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PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES ON MALE-GENDERED VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE

By

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A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

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## **ABSTRACT**

To create a better legal system for victims of violence and sexual crimes, research is necessary regarding the emotional impact on affected victims. What is the impact emotionally and socially on male-gendered victims of domestic violence? What changes can be made to further improve the legal system in a way that allows a better environment that encourages individuals to come forward and prosecute their perpetrators? How can accessibility and availability of resources be expanded to assist the non-female victim population? Domestic violence cases are one of the more difficult situations legally and socially.

In many cases, individuals have a secure emotional attachment to their abuser and may feel that their case will fall through the cracks of the system. The form of research conducted will be through a literary review of domestic violence research in a way that expands towards the underserved and underrepresented population of those who are male-gendered. There is a gap in the current research that needs to be filled and studied more thoroughly.

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## I. Introduction

In May of 2016, Amber Heard filed for divorce and had filed a restraining order against Depp for alleged Domestic Violence and Abuse (Nessif 2016). Using the term alleged is purposeful in this case as there has been no formal conviction. It has not been proven in the court of law that the statements she made are truthful. Her filing a restraining order and alleging abuse was the gateway to a social media uprising where teenagers and young adults, mainly on Twitter, chose sides in their divorce. After this initial social media frenzy, Amber Heard also wrote an op-ed for the *Washington Post* discussing her alleged experiences of physical abuse with her partner at the time, Johnny Depp. In the op-ed, she stated that "Like many women, I had been harassed and sexually assaulted by the time I was of college-age. But I kept quiet — I did not expect filing complaints to bring justice. And I didn't see myself as a victim." And "I had the rare vantage point of seeing, in real-time, how institutions protect men accused of abuse" (Heard 2018).

It was a "he said she said" situation, but over time, people went against Heard because pictures of Depp surfaced online with black eyes, and he used his platform to say he suffered the abuse from Heard. In 2016 when Heard showed up for a temporary restraining order appearing with bruises on her face, Depp denied being the abuser. He stated that "She was the perpetrator, and I was the victim. While mixing prescription amphetamines and non-prescription drugs with alcohol, Ms. Heard committed innumerable acts of domestic violence against me, often in the presence of a third-party witness, which in some instances caused me serious bodily harm." (Anon "Johnny Depp Accuses" 2019). Heard filed her restraining order in 2016, but the #metoo became prominent the following year. This movement sparked passion over Twitter about the importance of believing survivors who tell their stories and reducing victim-blaming.

Initially, in 2016, Twitter users believe everything Heard said to them and trusted her. However, when Johnny Depp made responding statements, the #metoo movement also helped propel his voice. He has stated numerous times that Amber Heard had her lawyers claiming abuses that were unbacked and lacked evidence. Even now, there are trending hashtags on Twitter calling for #justicefordepp, and a petition gained millions of signatures calling for the firing of Amber Heard from many prominent film roles. She did end up losing these roles. However, because of the controversy, Johnny Depp did as well.

When I began to examine the information about Johnny Depp's and Amber Heard's social and legal disputes, there had not been many updates since the summer of 2020. However, as of April 30, 2021, there has been an uproar in allegations that the Federal Bureau of Investigation is currently investigating Amber Heard in Australia for perjury (Davis 2021). A YouTuber pre-empted this, and there is no objective evidence, but that shows just how much interactions online can influence public opinion. The emphasis on how strongly influenced public opinion can be is essential because, with many individuals who use social media, public opinion can change within days or weeks. Utilizing an online platform could bring awareness about the pervasive issues in society, including the understudy of males as victims.

