

“...she hit me and we stopped, she was yelling and screaming at me”: An Exploration of the
Perceptions, Identities and Stigma of Men and Domestic Violence

by

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An oral defense of this thesis took place on December 5th, 2019 in front of the following examining committee:

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The above committee determined that the thesis is acceptable in form and content and that a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by the thesis was demonstrated by the candidate during an oral examination. A signed copy of the Certificate of Approval is available from the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Abstract

Domestic violence is a prevalent and important global social issue. This thesis is unique as it seeks to mobilize knowledge of male perceptions and experiences of domestic violence by giving voice to a rather silenced, invisible, and often neglected group of individuals. Through face-to-face conversations with nine men with ties to a community organization located within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), a qualitative conversation and thematic analysis was conducted. Through this interpretivist framework, I closely examine their lived experiences and perceptions of social reality as these men navigate the labels of masculine identities, stigma and social construction of domestic violence. Their perceptions inform us of their experiences with the criminal justice system and access to service(s). Core themes that emerged from the data are: (a) Masculine Identities, (b) Stigma Management, and (c) Barriers to Service. Practical implications, recommendations, future research and limitations in dealing with this neglected population is discussed.

Keywords: *Domestic Violence, Men, Masculinity, Identities, Stigma, Criminal Justice System, Barriers*

Author's Declaration

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RYAN LEPAGE

Statement of Contributions

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication. I have used standard referencing practices to acknowledge ideas, research techniques, or other materials that belong to others. Furthermore, I hereby certify that I am the sole source of the creative works and/or inventive knowledge described in this thesis.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Gary and Lana LePage, who have always supported me unconditionally throughout my educational career. From learning to count in elementary school all the way to completing graduate school. You have shown me the benefits of having a strong work ethic and persevering to achieve my goals. Without your love, help, and support, it would not be possible to be where I am today.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“I don't think that the police come into that situation without a massive bias”. The perception of bias, a notion that they would not be treated fairly or respected. Concerns of not being given the same consideration as women. Feelings of shame or stigma. Pervasive thoughts about the inadequacy of available supports and services. These were some of the opinions and experiences shared by the nine men who participated in this research, helping to provide their perspective on domestic violence. While working with the community partner, I was able to enter an environment where men were able to feel comfortable sharing these intimate personal experiences.

Most research on domestic violence has increasingly focused on women, compared to their male counterparts, as victims and as a result, a gender imbalance and bias has emerged in the extant research (Allen-Collinson, 2009; Lysova, 2016; Nixon, 2007). Consistently, research on domestic violence has greater favourability towards samples of women (Nixon, 2007; Zaidi, Fernando & Ammar, 2015) with respect to domestic violence. While studies do note that women are at a disproportionate risk of developing physical, emotional and/or psychological problems, as well as face harsher health consequences as a result of domestic violence victimization (Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015; Holtzworth-Munroe; 2005; Stark, 2010), there is a pressing need for knowledge mobilization on the various implications of domestic violence for men to come to understand their perceptions, experiences and the other side of the story. The perspective of men is highly neglected in domestic violence research (Caldwell, Swan & Woodbrown, 2012; Campbell et al., 2010; Drijber, Reijnders & Ceelen, 2013). A ‘violence against women’ approach still dominates theory, research and policy on this prevalent social issue (Lysova, 2016, Randle & Graham, 2011; Ross, 2011) which impacts both genders.

The earliest legal recognition of domestic violence is connected to the evolution of domestic partnerships and the contract of marriage in the United States (Barner & Carney, 2011; Schneider, 2008). Historically, most domestic violence was perceived to be physical, occurring in the privacy of the home between husband and wife, in which the husband was seen to be the instigator (Alvi, Zaidi, Ammar & Culbert, 2012; Barner & Carney, 2011, Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994, Nixon, 2007; Wong & Mellor, 2014; Zaidi, Fernando & Ammar, 2015). Domestic violence was mostly associated with physical violence primarily associated with male perpetrators (Barbour et al., 1998; Berkowitz, 1989). The perception of domestic violence as the result of hegemonic masculinity has focused the debate on the gendered nature of the phenomenon. Men's rights advocates contend that domestic violence is not primarily committed by men, and that women engage in similar levels of violence (Fraehlich & Ursel, 2014; Nixon, 2007).

Despite the domination of this female-centered approach, relevant and current literature on domestic violence has pointed out that men, like women, are also victims of partner violence (Barber, 2008; De Puy et al., 2017; Wallace, 2014). The present research clearly indicates that men and women in heterosexual partnerships commit equal or symmetrical acts of domestic violence against one another within an intimate relationship (Allen-Collinson, 2009; Nixon, 2007; Randle & Graham, 2011). The specific role of men in domestic violence remains unknown as there are clear gaps in the literature that need to be addressed. Women label men as the main *perpetrators* of violence and themselves as survivors (Nixon, 2007; Weissman, 2007), but in fact the dynamic is far more complex (Beck et al., 2013; Mager, Bresin & Verona, 2014). For example, mutual domestic violence occurs in an environment where both partners are engaging in partner violence. Relationships with partner violence are defined by an increased risk for the

escalation, duration, and frequency of violence (Mager et al., 2014; Rauer & El-Sheikh, 2012).

This raises an important question: are men also survivors or not?

Attempts to understand domestic violence have increasingly focused on the role of individual factors (i.e., anger, family of origin, relationship distress) specific to the abusive male in a male-female partnership (Berkowitz, 1989; Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005; Waltz et al., 2000). Men who are in a relationship characterized by violence are living within their own realities, and this indeed impacts how they may navigate and negotiate their social experiences. The goal of my thesis is to give voice to a group of neglected men who have been formally or informally accused or charged with domestic violence, a rather silenced and invisible group of individuals in the scholarship. The four research objectives are to: (a) explore the socially constructed interplay of the male label of perpetrator or survivor by assessing their perceptions and lived experiences of domestic violence, (b) assess the nuances of how the stigma associated with being labeled a perpetrator or survivor is managed, (c) navigate the role of agency in the creation of such masculine identities, (d) identify the complex systemic barriers associated with perpetrators/survivors of domestic violence.

Within domestic violence research, there is a dearth of knowledge on the male perspective regarding partner violence (Campbell et al., 2010; Drijber et al., 2013). While research has discussed domestic violence committed by men (Barbour et al., 1998; Beasley & Stoltenberg, 1992), there is a deficit of knowledge detailing the specific experiences and perceptions of men. Studies on males have highlighted the importance of understanding the social factors and community dynamics associated with partner violence (Dennison & Thompson, 2011; Heru, 2008). These findings on community impact and social factors stress the importance of understanding the specific factors surrounding men in a relationship characterized

by domestic violence. Further research is required if an effective strategy is to be created with the focus of responding to incidents of domestic violence.

Exploration of the interplay that surrounds men experiencing a perpetrator-survivor label becomes important and would aide in establishing a better understanding of the stigma and social identity dynamics they negotiate and navigate within the domestic violence space. In heterosexual relationships, men, as labelled by women and key players of the criminal justice system, are most often viewed as the sole perpetrators of domestic violence, yet this may not always be the case. Some men, like women, may also view themselves as survivors of violence. The duality of carrying both labels results in an additional burden that must be further explored. The ways in which men are *labelled* and viewed by themselves, their female partners and the criminal justice system impacts how they manage the stigma associated with domestic violence. Without managing stigma, it is impossible to break the familial and systemic barriers surrounding supports. Until these barriers are broken, it is difficult to deliver coping strategies to provide men with the support and assistance they require to manage their relationships in the social world.

While there are few gender-based studies on domestic violence, existing studies suggest how gender role related stress may impact whether a man chooses to engage in violence (Moore et al., 2008; Tager, Good & Brammer, 2010). Proponents argue that men feel intense demands to uphold gender role norms (i.e. strong, being a provider). The failure to meet these expectations results in aggressive behaviours as a response to the perceived or actual challenges to their masculinity (Moore et al., 2008, Smith et al., 2015). Gender roles may negatively impact male

perpetrators-survivors of violence in a way that shifts how they perceive their own masculinity (Peralta & Tuttle, 2015; Smith, Parrott, Swartout & Tharp, 2015).

This research aims to reconcile the gaps of the scholarship, by providing a richer, more detailed understanding and insight of the perceptions and experiences of men regarding domestic violence. Being labeled as a *perpetrator of domestic violence* comes with it an attachment to their identity. It is a label to stigmatize and discredit the individual upon which they are placed (Akers & Sellers, 2009; Mongold & Edwards, 2014). Identity is significant as it concerns how individuals perceive themselves. These labels are part of what comprises our identity, which is a critical factor in determining how we experience and interpret reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). For men who are accused of partner violence, their identity is heavily impacted by socially imposed ideals about how males should interact and navigate day-to-day society.

The significance of this study is two-fold: first, this study can help men and women partnerships in understanding the interplay of domestic violence and help understand the intricacies of such a relationship; second this study may assist service providers and policy makers in better understanding the needs of men regarding partner violence, as treatment must be unique and tailored individually (Caldwell et al., 2009; Stewart, MacMillan & Wathen, 2013). It will also build a case for having more shelters or spaces for men who need a space to talk their issues.

This thesis is presented in six chapters. Chapter two presents a detailed review of the previous literature on men and domestic violence. The literature explains how social expectations of men may negatively impact their emotional and psychological well-being, in addition to a discussion concerning how various stakeholders, such as the criminal justice system, social services, family and the broader community are impacted by the actions of these

male perpetrators/survivors of partner violence. Previous studies examining the impact of the legal system, familial origin, and socially constructed expectations of masculinity on male perpetrators and/or survivors of partner violence are analyzed. This chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations, inconsistencies and gaps of the previous literature.

Chapter three highlights the theory behind stigma management. It utilizes Berger and Luckmann's (1967) theory of social constructionism, highlighting the importance of identity and social interactions. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach on social interactions, as well as his work on stigma (1963) are detailed to assist in understanding the dynamics of how men engage in stigma management. Lastly, Matza and Sykes's (1957) five techniques of neutralization are discussed to assess how men employ these techniques to avoid guilt and shame over committing illegitimate actions. The combination of these theories allows for a more in-depth explanation of the intricacies concerning men and stigma management.

Chapter four discusses the methodological considerations this thesis entails and the rationale behind choosing the qualitative paradigm. It includes a description of the participant sample collected for interviews, ethical precautions, data collection, recruitment procedures as well as the data analysis techniques utilized. Chapter five incorporates the findings of the conducted interviews, highlighting reoccurring themes about the perceptions of men and domestic violence, and their cognitive and emotional responses to these perceptions. An analysis comparing preliminary literature with current findings is included. The results are presented in the form of two distinct sections: (1) Masculine Identities and (2) Stigma Management. The final chapter explains a summary of the results and will conclude with a discussion about future research and what that may look like, as well as limitations of the thesis.

Chapter Two: Current and Relevant Literature on Domestic Violence and Men

The focus of this chapter is to discuss male identity, stigma, and the dynamics of service access. These three critical components that must be appraised when examining the dynamics of domestic violence in men to gain a more holistic understanding of the current state of the literature. Male identity is discussed, from detailing the importance of early socialization, the identity of a perpetrator, and the intricacies of how gender role related stress is associated with emotional expression. Matza and Sykes' (1957) techniques of neutralization are presented, highlighting how they are utilized within the scope of domestic violence as it applies to men. The stigma and shame attached to the access of support services, and the efficacy of those services are discussed. The role of the police and courts are assessed, determining how this impacts child support and child custody.

2.1 Forming Male Identity: The Influence of Traditional Gender Roles and Socialization

The expected role of men is heavily influenced by gender roles (Choma et al., 2010; Peralta & Tuttle, 2013; Smith et al., 2015). From a young age, men are socialized to think, feel, and behave in ways unique to their gender. Men learn early that showing vulnerable feelings such as fear, shame, or grief is seen as a sign of weakness (Scheff, 2007). A common example that occurs as children is something as simple as a young boy falling and scraping a knee. For that boy, it is more than likely that he will refrain from expressing any sign of pain or sadness. With time, suppressing vulnerable emotions becomes more and more natural, and this is a form of stigma management (Goffman, 1963).

Socially constructed gender roles help to reinforce suppressing vulnerable emotions, as men are expected to be aggressive and tough, associating the expression of vulnerable emotions with weakness (Peralta & Tuttle, 2013). Traditional gender roles link females with the role of

‘caretaker’ and men with the label of ‘breadwinner’. Women are expected to take care and provide for the man and her children, while it is the duty of the man to go out to make the money required to provide for his family (Kray et al., 2017). Berger and Luckmann (1967) indicate that part of what constitutes identity are the various ‘roles’ we take on as we interact throughout daily life. This encompasses gender roles, which influence how we navigate society and interact with one another. An individual’s identity is a key factor in determining how they go on to interpret their subjective realities, and identity is heavily influenced by the society that surrounds them (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Essentially, gender roles significantly impact identity, and identity is critical in determining the way that we navigate our social world.

Genetic/prenatal factors, experiences in childhood, and labels such as *perpetrator* culminate to form identity. A man who has engaged in acts of violence and abuse towards his partner is labeled as a perpetrator of domestic violence. Attempts to deconstruct and understand the social construct of male perpetrators has led researchers towards identifying a typology of male perpetrators of domestic violence, in order to classify them based on how they engage with and use violence. Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) proposed a model that identified three different subtypes of male batterers. These typologies were defined as generally violent/antisocial, dysphoric/borderline, and family only (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994; Lohr et al., 2005; Waltz et al., 2000). These three subtypes are social constructs that are used to identify male perpetrators of domestic violence. Multiple studies have empirically tested these typologies, coming to the conclusion that this model is useful for identifying meaningful differences between subtypes of batterers, with empirical support for the three different classifications (Mauricio & Lopez, 2009; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000; Huss & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2006; Waltz et al., 2000).

For the purpose of this review, the focus will be on the *family only* and *generally violent* batterers. The distinction between the two are whether the man is violent only with his wife and family, or if that extends into other relationships as well (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). For these men, the label of *perpetrator* may form an identity, and this will impact and how they navigate everyday life. The stigma and shame associated with not meeting traditional gender role expectations is significant.

Masculine Gender Role Stress. Gender roles have a significant impact on the identity that males and females form as they navigate through everyday life, and this socialization begins at a very early age (Choma et al., 2010; Witt, 1997). When masculinity manifests itself in negative ways, it may present as masculine gender role stress, which has been linked to both increased anger and unhealthy lifestyle behaviours (Arrindell, 2005; Smith et al., 2015). For men who are closely attached to their male identity, how they perceive their own masculinity dictates how they interact and engage with the world around them. As a result, negative manifestations of masculinity may be perceived as threats directed at their own maleness. Studies have shown how threats to masculinity can trigger compensatory mechanisms like aggression and risk-taking (Cohn, Seibert & Zeichner, 2009; Eckhardt et al., 2002; Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2016; Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005). While there is no direct link between anger arousal and male-to-female violence specifically, data does suggest that high anger is a moderate risk factor for violent behaviour in general (Monohan et al., 2001; Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005).

Further, patriarchal expectations pressure men to be “good providers” for their family if they want to be viewed as successful, and having a respectable job is perceived as being a “real man” (Peralta & Tuttle, 2013, p. 10; Smith et al., 2015). These are examples of the traditional societal expectations placed upon men. Men who cannot meet these expectations may be left

feeling inadequate, and studies have indicated that being in poverty correlates with increased psychological stress and depressive symptoms (Caron & Liu, 2011; Jackson & Goodman, 2011). A lower socioeconomic status puts further pressure on these men, as they are expected to provide and be the breadwinner (Peralta & Tuttle, 2013; Smith et al., 2015).

While there are few gender-based studies on domestic violence, existing studies suggest how gender role related stress may impact whether a man chooses to engage in violence (Moore et al., 2008; Tager, Good & Brammer, 2010). Proponents argue that men feel intense demands to uphold gender role norms (i.e. strong, being a provider). The failure to meet these expectations results in aggressive behaviours as a response to the perceived or actual challenges to their masculinity (Moore et al., 2008, Smith et al., 2015). A significant contributing factor to this rising stress is the inability for some men to express themselves emotionally.

Expressing Emotion. Emotional expression is complicated at best and being vulnerable carries with it connotations of weakness, especially for males. As a result, men may learn to regulate their emotional experience by using anger, aggression and/or hostility as a means of ending negative feelings of shame or fear (Jakupcak et al., 2005; Levitt et al., 2008). This may be due, in part, to the socialization that expressing inner emotions is not a manly quality. Studies attempting to assess how men respond to what they regard as threats to their male identity revealed that displaying anger and aggression was viewed as the only possible response that would protect their respect and masculinity (Dahl, Vescio & Weaver, 2015; Jakupcak, Tull & Roemer, 2005; Levitt, Swanger & Butler, 2008).

