

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
AND LETHAL INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

By

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## **Introduction**

Violence against women can take on a variety of forms and shapes; it can be physical or psychological, making it difficult to observe or quantify. It might be prolonged for an extended period of time, or it can be quick but intense. Women are most frequently victims of intimate partner violence (IPV). IPV happens in a variety of circumstances, spanning socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicities, ages, and religious affiliations. IPV, in its most severe forms, is fatal. When IPV leads to death, it is commonly referred to as lethal IPV or Intimate Partner Homicide (IPH). The available definitions of IPV are varied, frequently being either too broad or too narrow, preventing a comprehensive understanding. Not all forms of violence endured by women occur inside the confines of the home. IPV is not always explained in terms of gender violence (Zara & Gino, 2018). While it is recognized that men can be victims of IPV, research consistently shows that the victimization of women through IPV is more prevalent in our society (Koppa, PhD & Messing, PhD, 2021). The focus of this paper is to specifically analyze the violence, and sometimes murder, of women committed by the men they are in intimate relationships with. Intimate Partner Violence and Homicide are very complex issues. Combating this type of violence against women continues to be an enormous task. While we have made significant progress in addressing domestic violence, legislation, practices, and research continue to fall short of responding to the reality of women's experiences (Meloy & Miller, 2011). I argue that important advances can be made to further mitigate its impact and save lives.

I learned of IPH through the murder of my cousin, Daniella who was murdered by her ex-boyfriend. I share a diary post from that day to convey the shock and devastation that this type of murder brings to the victim's loved ones....

*Today, I went to my dad's house to drop off the boys because I had a photo shoot. While I was there the phone rang. "It's Damien. I'll call him back" my dad said. Then, while I was driving to my studio, Damien called me. When he found out that I was driving he asked me to just call him back when I got to the studio. I tried to get him to tell me more, but he insisted I call him back. It was bad news; he didn't want to tell me while I was driving. I spent the next minute going through all the horrible things that could have happened, which was defeating the purpose of waiting to call him back. Surely everything I had considered was far worse than what he was going to tell me. So, I called him back and explained that what I was thinking was probably worse than what he had to tell me and for him to please just tell me. He then told me something I had never even considered "Daniella is dead". Daniella is our cousin. "What?" I asked. "What do you mean? What happened?" He told me that her ex-boyfriend had killed her. He told me that he strangled her and then stabbed her multiple times.*

*How could this be true? "Oh my God!", I responded. "Where is she? What hospital? Call me when you find out more." I was not understanding. "Donna, she's not in a hospital. She is gone. They found her in the tub. She is dead." I hung up thinking he was mistaken. He had to be. I went on and somehow photographed the little boy who was in my studio, in his white communion suit anxiously waiting to find out that Damien was wrong. I called my dad, he was on his way to Brooklyn to be there for Aunt Lena. He would call me when he knew more. I waited by the phone, unable to do anything but search the internet for more information. It was not until I saw a news broadcast from a Brooklyn station that showed them taking my cousin out of the house in a body bag. A body bag! It had been hours since I had learned that she had been killed. Seeing that broadcast made it true. She was dead. He killed her. How could this have happened? I called my dad and told him the news that he knew for hours, but that I was just beginning to understand. "Dad, it's true, she's dead".*

This devastating news caused my entire family to go through a litany of questions such as: *How did we not see this? Why didn't she come to us for help? Why did she stay? What can we do to prevent intimate partner violence? More importantly, what can we do to prevent intimate partner violence from turning into homicide?* It is important to address questions such as these, not only for my family, but for society's sake. Additionally, viable solutions must be created and incorporated to navigate these

concerns. Granted, these issues are global in nature, however, for the purposes of this work, I will explore the impact of IPV and lethal IPV in America.

### **Intimate Partner Violence**

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is defined as any conduct occurring within an intimate relationship that leads to physical, psychological, or sexual harm to one of the individuals involved. An intimate relationship includes those that are married or unmarried who are living together or separately. This term incorporates all forms of physical, sexual, and psychological aggression/abuse, as well as all forms of controlling behavior. Despite its widespread presence, it remains a poorly understood phenomenon. IPV is distinct from Domestic Violence in that it is limited to acts of aggression between intimate partners. Domestic violence is a blanket term that refers to all forms of family violence, including elder abuse, child abuse, and marital rape. (World Health Organization, 2012). While the word "domestic violence" is not an accurate description of intimate partner violence, it is the most frequently used term in the United States to refer to the sort of crime that IPV refers to. Although the term Intimate Partner Violence was coined in reaction to the reality that domestic violence excluded a significant number of female victims, many government programs, regulations, and laws continue to use the phrase domestic violence (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

