Original Research

Journal of Interpersonal Violence
1–27

DOI: 10.1177/0886260520922342
journals.sagepub.com/home/jiv
SAGE

Examining Men's Experiences of Abuse From a Female Intimate Partner in Four English-Speaking Countries

Louise Dixon,[1] Gareth J. Treharne,[2] Elizabeth M. Celi,[3] Denise A. Hines,[4] Alexandra V. Lysova,[5] and Emily M. Douglas[6]

Abstract

This qualitative study explores the experiences of men who self-report victimization from a female intimate partner in four English-speaking countries. Forty-one men who reported any type of intimate partner abuse (IPA) from a female partner were recruited via targeted advertising in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Twelve online focus groups were conducted across countries using a phenomenologically informed design. Thematic analysis was carried out from an inductive and realist epistemological position and themes identified at a semantic level. This approach was taken to directly reflect the men's experiences and perspectives, ensuring the voices of this hard-to-reach and overlooked population were heard. Three themes were identified across the countries:

[1]Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
[2]University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand
[3]Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia
[4]George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, USA
[5]Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
[6]Worcester Polytechnic Institute, MA, USA

Corresponding Author:
Louise Dixon, School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington, Kelburn Parade, Kelburn, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.
Email: louise.dixon@vuw.ac.nz

an imbalanced experience of harm; living with sustained abuse; and *knowledge is power for men experiencing IPA*. It was found that most participants underwent physical harm in the context of coercive control and experienced abuse over long periods of time. They were slow to recognize the magnitude of their partners' behavior and act upon it for a range of reasons that are described in detail. In addition, promoting knowledge about the victimization of men by women, using appropriate language and active learning, was found to be important in helping the men gain autonomy and agency to break the pattern of abuse and aid their recovery. The implications of the findings for developing male-friendly IPA policy, practice, and services are discussed, in addition to the need for innovative research methodology to access hard-to-reach populations.

Keywords
perceptions of intimate partner abuse, disclosure of intimate partner abuse, male victimization, women offenders, hard-to-reach populations

Introduction

The field of intimate partner abuse (IPA) has been dedicated to and defined by studying the victimization experiences of women in heterosexual relationships (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011). Statistics showing that women are at greater risk of serious injury and death from men support this approach. For example, homicide rates show three quarters to four fifths of those killed by a partner or ex-partner are women (e.g., Federal Bureau of Investigation, Criminal Justice Information Services, 2019; K. Smith et al., 2011). However, national crime victimization surveys report that a significant proportion of men experience nonlethal IPA, which warrants further understanding. For instance, annual data from England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2019), New Zealand (Ministry of Justice, 2019), and the United States (Black et al., 2011; S. G. Smith et al., 2018) reported between 32% to 50% of those sustaining IPA were men. Canadian data reported that over 50% of victims were men between 2010 and 2014 (Lysova et al., 2019). Despite such findings, research investigating men's victimization is limited; in particular, there is a dearth of research exploring heterosexual men's experiences (Laskey et al., 2019). This may be partly attributed to the common understanding that men's victimization occurs in response to their own aggressive and controlling behavior (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011). However, a growing body of research suggests women are not only aggressive in self-defense and that men's victimization requires investigation (e.g., Corbally, 2014). As heterosexual men undergo

IPA in a social context characterized by such preconceptions, initial investigations should capture their experiences separately to understand any impact this may have. Therefore, while it is acknowledged that research with men in non-heteronormative relationships is also much needed, this study examines the experiences of men who have been abused by a female intimate partner.

Laskey et al.'s (2019) recent systematic review identified four "good quality" studies on male victimization in heterosexual relationships. Together they provide an indication of current knowledge in the field. Specifically, Hines (2007) explored the association between self-reported physical victimization and posttraumatic stress (PTS) symptoms among 3,461 male students at 60 international university sites (mean age 19–30 years). Overall, 25.9% of men sustained violence from their female partner, 16.6% reported minor, and 9.3% severe violence. Every country reported rates of minor and/or severe victimization which significantly predicted PTS symptoms for men at all sites. Rhodes et al. (2009) examined the self-reports of men aged 18 to 55 years via a computer-based health questionnaire in a U.S. emergency department. Of 712 consenting men, 261 (37%) disclosed some experience of victimization and/or perpetration: 20% ($n = 144$) disclosed victimization only, 6% ($n = 40$) perpetration only, and 11% ($n = 77$) bidirectional IPA (both victimization and perpetration). Victimization was measured across different types of aggressive behaviors, including controlling behaviors. Poor mental health and adverse health behaviors were associated with intimate partner violence (IPV) disclosures; men disclosing bidirectional IPA experienced the highest rates and severity of adverse mental health symptoms. Hines and Douglas (2011) compared the survey responses of 302 U.S. men who had been physically assaulted by a female partner and sought help (mean age 40 years) with 520 men sampled from the U.S. community (mean age 44 years). In addition to physical abuse, 93% of the helpseekers sustained controlling behaviors, 96% severe psychological aggression, and 79% experienced injury in the previous year. In comparison, 16% of the community sample experienced physical violence; of those 20% sustained controlling behaviors, 14% severe psychological aggression, and 4% injury in the previous year. While all IPA was associated with symptoms of PTS, helpseekers were at exponentially increased risk of exceeding the clinical cutoff. Finally, Hines and Douglas (2016) extended their work to survey 611 U.S. helpseeking men. Again they found high rates of sustained controlling behaviors (94%), severe psychological aggression (96%), injury (72%), legal and administrative aggression (79%; where legitimate services are misused purposively by one partner to the detriment of the

other), and sexual aggression (48%). Controlling behaviors, legal/administrative and sexual aggression, and injury most strongly predicted poor mental and physical health after controlling for demographics and other traumatic experiences.

The four studies demonstrate that men experience different types of IPA from women that negatively affect their health and well-being. While the studies are primarily U.S. based and quantitative in nature, Hines (2007) highlights the need to further understand the issue of men's victimization at an international level. Furthermore, the studies indicate that qualitative work is needed to capture the nuances of men's experience outside of descriptive and statistical associations (Laskey et al., 2019). Much current research and practice on men's victimization is guided by Johnson's (1999) qualitative research which examined the nature of men's and women's IPA. This study concluded that "intimate terrorism" (a term used to describe severe physical abuse in the context of control) was commonly experienced by women who sought professional help, but rarely experienced by men. However, Johnson analyzed interviews conducted solely with women to make inferences about men's experiences. Research that infers conclusions about men's victimization needs to hear the voices of men who have sustained IPA. Indeed, a growing body of qualitative research highlights that men do experience IPA in the context of control from female partners and that their experiences share many similarities with women's experiences of IPA (e.g., Corbally, 2014; Morgan & Wells, 2016). This study interviews men who have experienced IPA from a female partner to learn about their experiences firsthand.