The ignorance of sexual and physical victimization occurred over a prolonged period, centuries even. Gender and power relations perpetuated this ignorance, and they are still prevalent in society today. Over the last few decades, there has been much progress for women's justice, but what about the men suffering the same abuses? In the case of Johnny Depp, it took a massive movement of fans to change the public discourse and question why females are recognized as victims regularly, but males are not. There has been no conclusion or answers for

what truly transpired between Johnny Depp and Amber Heard, and there may never be. There is a possibility that they were, in fact, both the victims and both the perpetrators. People will never know what truly happened behind closed doors. This case brings more significant questions to the forefront: what does the idea of a man being the victim mean for people? How does a man being a victim put their masculinity into question? What is the public perception of this male following the announcement that they may be the victim?

In this paper, I investigate the relationship between male exclusion from domestic violence literature and how that may carry psychological consequences for male-gendered victims of domestic violence. I will present a definition of *Domestic Violence* and how it became part of today's public discourse. I examine the exclusion of men from both genealogy and rhetoric and how that has a ripple effect throughout the lives of male-gendered victims of domestic violence. Using a literature review, I will analyze how the exclusion socially and in research impacts the experience of victims of domestic violence who are male-gendered.

## **II. What is *Domestic Violence* (DV)?**

In California, the legal legislations of Family Code - FAM Division 10 "Prevention of Domestic Violence" encompasses codes 6200-6219. They refer to this division as the Domestic Violence Prevention Act that became effective on January 1, 1994. *Abuse* is defined as any intentional or reckless attempt to cause of bodily injury, sexual assault, placing a person in "reasonable apprehension of imminent serious bodily injury," and any abuse that is not limited to the infliction of physical injury (CA Family Code, 6203). This abuse, as defined by California legislation, becomes "domestic violence" when a spouse or former spouse perpetrates the abuse,



a cohabitant or former cohabitant (defined in section 6209), a person with "whom the respondent is having or has had a dating... or relationship", a person with whom the respondent has had a child with, a "child of a party or a child who is the subject of an action under the Uniform Parentage Act, where the presumption applies that the male parent is the father of the child to be protected," or any other person related consanguinity or otherwise (CA Family Code, 6211). Unlike the legal definition, family justice centers (which provide services to victims of violence between persons) define *Domestic Violence* differently. Family justice centers define *domestic violence* as a pattern of behavior that can be controlling, coercive, life-threatening forms of abuse that affect anyone regardless of their race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender, or ethnicity (Center for Family Justice 2021). The legal and family justice definitions surround the same topic, but for the Center for Family Justice, they have a much more vaguely defined and broad interpretation. This is because they want to allow all who feel they need help to be able to have it, while the law has to prosecute individuals who fit a certain criteria of law violation.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) looks at the umbrella term for different forms of violence, known as "intimate partner violence" (IPV), which encompasses physical or sexual violence, stalking, psychological aggression, and domestic violence. They define *IPV* as "abuse or aggression that occurs in a romantic relationship...[with either a] current or former spouse(s) and dating partner(s). It can range from one episode of violence...to chronic and severe episodes over multiple years" (Centers for Disease Control 2020). The CDC defines separate forms of violence because Interpersonal violence, including *Domestic Violence*, is considered a public health issue pervasive in society.

These definitions all focus on how violence between two individuals in a relationship (whether tangible or intangible) is unacceptable in our society. Their definitions vary because each of them tries to accomplish something different in regards to DV. The CDC wants to inform and educate the public about a common problem, the Center for Justice wants to provide resources for those who have survived DV, and the legal definition wants to provide justice and prosecute perpetrators of this crime.

### **III. Public Opinion and Domestic Violence**

History back to the Old-English common law in the early 1500s explicitly allows men to beat their wives as a form of behavioral correction if the whip is smaller than the thumb's width (The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center 2016). This statement from the 1500s is one of the first references to violence against another in a relationship in the legal text. It was not until the late nineteenth century that Alabama took back the legal right to allow men to beat their wives (The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center 2016). Even without legalization, outlawing wife-beating did not occur until a few years later, when the state of Maryland made it a crime for a man to beat his wife. Following the criminalization by Maryland in 1882, it was not until over thirty years after this that women gained the right to vote, leading to the expansion of the feminist movement. This expansion began to address and include domestic violence, and finally make wife-beating illegal in 1920 nation-wide (The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center 2016). Shortly after national criminalization, domestic violence cases were more prevalent in the United States court system. The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center provides a handout that does a fantastic job of creating a timeline of how domestic violence turned from an issue in

the home to a deeply political movement that stems from the women's liberation movement (The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center 2016).