Koppa and Messing (2021) found that 33% of women in the United States have experienced physical abuse at the hands of an intimate partner during their lifetime, and 25% of women have experienced severe intimate partner violence. These data came from a large urban police jurisdiction and the research was designed to assess how frequently people who were murdered contacted the police in the three years preceding their death (to report abuse). The study examined the period from 2010 to 2014. During that period, 39.6% of women were murdered by an intimate or previous partner, compared to 3.9% of men. According to the study, police contacted 91% of female victims of intimate

relationship femicide. However, only 44.9% of these cases/calls resulted in an arrest. Koppa and Messing's findings (2021) suggest that there is a possible avenue for intimate partner homicide prevention through the integration of risk assessment and strengthened criminal justice and social sector interventions in high-risk cases (Koppa, PhD & Messing, PhD, 2021). There are several key elements to understanding intimate partner violence. Some of those include exposure to IPV as a child, the reason offenders use violence and the societal norm that allow offenders to use violence such as toxic masculinity and patriarchy. I will begin to cover the science related to these areas now.

### **Intergenerational Cycle of Abuse**

Being exposed to violence in the home and/or experiencing violence in the home as a child is a significant predictor of future violence and victimization. (Manchikanti Gómez, 2010) and many others have identified an elevated risk of violence after growing up in violent homes - of a cycle of violence exists. This "cycle" plays out in various ways.

Research has found that children who have been abused or maltreated are more prone to experience and perpetrate violence as they grow older. Abused adolescents are frequently ignored by their "regular" classmates and gravitate toward deviant peer groups, often choosing romantic partners from these groups during adolescence and young adulthood. This indicates that victims of child maltreatment have a larger risk of grownup violence victimization and perpetration. However, parental mistreatment of children may be associated with a number of additional disadvantages, including sociodemographic, economic, cultural, and environmental factors that contribute to future violence (Manchikanti Gómez, 2010).

A few studies acknowledge that the link between child maltreatment and the probability of adult IPV may be due to social and environmental factors, rather than a single, direct effect of violence. Women who have been subjected to interpersonal

violence during adolescence (ages 12-19) are reported to be at an increased risk of repeat IPV in early adulthood (ages 20-26) (Manchikanti Gómez, 2010).

According to a study of mothers who were also victims of IPV, many of the mothers were scared of violence in their children's lives as a result of their own generational pattern of violence. Many of them grew up witnessing violence between their own parents. "Me being a girl and seeing my mother being abused, you know, I followed right in her footsteps." one mother recalled (Insetta, MD et al., 2014, 715).

The idea that tensions build up before erupting in violence is only half accurate. For starters, many victims describe their stress as chronic rather than episodic, as if they are constantly "walking on eggshells." In certain instances, the joyful times might cause as much concern as his brooding, as his subsequent wrath is related to how far he has "come down" (due to something she has done or not done in his eyes) (Stark, 2009, 247). Additionally, many men leap directly from hurt to wrath, bypassing the transitional emotions portrayed in a buildup. Once men develop a dependence on violence, its absence can elicit the same physiological reactions that women do in the context of violence, such as sadness, substance addiction, and suicidal thoughts. During a divorce, many men convince themselves that their former partner is the source of their distress, obsess over her, deprive themselves of basic necessities such as food or sleep, and may stalk or murder her (Stark, 2009).

### **Exposure to IPV as a Child**

Research shows that many of the men who are batterers were not only exposed to domestic violence as children but were victims of it themselves (e.g., child abuse). There are numerous theoretical ideals that assert that behavior is learned through imitation of others and a system of rewards and reinforcements, or "subculture of violence" rationales, which attempt to explain why family violence is overrepresented in poor households and impoverished neighborhoods, or the intergenerational "transmission of

violence concept,” which asserts that domestic battery victims and their children are both victims of domestic battery (Meloy & Miller, 2011, 39).

Interestingly, many perpetrators who were abused as children did not describe their fathers as violent. In fact, many of them even blamed their mothers for the way their father behaved, “If she had been less provocative, more respectful of his position as a husband...” (Snyder, 2020, 162). This perpetuation of family violence establishes a troubling precedent for our country. A father, who is violent, instills this trait in his son. “The most common aphorism in the world of domestic violence is ‘hurt people hurt people.’ So, if a hurt person took his own pain and grappled with it rather than turning it outward toward the people in his life...” (Snyder, 2020, 162).

### **Does the Purpose of IPV Vary by Gender?**

Social constructs are cultural ideas that reflect culturally agreed upon ideas of roles of men and women in our society (Garcia & McManimon, 2011). When men use violence against their intimate partner, they are using it as a way of dominating them. In contrast, when women employ violence in their relationships, it is often as a defensive mechanism to prevent being hit or as a response to perceived threats of physical or sexual violence directed at them. Popular explanations for why males commit more violent crimes sometimes include reference to biology and evolution. The biological explanation often asserts that men have higher amounts of aggression due to higher testosterone levels, while cortisol and serotonin are also believed to be involved. While these variables have some face validity in explaining sex differences in violence, neither is sufficient to account for men's greater rates of violence. For example, testosterone levels generally increase following acts of aggression, implying a correlational but not causative relationship between testosterone and violence (Dagirmanjian et al., 2016).