Gender-related stress is associated with emotional expression, as some men express stress through anger and hostility. Culturally defined images of masculinity portray aggression as an acceptable way for men to express emotion (Umberson, 2003). The constant pressure to maintain

aggression comes with consequences. Vogel et al. (2014) determined that men who restricted affectionate behaviour between men were also more likely to feel stigma, with a decreased willingness to refer family and friends to seek help. Nonviolent men are more emotionally reactive to stress and relationship dynamics than violent men. For violent men, it is as if the link between emotions and personal circumstances has been disconnected (Umberson et al., 2003). Male friends and family members may be unlikely to refer men to seek mental health services as it goes against the traditional patriarchal paradigm whereas men do not talk to other men about emotional issues (Vogel et al., 2014).

Masculine norm adherence is consistently linked to self-stigma, a fear of shame or reduced self-worth for seeking counselling (Heath et al., 2017). Until the taboo around expressing emotions and showing vulnerability as a man is broken, it will only result in increased stigma and shame. Unfortunately, Western culture demands men be in control of their emotions, strong, without requiring any ask for help (Smith et al., 2015; Vogel et al., 2014). Rejecting help to appear strong is likely counterproductive in many cases, as the self-stigma and shame that results creates more harm. Healthy emotional expression should be perceived as the norm, not something to ostracize.

2.2 Not My Fault: Employing the Techniques of Neutralization

As mentioned, Matza and Sykes (1957) detailed five different techniques of neutralization to explain the different means by which delinquents avoid moral responsibility for their illegitimate actions. Four of them will be presented alongside the literature on domestic violence: (1) the denial of responsibility, (2) denial of injury, (3) denial of the victim, and (4) condemnation of the condemners. This will reveal how some men are able to silence their moral compass and avoid the stigma and shame associated with experiencing domestic violence.

Denial of Responsibility. A common technique employed by male perpetrators of domestic violence to mitigate the social impact of their actions is the denial of responsibility. Matza and Skyes (1957) presented that personal accountability can be negated by shifting blame away from the individual responsible and instead placing it on an outside influencer. For example, research by Catlett et al. (2010), and Olver et al. (2011) identified denial as a predictor of attrition in treatment programs. There is no reason for an individual to obtain treatment for something that they are not responsible for. A man engaging in this technique of neutralization is working to minimize his level of responsibility for any violence or harm caused. It is also common to use these denials as excuses and justifications for aggressive behaviour (Catlett et al., 2010).

Further, a study conducted by Coulter and VandeWeerd (2009) found that utilizing a group-based format for interventions forces offenders to accept responsibility for their own behaviour, in part by confronting each other about engaging in denial. Bonem et al. (2008) notes how the purpose of the Duluth model is to help offenders to take responsibility for abusive behaviour, recognizing the effects that violence has had on those around them. As a result, the men entering these programs remain in a state of denial that they are not responsible for the harm or injury caused as a result of their actions. Taken together, this literature suggests that male perpetrators of domestic violence often implement the denial of responsibility to offset the societal pressure of their deviant actions.

Denial of Injury. Additionally, research indicates that the denial of injury is also a technique often implemented by male perpetrators of domestic violence to offset the guilt and shame evoked by their actions. Matza and Skyes (1957) suggested that by stating that an action was not harmful or resulted in no injury, an individual who has committed a deviant act is able to

lessen their responsibility for the behavior. This can be seen in the work conducted by Bullock and Condry (2013) who found that utilizing the denial of injury is commonplace within offender accounts, as a minimization of the harm inflicted on their partners.

Presser (2003), and Tomita (1990) note how victims may deny their own injuries, not realizing that they are being treated abnormally, or they blame themselves, believing to have contributed to their own victimization. If the perpetrator is denying responsibility for their actions, the victim may internalize that perspective that nothing is wrong because they were not injured or harmed. This helps to reinforce the belief that nothing is wrong, therefore the perpetrator has not committed any illegitimate actions, and their moral compass remains intact.

The perpetrator may not be the only party denying the injuries of the survivor. Hatty (1987) indicates that the physical injuries incurred by women in abusive relationships is often denied. The female experience of victimization is scrutinized for authenticity. The woman must prove her experience in professional settings, and battered women who fail to conform to expectations may be regarded as deviant (Hatty, 1987). This places significant stigma on the woman, while the perpetrator of domestic violence can avoid culpability.

Denial of the Victim. When looking to neutralize negative consequences resulting from their actions, a male perpetrator of domestic violence may also turn to the technique of denying the victim. As framed by Matza and Skyes (1957) if there is no victim, there can be no guilt and shame. This can be accomplished through rationalizing that the deviant act was one of rightful retaliation, thus shifting the perpetrator to position of morally just avenger, but also through simply denying that the victim exists. A male perpetrator of domestic violence can easily employ this technique. For example, research conducted by Catlett et al. (2010) found that some men

justify and rationalize their actions by minimizing the severity and impact of their actions, downplaying the victim.

Dutton (1986) conducted a study assessing explanations given by male perpetrators of domestic violence. He concluded that men who excuse their assault are most likely to attribute it to situational circumstances, whereas men justifying their assault blame the victim, minimizing the severity of their actions (Dutton, 1986). Additionally, Henning and Holdford (2006) note how victims who may be able to contribute information is also a challenge, as victims are often difficult to locate. If the victim cannot be found, then it is as if there was no victim at all.

Perpetrators engage in denial of injury as a means of minimizing the harm and injury caused to the victim (Bullock & Condry, 2013). This has negative outcomes for victims themselves, as they do not receive the appropriate assistance to heal, instead internalizing their harm. A study by Henning and Holdford (2006) indicated that the majority (72%) of men denied that their victim and children (if any) were affected by the event, and over half (59%) said the same thing about the police report on the given offense. When engaging in tactics of denial do not work, some men may shift their efforts towards condemnation of the condemners.

Condemnation of the Condemners. Condemnation of the condemners can also be a useful technique through which the personal responsibility can be removed from a male perpetrator of domestic violence. In this technique of neutralization, a delinquent individual can deflect their behaviors and turn them back on those who judge those behaviors as wrong, labeling them as hypocrites and attacking them to defuse responsibility (Matza & Skyes, 1957). In work conducted by Catlett et al. (2010) they revealed how some batterers felt a powerful sense of victimization at the hands of the legal system, and they responded with hostile and angry attitudes. This indicates that by reducing the credibility of those condemning them, these men

have been able to attempt to shift personal blame from themselves. They frame the legal system as the problem, deflecting responsibility away from their own actions.

2.3 Requiring Help: The Dynamics of Service Access and Coping Mechanisms

Men face a variety of systemic barriers and challenges as they attempt to access social services and other supports. A lack of understanding about their experiences of domestic violence leaves a gap in the level of service provided (Caldwell et al., 2009; Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005). Generally, the treatments provided are not unique, with examples like the Duluth model using a blanket approach to assistance. Ignoring that men are unique individuals limits the effectiveness of domestic violence programs, as highlighted by high attrition levels (Cantos & O’Leary, 2014; McConnell, 2017). Existing services do not meet the specific needs of men in a way that does not lead to shame and/or stigma.

The legal response to domestic violence places a heavy burden on the police as gatekeepers, and on the courts to adjudicate. A discussion of divorce law in Canada highlights how historically, domestic violence was approached primarily from a patriarchal perspective (Hough, 1994; Rogerson & Thompson, 2011). There are concerns over how police respond to cases of domestic violence (Fraelich & Ursel, 2014; Randle & Graham, 2011), and fathers’ rights groups question the efficacy of both the child custody and child support systems (Crowley, 2009; Dragiewicz, 2010)

Community Supports.

Traditionally, emergency services for survivors of domestic violence have primarily been offered to women (Wallace, 2014). As a result, for men attempting to access community supports, there is a significant lack of available help, regardless of whether he is accessing this help as a perpetrator or a victim. Shelter programs for survivors of domestic violence emerged to

address the systemic roots of male violence using a feminist framework, while providing basic human services such as clothing, shelter, and food to survivors (Barner & Carney, 2011; Latchford, 2006; Wies, 2008). Shelters have a focus on housing survivors, providing a roof over their head while they stabilize after leaving an abusive environment. The problem is that most shelters focus on assisting women (Wies, 2008; Wright & Bertrand, 2017). Many shelters refuse male survivors from access, or they do not have adequate services to meet the unique needs of men (Barber, 2008; Wallace, 2014). This gap in support can be explained in part by the taboo nature of the subject.

Men are less likely to admit or report incidents as a result of fear, embarrassment, and the lack of support available (Barber, 2008). This creates a negative feedback cycle where the service is not improved due to a lack of access, but low participation rates reflect poor available supports. To break the negative cycle, health professionals need to show compassion, humility, and sensitivity when addressing this minority population (Barber, 2008; Wallace, 2014). This approach will help to reduce the shame and stigma associated with victimization. Similarly, to their female counterparts, many men will require support and encouragement if they are to seek help and report incidences of violence. Shame and stigma are common responses for men experiencing domestic violence, regardless of whether they are a perpetrator or survivor (Cho & Wilke, 2010; O'Brien, 2011; Randle & Graham, 2011). The burden of stigma prevents many men from coming forward to share their experiences, this lack of information impacts the efficacy of community supports.

Previous studies on treatment programs for perpetrators of domestic violence reveal a lack of evidence for the long-term effectiveness of most of the common treatments, including the Duluth model (Hamel et al., 2017; Holmgren et al., 2015; Stover et al., 2009). The Duluth model

is the most common treatment model, launched more than 30 years ago in Duluth, Minnesota, and emphasizes education (Hamel et al., 2017). The purpose is to provide men with different ways to express anger, while working to reduce controlling, interpersonal behaviour (Heru, 2008). Unfortunately, as a result of its one-size-fits-all approach, the Duluth model is not very successful. Men entering these programs differ in terms of individual characteristics, mental health, as well as in the severity and nature of their abusive behaviour (Cantos & O'Leary, 2014; Ennis et al., 2017). Until the universal treatment programs for perpetrators of domestic violence move towards a more tailored, individual approach, the interventions will continue to lack efficacy.

Accessing supports as a man is not a simple task. The combination of systemic barriers to service access (Barber, 2008; Wies, 2008), and inadequate approaches to treatment (Ennis et al., 2017; Holmgren et al., 2015), leaves men in a position where there are few resources allocated towards ensuring that they are both mentally and emotionally stable. Until the stigma and shame associated with experiencing domestic violence is dismantled, men will continue to suffer in silence instead of getting the appropriate supports that they require for success.

Legal Services. Until 1968, Canada had no uniform divorce code, and divorce could only be obtained based on adultery, desertion, or mental cruelty (Bystydzienski, 1993; Hough, 1994). The passing of Canada's first federal divorce act extended the grounds of divorce to include several fault-based grounds, and this framework was expanded to include no-fault divorce as of 1985 (Hough, 1994; Rogerson & Thompson, 2011). The introduction of the uniform divorce code caused the divorce rate to double, and the divorce rate jumped again as no-fault divorce were introduced (Bystydzienski, 1993; Rogerson & Thompson, 2011). The legal framework of divorce laws in Canada are based on the traditional, patriarchal perspective of domestic violence

concerning a male perpetrator and female victim. Despite these changes, married women are less likely to contact the police. Married women tend to have stronger ties, both financial and emotional, to the relationship, and this may cause them to decide against reporting the violence and abuse (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009).

Police are the gatekeepers to the criminal justice system, therefore police attitudes towards domestic violence are a critical aspect of interventions (Buzawa & Austin, 1998). Traditionally, police have not responded to battered women calls, and prosecutors have treated domestic violence as a non-criminal event (Simon, 1995). Police response to domestic violence has shifted significantly over the past three decades, with the implementation of mandatory and pro-arrest policies during the 1980s and 1990s (Roark, 2016). This shift in domestic violence policing forced police departments to remove officer discretion, with a mandate to adhere to non-discretionary arrest policies. In Canada, most victims of police reported domestic violence are female (83%), while only 17% of the cases are concerned with male victims (Fraelich & Ursel, 2014). The low percentage for men may be explained in part by how underreported the crime is (Barber, 2008), and for those that do report, police may be unwilling to arrest women accused of perpetrating violence (Randle & Graham, 2011). Avakame and Fyfe (2001) reported that police were more likely to arrest the male defendant if the victim was white, affluent, older, and lived in the suburbs.

Police officers also have the option of a dual arrest. Hirschel et al. (2008) revealed that the main effects on dual arrest were offender sex and age, with odds increasing if the offenders were over 21 and male, if the incident occurred in the residence, and if the incident was an assault. Substance use by either party has also been shown to influence dual arrest outcomes (Fraelich & Ursel, 2014; Roark, 2016). In cases of sole arrest, it is more likely to be a male

suspect. Roark (2016) determined that when women were arrested, it was more likely to be alongside their male partner. For male survivors, the police response is unhelpful. If a man had contact with the police as a victim in a previous arrest, it increased the odds of a dual arrest by over 300 percent, suggesting that police officers may not take male victimization seriously (Roark, 2016). A previous study by Drijber et al. (2012) determined similar outcomes, where many men are discouraged from calling the police due to the negative police response.

Historically, the legal processing of domestic violence offenders emphasized treating mental health as opposed to a more punitive approach (Simon, 1995) contrasting sharply with the denial of rehabilitation programs to general criminal offenders. The Duluth model is generally the intervention of choice for court-mandated domestic violence programs (Barner & Carney, 2011). As mentioned previously, the efficacy of these interventions are in question (Cantos & O'Leary, 2014; Ennis et al., 2017). Although perspectives on intervention from the women's movement, psychotherapy, and criminal justice have evolved over time, over ninety percent of interventions for male perpetrators of domestic violence are court mandated as sanctions for charges arising from domestic abuse (Barner & Carney, 2011). This indicates that men are not utilizing these interventions of their own accord.

Most fathers' rights groups in North America assert that men are discriminated against when it comes to family law, especially with respect to custody and child support issues (Crowley, 2009; Dragiewicz, 2010). In the United States, they note that in 2005, ninety percent of the parents awarded child support were women (Grall, 2007). Collection of child support from unwilling parents without custody is far more likely today, as states now have the power to collect support on behalf of custodial parents (Dragiewicz, 2010). Fathers' rights groups resent this, arguing that child support payments are not justified unless a child spends substantially

more time with one parent than with the other (Crowley, 2009). This links the issue of child support with child custody, presenting the argument that child support is only necessary because custody is being taken from them.

Increased custody time with their children would reduce their obligations for child support (Crowley, 2009). There is a push for joint custody legislation, but there are concerns that this would expose women to the threat of ongoing violence as a result of forced interactions between former partners (Crowley, 2009; Dragiewicz, 2010). Courts assume that children fare better when they can maintain relationships with both parents, therefore joint custody and co-parenting relationships are encouraged (Hardesty & Chung, 2006). Although the number of parents who share custody after divorce is increasing, most children live primarily with their mothers. Family courts want to ensure positive outcomes for the child first and foremost.

Overall, the available services provided within the community are lacking for men, whether they perceive themselves as survivors or perpetrators. If the needs of this demographic are to be adequately met, the current supports require enhancement. The criminal justice system currently exacerbates this issue, given that the treatment programs being mandated are a one-size-fits-all approach. Approaching everyone as unique would increase the efficacy of treatment. The traditional police response was limited, but the implementation of mandatory and pro-arrest policies has increased their role in the domestic violence space. However, this has arguably resulted in negative outcomes for men. Fathers' rights groups argue that they are being discriminated against in the area of family law, but the empirical data supports abused mothers (Dragiewicz, 2010; Hardesty & Chung, 2006).

2.4 Critique of Current Literature

Future research must continue to evaluate the role of anger and its association with domestic violence using multiple methods and context-relevant research designs, as studies have shown the importance and impact of anger (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Eckhardt et al., 2002; Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005). One of the primary functions of aggression is to express strong emotions such as anger and frustration (Berkowitz, 1989; Caldwell et al., 2009), but that expression is not being done in a healthy way. An explanation for this may be how men experience socialization from youth to suppress vulnerable emotions, instead showing anger or aggression as a response (Jakupcak et al., 2005; Scheff, 2007). This indicates that men are likely to turn to anger or aggression as a means of emotional expression. A better understanding of how and why men use anger, and the specific impacts anger has on an intimate relationship will allow for more informed responses to better help men who lack control and emotional regulation.