Relationship violence can be dated as far back as Anglo-European interpretations. As early as the 1700s, women began being legally excluded from public participation and structures, and in private were being harmed as well. When Europeans immigrated to North America in the late 1700s and early 1800s, indoctrination of wife-beating as a crime occurred: rejecting laws posed by Puritan and English law (Ferraro 1996). However, even with the prohibition of this violence, it seems that the American conception of privacy overruled the punishment of abusers within the family context (Ferraro 1996). Most studies emphasize efforts to punish men battering women inside the home. While this is important for the rights progression, there are many gaps in research from the late 1980s until now.

When researching domestic violence, specific studies of those who are heterosexual or homosexual, of minority or majority, or another specification were found, but not an all-encompassing study. A lack of a comprehensive study means that it is highly likely that not all populations impacted by Domestic Violence are covered in the study. It is vital to have a study that includes gendered-males, gendered-females, non-binary individuals and includes all individuals from varying backgrounds, ethnicities, and races to get accurate data and find sweeping conclusions.

There were three primary sources of contribution to the violence found in studies; the economic disparity between men and women, traditional gender role expectations, and a criminal justice system "that did not hold men accountable for violence against women" (Ferraro 1996). Lacking a criminal justice system that did not hold perpetrators of this violence responsible or

accountable led to the battered women's movement (Ferraro 1996). During the 1960s and 1970s, groups and grassroots organizations slowly came together to help support those suffering from interpersonal violence. By 1975 many US states allowed wives to criminally prosecute men who inflicted violence upon them. Men were considered only in their relation to perpetrators, and not considered as victims of violence as well. It was assumed that the gender of the victims searching for justice were female.

Following the 1970s and the second wave of the feminist movement, when Reagan came into office, he defunded all federal programs recently put in place for those suffering from sexual and domestic forms of violence. The discourse of violence shifted. Instead of the former support and social work actions of women's organizations and feminist leaders, law enforcement's involvement and the criminalization of domestic violence became a center-point of the discourse and research (Ferraro 1996). In analyzing the violent reactions in interpersonal relationships, there had been minimal inclusion of men as victims of violence.

By the late 1990s, there were over 1200 battered women's programs located throughout the United States which was aided by President Clinton at the time. The amendment of the Victims of Crimes Act provided funding and support for (female-centered) victims of domestic violence, established stalking as a crime, and required judges to consider spousal (domestic) abuse in deciding child custody cases (Ferraro 1996; The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center 2016). These events were critical in the development of programs for victims that spread knowledge of this expansive issue. However, focusing mainly on women in these programs did not account for harm done to others, such as men and those who are gender non-binary. The discourse of the amendment to the Victims of Crimes Act included assuming the ideal

heteronormative family dynamic of western nations, including a husband (the breadwinner), his wife (the subordinate), and their children. Based on this ideal, differentiating between the batterer and the battered woman transpired. Nevertheless, the wording of these programs and codes sought to define domestic violence as a "genderless code", but as a whole, perception seems to veer towards men as batterers and women as the battered regardless of the supposed good intentions (Ferraro 1996).

Searching for sources of the effects of interpersonal violence generally and domestic violence against those of the male gender is a difficult task. When you search research archives online to find genealogical studies of the Domestic Violence discourse, quite a few come up. Nevertheless, there is endless frustration at the lack of information pertaining to the male gender (including those who identify as male) and how the same forms of violence affect them. This sexual and domestic violence results from hierarchies of power intertwined with one another, which include race, class, gender, ethnicity, physical or mental ability, and sexual orientation. The interactions between each pose different levels of power and dominance and subordination dance with one another (Ferraro 1996; Stemple, Meyer 2014).