### **Toxic Masculinity as a Result of Patriarchy**

The more compelling explanation for men's greater levels of violence includes a gendered component. Many civilizations view men's violence as normative, with males rewarded for adhering to male violent standards (e.g., receiving respect from peers) and punished for non-conformity (e.g., shamed for running away from a fight). This is especially evident in societies that adhere to an "honor code." When men are raised in places with a "culture of honor" (e.g., the Southern states of the United States), they tend to perceive more encouragement for aggressiveness in ambiguous situations, regardless of whether they believe the aggression is justified. The research demonstrates that males who adhere to traditional masculine ideals are more interpersonally aggressive, commit more intimate partner violence, and engage in more physical confrontations (Dagirmanjian et al., 2016).

With patriarchal cultures, like the United States, clear delineations of gender expectations are enforced. As noted, patriarchy governed the early ideologies of gender in our country and established that women belonged in the home. They were expected to be submissive and manage the family under her husband's rules. Women's domains were the home and the family, while men's domains were the workplace and the public (Garcia & McManimon, 2011). While men were accountable for legal, financial, and disciplinary decisions, the women were responsible for child rearing. Accordingly, the American justice system treated men and women differently as well, with women traditionally considered extensions of their fathers or husbands. Women were remanded to second-class citizen status in order to protect them from exploitation. Historically, the legal system has been governed by males who have held gender ideologies, employed a male lens, and assumed that women were not rational (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

Today, some may argue that patriarchal thinking is no longer a ruling principle. Scholars, however, believe that in any patriarchal system, gender inequality and

oppression remain. As a result, many men who embrace patriarchy have also committed to extreme levels of toxic masculinity which enforce this ideology. However, patriarchy and toxic masculinity has been challenged – at times – by the very ones who are the benefactors of it: men.

## **Victim Risk Factors**

### **Exposure to IPV as a Child**

Females who witnessed IPV as children have much greater risk of becoming victims of IPV. (As noted previously, exposure to IPV in childhood for boys is similarly a risk factor for IPV offending as adult men.) Exposure to relationship violence as a child has proven to be a contributing factor to why women become victims and why they stay in relationships. In part, the increased victimization risks for these females is related to the acceptance of homes as places for violence and that it is "normal" as a form of control because they have witnessed it over an extended period (Insetta, MD et al., 2014).

### **Learned Helplessness**

Learned helplessness and battered woman syndrome (BWS) was developed by psychologist Lenore Walker, a Rutgers scholar. This development was a positive shift in the psychological focus of women who were victims of abuse. Prior to this, the focus was on the victim with theories that viewed the women as pathological, masochistic, weak, sick or as women who sought out batterers. Walker asserts that BWS is caused by a cycle of violence, learned helplessness, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Victims go through three phases during the cycle of violence: tension rising, acute violence, and the honeymoon phase. As violence continues to cycle through these three phases, victims learn that they have no power to stop it, and as a result, they learn to accept their role as powerless victims. As the model proceeds, victims get PTSD, also referred to as shell shock in the military (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

Learned helplessness develops as a result of repeated exposure to unanticipated and painful situations. The idea postulates a significant deterioration in the capacity to correlate activity with a desirable outcome and a related decrease in the spectrum of responses to external demands. Battered women's learned helplessness contributes to their submissiveness and reluctance to exit an abusive relationship. Through changes in perceptions and beliefs, learned helplessness may have a moderating effect on the association between violence and mental illnesses, such as PTSD and depression. PTSD symptoms relate to learned helplessness cognitions in battered women, including the anticipation of repeating violence, an internal attribution style, and an external locus of control (Bargai et al., 2007). The characteristics of helplessness are associated with dysphoria in assaulted women. These findings suggest that battered women's learned helplessness is a widespread and predictable response to their condition. However, it is unknown whether battered women develop learned helplessness as a result of current violence or as a result of their past experience (Bargai et al., 2007).

### **Why Women Stay**

#### **Fear of Danger**

Women who are abused and show reluctance to leave their abuser have been interpreted by some as a rational and conscious choice rather than a sign of learned helplessness. This idea is based on a realistic evaluation that taking any action will significantly increase the danger for both the woman and her children (Bargai et al., 2007). As a matter of fact, when women leave a violent relationship, it increases the odds of IPH (Belknap, 2021). Leaving an abusive relationship is the single most dangerous time for women living in a violent relationship. Nicole Brown Simpson's case is a possible example Nicole was a stunning woman who was both wealthy and well-known. She was formerly married to OJ Simpson, a well-known football star. OJ was a physically and verbally violent husband. Nicole reported violence on numerous occasions, and his

violent behavior was well-known to law enforcement. Nicole and OJ divorced in 1992. She acted exactly as we would wish our loved ones to act in response to such behavior. She routinely reported their violent altercations to the authorities. Despite the fact that she divorced him, she was never truly free of him. Nicole and her friend, Ronald Goldman, were found dead two years after their divorce. "The murder was brutal – she had been stabbed 12 times. Goldman had been stabbed 25 times." (Kiner, 2020). Despite OJ's acquittal, many legal experts believe OJ murdered both victims.