While there are studies that have assessed the impact and effectiveness of treatment programs, more research is required to quantify the capabilities and characteristics of programs that work directly with male perpetrators of domestic violence (Hamel, Ferreira & Buttell, 2017; Stover et al., 2009). Without empirical data to determine how and why a specific treatment program was successful for male perpetrators, it is difficult to provide quality support and assistance. The current system of interventions has had little success beyond the impact of the arrest itself (Armenti & Babcock, 2016; Stover et al., 2009). If the current interventions are not adequately dealing with the issues presented by male perpetrators, more informed, uniquely tailored approaches are required if change is to be successful. Perceiving domestic violence as a male phenomenon has created a climate where male perpetrators are unable to receive adequate assistance. For perpetrators, the treatments provided are not tailored to the individual, and this

creates a gap in support. Many of the men require assistance in managing anger and/or emotional regulation, but do not receive the needed support to properly manage and control their emotions (Campbell et al., 2010; Price & Rosenbaum, 2009).

Complex relationship dynamics involving mutual domestic violence is difficult to manage. Service providers do not have adequate services to meet the specific needs of male perpetrators who are experiencing a perpetrator/survivor dynamic, such as mutual partner violence. Survivors of domestic violence tend to view shelters as a means of support, but men may be blocked from access, or the shelters are not appropriately equipped to respond to their specific needs (Barber, 2008; Wallace, 2014). Men living in a cycle of perpetration and victimization are effectively unable to receive the appropriate help required from these shelters. The focus of domestic violence as a male phenomenon has influenced how shelters for survivors of violence handle intake, with an expectation that the survivors will likely be women (Wies, 2008; Wright & Bertrand, 2017). Future research should empirically test supports provided to male perpetrators-survivors, so that the best possible treatment and assistance is given to these men.

A significant barrier for service providers is a lack of accurate information concerning the number of men involved in domestic violence. The way that the Canadian government reports crime rates around domestic violence is questionable, due to the number of survivors that never report being victimized (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Rennison et al., 2013; Zaidi et al., 2015). The official statistics capturing domestic violence in Canada reflect police-reported incidences of domestic violence. This indicates that there are likely more perpetrators and survivors of domestic violence, but because the acts of domestic violence went unreported, they are not represented in the data collected by Statistics Canada. Future data collection should consider

expanding to include self-reported victimization surveys. Victimization surveys may help better capture the demographic whose criminal activity and/or survivor experience is not reflected in official statistics. Conversations with male perpetrators directly may provide valuable feedback for improving service delivery and interventions for this very specific subset of the population. If interventions and service delivery is improved, it will positively influence not just the male perpetrator, but also their family and the broader community. The following chapter will present the methodological framework that framed this research.

2.5 Chapter Summary

Analyzing current literature highlighted the importance of three factors when assessing the intricacies of men and domestic violence (1) male identity, (2) stigma, and (3) the dynamics of service access. The creation of male identity is significantly influenced by gender roles (Choma et al., 2010; Peralta & Tuttle, 2013; Smith et al., 2015). Being a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’ is a role we take on, and these ‘roles’ impact the formation of identity. When masculinity negatively manifests itself, it may present as masculine gender role stress, which has been linked to both unhealthy lifestyle behaviours and increased anger (Arrindell, 2005; Smith et al., 2005).

In response to the stigma associated with masculine stress, some men may utilize one of Matza and Sykes’s (1957) techniques of neutralization, which are a means of avoiding moral responsibility for their action. Four techniques were assessed, specifically: (1) the denial of responsibility, (2) denial of injury, (3) denial of the victim, and (4) condemnations of the condemners. For men who attempt to utilize community supports, service access is a significant concern, as current literature identifies gaps in the levels of service provided (Caldwell et al., 2009; Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005). Existing services do not meet the specific needs of men in a way that helps manage shame and stigma. The next chapter shall analyze three theories that help

explain how men engage in the process of stigma management. These frameworks highlight the importance of managing social interactions as a means of avoiding shame and stigma.

Chapter Three: Men and Domestic Violence: The Theory Behind Stigma Management

This thesis aims to provide an understanding of domestic violence from the perspective of men by applying theoretical elements from social constructionism, stigma, and techniques of neutralization to this prevalent social issue. Without placing moral weight, the label of victim is used. To identify as a victim carries both negative and positive consequences for the individual who has experienced a crime (Fohring, 2018). With this label comes numerous social and psychological burdens. Goffman (1963) was the first to describe these stereotypes and the resultant stigma as the circumstances of the person who is unable to achieve full social acceptance (Fohring, 2018). Utilizing these three theories in combination allows for a more in-depth explanation of the extant literature on the male experience of domestic violence.

3.1 Social Constructionism

Tepperman and Curtis (2009) note that the process of interacting with parents, siblings and caregivers provides children with the necessary emotional and cognitive skills required to interact successfully within our society. It is through our interactions with one another that we learn to navigate the everyday reality of our social world. Social constructionism questions humans' and society's definition of reality. Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue that all knowledge is derived from and maintained through social interactions. The individual is not born a member of society. Social expectations are internalized as an objective reality while the individual externalizes their own being into the social world. People and groups in a social system create concepts or representations of each other's actions, and these concepts eventually become habituated into reciprocal roles (Berger & Luckman, 1967).

These roles are significant as they determine how we interact with one another. One can take on the role of man, friend, student, professor and so forth. The various roles we subscribe to

are part of what constitutes identity. It is formed by social processes, and how one regards oneself is maintained and/or modified through social relationships (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Identity is a critical component of self-perception. Berger and Luckmann (1967) propose that when reciprocal roles are made available to other members of society, the reciprocal interactions are institutionalized. Institutionalization of social processes grows out of the reciprocal roles, gained through mutual observation, with subsequent agreement on what is expected of the roles (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). In this process, meaning is embedded in society. With such a high importance placed on social interactions within broader society, it is expected that individuals would create ways to avoid shame and stigma as a result of negative social interactions.

Engaging in such action is known as stigma management.

3.2 Stigma

This research is guided in part by Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach on social interactions, specifically his theory of impression management, as well as his work on stigma (Goffman, 1963). Stigma refers to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier (for example, being a traitor or a criminal), but it is not limited to bodily evidence (Goffman, 1963). Goffman (1963) details three types of stigma: abominations of the body (physical deformities), blemishes of individual character (i.e., weak will, dishonesty, alcoholism, or mental illness), and tribal stigma of race, nation, or religion (i.e., antisemitism or islamophobia). Managing stigma within social interactions is critical for individuals who are attempting to conceal their own problems and prevent stigmatization.

To manage stigma, Goffman (1959) argued that individuals employ impression management. Impression management is a process where individuals attempt to influence the perceptions and beliefs of others, through regulating and controlling the information within a

social interaction (Goffman, 1959). Goffman viewed social interactions as performances, and the individual as the performer. Those on the receiving end of the performance are the audience. Goffman (1959) used the term performance to refer to a person's efforts to create specific impressions in the minds of others. A performer wants to present themselves in a positive frame, while avoiding negative emotions and feelings, especially shame. Freely disclosing negative information about oneself is not something that occurs often. It is important to note that the goal of the performance is not necessarily to deceive.

Performances are defined by three stages: the frontstage, the backstage, and the outside stage (Goffman, 1959). To navigate and manage stigma, the frontstage is the most significant. The frontstage of the performance is concerned with authenticity and presenting oneself as an authentic individual during social interactions (Goffman, 1959). Frontstage behaviour is what we do when we know that others are aware of us. We change our behaviour and interactions when we have an audience. Frontstage behaviour reflects internalized norms that are shaped by our appearance, roles, and the setting (Goffman, 1959). The routines of our daily lives, such as commuting, shopping, or going out for dinner are all examples of frontstage behaviour. The performer follows familiar rules and expectations about what to do, talk about, and how to interact with each other within each setting (Goffman, 1959).

While we know that men are not superior to women, for some men, these negative concepts may be reinforced through impression management. Goffman notes how it is fine for a fifteen-year-old boy who drinks in a bar or drives a car to represent himself as eighteen, yet there are many social contexts in which it would be improper for a woman to not present herself as being more sexually attractive or more youthful than is really the case (Goffman, 1959). This example highlights the difference between the perceptions of men and women. For women, there

is a focus on youth and level of attractiveness. This is different for men, where there is a focus on what he does (such as driving a car or drinking alcohol) that defines him more so than appearance. Impression management and social norms influence these stereotypes and perceptions. Another means to influence the aforementioned is to utilize one or more of the five techniques of neutralization as below.

3.3 Techniques of Neutralization

Matza and Sykes (1957) indicate that people are always aware of their moral obligations to abide by the law, and that they have the same moral compass within themselves to avoid illegitimate acts. Thus, for individuals to commit an illegitimate activity, they must employ some sort of mechanism to silence the desire to maintain moral obligations. The use of these mechanisms to suppress guilt or shame are techniques of neutralization (Matza & Sykes, 1957). The five techniques of neutralization allow an individual to neutralize certain values within themselves which would normally prohibit them from engaging in illegitimate activities.

In building this theory, Matza and Sykes (1957) made four significant observations: morally delinquent individuals experience a sense of guilt or shame, they respect and admire law-abiding persons, there is a clear line drawn between those who can be victimized and those who cannot, and it is doubtful if delinquents are immune from the demands for conformity made by the dominant social order. From these observations, Matza and Sykes (1957) reasoned that when a person commits illegitimate acts, they must utilize one or more of the five techniques to manage the shame and stigma associated with their activities. The five methods by which individuals justify their illegitimate actions are: the denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties (Matza & Sykes, 1957).

Denial of Responsibility. If a person can define themselves as not responsible for illegitimate actions, then the disapproval of self or others is significantly reduced as a restraining influence (Matza & Sykes, 1957). Modern society draws a line between injuries that are unintentional (i.e. lacking responsibility) and those that are intentional. As a technique of neutralization, the denial of responsibility extends further than the claim that a deviant act is an accident, among other means to negate personal accountability (Matza & Sykes, 1957).

It may be asserted that delinquent acts are due to forces beyond the individual's control, such as living in a bad environment, having poor parents, or being influenced by other deviants. Matza and Sykes (1957) note that the delinquent sees themselves as helplessly propelled into new situations and that responsibility is beyond their control. By framing themselves as independent actors with no control, deviants reject responsibility for their actions. They perceive themselves as being acted upon by outside forces, with little control or personal responsibility for any illegitimate actions committed (Matza & Sykes, 1957).

Denial of Injury. This technique of neutralization focuses on the harm or injury involved in the delinquent act. Matza and Sykes (1957) highlight that criminal law has a clear distinction between crimes which are wrong in themselves and acts that are illegal but not immoral. A deviant may make the same distinction when evaluating the wrongfulness of their own behaviour. To the delinquent, wrongfulness may depend on the question of whether anyone has clearly been hurt as a result of their deviance (Matza & Sykes, 1957). Vandalism may be regarded as simply mischief, given that the persons whose property was vandalized can afford to fix it. Theft can be perceived as borrowing, or a gang fight may be a private quarrel, an agreed upon duel and thus not harmful to the broader community (Matza & Sykes, 1957). By framing

the delinquent act as not harmful and causing no injury, the deviant is able to downplay any personal responsibility for their actions.

Denial of the Victim. Despite the deviant accepting responsibility for their actions and being willing to admit that harm was caused, the moral indignation of self and others may be reduced by an insistence that the injury is not wrong considering the circumstances (Matza & Sykes, 1957). The injury is not really meant to harm; rather it is a form of rightful punishment or retaliation. Utilizing this technique moves the delinquent into the position of an avenger, and the victim is perceived as the true deviant (Matza & Sykes, 1957). By denying the existence of the victim, the deviant can assume no moral responsibility for any damage caused. The victim may also be denied by being physically absent, or unknown, reducing awareness of the victim's existence (Matza & Sykes, 1957). If others are not aware of the existence of the victim, then the delinquent cannot be held responsible for harming them.

Condemnation of the Condemners. Condemning the condemners is a technique where the delinquent shifts the focus of attention from their own deviant acts towards the behaviours and motives of those who disapprove of their illegitimate actions (Matza & Sykes, 1957). By reducing the credibility of those condemning the deviant, they reject the condemnation received. A delinquent may claim that the condemners are hypocrites, compelled by personal spite, or that they are deviants themselves (Matza & Sykes, 1957). Its function is to turn back or deflect any negative sanctions associated with the violations committed. The delinquent makes efforts to change the subject of the conversation in the dialogue between their own deviant impulses and the reactions of others (Matza & Sykes, 1957). By attacking others, the wrongfulness of their own actions is more easily repressed or hidden from view.

Appeal to Higher Loyalties. Matza and Sykes (1957) argue how internal and social controls may be neutralized through ignoring the demands of larger society, instead following the demands of social smaller groups to which the delinquent belongs to such as a gang, group of friends, or family members. Using this technique, the deviant may not necessarily reject social norms, despite refusing to follow them. Rather, the delinquent may see themselves as caught up in a dilemma that may only be resolved through violating the law (Matza & Sykes, 1957). The decision is made to place their loyalties to others above social norms and expectations.

Matza and Sykes (1957) indicate the extent to which the delinquent can see how they act on behalf of the smaller social groups to which they belong as a justification for violations of societal norms. This is unusual, but the conflicts between the claims of friendship and the claims of law have been recognized as a common human problem. Deviations from the norms may occur not because the norms are rejected, but because other norms, considered more pressing, or involving a higher loyalty are accorded precedence (Matza & Sykes, 1957).

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter assessed elements of identity, stigma, social constructionism and techniques of neutralization to provide a better understanding of stigma management. Berger and Luckmann (1967) positioned the importance of identity and social interactions, indicating that identity is formed through social processes, and these self-perceptions are modified and/or maintained through social relationships. With such a high degree of importance placed on social interactions, it is expected that individuals would create means to avoid stigma and shame as a result.

To manage stigma within social interactions, Goffman (1959) revealed the importance of impression management. Utilizing impression management, individuals attempt to influence the beliefs and perceptions of those around them, by regulating and controlling the information with

a social interaction (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) referred to these interactions as performances, with the performer making efforts to influence others. There are three stages: the frontstage, the backstage, and the outside stage, and for stigma management, the frontstage is most significant. Frontstage behaviour reflects internalized norms that are shaped by our appearance, roles, and the setting (Goffman, 1959).

For a performer trying to convince their audience that through impression management, Matza and Sykes (1957) argue that they may use techniques of neutralization. The application of these techniques are a means to reduce shame and stigma, through shifting the burden of responsibility for illegitimate actions. By shifting responsibility away from themselves, individuals may avoid the blame and consequences associated with their actions. The above theoretical explanations will play into my methodological approach and analyses. In this way, I will be able to accurately capture the real experiences of this vulnerable demographic and their sentiments about how domestic violence plays out in their lives. The following chapter reveals my methodological strategy in capturing their voices and thick descriptive accounts.

Chapter Four: Qualitative Inquiry Methodological Approach

4.1 Rationale & Methodological Technique

The limited and current research on men and domestic violence has been predominantly quantitative, focusing primarily on an objective reality assessing risk, impact of mental health, and domestic violence outcomes with little attention on the empathetic emotions or experiences (Ennis et al., 2017; Harris, Hilton & Rice; Maharaj, 2017; Oliver & Jung, 2017; Storey & Hart, 2014). This study engages in a qualitative methodological approach, rooted in the philosophical thought of interpretivism. Through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, I will be able to empathetically explore in-depth, perceptions and experiences of a sample of men who are survivors of domestic violence from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). An interpretivist methodology ensures that the social realities and lived experiences of the participants are captured through thick, rich descriptive outcomes outlining their definition of the situation (Lacity & Janson, 1994; Wignall, 1998). Through an empathetic understanding, participants were able to share their socially constructed realities of how they experienced domestic violence against their female counterparts.

4.2 Sample, Sampling Method & Recruitment

A total of nine heterosexual male participants, ages 26-58, who were either married, divorced, or separated and who experienced domestic violence in their relationship were selected regardless of race purposively; or through snowball sampling were recruited from the community partner. Recruitment was conducted using two primary means. With the assistance of the community partner, a recruitment ad (see Appendix C) was emailed to all members of the program. The researcher also had access to a gatekeeper who was able to help recruit additional participants. The initial sample was set at 15, however sampling this group of men posed to be

more challenging than anticipated and the researcher's final N was smaller. These men were either formally (i.e., charged) or informally (i.e., not charged) by police. The upper age limit of 18 was chosen to ensure that all participants were of the legal age to participate.

4.3 Data Collection

Once research ethics board clearance was given by UOIT, the data collection begun. The selected method of qualitative data collection was face-to-face semi-structured interviews which lasted about 1-1.5 hours. This type of interview allowed great flexibility in capturing the voice and experiences of all nine participants (Adams, 2010; Anyan, 2013; Rabionet, 2011). Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide richness, complexity and depth to substantiate the research objectives (Cachia & Milward, 2011; Opdenakker, 2006). This method allowed me to ask probing questions as required to gain a deeper insight into the topic. Data collection was complete after nine interviews, after this point emergent themes were revealed, and saturation was reached.

