines that uniformly associate women as being victims and men as the abusers. This type of automatic bias shows how female abusers may manipulate the legal system with false accusations (Hines et al., 2015).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Just as there are generalizations made about people, there are generalizations made about victims and abusers. Unfortunately, our society dictates that victims are female and abusers are male. This leaves quite a significant gap in services, as male victims of IPA are underserved. The theories that best describe the barriers and help perpetuate toxic masculinity are social learning and labeling theory. Using these theories can help break the stigma and toxic masculinity barriers that male victims face.

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura (1977) stated that children observe those around them in social learning theory (SLT), model their behaviors, and process stimuli and responses. There are four main elements of SLT: imitation, definitions, differential associations, and differential reinforcements. Children have models through school, family, television, books, and other outlets, thus setting the stage for masculine and feminine genders. The child observes and sees how others are supposed to act according to their genders. A child will pick up the social norms of the genders that they are most likely to identify. When the child reproduces the behavior of that gender, and there are reinforcements- whether they be positive or negative will define whether or not the behavior will be repeated (Bandura, 1977).

Definitions refer to the attitudes and values that individuals have regarding behaviors. Before children start imitating behaviors, they are neutral to such and have no definition of the norms that society has put onto genders. When a child starts to engage in the norms of their associated gender, they are responsive to the stimuli they receive regarding those behaviors. The stimuli or reinforcements they receive will dictate their future behaviors. When the child receives positive or approval for their behaviors, those associated with their respective genders, they become more entrenched in their identity, and children seek approval (Bandura, 1977).

The third element of SLT is differential association. The child will watch the reinforcements that others get with certain behaviors, such as "being a strong and brave man," and others around that person are positive with their feedback. The child will use that positive feedback to shape their identity (Bandura, 1977; Sellers et al., 2005). This also applies to how

children see the other gender behave and perceive the reinforcement. The more positive the reinforcement, the more they associate behavior with the respective gender. This element creates stigmas that have a lasting effect on persons and their self-image.

The fourth element of SLT is identification. Identification involves imitation and incorporating the model's values, norms, beliefs, and attitudes. It is where toxic masculinity becomes ingrained into personalities, becoming the norm for individuals and society. Unfortunately, this has laid the foundation for barriers that male victims of IPA experience when they attempt to report their abuse and seek services. The biases the victims face come from all avenues, police, neighbors, friends. However, the internal bias comes from within the victim themselves, feeding into the toxic masculinity that society has laid.

This toxic masculinity has many faces and is perpetuated around children. When a boy imitates a model, such as his father, does not cry when hurt, his behavior is positively reinforced, thus strengthened. If a boy should fall, cry when he is hurt, and his father tells him that he needs not to be a girl and stop crying, the behavior is negatively reinforced. This creates masculine toxicity because the child will likely stop crying when hurt, thus becoming stoic as society dictates.

Labeling Theory

Howard Becker's labeling (1963) theory posits that when stigmatizing stereotypes are attached to specific groups, their behaviors and attitudes will change to reflect such. Stigmas are defined as a series of particular, negative perceptions and stereotypes attached to a label (Nickerson, 2021) or gender.

Early studies showed that symbolic interactionism, or how the labels such as "being a real man" influenced the perception of self that children cultivate by those around them, thus, helping to perpetuate toxic masculinity and how we, as a society, perceive the genders, male and female, act. When we, as a society, view and act the way that our peers have deemed gender appropriate, then those behaviors become habits (Becker, 1963). Peers, such as family members, classmates, teachers, neighbors, clergypersons, friends, and society through social media, news, movies, music, and so on, influence how we respond to those behaviors. Unfortunately, when one does not conform to these norms, they are treated differently (Becker, 1963). both boys and men and girls and women. This is seen in male victims when they interact with the police, their families, and friends.

These theories have shown how society has set norms for the behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs of the set genders, thus generating stereotypes and stigmas (Becker, 1963). This is seen in campaigns for ending intimate partner abuse. Unfortunately, the campaigns are focused on male on female violence. In order to help break those stigmas, there must be programs aimed at gender-neutral violence- the violence must be the focus, not the gender constructs. Schools can benefit from changing the social norms of gender by focusing on gender-neutral terms and supporting behaviors that do not lead to toxic masculinity.

PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

While there are quite a few agencies that aim their services to female victims of intimate partner abuse, few do so for male victims. Several agencies claim that they serve all victims, but when phoned, a male victim is likely to experience reaching someone trained to help female

Male Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse

victims. However, a couple of shelters have aimed their focus on male victims. The Family Place in Dallas, TX and The Taylor House in Batesville, AR, and Valley Oasis in Lancaster, CA are the only domestic violence shelters with emergency shelters for women and children and separate shelters for men and children.

The Family Place

The Family Place (2021) mission states that they “empower victims of family violence to lead lives free from abuse.” The Family Place opened its doors in Dallas, TX, in 1978 with the first IPA hotline in the state, and since have added programs that serve women and children fleeing intimate partner abuse. An emergency shelter offers counseling services to those clients residing in the shelter and the surrounding community. In 2016 the agency opened a separate shelter for male victims of IPA. The Family Place offers shelter, transitional housing, legal services, community-based counseling and education, and supervised child visitation. Their services are free of charge and are offered in Spanish and English. Unfortunately, they do not specify whether or not their staff is trained to advocate for the men they serve and the women and if their counseling is gender-neutral or gender-specific. This is important due to the gender-specific stigma that male victims face.

The Taylor House

The Family Violence Prevention (2016), Inc’s mission is to “assist individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse and sexual assault to choose options and to control their own lives by providing crisis intervention and a full range of support services. FVP also empowers the community to understand and prevent domestic abuse and sexual assault crimes.

Male Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse

In 2015, the Taylor House for male victims of domestic violence opened and became the second shelter in the United States that houses male victims and female victims separately. While researching the website, it was found that they have listed houses separately with different hotline numbers. The services offered at their outreach center are legal and court advocacy, safety planning, help with reparations, and education on the dynamics of intimate partner abuse and sexual assault. Unfortunately, there was no mention of support groups, counseling, peer advocacy, or how they address the unique needs of male victims.

Valley Oasis

Valley Oasis's (2017) mission is “dedicated to eliminating social and domestic violence and homelessness through community awareness, intervention, prevention, safe shelter, and supportive services.” Valley Oasis began serving male victims of intimate partner violence in 1989, and until recently, was the only agency to do so. While the agency offers many services such as peer counseling, a business center, shelter, emergency food and clothing, transportation, response to hospital and law enforcement calls, and household establishment, there is no mention of separate shelters for men and women.

Domestic Abuse Intervention Services (DAIS)

DAIS’ mission is to “Empower those affected by domestic violence and advocate for social change through support, education, and outreach. Founded in 1977 and located in Madison, WI, DAIS serves both male and female victims and their children. Their help-line is available 24 hours a day and offers safety planning, support, information and is answered by

Male Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse

trained volunteers. DAIS' shelter, a communal living environment, has 56 beds and is the only domestic abuse shelter in Dane County. In the shelter, during a 45-day stay, the clients can find food, clothing, and resources. Shelter clients also have legal assistance, medical and social services, support groups, and individual case management. The children whose parents are using the shelter program have special programming available.

While DAIS does offer five weekly support groups, they are limited to “anyone who identifies as female across Dane County.” However, they offer a facilitated support group for “anyone who identifies as male,” which will work together to help them with sexual, emotional, and physical violence issues. Men Moving Forward helps touch on peer support, self-esteem, safety planning, and emotional and physical health; the group meets once a month.