### **Immigration Status**

When it comes to exiting an abusive relationship, immigrant women encounter distinct emotional, institutional, and ideological obstacles. They can be lonelier and more reliant on their spouses due to a lack of support networks and basic survival skills such as driving a car, as well as a language barrier and cultural insensitivity. Furthermore, restrictive immigration and welfare policies may keep them imprisoned with "sponsor-spouses," and their origins may make divorce unpalatable to them (Meloy & Miller, 2011, 129).

### **Ethnicity and Race**

The impact of racism must be considered when assessing IPV victimization. Studies show that the persistence of racism in our society causes Black women to be hesitant to accuse Black men of IPV for fear of betraying their already subjugated race. Furthermore, these women may encounter or perceive racism from police and other members of the criminal justice system, which contributes to their decision to keep their abuse concealed. (Waltermaurer et al., 2006)

### **Economic Autonomy**

Many battered women become imprisoned in relationships as a result of their economic dependence on abusive partners and a lack of alternative homes. Economic problems are amplified when children are involved (Meloy & Miller, 2011). If a victim

wishes to escape a situation, she must leave her house, uproot her family, and start over. This generally entails entering a shelter, moving into subsidized long-term housing, finding a new job, enrolling in new schools, and completely reconstructing their lives. In certain circumstances, women earn enough money to support themselves but lack the funds necessary for a security deposit and the first month's rent. Additionally, they may lack the financial means to furnish their new residence (Snyder, 2020)

### **Barricades to Leaving**

The question of why women stay in abusive relationships is the most frequent inquiry following an IPV-related death. This is another way for us to shift the responsibility away from the abuser and toward the victim. There are a variety of reasons why victims continue to live with their abusers. Researchers have noted that this question misses the mark because it assumes that leaving will stop the violence, when instead it can exacerbate it (Meloy & Miller, 2011).

### **Having Children**

Along with the financial obstacles that frequently exist in abusive relationships, there is the issue of children. Children complicate the process of leaving, given custody and visitation concerns. When a battered woman leaves an abusive relationship, she frequently fights for and obtains custody or visitation rights, making it virtually impossible to avoid contact with her batterer. Additionally, if the husband/partner abuses the children, the mother/wife may lose custody for failing to protect them (Snyder, 2020). There are also familial, societal, and religious influences that often reinforce the notion that parents should remain together, for the sake of the children.

### **Isolation**

Abusers isolate their victims in order to prevent revelation, establish dependence, express exclusive possession, monopolize their abilities and resources, and prevent them from seeking assistance or support. Isolation eviscerates a woman's self-

identity and constrains her subjectivity, undermining the foundations of social authority and identity (Stark, 2009). Isolation occurs as a result of a back-and-forth exchange in which victims seek to establish safe zones in which autonomy can be retained and exercised. Offenders seek to discover and destroy these safe zones. The perpetrator causes his partner to lose or quit her job, at which point she finds another or returns to school; he forbids contact with old friends, at which point she develops supplementary relationships; he steals her letters, at which point she begins a diary or establishes a secret Web address. His goal is that she will become who and what she is for him. Even if he is physically harming her, she may believe that he alone can protect her due to her isolation. She may work, visit friends, attend family functions, or seek treatment. However, she walks through these domains as if she were a corpse on leave, for whom the concept of spontaneous action, much alone freedom, can induce existential dread. The primary target of isolation is the woman's relationship with her family (Stark, 2009).

### **Emotional Obstacles**

Another reason women remain in these relationships is that she feels ashamed. She accepts some sense of responsibility for what her abuser is doing to her. Additionally, she is hopeful that he would alter his conduct. She is embarrassed to disclose that she is involved in a relationship marked by violence and "coercive control." Evan Stark (2009) defined "coercive control." Coercive control extends far beyond physical assault. Men deploy a mostly unknown type of enslavement in so many abusive relationships that resembles kidnapping or indentured service more than assault. He compares the behavior of women in abusive relationships to that of someone in a jail cell, recognizing that their behavior is difficult for an observer on the outside to comprehend since they cannot see the "bars" of her "jail cell." The abused woman is acutely aware of the "barriers" that encircle her and restrict her movement (Stark, 2009). Coercive control consists of four distinct characteristics: violence, intimidation, isolation, and

control. Forms of violence include emotional, psychological, sexual, and physical assault. Threats of emotional blackmail, violent behavior, and threats to hurt or ruin the victim or loved ones all constitute intimidation. Isolation refers to behaviors that make interpersonal interactions difficult or impossible for victims. The victim loses control over every aspect of his or her life as a result of strict restrictions and expectations. It comprises continuous monitoring and surveillance through tactics such as device examination or the installation of stalker apps. (Stark, 2009).