The interview guide comprised of core common themes that were in line with the research objectives. The interview schedule addressed key themes about participants' experiences and perceptions along the main research objectives of the current study. The core themes explored the socially constructed interplay of male perpetrator and survivor by assessing their lived experiences of domestic violence; the nuances of how stigma associated with being labeled a perpetrator is managed; navigating the role of agency in the creation of masculine identities; identifying the complex socio-cultural consequences and challenges of systemic barriers associated with perpetrators/survivors of domestic violence (see Appendix A).

All nine interviews were conducted at UOIT or an agreed upon location, like a coffee shop or the community organization. Participants were all asked to sign a consent form prior to

the interview, with the understanding that they did not have to answer a question if it made them uncomfortable or stop the interview at any point in time; all nine interviews were both tape recorded such that verbatim transcription could follow. Pseudonyms were used so that no real name was linked to anyone and the data remained anonymous and confidential. Any transcribed interviews were stored on a secure password protected hard drive and a back-up storage server. Only the researcher had full access to the data. A \$10 honorarium was given to each participant as a token of appreciation of their time (see Appendix B).

4.4 Data Analysis

Once data collection was completed, the interviews were transcribed and then analyzed. A thematic analysis was done, manually, keeping in mind the research objectives. Participants were divided by those who were formally charged by police and those who were not, to explore the male experience of domestic violence and if it differed. To help substantiate claims and align findings with research objectives, specific quotes from participants were extracted for each theme.

The analysis included a review of the transcribed notes and quotations for each individual participant. During this phase I analyzed each response to the question posed, using a combination of simultaneous and thematic coding techniques. This involves applying multiple thematic codes to the data since it can be nearly impossible to apply a single code (Saldāna, 2009). Initial coding was conducted to identify the primary themes for the data. This was done using descriptive codes, summarizing the primary topics of the excerpts to note observable action within the data (i.e., Domestic Violence; Service; Bias) (Elliot, 2018; Saldāna, 2009). Colour-codes were used to help identify commonalities that were grouped together, forming overarching themes about participants' perceptions associated with domestic violence. The three major

themes that were extracted from the interviews were: (1) Masculine Identities, (2) Stigma Management, and (3) Barriers to Service. Subsequent codes were applied to reveal more specific subthemes, namely: Defining Masculinity, Rebelling Against Social Expectations, Managing Stigma of Demasculinity, Techniques of Neutralization, and Service Access.

The data analysis was done to determine how everything connected, and thus reveal the core, integral components of the various experiences presented by these participants with respect to their domestic violence experiences. An intersectionality perspective provided a social explanation for the data. This social explanation examines various multiple identities of these men and see how their identities inform their domestic violence experience. More specifically, the end goal was to see how the various aspects of being a man with a history of domestic violence, along with additional individual identities (such as age, educational level, time in Canada, and income, among others) could intersect to influence perspectives on gender roles, relationships, masculinity, and other related issues.

To help enhance the thematic analysis, participants, with consent, were emailed their transcripts to engage in the process of member checking. Member checks provide participants with opportunities to correct errors and determine that the data analysis is congruent with their experience, ensuring truthfulness and authenticity (Carlson 2010; Reilly, 2013). This enhanced the reliability of their voice and ensured that I have accurately captured their lived experiences. Utilizing this technique increases trustworthiness and adds credibility to the qualitative study, while enhancing our understanding of participants' lived experiences (Candela, 2019; Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

4.5 Reflexivity and Insider versus Outsider Status

The researcher plays a pivotal role in determining the outcome(s) and success of research, especially in qualitative methods and specifically interviewing. One should be cognizant of the interviewee dimensions and how their identity may influence and shapes the process of the research. The literature on methodology continuously debates this dichotomy or insider-outsider status. Insider status offers many advantages when conducting qualitative research, such as expediency building rapport, and an ease of access to the field of participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Ross, 2017). Conversely, outsider researchers may inadvertently hold preconceived notions of the organization or social group under study (Greene, 2014).

In being reflexive, researchers consider their own role in the research process, and one way this is done is by considering insider/outsider status (Couture, Zaidi & Maticka-Tyndale, 2012). There are advantages and disadvantages to data collection that go along with holding either status. Having intersecting identities creates a dynamic where one can be both an insider or an outsider simultaneously, and this shapes the data collection experience (Couture, Zaidi & Maticka-Tyndale, 2012). This is important as this status can have a significant impact on how participants perceive and interact with the researcher during the interview. While researchers try to remain as objective as possible, simply asking the interview questions to elicit in-depth responses, we are human, and as a result both comfort levels as expectations others hold impact how we communicate with participants (Couture, Zaidi & Maticka-Tyndale, 2012). It is important to consider our own intersections of gender, race, and so on, and how this influences the nature of discussions with participants, our analyses, and our own reflexive accounts.

In my research, at times I saw myself as an insider, as well as an outsider. I toggled between the two. I claim to be an insider because of my gender identity. Being male put me in a

great position to be able to have an open dialogue with these men. There was a natural comfort and conversation that occurred with my participants where I or they did not feel odd. Rapport was established and I was able to capture the thick descriptive details with each participant. This may have been an issue if a woman was the interviewee. Due to the sensitive and personal nature of the topic, potential participants may not be as comfortable discussing such personal experiences with a woman due to stigma, or embarrassment (Anderson, 2013; Kimberg, 2008). As a result, participants would not have easily engaged in storytelling.

My status as an outsider impacted how I had to navigate the community; it was evident that some participants were worried about potential bias. This was not surprising as I do not share the same life experiences and cannot directly relate to the lived experiences of the interviewees. Some participants questioned my capacity to understand and relate to what they have observed as a result; and it was evident that some were worried about bias. To navigate this, I had to be aware of how my own biases and preconceptions may be influencing how I perceived the personal stories of the participants. I ensured the participants that I was present to capture their lived experiences, not place judgment.

For some of the participants, they may have been surprised to see a mixed-race man with an afro, as my name is relatively white and French. Every interviewee but one was a white male, the remaining participant was Indian. None of the participants were the same race as me. While I did not experience prejudice or discrimination during data collection, my ethnic background may have influenced rapport building, potentially impacting how comfortable the participants were throughout the interview. Any participant feeling unease may not have been as forthcoming with their narrative. As mentioned, my insider and outsider status was fluid, shifting depending on how I was perceived by the participants. Despite these barriers, the combination of successful

rapport building, and partial insider status revealed thick, descriptive results that will be analyzed in detail throughout the following chapter.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This study engages in an interpretivist qualitative approach, to ensure that the lived experiences of the participants were captured. Through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, the social reality of the sample are captured through rich, thick descriptive outcomes to uncover the themes of domestic violence for men. The next chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the 9 men and how they voice their definition of the situation in line with the research objectives with respect to masculine identities, stigma management, and barriers to service, as well as other themes that may be worth mentioning.

Chapter Five: Perpetrator or Survivor: A Question of Identity

The results begin with an overview of the sample profile along with a description of each participant's background. I then present a detailed analysis of three core themes: (1) Masculine Identities, (2) Stigma Management and (3) Barriers to Service; indicating how they connect to the research objectives. These themes are discussed, presented and dissected.

5.1 Sample Profile

A total of nine men were interviewed for this study, ranging from 26 to 58 years of age. All participants are currently residing in Canada. Of the nine participants, 6 did not face formal sanctions, while 3 were sanctioned and had to go to court. Seven of the nine men were born in Canada, but all are Canadian citizens. Eight of the nine men interviewed were Caucasian, with one respondent from India. Most respondents have no religious faith, and they have all completed some degree of education (at the time of writing the participant with high school education is working towards a university degree). It is critical to be aware that this sample is not representative of all men who have experienced domestic.

5.2 Participant Descriptions

Jim is 58 years old, Caucasian with a French and English background, and he was born in Canada. Jim holds a degree in mechanical engineering and did some computer science courses after that. Using that education, he worked as a telecommunications engineer for 24 years. Right now, he is on the verge of homelessness, and cannot maintain financial independence. Jim is not religious and growing up he had some conflict with his parents and siblings, as he put it: “*it’s intergenerational mental illness. I think because of the severity, it turns out my mother was very severely abused growing up, and my dad grew up in a big family during the Great Depression, so he had a tough life as well*”. Currently, Jim is legally divorced, single, and he has two sons

who are 20 and 22 years old. He does not have much of a relationship with his children. From his perspective, they resent him, and this causes him significant emotional pain. Jim's goal is to try and overcome what he sees as a broken system that is actively working against him. He would like to rebuild the relationship with his two sons.

Brad is 26 years old, Caucasian, and he was born in Canada. He is about to complete an undergraduate degree, as a full-time student, but he maintains financial independence. Brad rates himself as 1 out of 10 on the religious scale, and he had a good childhood, not witnessing much violence or abuse at home as a child. He is currently single, with a 2 and a half year old daughter, that he had to fight for custody for: "*I knew from a very early point in the relationship when I found out she became pregnant that this was gonna wind up in court and I was gonna have to fight her for custody*". He wants to be able to provide for his daughter, and he wants her to be safe.

Adam is 56 years old, Caucasian with an English background, and he was born in Canada. He got a university degree in science, and holds an MBA. He currently works as an accountant and maintains financial independence. Adam is not religious, but he does "*believe in Christian values, which is sort of ancillary to religious beliefs*", and growing up as a child he witnessed arguments in the home, but there was no violence, he feels like he had a good childhood. He is legally divorced, currently single, and has no children. From his perspective, the system is biased against men. He considers this to be a result of militant feminism, resulting in a system that places the concerns of women over men. If this is to change, men need to express themselves more, instead of silently suffering.

Ivan is 47 years old, and he is a Canadian citizen, but he was born in Croatia, and moved to Canada 30 years ago. He holds a college education in aircraft maintenance, and currently

works in postal services. His religious beliefs are moderate, 4-5 on a scale of ten: “*I have a faith, I don’t go to church there every day, but I go at least once a month*”. As a child he said he had a great childhood, with no problems at all, not witnessing any violence or arguments. Ivan was married for 4 years to his ex-wife, and they have two daughters together, aged 6 and 8 years old. They are currently separated, and he himself is single. He is financially independent, but the costs of dealing with the separation, as well as court concerning his two daughters is causing him to build up significant debt. While this has caused him financial stress, to him it does not matter what the costs are, he wants to regain custody of his children, and bring some normalcy back to his life.

Jeremy is 58 years old, Caucasian with a British background, and he was born in Canada. He has his high school education, a trade certificate in welding, and some university credits. John works as a management consultant for a living, but right now he is not financially independent. He does not consider himself religious in any way, and he did grow up in a household with some conflict: “*I also did grow up in a household where my father grew up with PTSD because of his experiences in World War II. So, I did have childhood trauma, it’s called secondary trauma because of his trauma basically*”. He is currently single, but has been married twice in the past, for 7 and 12 years respectively, and his 3rd intimate relationship was not a marriage yet lasted 5 years. He has adult children that were not involved in his most previous relationship. He experienced significant stigma when attempting to access services, and he thinks that this taboo around men needs to be broken.

Glenn is 35 years old, Caucasian with a Scottish/English background, and he was born in Canada. He has a university degree, with some post-graduate education completed. Glenn is currently unemployed, and only recently attained financial independence due to an inheritance.

He does not consider himself to be religious, as he stated “*anti-ism, anti-theist – I don’t think it’s false or wrong, I think it’s actively harmful and it should be taken with extreme caution*”. He did not have a good childhood, his parents had a high conflict marriage, significant amounts of arguments. He is currently single, and he has a daughter who is 3 years old. His ex-fiancé has denied him the custody of their daughter, blocking visitations altogether. She claims that he has been abusive towards her, so she cannot be around him. Glenn has hired a lawyer to bring his ex-fiancé to court, so that he can gain access to his daughter. Most of his time and energy is focused on being able to have a relationship with her again.

Nithin is 58 years old, and he is a Canadian citizen, born in India. He is university educated with a PhD in chemistry. For over 20 years he ran a business with his ex-wife. When it comes to religion Nithin’s perspective is “*I don’t believe in believing something ok?...this physical being is not the whole story – it’s not the whole story, there is more to our existence, in that sense, yes I am religious*” so while he doesn’t follow a specific religion, he is definitely spiritual. He never witnessed arguments or violence at home as a child. Nithin was married for 26 years to his ex-wife and is currently single. He has one son with his ex-wife who is 13 years old. While he was struggling financially as a result of conflict with his ex-wife, he has maintained financial independence. She had taken control of all the finances within the household. He feels that his son does not have much respect for him, but he attributes that to his ex-wife actively working to turn his son against him. Nithin only wants his son to do well and succeed in his education.

Aleksander is 46 years old, Caucasian with a Serbian, Ukrainian and Polish background, and he was born in Canada. He holds a university degree and some post-graduate education. Aleksander is a marketing executive, and he maintains financial independence. He does not

consider himself to be religious, and he did not have a good childhood, stating: “*Uh yeah I was a victim of child abuse from a narcissistic mother. She was physically and emotionally abusive*”.

He is currently divorced from a 10-year marriage (together for 24 years), and has recently become single, ending his last relationship a few months prior. Aleksander also has a daughter with his ex-wife who is 8 years old. His ex-wife would engage in physical violence towards him when she was upset. This caused him significant harm, and he faces PTSD as a result of the violence. He feels that the court system is heavily biased against men, and this perception resulted in shame and stigma.

Logan is 54 years old, Caucasian with an Italian background, and he was born in Canada. He is university educated with several post-graduate certifications. He works as a teacher, while also spending some time with investment portfolios. As a result, he has remained financially independent. Logan is not religious, and as a child he never witnessed any arguments or violence in the home, stating “*my parents were pretty good parents*”. He is currently separated after a 22-year marriage and has a 9-year-old daughter with his ex-wife. Logan perceives the justice system as heavily biased, and he believes that the system actively works against men. He is very critical of the Partner Assault Response (PAR) program, arguing it is ineffective. He is working to regain custody of his daughter.

The purpose of this background information is to help highlight each participant’s unique story. While they are concise summaries of participants’ characteristics, it attempted to give the reader some context as to the participants’ background and history. The perceptions and experiences of these various men are discussed in the following sections, as they relate to the research objectives. These experiences are then presented in relation to the three themes identified above that connect and portray domestic violence.

5.3 The Development of Masculine Identity: “Men Are Supposed to Suck It Up and Be Men”

The expected role of men is heavily influenced by gender roles (Choma et al., 2010; Peralta & Tuttle, 2013; Smith et al., 2015). From a young age, men are socialized to feel, behave and think in ways unique to their gender, and this influences the creation of male identities. Berger and Luckmann (1967) note that part of what constitutes identity are the various ‘roles’ we take on as we navigate everyday life. Being a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’ is a critical component of identity. The corresponding gender roles associated with being a man is critical for determining the ways in which men navigate our social world.

Traditional gender roles link females with the role of ‘caretaker’ and men with the label of ‘breadwinner’ (Peralta & Tuttle, 2013). For men specifically, this places social pressure on whether they can provide. It is the duty of the man to go out and make the money required to provide for their family (Kray et al., 2017). If a man is unable to meet the societal expectations of them, this can manifest as masculine gender role stress, which has been linked to unhealthy lifestyle behaviours and increased anger (Arrindell, 2005; Smith, 2015). A significant contributing factor to gender role stress is the inability for some men to express themselves emotionally. Emotional expression is complicated at best, and being vulnerable carries connotations of weakness, especially for males (Jakupcak et al., 2005; Levitt et al., 2008).

One way that the participants managed some of this stigma is to employ Goffman’s (1959) theory of impression management. By engaging in impression management, the individual may be able to influence the perceptions and beliefs of others, through controlling and regulating the information presented within their social interactions (Goffman, 1959). Through my conversations with the participants, three distinct categories were revealed: (1) Defining Masculinity, (2) Rejection of Social Expectations, and (3) Managing Stigma of Demasculinity.

These three aspects of masculine identity will be analyzed in more detail, utilizing the participants perceptions and experiences of masculinity and domestic violence.