Since women were the part of the population to speak up about this violence and because historically it has impacted women more than men, the research and societal focus tended to discuss men as wife-beaters and exclude men as victims of the same crime. Most academic and legal research focuses on the relations between men and women within a heteronormative sexual relationship, but that excludes a large proportion of the world's peoples. Even though there has not been much research on it, there has been evidence of male individuals being victims of domestic violence as early as the 1970s. However, violence perpetrated by women was not the

public concern (Vernon 2017). Early exclusions of men as victims and women as perpetrators in the discourse have led to a lack of representation and lead to social injustice for men (Vernon 2017).

#### **IV. When Men were Excluded**

There has not been much inclusion for male victims of violence in studies, progressive movements, public resources, or law verbiage (Javaid 2019; Ferraro 1996; Howard et al. 2010). There was not a purposeful exclusion, in my opinion, but it occurred nonetheless in the struggle for abused individuals during the 1970's women's rights movement. Radical feminists fought in the 1970s for the protection of women against gendered abuse, but this primarily divided homes into "good" and "bad" and had racism intertwined in the dynamics (Ferraro 1996; Vernon 2017). These homes would be evaluated based on how close they were to the American nuclear family picture of the white, male breadwinner of European descent with the doting wife and children (Ferraro 1996). So those who were impoverished and of a non-dominant race, usually black males, were emphasized as the probable perpetrators. Genealogical literature analyzes these nuclear units under a heteronormative framework and does not generally include other families that do not fall under the stereotypical nuclear unit. Under a heteronormative framework, relationship types that are viewed include those where the individuals are married, in a common-law marriage, or in a dating relationship. When punishing perpetrators, the "bad" homes that drew government intervention tended to be African-American men in low-income locales reported for beating their wives. These individuals were not reported directly because they were in poverty. Intervention and reports occurred because since these family dynamics did not fall

under the stereotypical, heteronormative nuclear unit that is expected of European-American identities: they did not deserve privacy within the home like their white neighbors (Ferraro 1996).

Grassroots activism did not initially focus on criminalizing violence, but over the last forty years has developed over time to be included. At first, the point was to protect and support women and fight the overall ruling patriarchy. Sometimes there were women's movements against male batterers, but this was not in conjunction with the feminist movements. Over time, it also seems like language has had an enormous impact in excluding men as victims of violence. When talking about a victim of a crime sexual in nature (battery, rape, assault, or domestic violence), I tend to hear the word "she" or "her" as applicable to the prevalent violence against women. Even an "inclusive, progressive environment" like the rape crisis center where I interned is not immune to the assumption that a woman is always the victim because violence against women is so pervasive.

I trained during the Spring of 2020 as a certified victim advocate for the state of California and now volunteer as a victim advocate and a crisis counselor between sixty and ninety hours a month. Volunteering has provided me an incomparable experience first-hand with survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Working as a crisis counselor and victim advocate, I have experienced a significantly smaller number of male victims proportionally to female victims. Over the past year, of the few advocacies calls I have been on, including accompaniment to Rape-Kit collection, none have been with male-gendered individuals. Of the scores of calls I received on our hotline, very few have been men either. There is a stark difference in the numbers of males calling, and of those individuals, none of them wanted any form of follow-up.

At the end of a hotline call, providing three referrals to services available to survivors in the local community is necessary. Programs vary including shelters, psychological services, counseling done by the crisis center, local law enforcement contacts, and other information. In addition to these referrals, I offer to follow up with the survivor over the coming days and get their name and phone number to reach them. Often, the survivor does want to hear from me again to see how they are doing, but none of the males ever have. This says a lot about how a male perceives themselves as a victim of a crime. Since the public discourse places a toxic emphasis on the desirability of masculinity, must these men stay silent and do not allow themselves assistance to preserve their feelings of manhood (Stemple, Meyer 2014). Allowing others to see their emotions, vulnerability, and pain could challenge a man's masculinity (Javaid 2019). Others can violate vulnerabilities. By admitting their abuse, men may feel that they are on the losing side of unequal gender and power relations in the patriarchal society (Javaid 2019).