Additionally, “many victims also face a lack of social support. They may be isolated from their family, friendships, and religious support networks or told to work things out.” (Garcia & McManimon, 2011, 161). We also send a message to victims to stay because our justice system requires them to face a person who may have tried to kill them. Knowing that the next time they may be able to complete the job. Therefore, we are asking these victims to put their lives further at risk. For that reason, many women withdraw their statements as a way of protecting themselves and their children (Garcia & McManimon, 2011). Yet, despite the victims’ best efforts to mitigate harm to themselves or their children, women are often blamed for these circumstances, instead of the perpetrator.

### **Victim Blaming**

Certain victims are believed to carry some blame for the crimes committed against them. Victimology emerged in the 1940s and 1950s as a means of separating victim from non-victim. Just as nineteenth-century criminology sought to understand what motivated people to commit crimes, victimology sought to understand what motivated people to become victims (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

Victim blaming as an official admission was successful because it fit well with pre-existing views that we could control our environment. People get what they deserve in a "fair world." This sense of control enables us to feel secure in an otherwise chaotic

situation. As a result, victims do not exercise control over their life as they should. Victim-blaming ideology asserts that victims bear responsibility for their actions, through commission or omission of some activity (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

The propensity to victim blame is a predictable occurrence. It is subordinated to patriarchy, gender, race, class, and sexuality ideas. Social psychology makes an attempt to explain why the victim must be blamed. As a result, it is normal for us to dismiss the victim's pain to rationalize injustice and avoid feelings of vulnerability. However, society tends to put the victim on trial instead of the offender. Victim blaming has the detrimental consequence of ignoring the structural factors that contribute to such victimization. Additionally, regarding female victims, it seeks to subjugate women rather than examine and change the paradigm that encourages gendered acts of violence. Instead, the work to keep women imprisoned in conditions of abuse and they contribute to the perpetuation of self-blame (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

One of the most powerful storytellers in our society is mainstream media outlets. The public perception of women, crime, and victimization are strongly influenced using language, visual imagery, case selection as well as the gendered nature of the profession. These factors develop or reestablish social norms, give alternative interpretations of specific occurrences, and affect how these variables affect women's daily lives. The public's primary source of information on breaking news and current events is television, newspapers, radio, and the internet, which gives the media near-unmatched authority to pick, define, and create our understanding of women, crime, and victimhood (Meloy & Miller, 2011).

Women's innocence or guilt is largely linked with evaluations of personal characteristics. The degree to which she conforms to social norms dictates whether she is "good" or "bad". When women deviate from the anticipated norms of acceptable female behavior, they are frequently portrayed as rule-breakers and held accountable for any

harm that results. Reporters frequently employ titillating language to draw readers' attention away from the danger and the fact that a crime has occurred. For instance, they may employ the term "fondled" rather than "touched." In many instances, it is not immediately evident who is at fault. Oftentimes, female victims bear the brunt of the blame, while male perpetrators are absolved of responsibility (Meloy & Miller, 2011).

I am including another journal entry from the day we went to court for the sentencing of the monster that killed Daniella. It shows how victim blaming played a role in my cousin's case.

*Yesterday was the court case. Aunt Lena and Uncle Joe painstakingly agreed to a plea deal. Apparently, the people they knew from the District Attorney's office felt that it was a decent deal. The monster agreed to 22 years in prison for taking the life of Daniella... it doesn't feel like enough!! They feared that if they didn't agree to the deal that his attorneys would drag Daniella's name through the mud. Even worse, they feared he would be sentenced to less time. My Aunt asked that I read my victim impact statement at his sentencing. It was the hardest thing I ever had to do. I shared the story of the first time I met him... how I saw something in his eyes that made me feel sick. I had mentioned it to my brother at the time and he said, "probably drugs." When the monster heard me tell this he had a look of surprise! Ummm.... You know how this ended, right?? I spoke about how when he is released from prison Sabrina would be the same age Daniella was when she was killed. It doesn't seem fair that he will still have an opportunity to see his loved ones and have a life, when he took that away from her and all of us. I also reminded him that what he did impacted his children... they must grow up knowing that their dad is a murderer. He was given the opportunity to address the courtroom. I expected him to say how sorry he was since he walked in carrying a bible. Not that that would have helped, but it is what I assumed he would do. But instead he told us how much he loved Daniella and how he wished she didn't do what she did.. he put the blame on her! Then this would have never happened. What?! He is more of a narcissistic monster than I ever gave him credit for! After his sentencing, cousin Sarina told me that her sister had the exact same reaction when she met him! Josephine told her at the time, just like I told Richie. If only one of us had spoken up...if only...*