Defining Masculinity. Patriarchal expectations pressure men to be “good providers” for their family if they want to be viewed as successful, and having a respectable job is perceived as being a “real man” (Peralta & Tuttle, 2013, p. 10; Smith et al., 2015). Men learn early that showing vulnerable feelings such as fear, shame, or grief is seen as a sign of weakness (Scheff, 2007). Generally, men are not expected to talk about their emotions. These societal pressures impact the way that men navigate everyday life. To gauge the participants’ perceptions of masculinity, they were asked about how they would define masculinity, gender roles, and what they expect of their partner within a relationship. In answering these questions, the importance of two different aspects of masculinity were revealed: (1) patriarchal expectations of men, and (2) expectations of a partner. The inherent expectations of how men should act starts as children. Jeremy indicated how as a child, how he felt emotionally was never discussed:

“Boys don’t get asked how they feel. You know, or you know, did it hurt? But not how you feel emotionally.” [Jeremy]

Jeremy touched on a core expectation of men – that they do not engage with their own emotions in a meaningful way. Growing up, he was not asked about how he personally *felt* about an injury or harm, instead it was a question of whether he was in pain. Jeremy was acknowledging an example of the socialization that shapes men from youth. When asked about masculinity, reinforcing the traditional notions of masculinity was common among the participants. For instance, when asked about what the term masculinity means to him, one participant stated:

“When I hear the word masculinity, I just think of traditional concepts of what is masculine.... typically, aggression. Maybe stubbornness, uh like an authoritative personality” [Brad]

The idea of being aggressive, stubborn, authoritative – all these characteristics are defined within patriarchal expectations of how men should act and behave. Brad was not the only one to mention aggression as being an inherent characteristic of masculinity. Adam initially rejected the notion of gender, framing gender identity as “*part of a political agenda*” that is corrupting youth and adolescents towards homosexuality. When probed further about how he viewed men specifically, he framed men as being dominant and aggressive:

“You know, there are traditional gender roles which are, are like the men is the more dominant, aggressive, he gets to go out and provide, and the woman she's there testing everything, she wants to go and reproduce, and she wants to have her babies with a man who she thinks is gonna be able to provide, and at the same time is going to be loyal.” [Adam]

Most of the participants shared Adam’s perspective, tying masculinity into aggression. Logan questioned traditional notions of masculinity, but he prescribed to some of those ideals. Specifically, when it comes to the concept of being the *protector* for the family, it resonated with Logan:

“I think men try to protect their women and I – I dunno – or the women are involved with us and I don’t know why we fucking do it.” [Logan]

Protection was important to Logan, mentioning it multiple times during the interview. When it came to his daughter, being able to provide for and protect her was critical to him. When she was absent from him, he claimed how “*she feels less secure because I am not around....she feels like she doesn’t have much protection right?*” continuing with a discussion about how the idea of being the protector could be attributed to genetics. Aleksander perceived masculinity as less rigid, identifying the traditional notions of masculinity as “toxic”:

“I have been thinking of masculinity like there, there’s toxic masculinityand that’s just kind of like the old caveman which goes around using violence when you’re enraged.” [Aleksander]

Aleksander went on to mention how the “caveman” is too far on the one end of the scale, but on the other end he argues that there’s “*been a feminization of men over the last little while*”.

He framed this shift as the result of a lack of male role models, as the dads are working, and moms are now a bigger part of their lives. From his perspective, this has led to a lot of societal pressures against toxic masculinity. The majority of participants reinforced traditional concepts of masculinity and how men should act. One outlier was Jim, who framed masculinity as:

“Someone who is masculine is someone who is accountable for their actions, they understand what their role is in society, they communicate clearly, and they recognize healthy boundaries in other men, and they have a mature relationship with the divine feminine, or the females in our society.” [Jim]

Jim explicitly stated how men must have healthy boundaries and communicate clearly. But he also noted how traditionally, men had to be warriors, and “*when you are a warrior, you’re not in your emotions. Not anger, not revenge, you’re doing a job right*”, acknowledging how that was his dad’s generation. Despite separating himself from his dad’s generation, Jim believes in traditional gender roles. As he discussed the expectations of his partner, he framed raising children as the most important job for a woman:

“I am a real conspiracy theory guy in that its wrong that some women are working minimum wage jobs to pay someone to look after their children, and they don’t really know about that person, and it’s not that they are a bad person, but why not just do it yourself? This is the most rewarding, important job possible in my opinion.” [Jim]

It is interesting that he rejected patriarchal norms for himself yet believes them to firm for his partner. Probing deeper, while he rejected patriarchal norms of how a man should act, he did internalize the importance of being a provider to his children. Fatherhood was very important to Jim. From Adam’s perspective, a woman wants involvement:

“Look. It’s like this. Women, once she decides that she wants to be with you, that you’re her man, she wants involvement. She wants you; she wants you to be totally focused on her, okay? That’s it. That’s the way it works.” [Adam]

When asked to explain what he means by involvement in more detail, he explained that it was about money and/or emotional involvement: “*some women are about money, they need to have the guy to provide material stuff*”, and “*she has to have you involved with her, and if you*

decide to reject her, and get – she will wage war on you.” Adam holds relatively rigid expectations of both himself and his partner, in comparison Nithin perceives the role of him and his partner to be significantly more fluid:

“It should be shared responsibilities and uh, you know. Respect for each other, if you want to get into a relationship, first of all if you really want the relationship you have to respect each other, I am not saying just the woman, but mutual - mutual respect, mutual - mutual concerns for each other and then sharing the responsibilities.” [Nithin]

Asked to be more specific about how he would share responsibilities, he indicated that it would depend on the circumstances. If he was working and his partner not, she should be taking on more responsibilities at home. But if the situation was reversed, and he was the one who was not working, then it should be expected that he would be taking on those tasks at home. It is interesting that he perceives his role to be so fluid, as he mentions how “*we can’t get away from the gender right? Because gender – I didn’t create the gender.*” Like Jim, Nithin accepts some aspects of traditional perceptions of gender roles, while rejecting others. In comparison, Glenn’s priority was authenticity:

“I think a person’s responsibility is just to represent who they are. I think people are too varied, so my only expectation is that people represent who they are as accurately as possible.” [Glenn]

To Glenn, what was most important is that people remain true to who they are and to their belief systems. He expects honesty and fairness, and that he would do the same. Gender roles are not of significant importance to him, and he does not have any set specific expectations of a partner. His perceptions of masculinity may be influencing how he regards gender roles, not prescribing to masculine norms either:

“I don’t spend as much time trying to be as manly as possible with the other guys in the bowling league so it’s kinda hard for me to define, yeah the word has been dragged through the mud, often for good reason.” [Glenn]

As evidenced above, many of the participants in this study prescribe to more traditional norms of masculinity and gender. Attaching themselves to patriarchal expectations of masculinity was common, and this was reflected in how they perceived themselves and their partners. There were some participants who rejected these aspects of their identity, and more specifically did not see themselves as the stereotype of the typical traditional man. While it was not common, some of the participants rejected social norms associated with gender roles, placing themselves outside of that box.

Rejection of Social Expectations. While the participants were not asked questions pertaining specifically to the notion of rejecting social norms, most of the participants mentioned ways in which they reject certain social standards. Specifically, there was a rejection of traditional gender roles, as well as the idea that men should suffer in silence, suppressing feelings of vulnerability. Instead they should be accountable and take responsibility. For example, Glenn indicated that he had no use for gender roles:

"I think they're very useful when you're trying to figure out who should be doing the breastfeeding....um, I think that – I don't have much use for them, I don't give a shit who makes more money, I don't give a shit who's um....spending more time taking care of family, I don't give a shit whether my teacher is male or female as long as they're good." [Glenn]

For Glenn, just like his expectations in a partner, is focused on authenticity. Gender roles to him are irrelevant, to him the individual just needs to be a good person. He rejects traditional gender roles, but he does acknowledge male privilege, as women: "*get a lot of shit as kids, grow up in a world where they are more often targeted for sexual assault, they are passed over for promotions....they are a targeted group of individuals.*" Glenn is really taking his daughter into consideration when he makes these statements, as he went on to mention that he would always tell her she is wonderful, because one day she "*will meet someone who is an ass.*" Aleksander rejects traditional gender roles as well, and like Glenn, he highlights the financial aspect:

“Like the role of men, men have changed. Uh, I don’t think we’re like um - at some point in society we are expected to be the caregivers, financials support and I don’t think uh - I think that’s changed quite a bit. I think uh, you know there’s a lack of men staying at home, and there’s like a role - in certain places women make more money than the men.” [Aleksander]

The mention of how the role of money has shifted, that it is no longer the sole purpose of men may reflect how society has shifted, from having one-income households being the predominant family unit. This has seen a significant shift towards having two income-earners within the family unit. By downplaying the importance of the financial aspect, it may also reduce gender-based stresses. Logan also referred to himself as a “*modern guy*”, rejecting traditional perceptions of men as “*funny*”:

“I think that I am pretty much a modern guy or a modern male I’d say in the sense that you know some of those old traditional roles you see in 50s and 60s movies and stuff just look funny to me” [Logan]

While many of the participants espoused traditional expectations of men and patriarchal gender roles, some of the participants rejected those perspectives when applied to themselves. Another social norm that some of the participants rejected is the idea that men must suffer in silence, suppressing vulnerable emotions, instead they must be accountable. Adam did not hesitate, claiming responsibility for what has occurred within his intimate relationships:

“I undertake my relationships the way I want to undertake them, and I take responsibility for my own shit. I am not blaming, I am not making excuses, I am not portraying myself as a victim because eh - I did this stuff so I am taking responsibility for it.” [Adam]

Accountability was important for Adam, and he would not want to hide behind the label of ‘victim’. While he did not explicitly mention personal faults, he reiterated the importance of responsibility, and functioning within social limits. He does not think that anyone should be going out of their way to create conflicts or “*stir up trouble*”. Jim also acknowledged taking responsibility, mentioning how he is “*faulty*”:

“I think that part of it is like I have accepted that I am faulty for so long, that I am open to it - so I am faulty but how do I get fixed?” [Jim]

Jim claimed that he had a feeling of being fundamentally faulted, and that he has a personality disorder where he had a grandiosity that was “*hey watch what I can do! I can do everything!*” He wanted to be that person who can do anything, help anyone, complete any task. But he had to accept that people would be able to poke at his self-image, and eventually he’d collapse. He realized this was his “*cycle of pain*” and that he was unaware of how his grandiosity was impacting those around him. When he accepted that he needed help, he viewed it a practical thing, something that would improve himself. Nithin framed men as having more responsibilities than women:

“We won’t...we won’t go talking about it, all those things, as women do, that’s one thing and secondly we feel more responsible.” [Nithin]

While only a few participants shared this sentiment, it is interesting that there was a sense of accountability and responsibility for those men. While Nithin ascribed it to masculinity, arguably remaining silent would have been the traditional norm when placed in these scenarios.

Managing Stigma of Demasculinity. The focus of this section is to explore the various ways in which the participants responded to the stigma associated with their experiences of masculinity. Questions probing how they felt emotionally about these events were asked, and this revealed three distinct categories that the participants had to respond to. These were emotional vulnerability, the loss of fatherhood, and managing the stigma associated with victimization. One situation involved Jeremy attempting to share his experiences, and in doing so he had someone literally get up and walk away:

“So afterwards, I was telling – I met with him and his wife, I was telling them about it. His wife was asking me about it – and as I was telling it, he literally got up and walked away. It’s something, something with him right, that – so I needed to share it, and yet I didn’t feel comfortable about with who I could share it with.” [Jeremy]

This experience was difficult for Jeremy, as at the time he was already uncomfortable with talking about what had happened within his personal relationships. Having someone he thought had been his friend literally get up and leave set him back significantly. He mentioned how he shut down emotionally as a result. With some time and effort, he was able to come out of his shell and become more comfortable in sharing his story again. It is now at a point where talking about it is cathartic, but for a long time it was an experience that he was embarrassed about. Brad's response to his experiences was to block it all out, and refuse to even engage with it:

"I think it's something that as opposed to dealing with it, as like a trauma I just blocked it, and I just shut it out, and I just refuse to engage with it." [Brad]

In Brad's case, he mentions how if other people are aware of the traumatic event, then it will only lead to more trauma, so that they do not have to respond to people being aware of what happened, on top of the stigma of the event itself. From his perspective, the more people know, the more pain and trauma that results. Therefore, for him, it is far easier to just bury the issue and pretend it did not happen. This is a more traditional response to stigmatizing situations, to just bury it altogether. Aleksander had to handle his ex-wife making her emotions and feelings far more of a priority than his:

"My emotions nor my feelings had any bearing. Hers were more needed, more present, and they were the only ones that mattered. Um, I was required and recommended to continuously make sacrifices, and they weren't uh - it wasn't 50/50." [Aleksander]

Within their relationship there would be constant fights and bickering. There was a turning point where he started to suppress his own feelings and emotions just to avoid conflict between him and his ex-wife. This had a serious negative impact on his self-perception, as he felt that he was slowly losing his person, because his opinions, thoughts and concerns were all being ignored in favour of the whims of his ex-wife. When he would try to push back and be vocal

about his concerns, it only caused further conflict, as she would engage in violence and abuse towards him. As a result, he felt emasculated within the relationship. Glenn lost all the mutual friends he had with his ex-fiance, as well as many of his own as a result of his experiences:

“None of our mutual friends talk to me since the abduction, so I don’t know what she’s told them. Um a lot of my other friends of my own accord, like they find out about it, and they’re you know, sympathetic, but then they like never speak to me again.” [Glenn]

This left Glenn feeling very alone, very lost, with little recourse. His own family did not want to get involved. When he tried to explain himself at his aunt and uncle’s house, they immediately shut him down: *“I don’t want to know! And then they walked out of the room.”* As a result, Glenn is not even sure who he can turn to. By being emotionally vulnerable, it only lost him friends and support. He feels that it may have been better to just remain silent. Between his family refusing to help, and the fact that he hasn’t seen his daughter in three years, he does not have many options. The loss of fatherhood hurts him deeply, and this sentiment was shared by most of the participants that had children. Jim explicitly mentioned how he feels shame because he has lost his relationship with his children:

But you know, they will not acknowledge me so I have some social shames as to why my kids do not want me. Well they are old enough, they can choose can’t they? Well...I am such a fucking idiot that they are choosing not to see me. That hurts like unbelievable, right. [Jim]

Jim places significant value on parenting, both for fathers and mothers. For him, the loss of his sons hurts him most of all. It is hard for him to reject the notion that he is a poor father, and this causes him significant stress and emotional pain. He claims that his ex-wife is *“deliberately perpetuating this emotional violence against me and our children”* as a means of getting back at him. But his children are both in their 20s, so they can make the decision for themselves about whether they want a relationship with him. Logan framed losing custody of his daughter from the perspective of his daughter, not himself:

“Since - since she's been separated, my daughter has felt this massive absence and not just me, she's feels less secure because I am not around.” [Logan]

For Logan, the lack of male role model in his daughter's life must be having adverse effects on her because he is not there to provide a feeling of safety and protection. While he feels that his daughter loves him and still wants a relationship with him, he is not able to have custody of her currently, and this hurts him. Logan views “*part of masculinity as being a good father*” and while he thinks he is a good father; he cannot be one if he is not actively present in her life. Nithin was also concerned about not being involved in his sons life, but like Jim, his son has started to reject him:

“How would you feel? You know right in front of your son, you know - you uh - more so what my son is thinking?” [Nithin]

His son had to witness as the police came, arrested him, and removed him from the home. Now, his son will be disrespectful, not answer the phone when he calls: *“I call him so many times, he doesn't care he doesn't think he has to answer. He ignores okay? Like I am nobody to him.”* As a result of the conflict with his ex-wife, he has lost his relationship with his son. Nithin wants to be a good father, he wants to see his son do well in his education, grow up, and be successful. But right now he does not have much of a relationship with his son which causes him emotional turmoil, because fatherhood is important.

The last aspect of demasculinity is the experience of victimization itself. Three of the participants had to respond to very stigmatizing experiences of victimization. The experiences of male victims of domestic violence are steeped in stigma, carrying with it significant shame and trauma. Aleksander highlighted how his ex-wife would control him using violence:

“That's where uhh, the violence, the rage - came out of nowhere. She had no idea it was how I really felt and...she needed to control me. So she used violence, really.” [Aleksander]

He was not able to strike back. He endured and endured. When I probed about getting physical in response to her actions, he mentioned how "*I just didn't have it in me to fight back or defend myself*". His opinions and emotions were already being steamrolled, and this was another step within the process. He eventually had her charged with assault, but the courts were not helpful. He had met with the Crown multiple times, went to court for each appearance, yet the charges ended up being dropped. Aleksander was "*heartbroken, devastated when it happened*".