A growing body of research also describes how men experience the help-seeking process. Internal (e.g., shame, self-blame, failing to recognize/being unwilling to interpret their experience as abuse or victimization; low fear of victimization) and external barriers (e.g., limited available services, professional gender bias) have been commonly identified as obstacles that hinder helpseeking (Brooks et al., 2017; Douglas & Hines, 2011; Durfee, 2011; Eckstein, 2010). One popular theory put forward to explain the presence of such barriers is hegemonic masculinity (e.g., Brooks et al., 2017; Corbally, 2014; Eckstein, 2010). Hegemonic masculinity constitutes the esteemed, socially constructed view of manliness (Corbally, 2014), including stereotypical attributes of strength, domination, aggression, power, and dominance in relationships (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Such norms are proposed to shape the way men perceive the world and behave, with men who deviate from the preferred social standard experiencing backlash, creating a hierarchy within masculinity (Brooks et al., 2017). Men experiencing IPA from a female partner would be one such deviation. Thus, it is claimed that institutional *and* personal perceptions of what it is to be a man affect men's ability to seek help

(Eckstein, 2010). In accordance with this theory, Corbally (2014) found that 14 Irish men attending a support group did not express fear of victimization or define themselves as a victim. Rather, they portrayed themselves as having power and control in line with hegemonic norms. She argues that IPA "remains an 'unbelievable' or 'forbidden' discourse for male victims," as such men should not be directly asked about their victimization, instead indirect questions like "How are things at home?" should be used to promote disclosure (p. 3127). However, Brooks et al. (2017) in their Canadian study with nine men highlight how assumptions about hegemonic masculinity may hinder the development of effective services. Although some men reframed their victim status to maintain power and control, others were willing to share their fears and name their victim status. It was concluded that facilitating a safe space where men could talk openly about their victimization may be more important than an indirect approach to questioning. Thus, the authors caution against "boxing men's experiences within a framework of masculinities" (p. 18). In keeping with this concern, this qualitative study does not adopt a theoretical lens through which to interpret men's experiences, rather it adopts an inductive approach to analysis that is free of any theoretical preconceptions.

Guided by the aforementioned literature, this study sets out to improve the dearth of qualitative and international research on men's victimization from women partners and overcome some methodological problems encountered by previous studies. Specifically, it aims to examine the experiences of men who are abused by a female intimate partner in four English-speaking countries. In doing so, it provides a *contribution* toward a global understanding of the problem, which is much needed if countries are to be encouraged to work together to reduce the problem. Indeed, an international response has promoted laws, policy, and practice aimed at reducing violence against women. For example, since the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (United Nations General Assembly, 1993), many countries have passed legislations to protect women from domestic violence, which have proved successful in a global rejection of violence against women (Pierotti, 2013). However, though this research promotes international knowledge, it is recognized that studies with non-Western countries are also needed to develop a global perspective.

Method

Design

The study adopts a phenomenologically oriented design, which means it is concerned with eliciting the men's personal *experiences*. Broad and open interview questions are therefore used to encourage men to discuss their

experiences in their own words. We conducted thematic analysis using an inductive, realist, and semantic approach to support this design, as per the distinctions described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This means that no theoretical preconceptions are used to guide the analysis and we did not seek to test any specific theory (i.e., it was an inductive analysis). The realist epistemology approach assumes that the men's contributions reflect their lived reality in the data and theme development reflects the explicit content of the data (i.e., semantic level themes were developed). Online focus groups were selected over individual interviews to enable men to validate their concerns and interests with each other and because the group interaction provides additional insight into how participants with similar experiences discuss those experiences and potentially learn from each other (Wibeck et al., 2007). This empowering approach is particularly useful in an area where the voices of participants remain unheard or not believed.

Participants

A convenience sample of 41 men residing in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, or the United States who self-reported abuse from a female intimate partner volunteered to take part in the study. Table 1 depicts the men's demographic information and the focus group in which they participated; categories are described broadly to retain confidentiality. Ages ranged from 28 to 63 years, with an average of 48.7 years ($SD = 7.5$). Most participants from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada identified as White and their nationality as British, American, or Canadian (80%, 91%, 67% respectively). In Australia, 36% identified as White Australian and 45% as White European. The majority of the men were in employment (88%). All spoke English, resided in the country where the focus group occurred, had an email address, and access to the internet and an online facility with a webcam. Of 103 men who enquired about the study, 74 went onto to request a screening questionnaire, 57 of whom completed it. Three men were screened out due to uncertainty over their physical and psychological well-being, 10 waitlisted due to high demand in Australia and the United States, and three failed to attend on the day. See Douglas et al. (2018) for details of participant recruitment in each country.

Procedure

Five researchers (first and third–sixth authors) with an interest in male victimization formed a research network to enable and design the international project. Ethical approval was gained from four separate university human ethics committees. Participants were recruited via an advertisement that provided

Table 1. Participant Demographic Information ($N = 41$).