### **Intimate Partner Homicide Risk Factors**

The most severe outcome of IPV is intimate partner homicide (IPH). Not unexpectedly, prior IPV exposure has been linked to an increased risk of homicide. IPH is also the most objective source of IPV data due to the fact that it does not rely on self-reports (Garcia et al., 2007). Similar to IPV, studies show that women are more likely to be victims of IPH than men, while men are more likely to be perpetrators of IPH. Studies also show that women in their 30's and mid-40's are more at risk than women younger than 30 years old. In addition to gender and age, some other factors that impact IPH are ethnicity and race, pregnancy, access to weapons and alcohol use.

Caetano, McGrath, Ramisetty-Mickle, and Field published a study in 2005 that established a link between IPV and alcohol consumption. They discovered that men who drank alcohol were three times more likely to commit violent acts against their female partners than men who abstained or drank less than five drinks (Garcia et al., 2007). Apart from the fact that alcohol use increases the risk of homicide in intimate relationships, some experts feel that access to weapons also increases the chance of homicide.

The most often utilized weapons in IPH are guns. When firearms are involved in family or intimate assaults, the likelihood of mortality increases by 12 times. Despite strict gun regulations and limited gun ownership, researchers discovered that some IPV perpetrators retained access to firearms (Rothman, Johnson, & Hemenway, 2006). Researchers discovered that a small proportion of men with current restraint orders and/or domestic violence convictions self-reported having access to weapons in their study of participants in a batterer intervention program. These were individuals recognized as violent offenders by researchers because they were more likely to report difficulties with gambling, drinking, threatening their partner with a firearm, and attempting homicide than other offenders (Garcia et al., 2007).

## Legal System

### Historical Overview of IPV

Legal responses to IPV were introduced in waves, reflecting the fact that violence in the private sphere was viewed as a threat to social order, rather than as an injury to individual victims (Meloy & Miller, 2011). In the United States it dates to the 1600s with the Puritans. The Puritans considered “wife beating” to be a social problem. Their solution was to have neighbors watch one another to correct any transgressions. The Puritans based many of their laws on British common law, which permitted “wife beating”. Between the years of 1633 and 1802 there were only twelve cases of intimate partner violence that were prosecuted in the Plymouth Colony. In 1824 the Mississippi Supreme Court upheld a husband’s right to administer only “moderate chastisement in cases of emergencies” (Garcia & McManimon, 2011, 70). Following those symbolic initial laws, legal prohibitions against wife beating did not reappear until 1850 in Tennessee and 1857 in Georgia. There is additional evidence that wife beating was criminalized in various US jurisdictions between 1830 and 1874. These new responses reflected concerns about social order caused by immigration, industrialization, and urbanization, as well as an attempt to rein in the behavior of the “dangerous classes.” At the time, wife-beating cases were classified as a violation of public order or breach of the peace, and formal complaints were uncommon (Meloy & Miller, 2011, 39-40).

It was not until 1871 that Alabama became the first state to reject a husband’s right to beat his wife (*Fulgham v. State*, 1871). Shortly after, other states began to follow suit. The justice system was finally beginning to reflect the growing sentiment that wife beating was unacceptable. However, women did not have much success in prosecuting their husbands for the crime. Instead of men taking the cue to stop beating their wives, they took it as a cue to only do it behind closed doors and keep it private. Some states

decided to enact a “stitch rule” which meant that wife beating was permitted as long as it did not require stitches. The first state to criminalize wife beating was Maryland in the late 1800s. A husband who beat his wife could face one year of jail or “forty lashes”. A few other states followed suite, with North Carolina closing the nineteenth century by condemning a husband’s who participated in the rape of his wife (State v. Dowell, 1890) (Garcia and McManimon, 71). These new responses reflected concerns about social order brought about by immigration, industrialization, and urbanization, as well as an attempt to rein in the behavior of the "dangerous classes." Women who filed complaints encountered a reluctance on the part of police and prosecutors to administer justice, believing that acting against a husband would be detrimental to the family's economic situation. It is unknown how strictly the laws were enforced (Meloy & Miller, 2011).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the country was divided regarding addressing the issue of intimate partner violence. As a country we made very little progress regarding enacting change. During this time women were not considered equal partners in marriages and were not even considered equal in terms of citizenship, as the nineteenth amendment was not passed until 1919. Until approximately 1960, women were expected to fit into the ideal family, which was a two-parent household with children. Additionally, during this time there were certain barriers that stood in the way of intimate partner violence. These barriers included: the right of privacy (family life was separate from public concerns); the belief that the husband was the “head of the household” and had rights over his family, including his wife; and the preservation of the family unit. During this time, it was even acceptable for a man to force his wife into having sex with him, whenever he wanted it (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