Brad's met his girlfriend while they were both in rehab, and ultimately, she ended up getting pregnant. He moved in with her to better support the unborn child, but he had to endure an abusive environment where she would throw things at him, hold the threat of police over his head, and he was in a position where the entire financial load was on him. This heavy burden resulted in significant stress. But throughout it all, Brad refused the label of *victim*:

"I wouldn't call myself a victim of it. Um, I wouldn't - I don't think I identify as a victim of abuse, and I think that you know, maybe part of the reason for that is you know, kind of what we were talking about earlier and the whole notion of men - they are not really allowed to be victims. It is a negative label for sure." [Brad]

He felt that it was an inherently negative label, and he did not want to deal with the stigma. He also argued that while he experienced a negative situation, others have been through worse. Acknowledging the experience of being a victim would be stigmatizing for him, and he opted to bury it, rejecting all labels. For Brad, it would be emasculating to accept the status of a victim. Jeremy held a similar perspective, rejecting the terms *victim* and *survivor*:

"Yeah, yeah I don't like either of those terms, victim or survivor, and that's just me personally." [Jeremy]

Jeremy preferred to frame it as "*someone on the experience end of domestic violence*". To Jeremy, the term victim is emasculating and places him in a position where he has no power whatsoever. He sees both terms as having a connotation of being powerless. In talking to other men in similar situations, he claimed that: "*they don't like the word victim or survivor either.*" It

is emasculating, stigmatizing, and rejecting these labels are a form of stigma management. In his situation, his ex-partner held complete control of the finances, and used this control to manipulate Jeremy, as he had little means of leaving the situation. While he was not being physically abused, it was emasculating to have decisions taken from him, and the loss of financial control in turn impacted his self-confidence to re-enter the working world and establish himself. With the assistance of his sister, he was able to successfully remove himself from that environment.

Overall, perceptions of masculinity and identity are critical to the way that the participants navigated their lived experiences. Whether it is the notion of fatherhood, gender roles, or the stigma around demasculinity, traditional expectations of men played a significant role in how the participants engaged in broader society. While most of the participants prescribed to traditional aspects of masculinity, some of them rejected these notions, instead seeing themselves as more fluid. Regardless of whether the participants agreed with them or not, the societal expectations of men impacted their lives. The next section will focus on the dynamics of stigma management using four different techniques of neutralization, as well as experiences of service access.

5.4 Engaging in Stigma Management: “*She Would Badmouth Me to All These People, so I was Stigmatized Already*”

Stigma management was a critical component of this project from the very beginning. The original gatekeeper, whom connected with me through Dr. Zaidi, while initially involved with the project, rejected being a participant when it became time for data collection. All the participants involved in this research self-identified as survivors of domestic violence, not perpetrators. The gatekeeper behind the community partner was very adamant that the word “*perpetrator*” be scrubbed from this research, as he did not want anyone referred to by such a

label, deeming it to be extremely stigmatizing. This became such a significant issue, that both my supervisor, Dr. Zaidi, and committee member, Dr. Mostaghim, spoke to this individual by phone for reassurance. This caused a significant delay, as only after these concerns were alleviated did the gatekeeper provide the approval to move forward and engage in data collection. This made us very aware of the importance of stigma, and its management.

This research is guided in part by Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach on social interactions, specifically his theory of impression management, as well as his work on stigma (Goffman, 1963). Experiencing domestic violence carries significant stigma, whether the individual is a perpetrator or a survivor. To manage stigma, Goffman (1959) argued that individuals employ impression management. Engaging in impression management provides a means for individuals to avoid the shame and stigma associated with negative social interactions. Engaging in these methods is known as stigma management.

Matza and Sykes (1957) note that delinquents must employ some sort of mechanisms to balance that they are engaging in illegitimate activities. They refer to these tools to suppress guilt or shame as techniques of neutralization. This section focuses on four, specifically: (1) denial of responsibility, (2) denial of injury, (3) denial of the victim, and (4) condemning the condemners. Through utilizing one of these four techniques, the participants engaged in stigma management, in ways that downplay the level of responsibility they hold for their actions.

Denial of Responsibility. If an individual can present themselves as not responsible for something, then the disapproval of others, or themselves, is significantly reduced (Matza & Sykes, 1957). Denying responsibility may alleviate blame and personal accountability. While not explicitly asked about denying responsibility, participants engaged in this technique of neutralization. This was done by blaming their partners' mental health, and by recasting

themselves as the survivor instead of the perpetrator. For example, Logan claimed that his wife was suffering from a mental health issue:

"I firmly believe she suffers from anxiety at the very least and possibly more. I think there's a mental health issue there" [Logan]

This claim was not verified by a psychologist, and by blaming a potential "mental health issue", personal responsibility for the conflict that was prevalent throughout their relationship can be avoided. Blaming a mental health issue is simply another means of saying "it is not my fault". This was a common theme for half the participants. Adam felt that his girlfriend was perfect, up until the mental health issues arose:

"The mental health is very, very, very important. In this case, it didn't manifest itself for like two years. She was like the perfect, the perfect perfect girl for a year and a half, before the mental health issues started to come out, and she was not the same girl again." [Adam]

Again, these "mental health issues" were never qualified by a psychological professional. This is another example of engaging in the denial of responsibility. It is interesting that the relationship was perfect for a year and a half, until these issues arose. Like Logan, by presenting mental health as the issue, Adam can avoid responsibility for the problems within his relationship. Adam earlier mentioned how he takes full accountability for his actions, yet here is a clear example of utilizing a technique of neutralization. He doubles down on mental health being something he now looks out for as a potential problem, stating: "*you look at the family....you look specifically to mental health characteristics in the two parents, it's like a fucking dog*". Equating finding a partner to looking for a dog is problematic. Framing his relationships in this way provides him with something to identify as the reason behind conflict, absolving himself of personal responsibility. Glenn engaged in similar tactics, framing his partner as a narcissist:

"I didn't know that um, so I thought you know – I didn't have a healthy role model for self-esteem growing up so I didn't realize how narcissistic she was.....I didn't realize that, you know, a person with good self-esteem is far more humble than that, and you know this person's a narcissist they have issues, um, and there's gonna be more issues later, and they're not the kind of issues that are curable." [Glenn]

Like Adam and Logan, by framing their partner as being mentally ill, Glenn provides himself with a justification that he can blame for being the reason behind any conflict. For all three of these men, presenting their partners as having mental health issues provides them with a scapegoat to absolve themselves of responsibility. This is a common technique of neutralization. Another means of neutralizing personal responsibility is through recasting themselves as the survivor, not the perpetrator. Nithin engaged in this tactic when explaining his arrest:

"They come and they go away, finally I got arrested by the way - you don't know the whole story but I got arrested and I got charged too." [Nithin]

To be arrested, removed from the home, and mandated to engage in the PAR program by the courts, it is a safe assumption that Nithin is not faultless in this scenario. Their relationship was one of mutual domestic violence, as his partner was also arrested during a different instance. She had been asked to stay in a hotel, and she returned the next day. He claimed that when the relationship went downhill, she called the police "*ten times, seven eight times*", and that they would come and go away, but eventually he was arrested and charged. He held to the notion that he was innocent, not at fault, and that she was to blame for the conflict within their relationship.

Ivan also positioned himself as the victim of his wife:

"....my daughters they are victims of wife, okay? And they are victims of the youth protection. Now, I am also a victim of the wife, and I'm a victim of the youth protection" [Ivan]

In Ivan's case, his daughters are not living with him, or his wife, they are in the custody of the youth protection program. While judgment cannot be passed on his story, the fact that the children are not living with either parent indicates that the conflicts within their relationship must have been mutual to some degree. When probed for more specifics he argued that his wife was

lying to the authorities, and to the youth protection staff, and that therefore neither of them have custody. From his perspective, his daughters and himself are the victims, and his wife is the perpetrator. Logan took a similar stance, maintaining his innocence:

"I believe I am innocent the only thing I did was yell when I was being yelled at to be heard, and – and - and try to get her help, and try to get heard to get help for herself and her daughter as much as anybody else, and the sake of our relationship. [Logan]

Logan is engaging in the denial of responsibility, downplaying his role within the relationship. Arguably, to be mandated to attend the PAR program, there must be more to the situation than simply “yelling when being yelled at”. When probed for further detail, he said that he did not grow up in that kind of environment, one where you are in constant conflict, yelling and screaming. Interestingly, he does not mention his own screaming or yelling, except in response to his ex-wife yelling at him. This indicates that he may be downplaying his contributions towards the conflict in their relationship. Engaging in the denial of responsibility is a form of stigma management, because if you are not responsible for an action, you cannot be blamed for it.

Denial of Injury. This technique of neutralization focuses on the injury or harm that results from the delinquent act. Matza and Sykes (1957) note how wrongfulness may depend on the question of whether anyone has been clearly hurt as a result of their actions. By denying the existence of harm, personal responsibility is avoided. Some of the participants utilized this technique of neutralization to downplay their actions. For example, Nithin would not explicitly state he had hit his ex-wife:

"She got physical too, she pulled him back to the - you know, table where she wanted him to eat his breakfast, and then I came back and I said no, listen you are late already....and that physical thing all of a sudden I hear thatshe started crying and uh, she kind of called 911." [Nithin]

He does not mention that he hit his ex-wife in any form, only stating how suddenly, he heard something. During further probes of the incident, Nithin argued that “*there was no physical thing.....yeah so she pretended okay*”. He claimed that there were no medical records, she never went to the doctor – that it was all just drama. Nithin stated how this all occurred in front of his son. When asked if his son said he saw him hit her, he said yes, and because his son said she saw him hit her is why he was arrested and removed from his home. Despite both his ex-wife and son claiming that he hit her, Nithin says that it did not happen. Denying the injuries of the victim is a technique of neutralization. Ivan framed the conflict within their relationship as self-defense:

“*Well we had kind of conflict, and sometimes I even had to defend myself, but she turn it after because I never call the cops first, she call first with the sisters*” [Ivan]

Through presenting his actions as self-defense, he is downplaying his role in the physical conflict with his wife. For their children to be taken away from both parents, the problems within their relationship was likely more than just an issue of self-defense. When asked for more details, he framed himself as: “*being a good person, good side, I am not perfect, but she can qualify for being the bad side, and very much the other way*”. It is interesting how Ivan presents the situation as being one of good vs. evil. From his perspective, he is the force of good. Logan claimed that his wife had tripped backwards when she got injured:

“*She was down on her haunches, she tripped backwards, screaming at my daughter "are you afraid?! Are you afraid?!" she fell backwards, hit me, knocked me backwards, I fell backwards and I reached out so she was facing that way - her shoulder would have been here, and I went to grab her shoulder to right myself and my hand passed through her hair.*” [Logan]

Two aspects of his response appear to be engaging in denial of injury. First, by claiming that she tripped of her own accord, and second that while reaching for her, his hand passed through her hair. In this version of events, Logan cannot be blamed for what happened because

he did not cause any injuries, in fact, not touching her in anyway. While he told police a similar version of events, they did not believe him, instead they charged him and removed him from the home. The police said that they did not “*find his story very believable*” but he is adamant that his story is the true version of events. It does appear that Logan was engaging in the denial of injury, to absolve himself of responsibility for what happened to his ex-wife.

Denial of the Victim. By denying the existence of the victim, the delinquent does not have to assume responsibility for any resulting harm or damage. Matza and Sykes (1957) argue that this technique of neutralization frames the injury as a rightful form of retaliation or punishment. Three participants utilized this technique, reducing their blameworthiness of what had occurred. For example, Nithin pushed back against claims made by his ex-wife:

“No medical, she never went to the doctor, she just made a big drama, ok? Essen - she has been doing that, called 911 many many times, police came, 6 7 times, they come, they see, they go right?” [Nithin]

Arguing that she never went to the doctor, Nithin presents his ex-wife as a liar, that she was not actually harmed by him. She just made a commotion so that the police would get involved and take him away. He is engaging in the denial of the victim, by questioning the fact that she did not see a doctor. From his perspective, she could not have been hit or injured by him, or she would have required medical attention. But someone does not need to be hospitalized to face physical abuse. By presenting his wife’s story as false, Nithin is engaging in the denial of the victim. Logan did this as well:

“Um I told her the textbook tenants of you know power and abuse relationships and I said like what you’re doing is abusive. Belittling me, bullying me, sometimes you’re bullying our daughter - sometimes. Ummmm ummm and uh she just turned that back on me.” [Logan]

He framed his wife as the abusive bully, but there were no examples of violence by her, other than when he claimed that: *“I never mentioned the violence because I was worried my daughter would be taken.”* But he did not provide any specific examples of violence by her

towards him. He says that he was also worried that she might make a false claim about him to leverage advantage within their relationship. By framing his wife as a liar, claiming that she is the abusive one, Logan is engaging in a technique of neutralization. This absolves him from a level of responsibility, thus reducing the stigma associated with his actions.

Condemnation of the Condemners. Condemning the condemners is a technique by which the delinquent shifts the focus of attention from their own deviant acts, instead pointing at the behaviours and motives of those who disapprove of their illegitimate actions (Matza & Sykes, 1957). By reducing the credibility of those condemning them, they reject the condemnations received. In this research, the policing and court systems are revealed as the condemners. The majority of the participants engaged in this technique of neutralization, framing either the police, the courts, or both as corrupt systems that actively work against men. Adam detailed his experiences with the police:

I raised the issue with the police and I went to the police different times and it's like, if you're a single guy, and you're older, and the girl involved is younger, good luck trying to get any traction with the police. [Adam]

Adam went on to state how he felt that he was basically laughed away for raising any issues with the police. A girl he was seeing had taken the plates off his vehicle, and when he went to the police, from his perspective, they did not treat it seriously. He had to push to get any sort of response from them. Adam eventually saw his plates returned to him, but he holds a very negative perception of the police regardless. When Glenn was trying to explain his situation at a police station, while he was able to speak to a civilian worker, the actual police officer quickly left:

"At this point in the conversation, 10 seconds in, the police officer stands up, says I think you're getting great advice right there, and walks out of the room so he doesn't hear the rest of it." [Glenn]

Glenn framed it as the police having no concern for his situation, and that the police officer deliberately left the room so that they would not have to get involved in his case. Further probing revealed that he was not able to get adequate police support when he was trying to report his ex-fiance, and his concerns about custody. They framed it as not an issue for the police, but Glenn disagrees, regarding the police as completely useless. For Ivan, his ex-wife held the threat of the police over his head. When his ex-wife brought her sisters over from Europe to permanently live with them, he took issue with it as he became financially responsible for them both. When he raised this issue, saying that they should move out of the apartment his wife claimed:

“If they’re leaving, I’m going to the cops and I’m going to say that you’re throwing me out and I am taking the kids.” [Ivan]

She would use the threat of police as a form of control, as he did not want to face sanctions by the police. This has really tainted Ivan’s perspective of the police. Ivan also holds bias towards the court system, which was a common feeling shared by most of the participants. For example:

“They are extreme manipulators, they extreme keep the control situation, they uh, they uh, they are like, they are like a bad cat, it doesn’t matter which way you turn, they’re gonna find a way out and that’s it, that’s what it’s all about.” [Ivan]

Ivan argues that the youth protection system has hurt him, and hurt his children because they must grow up without either parent, and the sisters themselves do not live under the same house. The fact that they are in separate places bothers Ivan the most, because he feels that at the very minimum, his two daughters should be kept together so that they have each other. He has one singular goal which absorbs all his energy: reclaiming the custody of both of his daughters. He considers the system to be corrupt. Jim holds similar views, perceiving both the police and the court systems to hold “deep corruption”:

“My family knows that I am freaking and peaking, but they really do not understand why. It is because of deep corruption in our court systems and our police systems, that has been my direct experience.” [Jim]

To Jim, the corruption within the court and policing systems directly contributed to his current circumstances, where he lost custody of his children and was forced to pay child support. He went on to say how he has tried going to various courts and police stations, seeing different detectives, different lawyers, but none of it has helped him to navigate this situation. He framed it as the state abusing him. Similarly, Logan considered the state to be an entity that enables abuse:

“I mistrust the state. I look at the state as something that enables someone who is bent on power, control and abuse to leverage advantage against an innocent person.” [Logan]

He went on to mention how he is horrified about what the system is like now. He mentions how he was predisposed prior to these experiences, like most men he knew, liberal or left leaning to: “*always favour the woman, to always think the woman was right in situations, to believe all the stats I was reading*” but he does not do this now. Logan argues that his lived experience has taught him a lot about what is really occurring behind the scenes. Aleksander, who was trying to utilize the court process as a victim, still found the courts to be useless:

“The criminal court system is just so bias, uh and uh just pain to deal with, I found the family court system to be absolutely useless. Um, and uh it was very female-biased, and it didn't matter what my stories were. I was continually discredited.” [Aleksander]

This notion of a bias towards females (or against men) was a common factor for most participants. It was almost conspiratorial in nature, as they felt that the system was corrupt, actively working against them. Many felt that the courts and police were not there to help or assist them but were instead present to be punitive. Framing the courts and policing systems as biased and broken is a way for the participants to manage the stigma associated with their experiences, especially as the authorities do not rule in their favour.