## **V. Literature Review**

Domestic violence (DV), a form of relationship violence, remains a prevalent issue in the United States (Howard et al. 2010, Tesch et al., 2010, Alejo 2014). There are severe consequences on victims of domestic violence that are physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual. Currently, we know that these consequences greatly influence the lives of the victim. The X is domestic violence (physical and psychological abuse), and the Y is the emotional/psychological consequences a victim suffers from in the short and long-term. However, there is little specificity in most of the studies I read focusing on DV's emotional and psychological consequences that gendered males experience in all styles of relationships (Y). DV is a controlling and coercive



pattern of behavior that affects individuals in a relationship and is shown by any incident of threatening behavior and violent abuse towards another (X) (Howard et al. 2010).

Being a victim of domestic violence leads to psychological and emotional consequences that an individual can experience for the rest of their life. To create a well-rounded analysis, multiple types of theory need to be used, with a significant focus on feminist theory and gender theory because of their emphasis on equality (Javaid 2019; Morgan and Wells 2016; Alejo 2014). Three articles used either feminist or gender theory (Javaid 2019; Alejo 2014; Tesch et al. 2010). Mixed methods state that twenty-six percent of men aged 16-59 have experienced at least one episode of interpersonal, physical, and emotional violence within a romantic relationship (Howard et al. 2010). However surveys are extremely limited in representing overall society (Howard et al. 2010). There is a causal relationship between psychiatric disorders that renders the inability to protect a person's self. Suffering from a psychiatric disorder may inhibit an individual's ability to recognize threatening situations and make them more easily manipulated thoroughly. In addition to this, manipulation by an abuser can extend as far as thinking someone is wholly isolated, and they do not have access to the outside world. Statistics rely purely on individuals' accessibility and honesty within surveys and interviews, making them relatively weak without longitudinal research (Javaid 2019; Alejo 2014, Howard et al. 2010, Morgan & Wells 2016).

Adult gendered males suffer from societal implications like stereotypes that threaten their ability to come forward and admit to their victimization (Morgan and Wells 2019). This topic is crucial because victims will stay silent out of fear, isolation, social norms, stereotypes, and manipulation (Howard et al. 2010; Morgan and Wells 2016; Alejo 2014; Tesch et al. 2010). There

is not much known about women as perpetrators because most of the research recorded does not include men as victims or both individuals as being perpetrators (Hester 2009). Implementation of pro-arrest policies occurred in the 1990s to hold perpetrators accountable. In many cases, when a police officer responds to a report of domestic violence and makes a house call, they are much more likely to question if the “correct” victim is being protected if they are male instead of female (Hester 2009). Punishing those who perpetrate domestic violence currently occurs under other laws of abuse, but there is no specific consequence for "domestic violence." Instead, the punishment falls under other offenses. For example, in California, an individual can be arrested for Domestic Battery which is when an individual uses force against an intimate partner (this can be violence or non-violent). Arrests happen in 91% of the cases in which it was possible for a perpetrator to be arrested (Hester, Westmarland 2008).

Regardless of who the perpetrator is, those who have the least accessibility to resources such as recent immigrants, non-English speaking, are in a position of feminine and powerless categories (Howard et al. 2010, Javaid 2019). Possessing vulnerabilities increases the likelihood of being a victim of sexual abuse (Rossetti 1995). For example, there has been much criticism of the Roman Catholic Church for abusing young boys (Stemple 2009; Rossetti 1995). Like those put at risk by the Catholic Church's cases, childhood abuse can also lead to increased chances of future violence victimization and perpetration (Fortson, Klevens, Merrick, Gilbert & Alexander 2016). Recurring or repeat victimization is a pattern recognizable with victims of sexual and physical abuse, and this is extremely common. *Repeat victimization* is a crime pattern in which a victim is harmed repeatedly within a specific time frame (for example, within a year or a lifetime) (Weisel 2005).