Focus Group					
Country	#	Name	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation
UK	1	Ron	46	White Irish	Professional
		Mick	47	White British	Tradesperson
		Carl	62	White British	Professional
	2	Marcus	46	White British	Unemployed
		Richard	47	White British	Manual worker/laborer
		Christian	49	White British	Professional
		Barry	43	British-Cypriot	Skilled agriculturist
	3	Nick	57	White British	Retired
		Robert	46	White British	Professional
		Gavin	47	White British	Tradesperson
US	1	Jamie	55	White American	Creative arts worker
		Donald	58	White American	Unemployed
		Ron	43	White American	Unemployed
		Samuel	57	White American	Business founder
	2	Simon	49	White American	Sales worker
		Craig	51	White American	Business founder
		Daniel	55	White American	Manager
	3	Stuart	52	White American	Technician
		Rory	53	First Nation Indigenous/ White American	Manual worker/laborer
		William	48	White American	Professional
		Todd	47	White American	Professional
Canada	1	Eoin	41	White Canadian	Tradesperson
		Nathan	42	White Canadian/German	Administrator
		Philip	57	White Canadian	Tradesperson
	2	Kevin	46	White Canadian	Hospitality worker
		Mark	51	White French	Tradesperson
		Louis	35	Black Irish	Tradesperson
	3	Thomas	51	White Canadian	Administrator
		Andrew	63	White Canadian	Community worker
		Bart	49	White Canadian	Professional
Australia	1	Gareth	34	White Australian	Student
		Chris	49	Persian/White Australian	Professional
		Ken	43	White Australian	Technician
		Hamish	58	White Australian	Tradesperson
	2	Trevor	55	White British	Professional
		Len	40	White German/Irish	Manual worker/laborer
		Damien	42	White British	Manager
		Bob	52	Greek	Professional
	3	Matthew	58	White British/German	Professional
		Mike	28	White Australian	Tradesperson
		Jim	45	White Russian/German	Tradesperson

key study information. It was stated the study sought to hear from men who had sustained all forms of IPA from women. This was distributed via existing professional networks and websites of targeted domestic violence and men's mental health organizations, or in the case of the United States, via existing email lists of past participants. Men were invited to email a lead researcher in each country for a full information and consent statement. Those who did were also provided with a pseudonym and instructions on how to construct an email address that did not feature their name. Men were never asked to provide identifiable information. Men who indicated they still wanted to take part were asked to complete a screening questionnaire to identify if participation could be detrimental to their physical/psychological well-being. The two researchers who were also registered psychologists (first and third author) helped to guide decisions about screening. Where demand for focus groups was too high, participants were waitlisted.

Twelve focus groups were conducted between October 2013 and February 2014, three in each country. Focus groups lasted approximately 90 min, never exceeded more than four participants, and each member participated from a private location. A secure online audio and visual modality "GoToMeeting®" was used to facilitate focus group discussions. Two facilitators were present in each focus group, one of whom was a registered psychologist designated to check on men's well-being during the group. The interview schedule included open-ended questions designed to elicit the men's experiences of IPA and associated helpseeking without being led by the researcher. The following questions were asked and supplemented with prompts where necessary: (a) Please describe some of your most memorable experiences of abuse from your partner? (b) When these things first happened, how did you feel about them? (c) How do you feel about them now? (d) Describe who you told about this experience, and why? and (e) What would have encouraged you to ask for help earlier?

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify, analyze, and report themes within the dataset using the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The type of approach taken in the thematic analysis was guided by four decisions: (a) We took an inductive approach as we were seeking to understand the men's experiences from their own perspectives and develop themes from what they said, rather than exploring a particular theory that had been defined in advance. (b) We sought to develop a rich description of the overall dataset addressing the whole of the men's experience rather than narrowing in on only one part of their experience or perspectives. (c) We applied a realist/essentialist epistemological paradigm as we wanted to identify themes that reflect the men's interpretation of their own experience of reality, as conveyed in their

descriptions. (d) Themes were identified at a sematic level, that is, the information shared in focus groups was used to develop themes that directly reflect the men's experiences and perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Analysis was conducted primarily by the first two authors, with other authors shaping the data gathering process and confirming the themes. The first phase of the thematic analysis involved familiarization with the data. The second author joined the project after the data were collected and worked with the first author to guide the analysis and ensure quality (Treharne & Riggs, 2015). Both analysts read the transcripts to ensure familiarity with the range of experiences and perspectives and develop initial ideas for codes. The second phase of analysis involved developing codes, which are self-contained recurrences within the data—common or important issues to the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each analyst coded a selection of transcripts from each of the four countries. Initial codes were developed iteratively in a series of meetings and email exchanges between the analysts. The codes were developed across data from all four countries. Codes that had similar and substantial content were merged to form a final set of codes, and any differences between counties were noted. Codes that did not have substantial content were discarded. The third phase of the analysis involved grouping those initial codes into a smaller number of themes and mapping out the distinct content. The two analysts met to discuss the preliminary themes that arose from grouping the codes and then worked on developing the claims within each theme. The fourth phase involved checking the themes back against the dataset by going through the transcripts and coded extracts and resolving any alternative arrangement of codes during meetings. The fifth phase involved defining themes and subthemes and giving them meaningful labels that captured the claims and coded contents. The sixth phase involved meeting again to produce a report describing the themes and subthemes and illustrating the claims with suitable example quotes, which was then shared with all co-authors for final feedback.

Results

Three themes were developed and are described with supporting quotes below (see Table 2 for summary). Themes were evident across all of the focus groups in the different locations, and differences between countries were not found. Names used in the interviews are exchanged for pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

An Imbalanced Experience of Harm

This theme outlines the imbalanced, or asymmetrical, nature of the abusive relationships, with men describing a range of aversive strategies employed by

Table 2. Themes and Subthemes Within Men's Experiences of Abuse.

Theme	Subtheme	Exemplifying quotes
1. An imbalanced experience of harm	1.1. An imbalance in physical violence	US1 Jamie: I ended up with two busted ribs and a broken finger . . . she hit me with a car once.
	1.2. Power play	AUS1 Ken: I wasn't allowed to go out of the house if she didn't come.
	1.3. Using children	US1 Samuel: her principal weapon was trying to put the kids in the middle of the divorce.
2. Living with sustained abuse	2.1. The changing nature of abuse	US3 Todd: you put the frog in cold water and heat up the water, it'll stay there until it dies.
	2.2. Excusing the partner's behavior	CA2 Kevin: I made a lot of excuses for her. I was always making excuses.
	2.3. Problem solving	US2 Simon: I just thought that this was just normal, and this was marriage. I needed to adjust.
	2.4 Professional gender bias	AUS3 Matthew: I went to the police and they laughed at me.
3. Knowledge is power for men experiencing IPA	3.1. Breaking the pattern of abuse	AUS 1 Chris: I had no idea about my rights in a relationship . . . or the right to live free of fear.
	3.2. The role of language in healing	CA1 Eoin: The victim narrative will never allow you to heal.
	3.3. Adopting an educative stance to promote agency	CA2 Louis: you have to let men know that somewhere, somebody will believe them.

Note. IPA = intimate partner abuse.

their female partners. Analysis identified three subthemes of physical violence, power play, and manipulation via their children.