Service Access. This section is focused on service access, and the direct experiences of the participants that attempted to get help and support from the broader community. Previous literature has highlighted the gaps in the levels of service provided, stemming from a lack of understanding regarding the male experience of domestic violence (Barber, 2008; Caldwell et al., 2009; Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005). Almost all the men identified either a lack of available supports or indicated that they had negative experiences when they did enter treatment programs. Ivan argued that money allocated from the government went primarily to women's organizations, leaving men with nothing:

"When I read the newspapers, you know, the money from the government it's always women's organizations that get it. Men, they don't get anything, no nothing – no they don't get nothing because there's no men's organizations" [Ivan]

While this is more conspiratorial in nature, Ivan reinforces the idea that men are not supported, in this case by the government themselves. From his perspective, if all the financial assistance from the government is flowing into women's organizations, it leaves men unsupported with nothing. Adam echoes this sentiment, claiming: "*there are no supports.... there is no support for men. Men are on their own.*" A lack of available help was a common experience for the majority of participants. Glenn claimed that he was trying to pay lawyers and other professionals to assist him with the custody battle over his daughter with little success:

"Even people I would pay to help me still didn't help me. Like, like a lot of professionals wouldn't help me too." [Glenn]

When probed for more details about why professionals would not assist him, even when he has offered money he stated: "*The first lawyer I paid was like not impressed with me by the time I finished the conversation, like I have these tapes and he didn't give a fuck.*" Glenn said that the tapes contained instances of his ex-fiancé upset him, as he had started recording her anytime they were in conflict. The tapes were not played during the interview for any sort of

verification. It is interesting that despite having recordings, professionals were unwilling to assist Glenn with his attempts to regain custody of his daughter.

Jeremy had to endure a very stigmatizing experience when he was trying to reach out for assistance as a victim of domestic violence. Jeremy detailed his experiences calling 7 hotlines:

when I decided I was leaving before I called my sister I called, I think it was 7, and my memory is not really great of some of that time but I think it was 7 hotlines, domestic abuse shelters, there was 7, uh, phone calls that I made. Of the 7, I got a range of responses. The one constant was that they don't deal with men. They have no services for men. [Jeremy]

Jeremy's experience is reflective of the scholarship, wherein there are not many places where men are able to get assistance. Not only was he unable to receive support, but one of the places he called responded by telling him that he "*clearly has emotional dysregulation – you clearly have anger problems, you need an anger management program.*" They knew nothing about him other than that he had mentioned he was in distress, and he was told he needed anger management. That experience was very stigmatizing for Jeremy, and it impacted his ability to have a voice. He alluded to how it was difficult to speak about as he was a "*privileged white male, an old privileged white male*". He firmly believes that his identity impacted his experiences with service access. The only participant who did not have a negative experience when attempting to access services was Brad. When asked about how it felt accessing community supports, he claimed that: "*I never felt that I was discriminated against or stereotyped.*" This is interesting, as every other participant reported that they felt stigmatized while trying to obtain help and support. Brad is an outlier to have been treated with respect as he obtained help and assistance.

Nithin and Logan were both mandated to complete the Partner Assault Response (PAR) program, and neither of them had a positive experience doing so. Nithin claims that he should

never have been mandated to complete the program, and he feels that there were other men in the program who were also being abused:

"I want people to be aware these are situations....and I've gone through that anger management through PARs eh? The PARs, 12 weeks, that was kind of it was mandatory for me to go through that. I met men in similar situations, similar stories, and uh, I'm not saying that men are not abusive, but there are men being abused." [Nithin]

When asked to elaborate on what he meant by that, he stated that there are both sides to the story: "*there are men, who are kind of alcoholics and all those things, they abuse and all those things. That is true, but this is true too, both are true.*" Nithin argued that there were men in the program who did not deserve to be there but were mandated to complete the program regardless. Interestingly, Logan argued the same thing, that there were some men in attendance that he did not feel were fully responsible for their actions:

"You go in - and I graduated - you go in and they treat you like a criminal, it doesn't matter what the truth is you're guilty. I hope you never go through this experience. - I'm sure some people in that program are guilty, you know some people confess to you know "I hit my wife, she hit me, I hit her back" but I never heard - only one guy had committed any sort of act of physical violence without his wife doing anything, every other guy in that program wife hit him as well, none of the wives were charged except for one. All the guys were charged." [Logan]

Like Nithin, Logan presented a similar argument of there being both sides to the story. It is interesting that both men had similar experiences with the treatment program. They both framed the PAR program as one that is bias, constantly forcing you to openly accept and admit guilt for previous actions. Concerning previous actions, Logan argued that the current practice of denying someone who has committed a crime from accessing supports is a glaring issue:

"So I don't think you should deny support services to somebody who's been charged of a crime. For example, especially if you're innocent, for example even if you are a guilty person what the fuck are our social services for? Like okay, Joe is guilty and he's a violent guy, and he understands that, he's trying to get help." [Logan]

Logan claimed that by rejecting perpetrators of domestic violence who acknowledge and accept that they are perpetrators is doing those individuals a huge disservice. They cannot be given

adequate support if they are being denied access, so what will prevent them from engaging in violent actions again? To Logan, step one is helping those who can acknowledge that they need help themselves, even if that person has committed terrible acts of violence. While Jeremy did not attend PAR, he gave his thoughts on how society responds to cases of domestic violence:

"I'm not saying that we have to do this for men, I think the system's screwed, and we need to do stuff for everybody. I think the whole concept of domestic violence isn't well enough understood or addressed. Taking women and putting them in a shelter, isn't really.... working either." [Jeremy]

From his perspective, the entire system is broken, and nothing will change under the current paradigm of how we respond to domestic violence. He argues that the cycle of violence is difficult to break using the existing options of support. Jeremy went on to mention his idea of what optimal service might look like:

"I think there would be a hub. Like this is, we are working towards that here, but um, and the hub wouldn't necessarily provide the services but the hub would be connected to the services so that men could come to that hub....in my ideal it wouldn't be a men's only and a women's only. It would be a hub for people who've experienced domestic violence. Here come here, and we'll help you, it doesn't matter what your gender is, or you know." [Jeremy]

To him, gender should be taken out of it. In his eyes, if you have experienced domestic violence, then you come to the “hub” and get support. It is an interesting concept to remove gender from the equation, instead providing treatment tailored to individual experiences. While the sample of this study is too small to be generalizable, it captures the perception and experiences of a group of men in the GTA. It is not possible to make any sort of meaningful policy recommendations about the efficacy of community supports based on the sample, although the common theme of receiving little to no assistance when accessing services is an interesting result that should be explored in more detail. For all the participants but one, the issue of service access was a stigmatizing, problematic experience. Participants involved in treatment programs were very critical of them, determining them to be stigmatizing and unhelpful.

5.5 Chapter Summary

The results presented in this chapter displayed participants' perceptions, experiences and attitudes concerning masculine identity and stigma management, determining how they relate to domestic violence. Discussing identity, the interviews revealed three important subthemes: (1) Defining Masculinity, (2) Rejection of Social Expectations, and (3) Managing Stigma of Demasculinity. Questions about masculinity and the participants' perceptions of it indicated that how they regarded patriarchal expectations of men, and their expectations of a partner influenced the way that they saw masculinity. Rejections of social norms manifested in two ways: some men saw gender roles as meaningless, pushing them aside, and a few argued that men do not need to suffer in silence, instead they should take accountability. To manage the stigma of associated with being emasculated a few participants noted that being emotionally vulnerable resulted in stigmatizing situations. Many of the participants with children were impacted by the loss of relationships with them, feeling shame by the loss of fatherhood. Three participants highlighted victim experiences that left lasting negative impacts on their self-perceptions. Understanding these different aspects of masculine identities will enhance our knowledge of the male experience of domestic violence.

Probing questions about stigma management highlighted two significant subthemes: (1) Techniques of Neutralization, and (2) Service Access. The majority of participants utilized Matza and Sykes (1957) techniques of neutralization as a means of managing the stigma and shame associated with their experiences. The most common technique identified by the sample was the denial of responsibility. By framing themselves as not responsible, the participants are able to avoid the shame and stigma associated with their actions. There was also a notable perception of bias by the participants about the policing and court systems. There was an

inherent thought that there is a prevalent bias towards men. Service access was an important component of stigma management, but for all but one participant, it was a negative, stigmatizing experience. Many of the participants identified a lack of available support, and for those that did find community supports, they were not able to provide the necessary assistance required. Two of the participants were mandated to complete the PAR program, and both had a negative experience, being very critical of their experiences completing PAR. The narratives provided demonstrated that men who have experienced domestic violence must engage in and negotiate stigma management to navigate their everyday lives and daily routines. In order to better understand the nuances discussed in the results section, the final chapter of this thesis aims to reconcile the analysis in more detail by making sense of the themes by revisiting the theory and scholarship on domestic violence.

Chapter Six: Discussion

The issue of domestic violence has received increasing attention as a prevalent social issue in recent years. This thesis explored perceptions and experiences of nine men who experienced domestic violence. The findings revealed three distinct themes: (1) Masculine Identities, (2) Stigma Management, and (c) Barriers to Service. The present study contributes to the field of research on domestic violence by exploring the male experience concerning this prevalent social issue. This discussion provides an analysis and explanation of the results in relation to the research objectives. To conclude, the limitations in the current analysis and direction for future research are discussed.

Assessing the Literature. A review of the existing scholarship revealed the importance of three factors when assessing the dynamics of men and domestic violence: (1) male identity, (2) stigma, and (3) the dynamics of service access. These are all critical components of the male experience. Expectations of men are heavily influenced by gender roles (Choma et al., 2010; Peralta & Tuttle, 2013; Smith et al., 2015). This socialization starts from youth, framing the way that men think, behave and feel in ways unique to their gender. As a result, men learn early how showing vulnerable feelings such as grief, shame or fear is perceived as weakness (Scheff, 2007). With time, the suppression of vulnerable feelings becomes the norm. Goffman (1963) notes how this is a form of stigma management.

Peralta and Tuttle (2013) highlight that traditional gender roles link females with the role of ‘caretaker’ and men with the label of ‘breadwinner’. Berger and Luckmann (1967) indicate that these ‘roles’ we take on as we move through daily life contribute to the formation of identity. Being a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’ impacts how we perceive ourselves, as identity encompasses gender roles, therefore identity is critical in assessing the way that we navigate

interactions throughout broader society. When masculinity negatively manifests itself, it may present as masculine gender role stress, which has been linked to both unhealthy lifestyle behaviours and increased anger (Arrindell, 2005; Smith et al., 2005).

In response to the stigma associated with masculine stress, some men may employ one of Matza and Sykes's (1957) techniques of neutralization, which are a means of avoiding moral responsibility for their actions. Four of the techniques were analyzed, namely: (1) the denial of responsibility, (2) denial of injury, (3) denial of the victim, and (4) condemnations of the condemners. The denial of responsibility is the most common technique of neutralization employed by men to mitigate the social impact of their actions. Research by Catlett et al. (2010) and Olver et al. (2011) revealed denial of responsibility as a significant predictor of attrition in treatment programs.

Matza and Sykes (1957) suggest that by stating an action resulted in no injury or was not harmful, an individual who has committed a deviant act can lessen their responsibility for what occurred. Engaging in the denial of injury is common, with offender accounts of domestic violence tending to minimize the harm inflicted on their partners (Bullock & Condry, 2013). Some men will deny not just the injuries of the victim, but also the victim themselves. If there is no present victim, then there cannot be any guilt or shame as a result (Matza and Sykes, 1957). This is accomplished through rationalizing that the deviant act was one of rightful retaliation, or through denying the existence of the victim altogether. Existing scholarship notes how some men downplay the victim as a means of justifying their actions (Catlett et al., 2010).

The fourth technique of neutralization is to simply condemn the condemners. A delinquent may deflect their behaviours and turn them back on those who have judged them to be wrong, attacking them to defuse responsibility, and labeling them as hypocrites in the process

(Matza & Sykes, 1957). Catlett et al. (2010) revealed how some batterers felt a powerful sense of victimization by the legal system, responding with hostility and anger. By framing the legal system as the problem, it deflects responsibility away from their own actions. The participants in this research also utilized these four techniques of neutralization to navigate personal shames and stigmas. The most common technique applied was to condemn the condemners. The majority of participants indicated that there was some sort of bias or corruption within the system that placed them at a disadvantage.

Service access is a notable issue, as many men face a variety of systemic challenges and barriers when attempting to acquire supports. A lack of understanding about the male experience of domestic violence leaves significant gaps in the levels of service provided (Caldwell et al., 2009; Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005). Generally, the treatments provided are not unique, with examples like the Duluth model taking a one-size-fits-all approach. As a result, existing services do not meet the specific needs of men in a way that does not result in shame and/or stigma. Fathers' rights groups question the efficacy of both the child custody and child support systems (Crowley, 2009; Dragiewicz, 2010) and there are concerns over how police respond to cases of domestic violence (Fraelich & Ursel, 2014; Randle & Graham, 2011). The participants in this study also identified difficulties in accessing community supports and were generally critical of treatment programs. There were notable concerns about being stigmatized while trying to obtain help. Stigma management is critical for this population as they navigate their daily lives and manage their lived experiences.

The Theory Behind Stigma Management. The theoretical framework that guided this research utilized elements from social constructionism, stigma, and techniques of neutralization. The use of these three theories in combination provides space for a more in-depth explanation of

the male experience of domestic violence. Tepperman and Curtis (2009) note that the process of interacting with siblings, caregivers and parents provides children with the necessary cognitive and emotional skills required to successfully engage with our society. Through interacting with one another, we can learn to navigate the everyday realities of our social world. Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue that all knowledge is derived from and maintained through social interactions. We take on various roles, as previously mentioned, and this constitutes identity. It is formed by social processes, and self-perception is modified and/or maintained through social relationships. With our society placing such a high importance on social interactions, it is anticipated that individuals would create means of avoiding stigma and shame as a result of negative social interactions. Engaging in such actions is known as stigma management.

To manage stigma, Goffman (1959) argued that individuals employ impression management. Impression management is a process where individuals attempt to influence the perceptions and beliefs of others, through regulating and controlling the information within a social interaction (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) used the term performance to refer to a person's efforts to create specific impressions in the minds of others. A performer wants to present themselves in a positive frame, while avoiding negative emotions and feelings, especially shame.

Performances are defined by three stages: the frontstage, the backstage, and the outside stage (Goffman, 1959). To navigate and manage stigma, the frontstage is the most significant. The frontstage of the performance is concerned with authenticity and presenting oneself as an authentic individual during social interactions (Goffman, 1959). Frontstage behaviour is what we do when we know that others are aware of us. We change our behaviour and interactions when

we have an audience. Frontstage behaviour reflects internalized norms that are shaped by our appearance, roles, and the setting (Goffman, 1959).

While we know that men are not superior to women, for some men, these negative concepts may be reinforced through impression management. Goffman notes how it is fine for a fifteen-year-old boy who drinks in a bar or drives a car to represent himself as eighteen, yet there are many social contexts in which it would be improper for a woman to not present herself as being more sexually attractive or more youthful than is really the case (Goffman, 1959). This is merely one example that highlights the differences between how men and women are perceived.

The third theoretical framework presented to assist in the explanation of stigma management concerns Matza and Sykes (1957) techniques of neutralization. The application of four of these techniques (denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, and condemning the condemners) are discussed above in detail. There is a 5th technique, the appeal to higher loyalties. Some deviants may be committing wrongful actions not because they reject social norms, but because other norms, considered more pressing, or involving a higher loyalty are given precedence (Matza & Sykes, 1957). All participants in this study rejected the use of this technique of neutralization. There were no claims to higher loyalties made as a justification of their actions. Keeping these theoretical frameworks in mind was important as I developed my methodology.

Methodological Approach. This study engaged in a qualitative methodological approach, rooted in an interpretivist framework. This helped to ensure that the social reality and lived experiences of the participants were captured through rich, thick descriptive outcomes outlining their definition of the situation (Lacity & Janson, 1994; Wignall, 1998). The limited existing research has been predominantly quantitative, focusing primarily on an objective reality

assessing the impact of mental health, risk, and domestic violence outcomes with little attention on empathetic experiences or emotions (Ennis et al., 2017; Harris et al., 2017; Oliver & Jung, 2017; Storey & Hart, 2014). Through an empathetic understanding, participants were able to share their experiences and perceptions of domestic violence.

The sample consisted of nine heterosexual male participants, ages 26-58, who were either separated, married, or divorced and who experienced domestic violence within their relationship and were selected purposively; or through snowball sampling were recruited from the community partner. Recruitment was conducted through two primary means. The researcher had access to a gatekeeper who was able to recruit additional participants. With the assistance of the community partner, a recruitment ad (see Appendix C) was emailed to all members of the program. The initial sample was set at 15, however sampling this group of men proved to be more challenging than anticipated and the researcher's final N (9) was smaller as a result. All participants were either formally (i.e. charged) or informally (i.e. not charged) by police. The upper age limit of 18 was chosen to ensure that all participants were of legal age.