During the 1960s, intimate partner violence continued to be a problem, despite the fact that it was not legal. The criminal justice system's response to it was not very effective. They choose to train police officers to be counselors and mediators. They would

separate the man and woman for a “cooling off” period. Then, they would be referred to appropriate services to work on their problems. In the more extreme cases, they were referred to the court to file a private complaint. In New York it was considered inhumane for husbands to beat their wives and was considered grounds for divorce. However, the victim would be required to provide proof that a “sufficient number of beatings” had occurred in order to be “allowed” to divorce (Garcia et al., 2007, 73).

In the mid-1970s we began to see some more substantial movement. Finally, people began to question the police department policies that instructed them not to intercede in domestic violence situations. The women's movement's and victim's rights movements' initiatives, as well as the growing popularity of law-and-order principles, have largely succeeded in changing society's perception of women battering. Gradually, battering was elevated from the private to the public domain and characterized as a significant social problem requiring response. Legislative developments reflect the acknowledgement of battered women as criminal victims, although legal remedies are not always easily implemented. As evidenced by the fact that violent crimes committed against strangers continue to be treated more harshly by the criminal justice system, law enforcement practices continue to reflect a degree of ambivalence about the notion that assaults committed against intimate partners or former partners merit legal action. More frequently women's groups filed class action lawsuits against police departments that failed to protect victims from abusive partners. They were frustrated with the ineffective police response and were looking to hold them accountable (Meloy & Miller, 2011).

A landmark case concerning domestic abuse policies was *Thurman v. City of Torrington* in 1984. In this case, the plaintiff, Tracey Thurman was awarded \$2.3 million for the negligence of the police department. Despite many phone calls to the police and a restraining order against her husband, he managed to stab her multiple times while she waited for officers to arrive on the scene. Twenty-five minutes after calling the police to

report that her husband was violating his restraining order, a single officer arrived to find Tracey stabbed multiple times. Her husband continued to threaten her in front of three police officers while she was being treated for her injuries, and was finally arrested (Snyder, 2020). The most important part of this landmark case is that it drew attention to an issue that existed. After that case in 1984, some things began to change within the police departments, finally. The court systems, however, were still not adapting (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

By the mid-1980s, most states had strengthened their laws against "domestic violence." However, most police officers were not permitted to make an arrest in misdemeanor assaults unless it occurred in their presence (Meloy & Miller, 2011, 41). In several states, stronger arrest policies took the shape of pro-arrest measures for misdemeanor violence. A pro-arrest policy constrains or guides police discretion in making warrantless arrests in misdemeanor assaults, even when officers are not present at the time of the incident. When probable cause exists, police must (required) or should (presumptive) arrest batterers, even if the victim does not request it. (Meloy & Miller, 2011). Victims must also be informed about legal alternatives and services and, if necessary, transported to shelters or hospitals under these new requirements. These rules result in officers completing a great deal of paperwork and spending extended periods of time on domestic battery calls. While pro-arrest policies are intended to eliminate or drastically limit police discretion, most of it survives in practice. Assessments of probable cause are frequently influenced by ideological factors, such as preconceived notions about the "stupidity" of battered women who remain with or return to abusive partners, or preconceived notions about the violent culture prevalent in lower socioeconomic strata and ethnic/racial minority groups (Meloy & Miller, 2011, 42).

### **The Violence Against Women Act**

Finally, in 1994 The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was passed. VAWA “identified certain intimate partner crimes as federal crimes and provided training and funding in order to address this problem.” (Garcia & McManimon, 2011, 78). This law was a start, but we needed more. The original VAWA was amended in 1996 and again in 2000. The law was amended to continue attempts at combating intimate partner violence through partnerships with state and local governments. In 2000 the amendment added crimes to the law such as crossing state lines to stalk a victim and they also increased funding to train personnel in the police department and the courts. Most notably, the Office of Violence Against Women (OWA) was formed to administer assistance to keep programs, policies, and practices up to date nationwide (Garcia & McManimon, 2011, 80).

### **The Shelter Movement**

The battered women's shelter was founded on the "private is political" campaign of the feminist and victim-led advocacy movements. Victims' and advocate groups' efforts to raise awareness taught that violence against women was an unavoidable result of a patriarchal system in which women were kept silent in the house (Garcia & McManimon, 2011, 162). The feminist liberal theory that underpinned the abused women's and anti-rape movements declared that women have agency and would no longer tolerate their domestic ages passively. Early shelters promoted women's agency by teaching empowerment and self-help skills in addition to offering social and service support.