An imbalance in physical violence. This subtheme represents the imbalance in physical aggression. Many, but not all of the men, had experienced unidirectional acts, ranging from minor to very severe:

UK3 Gavin: I had to literally force her jaw open to take her teeth out of my arm and she drew blood on a number of occasions, and she took great delight in it.

The men emphasized how they would rarely defend themselves because they did not agree with violence against women, and because they feared reprisal from authorities:

US1 Jamie: there was one time very early on in our relationship . . . I smacked her across the cheek, and I found that repulsive, you know. That was the only time I ever struck her.
CA1 Eoin: In our entire relationship I never hit her back . . . if I would, even defending myself once, . . ., I am sure that I would be arrested.

Power Play. This subtheme details how the men experienced her attempts to exert control over almost every aspect of their lives through surveillance, aggression, and humiliation. Physical violence was often used to control or gain power over them, and was used alongside a range of other behaviors whose function also appeared to be centered on power and control:

UK1 Mick: We were at a party, and she had decided that she didn't like the person I was speaking to and literally ran across the room and punched me so hard in the ribs that she broke two of my ribs.
CA2 Kevin: . . . with my wife it was very much issues of control and dominance. When she did get physical—physically violent, it was always in front of other people. It was trying sort of, to humiliate.

In accordance with this, while some men described that alcohol or drugs exacerbated their partner's physical aggression, these instances occurred in a milieu of persistent and sober attempts to gain power and control over the men:

UK2 Barry: It's not about drinking. It's just power play.

Surveillance of the men's behaviors, accompanying the men, and imposing rules were central to their partner achieving control:

AUS1 Ken: She ended up controlling every aspect of my life, more or less, my relationship with friends and family, and to the point where she was driving me to work in, the morning, and then come picking

me up from work so she could see what I was doing. She stopped me using Facebook, checked my phone, phone calls, and text messages every day.

Financial dependence was also a common means of control that included surveillance and restriction, and some men discussed how sex was used as a means of control:

AUS1 Ken: She insisted on sex every day because that's the way she knew I wasn't seeing someone else . . . If I was having a shower, she would stay in the bathroom to make sure I didn't masturbate because that was cheating on her.

The cumulative effect was a loss of independence and a sense of isolation, fear, helplessness, or invalidation of the self:

AUS3 Jim: it was just easier not to see anyone. When she went off to work . . . I would just sit home alone because it was just too dangerous to have a friend over.

Using children. This subtheme outlines specific ways that control and power over the man was achieved via the children, for most of the men who had children. The men described being harmed in front of their children, which exacerbated their humiliation, with US1 Samuel describing children as "the Achilles heel" and US1 Nicholas claiming "that was much more traumatic for me, uh, having been subjected to that sort of abuse in front of my daughter than being punched in the face." They were concerned their children would become the target of their partner's abuse if they left the relationship, and many of the men expressed concern about children witnessing their partner's aggression and thus normalizing abuse.

CA1 Nathan: the youngest one wouldn't even speak, and he just stopped talking, and the oldest one was kicking and beating on me every day because that was what he always saw.

Using children to achieve power was apparent toward the end or post relationship.

UK2 Christian: But the abuse is still going on. Even yesterday she attempted to remove my son from school on a day when he's on nights with me.

Effects included limited contact or severing of the father–child relationship, and distress for the men and their children.

> US3 William: she wouldn't let my daughter come over . . . for . . . six months.
> US3 Stuart: It devastated me, and it devastated my daughter.

The men also reported manipulation that centered on access to their children, describing long battles to settle custody or redress false criminal charges that impacted their access:

> AUS2 Len: she has just denied all contact with the children, on a whim, just using them as weapons. . . . And she used to love dangling this in front of me.

Living With Sustained Abuse

Analysis identified that abuse occurred over prolonged periods of time. This sustained abuse was perpetuated by four factors, each outlined as subthemes below.

The changing nature of abuse. It was common for the men to describe experiencing a gradual buildup of harmful behavior that slowly escalated in severity of physical harm. Initially using behaviors that carried low risk of physical harm and that were tolerated by the men (i.e., psychological abuse and control) served to normalize a context of abuse and control. This process of normalization inoculated the men against later abusive actions, and from recognizing the abusive state of the relationship. Thus, the strategies used by the women evolved, changing in line with what the men would tolerate and afford the relationship to continue.

> US3 Todd: I didn't really realize what was going on. . . . it happened gradually. . . . one of the analogies I came up with is that it's like the frog in the pot of water, . . . if you throw a frog into boiling water it will jump out but it you put the frog in cold water and heat up the water, it'll stay there until it dies.

In another example, UK2 Marcus felt that his partner invited him to reciprocate with violence to normalize her behavior and allow it to continue:

> The scariest point is that actually I was being invited to be a co-dependent of the abusive relationship: . . . she was trying to normalize what was really very toxic behavior. And I was being invited to become part of that. And that was scary because that's not my nature.

The slow escalation and normalization of violence and psychological control resulted in high levels of stress for many, which in turn made it harder to identify the abuse:

> CA3 Bart: It progressively got deeper and worse, and deeper. But when I was in the thick of it, I was coping with the stress, with the abuse, and it wasn't so clear to me that it was actually happening.

While men typically described shifts from psychological to physical abuse, two men described the reverse. Both the men and their partners deemed the psychological aggression as more overtly tolerable than the physical violence, thus this shift prolonged the relationship:

> CA1 Nathan: Her abuse in the beginning was characterized by a lot of physical and emotional and verbal abuse and really nasty stuff, getting thrown into cabinets, kicking me when I was on the floor, and stuff like that. She got smart, the physical stuff stopped because I told her, I threatened her, "If you won't stop I will go to the police, so you need to stop it," so it really became more emotional, and more dealing with her putting me down.

Excusing the partner's behavior. Many of the men described how they, and their partners, often compartmentalized her overtly abusive behavior, highlighting it as being carried out by a "monstrous" part of herself. This splitting served as a mechanism by which they could excuse this behavior, dehumanizing the bad version of her that appeared occasionally. This belief and the intermittent nature of the behavior served to maintain the relationship:

> AUS 2 Len: You've just got to let it roll. She's just having one of her episodes. . . . She called it "the monster." . . . It's like two split personalities.