The selected method of qualitative data collection was face-to-face semi-structured interviews which lasted about 1-1.5 hours. This type of interview allowed great flexibility in capturing the experiences and voice of all nine participants (Adams 2010; Anyan, 2013; Rabionet, 2011). This interview allowed the researcher to establish rapport and let the participants engage in a somewhat natural conversation. The open-ended format of semi-structured interviewing provided participants with a space to provide authentic answers that captured the stories of this marginalized population (Rabionet, 2011). All nine interviews were conducted at UOIT or an agreed upon location, like the community organization or a coffee

shop. A \$10 honorarium was given to each participant as a token of appreciation of their time (see Appendix B).

Once data collection was completed, the interviews were transcribed and analyzed. A thematic analysis was done, manually, keeping in mind the research objectives. To help substantiate claims and align findings with research objectives, specific quotes from participants were extracted for each theme. The three major themes that were extracted from the interviews were: (1) Masculine Identities, (2) Stigma Management and (3) Barriers to Service. To help enhance the thematic analysis, participants, with consent, were emailed their transcripts to engage in the process of member checking. Member checks provide participants with opportunities to correct errors and determine that the data analysis is congruent with their experience, ensuring authenticity and truthfulness (Carlson 2010; Reilly, 2013). This enhanced the reliability of their voice, ensuring that I have accurately captured their lived experiences.

At times within this research, I saw myself as an insider, as well as an outsider. Being male put me in a great position to have an open conversation with these men. Rapport was established and I was able to capture the thick, descriptive details with each participant. This may have been an issue if the interviewer was a woman. Due to the sensitive and personal nature of the topic, potential participants may not have been as comfortable discussing such personal experiences with a woman due to stigma, or embarrassment (Anderson, 2013; Kimberg, 2008).

My status as an outsider impacted how I had to navigate the community; it was evident that some participants were concerned about bias. This was not a surprise, as I do not share similar life experiences and thus cannot relate to the lived experiences of the participants. Some of the men questioned my capacity to both relate to and understand what they observed as a result. To navigate this issue, I had to be aware of how my own biases and preconceptions may

be influencing how I perceived the personal stories of the participants. For some, they may have been surprised to see a mixed-race man with an afro, as my name is relatively white and French. None of the participants were the same race as me. While I did not experience discrimination during data collection, my ethnic background may have influenced rapport building, potentially impacting how comfortable the participants were throughout the interview. Despite these barriers, the combination of partial insider status and successful rapport building helped to reveal thick, descriptive results that will be analyzed alongside the research objectives below.

Applying Research Objectives to the Results. This study attempts to investigate four research objectives: (a) explore the socially constructed interplay of the male label of perpetrator or survivor by assessing their perceptions and lived experiences of domestic violence, (b) assess the nuances of how the stigma associated with being labeled a perpetrator or survivor is managed, (c) navigate the role of agency in the creation of masculine identities, (d) identify the complex socio-cultural consequences and systemic barriers associated with perpetrators-survivors of domestic violence.

Exploring the lived experiences of these participants allowed for deeper insight into the stigma surrounding the labels of ‘perpetrator’ or ‘survivor’. As mentioned, the gatekeeper for this project was extremely adamant that the word ‘perpetrator’ not be applied to the participants because of the negative and stigmatizing connotations associated with it. All the participants themselves rejected the label of ‘perpetrator’, positioning themselves as victims or survivors of domestic violence. The rejection of stigmatizing labels revealed within the results was consistent with the literature (Akers & Sellers, 2009; Mongold & Edwards, 2014). Being labeled as a survivor or victim of domestic violence was not perceived as a positive either. Some of the men mentioned how they did not like the label of survivor, preferring to term it as being “*someone*

who has experienced domestic violence”. The rejection of these labels was one of the means by which the participants engaged in stigma management.

Stigma management is inherent to this marginalized population. Rejecting the labels of ‘perpetrator’ and ‘survivor’ is a way for the participants to manage the negative connotations associated with the male domestic violence experience. The main method utilized by the majority of the participants to avoid stigma and shame was to engage in Matza and Sykes (1957) techniques of neutralization. Specifically, the participants engaged in four: (1) the denial of responsibility, (2) the denial of injury, (3) the denial of the victim, and (4) condemning the condemners. These results are consistent with the literature (Bullock & Condry, 2013; Catlett et al., 2010; Henning & Holdford, 2006). Utilizing these various techniques provides the participants with a tool to shift shame, stigma, and responsibility away from themselves and on to others around them.

The role of agency had an influence on some men concerning the creation of masculine identities. While many participants held to more traditional expectations of the role of men and masculinity, there were a few that rejected the notion of traditional gender roles. Socially constructed gender roles help to reinforce suppressing vulnerable emotions, as men are expected to be aggressive and tough, associating the expression of vulnerable emotions with weakness (Peralta & Tuttle, 2013). Results of the study corroborated this taboo on emotional expression, with most of the sample maintaining patriarchal perspectives on how men should act and behave. A few of the participants rejected social norms, instead choosing to take ownership and be accountable for their actions. Clearly, some of the participants had more agency over their self-perceptions than others. But one common experience is that regardless of how they perceived themselves, the majority of them faced barriers when attempting to engage in service access.

All but one of the participants in this research faced systemic barriers and challenges that were associated with their experiences of domestic violence. Two of the men in this study were mandated to attend the PAR program because of their actions, and neither felt that it was a positive experience in doing so. The PAR program is based on the Duluth model of treating offenders, which is supposed to help them take responsibility for their behaviour so that they may recognize how they have impacted those around them (Bonem et al., 2008). Although this appears to be a logical premise for treatment, the scholarship has shown that the Duluth model has failed to consistently change behaviour in batterers (Cantos & O'Leary, 2014; Stover et al., 2009). Both participants who completed PAR felt that it was unnecessary, and it did not change how they perceive themselves or domestic violence. The experiences of these two men concerning the Duluth program are in agreement with the literature.

Further, participants attempting to access community supports or legal assistance of their own accord, generally had negative experiences, and were unsuccessful in obtaining help. All the participants but one perceived a notable bias towards men by both support services and the criminal justice system. It was almost conspiratorial in nature, with many of the men labeling the system as “*corrupt*”, “*broken*”, or “*useless*”. Many had concerns about how the police respond to domestic violence, and they questioned the efficacy of how the government handles cases of child custody. Most shelters focus on assisting women (Wies, 2008; Wright & Bertrand, 2017), resulting in inadequate services to meet the demands of men. The experiences of the participants were reflective of this lack of support. To break the negative cycle, health professionals should show compassion, humility, and sensitivity when addressing this minority population (Barber, 2008; Wallace, 2014).

This thesis captured the voice of a relatively silenced and stigmatized segment of the population. While the sample does not allow for generalizability, the findings of this thesis suggest that we need to gain a more empirical understanding of service access. The majority of participants had very negative experiences when trying to access community supports, a phenomenon seen in existing scholarship (Barber, 2008; Wallace, 2014) A unique key finding of this research is that multiple participants, with no previous connection to one another, positioned their partner having narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) as a primary reason for the conflict within their respective relationships. It is interesting that some of the men framed their partners as having an identical mental illness. This finding should be explored in more detail in future.

6.1 Limitations and Future Directions

The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions and experiences of men and domestic violence. It is important to highlight that there were notable limitations. As a result of the chosen method of analysis, qualitative, the results of this study were not generalizable to the broader population. Due to the sample being small, 9 participants, it highlights a small, targeted population. As a result, it is not possible to suggest policy recommendations, as the sample cannot accurately capture the entire male experience of domestic violence. All participants were heterosexual, so the experience of domestic violence between homosexual male partners was not captured. There was not enough variance in the demographics of the participants, for example their race or age, meaning that it is not possible to determine the impact of these specific factors on the male domestic violence experience. Also, there were no means to corroborate their stories with any other source to test the validity of the data collected. The subject matter of this thesis was sensitive, and therefore, some participants may have answered in a socially desirable manner to look good. While a true effort was made to encourage an honest discussion, sometimes a

participant may not follow suit. The participants belonged to a community partner and sometimes that in itself forces individuals to talk differently. Perhaps, doing interviews with non-community partners may have resulted in a different outcome.

While this research was completely exploratory in nature, it has made a significant contribution to the extant scholarship on the male experience of domestic violence in Canada. It provided voices to a rather invisible group of individuals that truly need a platform to discuss their perceptions. My research, although challenging in more ways than one, created a safe space for these men to discuss their lived realities and help reconcile the gaps in the domestic violence literature. Future research should attempt to examine a larger sample size of men and a mixed methodology to better understand what has been left unsaid in these pages. The problem is a complex one and requires more scholars to participate to mobilize knowledge. Additionally, a larger sample may enhance the heterogeneity of the sample and generalizability. My sample, unfortunately, was not representative of all racial groups and was not generalizable. The current sample was predominantly Caucasian and had a very small sample size. An understanding of the racial differences for men who experience domestic violence may aid scholars and service providers with a more holistic understanding of the issues and experiences of domestic violence in men and how to appropriately respond to these issues.

A consistent finding in my research was that, most participants struggle with accessing community supports. Future studies should empirically test the assistance provided to men who have experienced domestic violence, so that the best possible treatment and assistance may be provided to them. There is clearly an influx of women shelters. These gaps seen in the domestic violence literature need to be addressed in-depth sooner than later such that this invisible group of men find their way to such research to have their voices also be heard. This will alleviate the

underdeveloped understanding of men and domestic violence, especially in a Canadian context. To this end, this thesis has made a conscious effort to understand these vulnerable men's social realities and give voice to a rather silenced group of men in the domestic violence scholarship.

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Appendix A

The interview schedule is detailed below:

Demographic Questions

How old are you?

What race do you identify as?

Where were you born?

What is your highest level of education up until now?

Would you consider yourself to be a religious person?

Did you ever witness arguments or violence at home as a child?

Are you currently in a relationship? (*If yes – how long?*)

Research Objectives

A) *Exploring the socially constructed interplay of male perpetrator and survivor by assessing their lived experiences of domestic violence*

-> Are you employed? (*if yes*) what is your field of work? (*if no*) do you feel financially dependent on your partner (*if yes – how so?*)

-> How did you and your partner engage with each other day-to-day?

Probe here to learn more about day-to-day interactions, possible triggers, etc

-> Could you provide me with your account of how the major incidences of IPV between you and your partner happened? How did the interactions play out?

Probe here to understand more about the experience – who engaged with who, how the IPV occurred, the health/mental impact, etc

-> How would you identify yourself due to of these interactions? How has this experience affected you?

->Have you shared this information with others? (*if so*) what made you want to tell others about your experiences? (*if no*) what made you decide to keep your story to yourself? (*Potential probe for stigma*)

B) *Assessing the nuances of how the stigma associated with being labeled a perpetrator is managed*

->Have you been in a situation where others knew about your personal experiences with IPV? (*if so*) How did this impact you?

->Have you ever been labeled as a perpetrator? (*if yes*) how did you respond to this? What happened between you and the individual(s)?

(*if no*) have you faced any other negative labels or interactions as a result of your personal experiences? Could you explain what happened?

->How do you manage stigmatizing situations?

C) *Navigating the role of agency in the creation of masculine identities*

->How would you define masculinity?

->How would you define the characteristics of a man? (What makes a man a “man”?)

->How do you view gender roles?

->From your perspective, what is the role of a woman in the relationship?

->What are the ideal characteristics in a partner? (physical, personality, etc)

(*Probe deeper where possible – try to dig into how they perceive masculinity and gender roles*)

D) *Identifying the complex socio-cultural consequences and systemic barriers associated with perpetrators/survivors of IPV*

->How have your experiences with IPV affected your relationships with other people?

->Is anyone in your family aware of your experience? (*if yes*) how has your relationship changed with them as a result? (*if not*) how come you have not shared your story with them?

->Has your opinion on intimate relationships been impacted due to your personal experiences with IPV?

->How has your day-to-day life changed as a result of your experiences?

Probe here to determine how this has impacted their interactions with others

E) *Discussing the systemic barriers and challenges to service access for male perpetrators/survivors*

->Did you attempt to access any services to get help and/or support?

(*depending on answer*) did you feel like you were being treated fairly and with respect as you accessed supports? OR did something prevent you from attempting to get help?

->What would optimal support services look like to you?

->In your opinion, what is the biggest barrier or challenge that could stop someone who is looking for assistance?

Thank you for your time and participation today, and I hope you also found some benefits as a result of your engagement on this research project. Is there anything you would like to mention, discuss, or add that was not brought forth during this interview already?

Appendix B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

TITLE OF STUDY: Understanding Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Through the Experiences and Perceptions of Men in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by MA candidate Ryan LePage under the supervision of Drs. Zaidi & Mostaghim from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT). If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact MA candidate Ryan LePage at (905)-721-8668 ext. 3443 or ryan.lepage@uoit.ca

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research project will provide men with an opportunity to share their perceptions and experiences surrounding intimate partner violence (IPV). Through interviews with male perpetrators and/or survivors of violence, we may gain a stronger, more holistic understanding about IPV. More specifically, we may be able to provide better support and assistance to male perpetrators/survivors, as we gain knowledge surrounding their perspective and personal experiences with IPV. Without this knowledge, it is difficult to identify the specific blocks to service access for male perpetrators of IPV, which impacts their rehabilitation process.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an interview which will last no more than one hour. This will be the primary method of data collection.
2. The interview will address, but will not be limited to the following themes: Your background information, experiences & perceptions of IPV at the individual, community, and service levels, stigma management, and the role of agency and its impact on identity.
3. At the end of the interview, you will be thanked for your participation in our study, and you may leave contact information so that a copy of the final research project can be sent to you, if you wish to see it.

As well:

- Your answers will be treated as **CONFIDENTIAL** and will not be accessed to others outside of the research. However, the responses are not **ANONYMOUS** as direct quotes will be used in written records, and participants will be able to self-identify.
- Interviews will be **AUDIO RECORDED**, using a digital recording device.
- Your participation in this survey is completely **VOLUNTARY**. If you **WITHDRAW** from the interview, the data file with your voice will be deleted, and none of your thoughts will be transcribed.
- Should the participant **REVEAL** something of a criminal nature, there is the possibility that legal authorities will be notified.
- If you wish to withdraw your consent at any point after the interview has been completed, the data file with your voice, as well as any transcriptions of your thoughts will be deleted.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

All data will be kept confidential and anonymous so risks are minimal, however in discussing their IPV experiences, circumstances, challenges, stressors, and strains, participants may have feelings of embarrassment and/or be upset while discussing a particular experience.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The benefits of this research are that it makes significant contribution to IPV and community partnerships by examining the perceptions and experiences of male perpetrators/survivors of IPV. Such research will contribute to education, new laws, and the removal of blocks to service access for men in this demographic. Participants will receive \$10 for their involvement in the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

As noted earlier, any information obtained in connection with this study that can identify you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Participants will self-identify themselves, and the research data will remain confidential by removing all identifiers. Confidentiality will be maintained by keeping all records of participants that can identify subjects on an encrypted USB device in a locked drawer within a locked office on the UOIT campus. We will never use your real names in anything that is written as a result of this research.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. If you WITHDRAW from the interview, the data file with your voice will be deleted and none of your thoughts will be transcribed.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

Formal presentations will be made by researchers to ensure that knowledge is distributed to the public, and the public sectors (health, education, social work). Any of these findings will be reported according to their institution's standard practice and protocol.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant, complaints, or adverse events may be addressed to Research Ethics Board through the Research Ethics Officer – researchethics@uoit.ca or 905.721.8668 x. 3693. By signing this consent form I understand and agree to the terms and conditions of this research study. I also understand that I have NOT relinquished any legal rights (e.g., in the case of research-related harm).

X_____

DATE: _____ / _____ / _____ (DD/MM/YYYY)

This study has been approved by the UOIT Research Ethics Board REB #14766 on August 20th, 2018.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or experience any discomfort related to the study, please contact the researcher Ryan LePage at (905)-721-8668 ext. 3443 or ryan.lepage@uoit.ca

Appendix C



SHARE YOUR STORY

The University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) invites men to participate in a **CONFIDENTIAL & PRIVATE** Face-to-Face interviews about their life experiences and perceptions with intimate partner violence (IPV). These interviews will last approximately one hour. A **\$10 honorarium** will be provided as a token of appreciation.

Your story may forever impact the lives of future male survivors of IPV, while breaking down systemic barriers to service access

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

- ➔ Heterosexual men who have experienced IPV
- ➔ Currently in an intimate relationship, or have been in the past
- ➔ Lives within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)

If interested, PLEASE CALL **905.721.8668 ext. 3443**
or EMAIL ryan.lepage@uoit.ca

*This study has been approved by the UOIT Research Ethics Board REB
[#14766] on [August 20th, 2018]*