Unfortunately, there was no mention of whether the shelter houses female and male victims and their children or if male victims are housed separately off-site. Although all four evaluated programs offered their services to all victims and survivors, they were female-centered. The lack of mention can leave male victims wondering where they fit into programs and encounter bias.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While there are quite a few programs for female victims of IPA, however, are steps and programs that can be implemented for male victims to have a safe and judgment-free place to speak their truth and receive services that will allow them to heal, just as female victims have. Four programs are beneficial to victims and either gaining their autonomy, having a service to allow them to vent and deal with their present, or past, situation- as not all victims will leave

Male Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse

their abusers; therefore, trauma-informed care (TIC) must be brought into all services that pertain to victims. TIC addresses the trauma-related needs of survivors and guides the services that the survivor wishes to utilize, with the survivor and advocate on equal footing in the relationship (Wilson et al., 2015).

The four services that male victims need to attend to begin their journey to autonomy and healing are support groups, chat/text lines, emergency shelters, and hotlines. The main focus of all of these services should be TIC and training for advocates and volunteers to understand that men are victims too. In order to become gender-inclusive, agencies should learn how to identify their implicit biases and leave their explicit biases at the door. TIC will help all involved understand how the nature of IPA, how the trauma causes stress, and how validation of that stress can help open the door for learning healthy coping mechanisms (Wilson et al., 2015). Always approaching every caller, gender aside, will help to ensure that male victims do not feel further shame and helplessness that they are in all likelihood feeling (Stiles et al., 2017).

Support groups

Support groups are necessary for survivors to connect with others and know that they are not alone. Not only will the groups allow for sharing of emotions, but they offer validation of those emotions and can begin to develop healthy connections (Wilson et al., 2015)- something that male victims rarely find in general society. Victims often find a sense of emotional safety that they otherwise would not have in this setting. It has been shown that within support groups and shelters, male victims of IPA feel as if they are not allowed to identify as a victim, especially if their abuser is a woman (Barret et al., 2020). With TIC, support groups will help victims

Male Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse

develop a sense of community and friendships with others who understand them. Victims can begin to repair that sense of belonging through these connections, as often victims have been isolated by their abusers (Wilson et al., 2015). Creating male-centered support groups, even on a short-term basis, with both female-centered and male-centered groups working on similar concerns simultaneously, may help build a new sense of trust for the two groups. Stiles et al. suggest expressive art as an avenue to explore.

Chat/Text Lines

Often with IPA comes isolation, but with chat and text lines, there is a way that victims can reach out without leaving the house. The victim may want to leave home and use the lines to make arrangements. However, the victim may wish to stay in their situation for a myriad of reasons, and the lines will offer them a chance to get support and offer services of which the victim may not be aware. The key to successful chat/text lines is education advocates and volunteers in TIC. With this training, the staff will be better able to offer victims the support to understand and cope with the trauma that IPA has brought them. Unless the victim wishes to state their name, the lines should remain confidential. Chat and text lines remain cultural and gender-inclusive, which may have the ability to create a safer space for those victims that cannot avoid isolation (Wilson et al., 2015).

Emergency Shelters

It is not only women who need to escape from IPA relationships but also men. Unfortunately, most emergency shelters are women-centered and do not offer services to male victims, house them in the same shelter, creating what could become retraumatization for both

Male Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse

men and women, or the agency will house the male victim in a hotel, creating further isolation and separation, causing them further harm. By housing a male victim at a local hotel, they risk not having access to all the resources that a shelter would offer, including the support to process their experiences, further devaluing male victims' truths, hence leaving them vulnerable. If looking to bring male-victim centered services to a shelter, Stiles et al.(2017) suggest the staff should keep TIC in mind and ask themselves the following questions:

- How often does the agency review policy and procedure to ensure non-discriminatory practices? The agency often reviews the policy, including serving male-identified victims/survivors?
- Will all staff review and provide input into policy and procedure to help ensure that there is a good message about serving all cultural groups and populations? Is there a practice in place for focus groups of partners?
- What is the policy on inviting and hiring male-identified employees, board members, and volunteers? How are the positions advertised?
- What are the policies and procedures for training staff and volunteers to work with male-identified victims and survivors?

The above questions will help open the door for working to meet the needs of male victims and survivors, but it will help show the community that IPA is not gender-specific. Often male victims are thought to be the outlier and are not brought into the fold when addressing the needs of IPA victims and survivors. The above suggestions and recommendations can help to ensure that the male victim/survivor is not left feeling isolated and ashamed, thus possibly retraumatizing him.