The powerful role that excuses played in promoting men's tolerance was apparent:

UK2 Marcus: I made excuses for her behavior. . . . say for example her mother died, . . . that was her way of coping with bereavement. Then children started arriving, so I then excused the behavior by postnatal depression, and that sort of thing.

Even the few men who noted that they understood her behavior was abusive from the outset described how this cognitive strategy enabled them to tolerate the behavior:

UK3 Robert: I knew right away it was abusive, but I convinced myself the abuse was coming from her insecurities.

Problem solving. Normalizing, compartmentalizing, and excusing their partner's behavior led the men to attempt to solve the problems which they understood to be causing her aversive behavior.

US2 Simon: I just thought that this was just normal, and this was marriage. I needed to adjust, and I was presented with trying to solve the problem.

It was common for the men to describe feeling responsible for causing their partner's behavior. This resulted in them persistently monitoring and changing their own behaviors to keep the "monster" at bay and manage the high levels of anxiety and fear related to this:

AUS2 Damien: I was scrutinizing every single thing I did and said, and I was, uh, I was walking in eggshells. I mean you're looking forward to going to work in the morning and dreading coming home in the afternoon.

Professional gender bias. The men commonly talked about the gender bias they experienced from some professionals and organizations, which resulted in a poor response to their helpseeking via a lack of available services or a disbelief of their experiences:

CA1 Eoin: She was trying to break the restraining order and the police just told me, "Oh man up, or who are you? You are so pathetic that you cannot protect yourself against a girl."

They described how gender bias provided their partners with an opportunity to use the law or services against them as a weapon, and that this continued after the relationship:

US1 Samuel: She caught on really quickly that the cops were her ally. That even if I called them, she could use them and uh that they were there to serve her interests and not mine.

The gender bias resulted in a sense of hopelessness; in some cases, their interactions with organizations revictimized them, prolonged the time they spent in the relationship, or increased their self-blame:

CA1 Eoin: I called the women's assault helpline . . . and I asked if there was anybody that I could talk to there about it and they said, "No, no, you have to figure things out on your own." And they wouldn't help me at all, and I couldn't understand why I got that reaction and I was really hurt by that.

A few of the men described positive experiences with professionals or other men with similar experiences, highlighting the positive impact of a gender inclusive response:

CA1 Nathan: the police officer came into the room and said, "Can we talk?" And I said yes, and he handed me a card and he said, "You need to go immediately down to the courthouse . . . you need to talk with somebody. This is going to kill you."
AUS1 Ken: And I went to a men's group that was just more about telling your story with other similar guys, and I think that was the most useful thing I did.

Knowledge is Power for Men Experiencing IPA

This theme details the importance men placed on promoting understanding about male victimization from women to help men recognize it and develop autonomy/agency to break the pattern of abuse and aid their recovery. The use of appropriate language to achieve autonomy was highlighted. In addition, the focus group methodology used in this study provided a framework through which the men could interact and actively learn, educating each other and validating their own, and other men's, experiences.

Breaking the pattern of abuse. This subtheme describes the way the men recognized and broke the abusive pattern. The majority of the men described being in their relationship for long periods of time before they could no longer explain away or tolerate their partner's actions. This happened through a process of trial and error:

AUS1 Chris: Eventually, I got to a point where I fed all of those monsters to try and contain the monsters, but the monster would still come out.

Many men discussed a critical point in the relationship that acted as a "wake-up call" to leave. For some men, realizing the impact of her behavior on their children helped them look past the excuses that had helped them to tolerate the situation:

UK2 Marcus: My son . . . one day mirrored some behavior that he'd seen his mother do to me. . . . I shouted at him, and just saw the look of sheer horror on his face as if to say well, why are you shouting at me, you didn't react when mum did it. My thought process was, hang about, am I really protecting him? . . . So, that was really the wake-up call.

With hindsight, education, and a fresh understanding of the problem, some of the men reflected that if they had understood the dynamics of an abusive intimate relationship they would have left sooner, reducing the amount of abuse they and their children experienced:

AUS1 Chris: I never called it domestic abuse . . . I had no idea about my rights in a relationship with regards to family law or the right to live free of fear . . . I didn't recognize it.

The role of language in healing. The men reflected on the language that is often used to describe their experiences and how that has impacted them. They noted the powerlessness that words like "victim" can create, denoting that it implies a person who has experienced harm from their partner and permanently lacks agency, and that this will prevent them from moving forwards in a healthy way:

CA1 Eoin: The victim narrative will never allow you to heal, that's the thing you know.
Philip: I am a survivor, that's how you change that. A survivor of domestic abuse.
Nathan: Yeah, survivor or somebody who has been in an abusive situation and has changed. Either side can change. You have two, both sides can change, they need to, it's a choice, right?
Philip: Personal accountability, or responsibility, is important to maintain through this process rather than being victimized by being a victim or victimhooded.

The men preferred terms that acknowledged the harm they experienced and held their partner accountable for that behavior, while also capturing their strength and independence. However, they did not vocalize one definitive term to reflect their experience (e.g., "target," "survivor," "been in an abusive situation"). Although the men acknowledged and talked openly about their experiences of harm, they chose to describe them using language that promoted a sense of autonomy and agency. The importance of appropriate language and validating men's abusive experiences was highlighted by the powerlessness reflected in Carl's narrative. This study provided the first opportunity for Carl to validate his experience. Carl's partner had never been held accountable for her actions which left him stuck between a victim and survivor role:

> UK1 Carl: I find it very hard to talk about the victim, and I certainly don't feel like a survivor, I suppose in practical terms a survivor, but I don't really feel that it ever got better, partly . . . that there have been no consequences at all for my wife for whatever she did for all those years.

Adopting an educative stance to promote agency. The men took an educative stance, emphasizing the need to raise awareness about men's experiences of harm to validate them and increase autonomy and agency:

> US2 Daniel: I think that the biggest . . . thing that could be of assistance here is awareness, so that other men realize this is not something that is an isolated event. . . . I think you two (the researchers) are doing exactly what needs to be done . . . creating . . . awareness.
> CA2 Louis: you have to let men know that somewhere, somebody will believe them.

UK2 Daniel described how the focus group methodology provided an opportunity for validation to take place: "What this group is, is validating each other's experiences." Indeed, the men described how the focus group allowed them to learn from others:

> US3 Todd: what I am hearing everyone say . . . has happened to me at some level . . . I'm seeing parts of myself in everyone else seeing the same thing.