DV is a public health issue and crisis because victims suffer from both short-term and long-term psychological consequences. Current quantitative statistics are minimal and lack universality and complete information. They do not consider external factors because of a reliance on self-reporting and cross-sectional research. A significant issue stated repeatedly is the minor occurrence of victims reporting and receiving help. The most effective way to gauge the level of victimization and its effects is through a cohesive combination of surveys and interviews (Tesch et al. 2010, Howard et al. 2010, Morgan and Wells 2016). Researchers found the relationship between the DV and psychological impact to be negatively conditional: more violence physically and psychologically perpetrated degrades the victim's mental health and well-being. These studies all took precautions to prevent invalidity in the research. Researchers did an excellent job with cross-sectional analyses, but that is not as strong as longitudinal research would be to see how detrimental abuse is to a person in the long-term psychological well-being (Howard et al. 2010; Morgan and Wells 2016; Alejo 2014; Tesch et al. 2010; Javaid 2019).

Those more vulnerable to abuse because of isolation, accessibility to services, and more closed off from their family and friends are disproportionately affected (Howard et al. 2010). Injuries to victims include both physically acute problems, like bruises and broken bones, and physically chronic problems, including neurological, cardiovascular, and other long-term conditions (Howard et al. 2010; Alejo 2014). Less than half of reporting victims (this number is not applicable to the population as a whole, just of those who responded to surveys) would have gone to the doctor for physical issues. Many of those who get medical assistance receive long-term disorder diagnoses (the most severe being death from injuries/ diagnoses) (Howard et al.

2010; Alejo 2010). Internal psychological traumas are unseen by the eye and become much harder to discern in victims of domestic violence (especially in the long- term). Healthcare needs to acknowledge this international public health issue. The psychological impact on victims is stated in Howard et al. 2010 to be akin to the impact of kidnapped and tortured experiences. These psychological impacts include depression, PTSD, suicidal behaviors, eating and sleep disorders (Howard et al. 2010; Morgan and Wells 2016). These health consequences have been found internationally in different studies and settings, all equating in severity and consequence (Howard et al. 2010; Morgan ad Wells 2016; Javaid 2019).

All research needs embellishment by analyzing past literature about stereotypical forms of domestic violence, and an emphasis on male victims needs to be the new approach. The male population is significantly underserved, and false blame resides on low socio-economic status and ethnic minorities, disregarding external influences. There needs to be a multi-theory approach for higher analysis. A possibility of grounded theory, making hypotheses, and researching based on results of individuals may be less constraining and more helpful for improving research. Expanding definitions and increasing survey universality and accessibility will also improve the research.

As a scientific skill, this literature review allowed me to expand my knowledge of the current topic. Most of the research that has been conducted looks at varying relationships, but primarily only female victims with male perpetrators. I was not surprised by anything learned, but the way I think about domestic abuse has broadened throughout my research and interest in this topic because, at one point, I too suffered from the stereotypical thinking in my head. The

myths and stereotypes of rape and domestic violence are profoundly influential and deeply ingrained in our culture. It takes much thought to step back and analyze what needs to change.

## **VI. Men as Victims**

The United States and the United Kingdom are a few of the nations that have started to move away from the idea that only women are victims of domestic violence. However, the progress does not mean that they have covered enough ground. Internationally, over the last few decades, there has been discussion about the victimization of women worldwide and how the patriarchal relations of society perpetuate it. However, these studies and declarations tend to have the same hole as what we see here in the United States: what about the men who are victims of the same form of violence? Who is going to help them?