CONCLUSION

Male victims of IPA are an underreported population due to their situation's stigma. Unfortunately, this leaves them vulnerable to the implicit and explicit biases that they may face from their community, law enforcement, and the courts. The bias that male victims face can further traumatize them, leaving them feeling isolated and untrustworthy of those with the power to help them (Hogan et al., 2012; Walker et al., 2020). While many programs and initiatives are female-victim centered, there is little to no male-victim centered. The lack of programs and research into this subject is linked to toxic masculinity, as real men do not cry, nor do they allow their intimate partners to beat on them. This concept is ingrained in western civilization, and by constructing gender roles, society has deemed a male victim of IPA as either lying or worthless (Allen-Collinson, 2009; Luthada, 2019).

Further studies into toxic masculinity and its effects on society and male victims of IPA, in particular, need to be conducted. Gender-neutral programs and initiatives need to be created and utilized in order for male victims to feel comfortable naming their abuse. To discount male victims as victims is a disservice to all victims everywhere; men deserve to have their voices heard and begin their journey to becoming survivors.

REFERENCES

Allen-Collinson, J., (2009). A marked man: Female-perpetrated intimate partner abuse.

International Journal of Men's Health 8(1), 22-40.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.3149/jmh.0801.22>

Barrett, B.J., Peiorone, A., & Cheung, C.H., (2019). Help-seeking experiences of survivors of intimate partner violence in Canada: The role of gender, violence, severity and social belonging. *Journal of Family Violence* 35, 15-28.

<http://doi.org.10.1007/s10896-019-00086-8>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020). Intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking among men.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/fastfact.html>

Smith, S.G., Zhang, X., Basile, K.C., Merrick, M.T., Wang, J., Kresnow, M., & Chen, J. (2018). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2015 Data Brief- Updated release. Atlanta, GA: *National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/datasources/nisvs/2015NISVSdatabrief.html>

Eckstein, J., (2015). IPV stigma and its social management: The roles of relationship-type, abuse-type, and victims' sex. *Journal of Family Violence* 31, 215-255.

<http://doi.org.10.1007/s10896-015-9752-4>

Hines, D.A., Douglas, E.M., & Berger, J.L. (2014). A self-report measure of legal and administrative aggression within intimate relationships. *Aggressive Behavior* 41, 295-309. <http://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21540>

Hogan, K.F., Hegarty, J.R., Ward, T., & Dodd, L.J., (2012). Counsellors' experiences of working with male victims of female-perpetrated domestic abuse. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* 12(1). 44-52. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14733145.2011.630479>

Luthada, V.N., Netshandama, O.V., (2019). An investigation into the trend of domestic violence on men: Re-visiting the Sepedi adage "Monna Ke Nku O Llela Teng." *Gender and Behavior: Center for Psychological Studies/Services*.

Mappin, L., Dawson, D.L., Gresswell, D.M., & Beckley, K., (2013). Female-perpetrated intimate partner violence: An examination of three cases using multiple sequential functional analysis. *Criminal Behavior and Mental Health* 23, 290-303. <http://doi.org/10.1002/cbm.1874>

Morgan, W., & Wells, M., (2016). 'It's deemed unmanly': Men's experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV). *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology* 27(3), 404-418. <http://dx.doi.org/1080/14789949.2015.1127986>

Stiles, E., Ortiz, I., and Keene, C., (2017). Technical Assistance Guide. *National Resource Center on Domestic Violence*. https://vawnet.org/sites/default/files/assets/files/2017-07/NRCDV_TAG-ServingMaleSurvivors-July2017.pdf

The Stalking Resource Center (2015). *Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women*. <http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov>

Walker, A., Lyall, K., Silva, D., Craigie, G., Mayshak, R., Costa, B., Hyder, S., & Bentley, A., (2020). Male victims of female-perpetrated intimate partner violence, help-seeking, and reporting behaviors: A qualitative study. *Psychology of Men and Masculinities* 21(2), 213-223. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/men0000222>