It also provided an opportunity to educate other men through comparing and sharing their experiences and providing their perspectives:

> AUS 3 Mike: My experience is very similar to Matthew's. We've never met [laughing].

Matthew: Um, just as a brief personal message to Mike. . . . So [laughing], so some more similarities there.

UK2 Barry: Marcus don't feel about it. You stand up and tell. We've got to say it because otherwise it's not recorded. Don't feel ashamed mate. Someone who smashed a plate on your head, that's the person who should feel ashamed, don't you think?

Marcus: I'm with you there.

Thus, the focus group methodology provided a framework for men to educate and empower themselves and others, doing exactly what they emphasized should happen in the real world.

Discussion

This qualitative study explored men's experiences of victimization from a female intimate partner in four English-speaking countries. It adds to the research on the study of men's victimization and provides a voice to an invisible and hard-to-reach population (Douglas et al., 2018; Laskey et al., 2019). By recruiting an international sample, it is possible to examine the men's experiences of abuse and helpseeking across different countries. Three themes were developed that were relevant to each of the focus groups held in the four countries; differences in the themes across these locations were not found. Thus, similar qualitative themes were relevant to the men in each country examined in this study.

An imbalanced experience of harm is described by three subthemes. Together they highlight how men were primarily the recipients of different forms of unidirectional aggression, namely severe physical violence, controlling behaviors, and parental alienation. In line with quantitative research (Hines & Douglas, 2011; Hines & Douglas, 2016), the men did not report instigating aggression. They can therefore be described as "primary victims" (Douglas et al., 2018). Contrary to Johnson's (1999) findings, this study identified a range of tactics that the men experienced as attempts to gain control and power over them. This resulted in a sense of isolation, fear, helplessness, and invalidation of the self. The findings are in line with work that shows men do experience intimate terrorism (Hines & Douglas, 2011, 2016). In keeping with other family violence research (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011), children were exposed to the abuse and its negative effects. Thus, effective policy and practice for men also needs to consider their children. These experiences are similar to those described by abuse victims of all gender identities.

Living with sustained abuse is described by four subthemes which highlight factors that kept the men in the relationship. The abuse was most often described as a slow unfolding process where the severity of physical harm

and overt nature of the woman's actions increased slowly, moving from psychological to physical aggression. This served to normalize the context of the abusive relationship and slowly undermine the man's autonomy. This change from psychological to physical aggression was possible because the men tolerated psychological aggression or did not recognize it as IPA. However, a few participants experienced a shift from physical to psychological aggression, instigated because the men articulated that they would not tolerate her physical aggression. The common thread across both types of scenario is that the strategies used by the women evolved, changing in line with what the men could tolerate and enabled the relationship to continue. In both examples, men's tolerance of nonphysical aggression prolonged the abusive relationship, exacerbating an environment that undermined the men's autonomy. Past literature has argued that induction of psychological states such as low self-efficacy and learned helplessness is key to undermining autonomy, and that IPA provides the perfect conditions for this to happen (escalating demands, imposed isolation, anxiety-inducing prompts, violence: Ciurria, 2018). It is further suggested that the easiest time to leave is in the early stages (Ciurria, 2018); therefore, not recognizing psychological IPA early can close this window of opportunity.

Identifying opportunities to stop the abuse in its early stages were further reduced because the men explained away their partner's behavior and blamed themselves for her actions. This resulted in the men attempting to fix the problems that they understood to be causing her behavior, prioritizing her goals over their own basic needs. Professional gender bias was also described by the men as further enabling and maintaining the abuse, increasing the woman's opportunity to use legal and administrative systems against them. Together, these internal and external factors made it difficult for the men to feel autonomous, gain agency, and seek help.

Identifying and removing barriers that keep men in the abusive relationship offer areas of intervention that could reduce the length of time men and their children live with the abuse before attempting to prevent or stop it. Decreasing the men's tolerance for or improving their ability to recognize nonphysical aggression are useful targets. Indeed, other research (Durfee, 2011; Eckstein, 2010) highlights men's difficulties in recognizing and placing responsibility for the abusive behaviors with the abuser. Thus, gender inclusive public education about the range of behaviors that constitute IPA is needed. To specifically increase men's ability to recognize risk, such messages need to be communicated effectively to men. Prevention campaigns could use language and messages that men identify with, invite men to autonomously assess and fix the problem for themselves (e.g., via internet-based anonymous self-assessment), and locate messages in public and media spaces that men frequently use, or pay

attention to (Robertson et al., 2015; Spencer-Thomas et al., 2012). Training professionals about the gender inclusive nature of IPA and how to respond appropriately to men could also break down external barriers.

The theme *Knowledge is power for men experiencing IPA* constituted three subthemes. Collectively they show the importance the men placed on promoting knowledge about men's victimization from women to help men recognize IPA, seek help, and heal. Men discussed how education needs to occur in a way that develops autonomy and agency in men, validating their experiences and holding the woman accountable for her abusive actions. Using appropriate language and participatory education were identified as mechanisms through which men's awareness, helpseeking, and resilience could be promoted.

Unlike Corbally (2014), we did not find that the men found it difficult to talk about their fear and abusive experience but wanted to do so using language that validated it, held the woman accountable, and promoted their autonomy and agency. For example, the men reflected on the powerlessness that a label like "victim" can create because it implies a lack of autonomy. Instead, they wanted to talk about their experiences in a way that acknowledged the choices that *they* made which served to maintain and prevent or stop the abuse. Of course, their need to use language that promoted autonomy could be interpreted in line with men prescribing to hegemonic masculine norms of power and control. From this perspective, services designed to preserve masculine ideals (such as use of indirect questions to promote disclosure; Corbally, 2014) are necessary to encourage men's helpseeking. However, in line with Brooks et al. (2017), we caution against interpreting men's internal barriers to helpseeking within an *isolated* framework of masculinities above and beyond a basic humanitarian perspective. The subtleties of indirect questioning may result in missed opportunities to encourage disclosure. Indeed, the benefits of direct questions as part of health assessments have been shown for some men (Rhodes et al., 2009; Simmons et al., 2016). To interpret men's experiences in a limited framework of masculinities and rule out the benefits of direct questioning may therefore prove detrimental. Learning from research with women in medical settings it is clear that while routine enquiry with trained professionals increases the identification of IPA, the preferred use of direct or indirect questions depends on the context, with women well known to the professional preferring indirect questions (Feder et al., 2006). Feder et al. therefore suggest a bespoke approach to enquiry, tailored to individual woman. The same flexibility could be applicable to men.