Human rights groups that include United Nations treaties, resolutions, and discussions have addressed the idea of sexual violence but have not included male victims (Stemple 2009). In December of 1993, the General Assembly of the United Nations made a Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (United Nations 1993). This convention emphasized how power relations over the centuries between men and women have led to discrimination against women by men. The subordinate position that women hold violates their rights and freedoms. However, this understated cause leaves much to be desired for those who also suffer from the same mistreatments. For example, the vulnerability to violence and other discriminations that gay men experience, along with women, is unacknowledged by the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women nor the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (Stemple, Meyer 2014; United Nations 1993). The World Health

Organization estimates that between five and ten percent of all males worldwide reported sexual abuse (Stemple, Meyer 2014). It needs notation that this percentage was found by surveying highly developed nations and include minimal variation for those in developing or underdeveloped countries. In essence, there have been international movements towards protecting individuals from sexual violence, but these changes have not reflected the inclusion of men.

## **VII. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study brings us to two fundamental findings, 1) Current research is severely limited, and 2) domestic violence literature has a significant gap regarding male-gendered victims and their experiences. Stemming from these findings it is clear that future research needs to expand all the current psychological impact analysis done on women to include males and non-binary individuals. An ideal research study should be longitudinal and include a combination of both one-on-one interviews and surveys (Tesch et al. 2010, Howard et al. 2010, Morgan and Wells 2016). In the past some articles focused on applying past literature to same sex relationships with men as perpetrators and victims (Tesch et al. 2010; Renzetti 2014). Along with the variability in the different kinds of relationships, these articles also look at how law enforcement training instructs officers to respond to these calls of domestic violence as their response may impact the victims (Tesch et al., 2010). An all-encompassing study would improve academic knowledge on the subject and create a better-informed society. This type of study would account for the variation in types of relationships and the backgrounds of individuals.

Studies discovered that in response to the traumas that occur, improper or incomplete training could make the existing damage due to the domestic traumas that occurred more extreme. Without the proper education of first responders, including police officers, nurses, and other healthcare providers, a victim may feel re-victimized. There needs to be more research on exactly what needs to change within the response systems to serve victims of domestic violence, especially males, and reduce the psychological impact. Men feel the most threatened by reporting their abuse because of the societal implications that may come, which should not be the case.

Some ramifications of the exclusion of men are lack of proper education for those in the criminal justice system, insufficient resources specialized for men, and equal access to programs. The most significant impact is the lack of accessibility that males have as a result of the exclusion. Most resource centers focus on programs for women and their children, and many “safe homes” and emergency housing for victims do not allow men as a way protect the women. However, where does that leave men if they suffer from the same abuses as women but do not have the same availability of emergency resources? Resources should be equally accessible regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, ability, or any other discriminating factors. Even though the percentage of male victims is much lower, violent harm is still occurring. Not discussing this does not change the fact that men are psychologically and physically harmed daily by partners. If victims do not feel like somebody is willing to help them or fear judgment or invalidation, they are not likely to come forward. Women abuse men at an almost equal rate as men abuse women, which means severe underreporting (Swan, Cambone, Caldwell, Sullivan, & Snow 2008).

There was an amendment to the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 in 2013, which emphasized that there cannot be discrimination based on race, gender, or ethnicity (Leahy 2013). Policy needs to highlight how the male-gendered victims' experience can differ from females' experience of Domestic Violence. Funding and allocating resources should be adjusted in response to these variations so that survivors from all backgrounds, races, ethnicities, genders, and abilities feel comfortable coming forward with their stories. There should not be any changes that would take away resources or access from female-gendered individuals. Instead, additional funding and programs are necessary. Since there is such little funding to go around for victims of domestic violence in general, a specialized national policy may be in order for male victims specifically to serve them thoroughly. It is not about arguing which victims are more important or more pervasive. Men need to feel accepted, validated and encouraged to come forward and discuss their abuses without fear of retaliation or discrimination.



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