We propose that while hegemonic masculinity may be a barrier to disclosure and helpseeking for some men, a lack of autonomy may play a more important role for others. Acquiring autonomy and agency through

appropriate education and safe discussion is promoted as an important way to empower and protect women from abuse (Ciurria, 2018), suggesting this is not a gendered phenomenon, but rather a humanitarian one. Using an a-theoretical approach, this study found that the choice of language was important to ensure men had a positive experience during disclosure and helpseeking. Men preferred empowering terminology that held their partner accountable. Thus, whether initial questions are best framed directly or indirectly remains unknown, we suggest the *language* used to discuss men's victimization and the *timing* of when they are asked should always be designed to facilitate autonomy, safety, and agency.

In relation to language, this study suggests that a focus on the accountability of the abuser in direct questions (e.g., "is she aggressive toward you?"), rather than the men's victimization status (e.g., "are you being hurt?"), may provide an engaging way to validate men's experiences while holding the woman accountable. Male-friendly principles could be incorporated into this empowering approach, for example, taking the mental health language out of communication and giving men an opportunity to assess and fix themselves (e.g., "what do you think should happen to stop her behavior?" rather than, "do you want to seek-help for the abuse?"), and joining the dots between men's experiences and physical symptoms to prompt recognition (e.g., "since she has been aggressive toward you are you struggling with your appetite, or feeling tired a lot?"), have been suggested as useful strategies when working with men (Spencer-Thomas et al., 2012). In relation to timing, there may be an appropriate window for disclosure support. The bereavement literature suggests it should be offered when men feel less overwhelmed and safe (McNess, 2008). Many of the above suggestions would contribute to creating an empathic space that provides a sense of safety to help men disclose.

This study also showed the importance of creating a safe space to aid men's disclosure. The focus group methodology provided a framework through which this could be achieved, allowing the men to interact and learn from each other, validating their own and other's experiences, an established benefit of the group interaction element of focus groups (Wibeck et al., 2007). The men gained empowerment through active learning and educating peers. This is in line with research that shows men respond well to services and interventions that promote action or problem-solving approaches (Doka & Martin, 2010; Robertson et al., 2015). There is a substantiated need to develop specific services and education programs for men, and this study provides one example of how facilitated peer support could be effective in empowering men in the real world. Indeed, peer support groups for men who have accessed mental health services have proved fruitful in enhancing recovery, improving hope, self-efficacy, and empowerment (Repper & Carter, 2011).

Strengths and Limitations of the Online Methodology

The main strengths of this study are the inclusion of an appropriately sized international sample of heterosexual men and the team approach to analysis. Although use of online methodology limits participation to men with internet and webcam access, it would not have been possible to facilitate an international collaboration of this kind without it. However, future international investigations are needed to understand men's and women's experiences in non-Western countries whose native language is not English, and with a diversity of sexual orientations. In addition, this study represents the views of men who have realized their abuse experience and reached out to organizations. Research needs to hear the voices of men who have not reached this stage and may have different education and helpseeking needs. However, it is only by conducting research with men who have realized their abuse that researchers can work out how to best engage with men who have not reached this stage. Finally, remote participation enabled the men to protect their identities as only their country of residence was known, and men could temporarily remove themselves from the conversation by sending a private message to the facilitator. This anonymity and distress management would have proved more difficult to achieve in a face-to-face group setting. For an in-depth discussion of the pros and cons of the methodology see Douglas et al. (2018).

Conclusion

This study signals the need to recognize and promote that men in different countries experience aggression and control from female intimate partners and have difficulty breaking the pattern of abuse. Men's experiences remain poorly understood. This lack of knowledge impacts both internal and external barriers to men's helpseeking. The development of male-friendly policy, practice, and services that validate, empower, and encourage autonomy and agency in men is required. It was clear that, given appropriate facilitation and language, the men wanted to talk about their experiences of abuse, validating other men's experiences while doing so and achieving a sense of autonomy. This expands on previous explanations centered on how men define their abusive experiences in line with hegemonic masculine norms. Practice can draw upon such findings to enable men to step into their autonomy productively. The need for innovative research methodologies to hear the voices of this hard-to-reach population are also required. It is not sufficient or ethical to assume this population cannot be accessed; researchers need to find creative ways to be inclusive if a comprehensive understanding and effective response to family violence is to be achieved.

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge and thank the men who generously shared their experiences and the organizations who helped to facilitate connections with the men.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Louise Dixon https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4947-6993

References

Black, M. C., Basile, K. C., Breiding, M. J., Smith, S. G., Walters, M. L., Merrick, M. T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M. R. (2011). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 summary report*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*, 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brooks, C., Martin, S., Broda, L., & Poudrier, J. (2017). "How many silences are there?" Men's experience of victimization in intimate partner relationships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517719905

Ciurria, M. (2018). The loss of autonomy in abused persons: Psychological, moral, and legal dimensions. *Humanities*, *7*, 48. https://doi.org/10.3390/h7020048

Connell, R., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society*, *19*, 829–859. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639

Corbally, M. (2014). Accounting for intimate partner violence: A biographical analysis of narrative strategies used by men experiencing IPV from their female partners. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *30*, 3112–3132. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260514554429

Dixon, L., & Graham-Kevan, N. (2011). Understanding the nature and etiology of intimate partner violence and implications for practice and policy. *Clinical Psychology Review*, *31*, 1145–1155. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2011.07.001

Doka, K. J., & Martin, T. L. (2010). *Grieving beyond gender: Understanding the ways men and women mourn* (Revised ed.). Routledge.

Douglas, E. M., & Hines, D. A. (2011). The helpseeking experiences of men who sustain intimate partner violence: An overlooked population and implications for practice. *Journal of Family Violence*, *26*, 473–485. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-011-9382-4

Douglas, E. M., Hines, D. A., Dixon, L., Celi, E., & Lysova, A. (2018). Using technology to conduct focus groups with a hard-to-reach population: A methodological approach concerning male victims of partner abuse in four English-speaking countries. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518799459

Durfee, A. (2011). "I'm not a victim, she's an abuser": Masculinity, victimization, and protection orders. *Gender & Society*, *25*, 316–334. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243211404889

Eckstein, J. (2010). Masculinity of men communicating abuse victimization. *Culture, Society & Masculinities*, *2*, 62–74. https://doi.org/10.3149/csm.0201.62

Feder, G. S., Hutson, M., Ramsay, J., & Taket, A. R. (2006). Women exposed to intimate partner violence: Expectations and experiences when they encounter health care professionals: A meta-analysis of qualitative studies. *Archives of International Medicine*, *166*, 22–37. https://doi.org/10.1001/archinte.166.1.22

Federal Bureau of Investigation, Criminal Justice Information Services. (2019). *Uniform crime reports: Crime in the United States*. U.S. Department of Justice. https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr/publications

Hines, D. A. (2007). Posttraumatic stress symptoms among men who sustain partner violence: An international multisite study of university students. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, *8*, 225–239. https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.8.4.225

Hines, D. A., & Douglas, E. M. (2011). Symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder in men who sustain intimate partner violence: A study of helpseeking and community samples. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, *12*, 112–127. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022983

Hines, D. A., & Douglas, E. M. (2016). Relative influence of various forms of partner violence on the health of male victims: Study of a helpseeking sample. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, *17*, 3–16. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038999

Johnson, M. P. (1999, November). *Two types of violence against women in the American family: Identifying patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence* [Paper presentation]. Annual Meetings of National Council on Family Relations, Irvine, CA, United States. http://personal.psu.edu/faculty/m/p/mpj/dvpage.html

Laskey, P., Bates, E. A., & Taylor, J. C. (2019). A systematic literature review of intimate partner violence victimisation: An inclusive review across gender and sexuality. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *47*, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2019.02.014

Lysova, A., Dim, E. E., & Dutton, D. (2019). Prevalence and consequences of intimate partner violence in Canada as measured by the national victimisation survey. *Partner Abuse*, *10*, 199–221. https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.10.2.199

McNess, A. (2008). Happy to talk . . . to a point: Bereaved young men and emotional disclosure. *Youth Studies Australia*, *27*(4), 25–34.

Ministry of Justice. (2019). *New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey: Key findings: Cycle 1 (March–September 2018): Descriptive statistics*. Ministry of Justice, NZ Government. https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/NZCVS-A4-KeyFindings-2018-fin-v1.1.pdf

Morgan, W., & Wells, M. (2016). "It's deemed unmanly": Men's experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV). *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, *27*, 404–418. https://doi.org/10.1080/14789949.2015.1127986

Office for National Statistics. (2019). *Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics: Appendix tables*. www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/domesticabuseprevalenceandvictimcharacteristicsappendixtables

Pierotti, R. S. (2013). Increasing rejection of intimate partner violence: Evidence of global cultural diffusion. *American Sociological Review*, *78*, 240–265. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122413480363

Repper, J., & Carter, T. (2011). A review of the literature on peer support in mental health services. *Journal of Mental Health*, *20*, 392–411. https://doi.org/10.3109/09638237.2011.583947

Rhodes, K. V., Houry, D., Cerulli, C., Straus, H., Kslow, N. J., & McNutt, L.-A. (2009). Intimate partner violence and comorbid mental health conditions among urban male patients. *Annals of Family Medicine*, *7*, 47–55. https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.936

Robertson, S., White, A., Gough, B., Robinson, M., Seims, A., Raine, G., & Hanna, E. (2015). *Promoting mental health and wellbeing with men and boys: What works?* Centre for Men's Health, Leeds Beckett University.

Simmons, J., Brüggemann, A. J., & Swahnberg, K. (2016). Disclosing victimisation to healthcare professionals in Sweden: A constructivist grounded theory study of experiences among men exposed to interpersonal violence. *BMJ Open*, *6*, e010847. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010847

Smith, K., Coleman, K., Eder, S., & Hall, P. (2011). *Homicides, firearm offences and intimate violence 2009/10*. Home Office. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/116512/hosb0111.pdf

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*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Spencer-Thomas, S., Hindman, J., & Conrad, J. (2012). *Man therapy™: An innovative approach to suicide prevention for working aged men*. Carson J Spencer Foundation, Cactus Marketing and communications, and the Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention. https://mantherapy.org/pdf/ManTherapy.pdf

Treharne, G. J., & Riggs, D. W. (2015). Ensuring quality in qualitative research. In P. Rohleder & A. C. Lyons (Eds.), *Qualitative research in clinical and health psychology* (pp. 57–73). Palgrave Macmillan.

United Nations General Assembly. (1993, December 20). *Declaration on the elimination of violence against women 1993* (A/RES/48/104). https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ViolenceAgainstWomen.aspx

Wibeck, V., Dahlgren, M. A., & Öberg, G. (2007). Learning in focus groups: An analytical dimension for enhancing focus group research. *Qualitative Research*, *7*, 249–267. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794107076023

Author Biographies

Louise Dixon is associate professor of psychology and director of the forensic program at Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand, where she also leads the Interpersonal and Family Aggression Lab. As a registered forensic psychologist, she specializes in the prevention of interpersonal aggression and violence.

Gareth J. Treharne is associate professor of psychology at the University of Otago, Aotearoa/New Zealand, where he directs the health psychology research group and applies his expertise in research methods to a range of collaborative projects.

Elizabeth M. Celi is a practicing psychologist and author of books on men's mental health, a media commentator, and advocate for matters affecting men. She is registered with the Psychology Board of Australia and is based on the Gold Coast in Queensland.

Denise A. Hines is associate professor of social work at George Mason University in Virginia, USA. She studies family violence and is the co-founder of the Clark Anti-Violence Education program—to lower the rates of sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking on campus—and former director of the Massachusetts Family Impact Seminar, which brings research-based information to state-level policy makers.

Alexandra V. Lysova is assistant professor of criminology at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. She studies intimate partner and family violence, homicide, and cross-cultural aspects of crime. She has held multiple appointments, fellowships, and visiting positions in Russia, the United States, Germany, and Canada, including the World Health Organization and the Max Planck Institute.

Emily M. Douglas is professor and department head of Social Science & Policy Studies at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts, USA. She studies family violence and social policy and formerly served as a Congressional fellow for the U.S. Senate Finance Committee—sponsored by the Society for Research in Child Development and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.