The shelter movement began in the 1970s as a means of providing refuge and emotional support to victims of IPV fleeing their abusers. The abused women's shelter serves as a temporary haven for female IPV victims and their children, where they can seek assistance in attaining the financial, health care, childcare, and social resources

necessary to begin a stable, independent, and violence-free life. Prior to the shelter movement, IPV victims faced a lack of resources. However, as a result of grassroots efforts and the anti-rape movement's influence, abused women's shelters swiftly proliferated across the country. The shelter movement was founded on the conviction that intimate partner abuse was not a private matter but a pervasive social problem that needed to be addressed by both the community and the legal system (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

Although the shelter movement was helpful for IPV victims, it was not perfect. “Shelter doesn’t simply mean a safe place to sleep; it means walking entirely out of your life, having your children walk entirely out of their lives. It means disappearing from view” (Snyder, 2020, 223). In addition to the disruption, what prevented the abuser from locating and harming his family? They remained at risk, as many abusers will do anything to reach their victim, including killing bystanders.

### **Domestic Violence Courts**

Domestic violence courts were founded in the late 1990s as a sort of “therapeutic jurisprudence” in the United States. The therapeutic jurisprudence idea is that it enables the law to improve the victim's mental health, psychological, social, and physical functioning while also resolving the multi-jurisdictional complications in which victims and offenders are entangled. As a result, while domestic violence courts must comply with evidentiary rules and due process processes, a primary focus is on ensuring victim and child safety, obtaining necessary resources for victims and their children, and requiring the offender to undergo batterer therapy (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

## **Education and Programming**

Barner and Carney (2011) conducted a historical examination of IPV preventive and intervention attempts. The study revealed three distinct institutional development trajectories: the criminal justice system, the psychotherapy community, and the women's movement. Further, it revealed various shifts and reversals in the scope, focus, and treatment techniques across time. Most notable is the historical reversal of the criminal justice system's role in providing IPV interventions. It shifted away from a victim-centric focus toward a perpetrator-centric focus for IPV interventions, and the shift away from a victim advocacy perspective toward a coordinated community response paradigm. Additionally, when the authors reviewed the coordinated community response, it indicated a lack of empirically supported practices in treating perpetrators and victims, as well as inconclusive data on the effectiveness of mandated or supported treatment modalities. Lack of agreement on gender problems and culturally competent methods within these modalities create substantial challenges to providing a full continuum of therapy for both offenders and victims of IPV (Barner & Carney, 2011).

### **Duluth Model**

In an effort to fill the gap in programming for victims, the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP) developed the Duluth Model. This is the most frequently used intervention model in the United States and Canada for men who have been court-ordered to treatment for a domestic assault-related offense. The Duluth Model is based on feminist and sociocultural concepts of dominance and control, in which men use IPV to demonstrate their power and assert control over their female partners. The Duluth Model's central tool is the Power and Control Wheel, which illustrates how men control women through male privilege, emotional and economic abuse, violence, intimidation, and isolation. The Duluth Model is centered on community coordination, with the goal of empowering and protecting survivors of domestic violence while holding perpetrators

accountable. While the Duluth Model's format is educational, it incorporates cognitive-behavioral techniques (Bohall et al., 2016).

Numerous research has addressed the distinctions between the Duluth psychoeducational model of behavioral intervention and the rise of cognitive-behavioral therapy for both perpetrators and victims of IPV. The primary distinctions between the two theories are in how researchers perceive perpetrator attitudes, whether these attitudes are inherently violent, and whether they are socially reinforced. Another distinction is that the Duluth model is not therapeutic by design but asserts the ability to induce psychotherapeutic and behavioral change in IPV abusers (Barner & Carney, 2011).

### **Youth Preventive and Educational Programs**

There has been some development of victim education programs at schools and universities. The overarching goals of these programs are to educate young people about their rights as victims and to support them in building skills to aid in their healing. At the college and university level, the focus was on building curriculum to educate students and advocates about victims' needs in general, as well as specialized needs for victims of child abuse, domestic violence, and so on. Several prevention approaches aimed at preventing violence against women and children included screening applicants for school jobs, providing lights and emergency phone systems on college campuses, restricting access to buildings, and establishing security patrols; designing violence prevention programs that promote alternatives to violent behavior; developing speaker programs for high school and college students; and utilizing peer educators to teach nonviolence (Meloy & Miller, 2011).

### **Male Centric Prevention Programs**

In her book *No Visible Bruises*, Rachel Louise Snyder (2020) introduces a man named Hamish Sinclair. Mr. Sinclair was an activist who questioned some of the things

that he saw in his life and did what he could to bring about change. He met a man named Steiner who was an icon in the field of gender theory. The two men became fast friends and Steiner mentored Hamish. It was because of this mentorship that Hamish was able to dive a little deeper into why men's violent tendencies have been normalized by our society. Hamish felt that it has to do with the difference in how we treat boys and girls starting at a young age. Why is it that we raise our boys to not cry, but at the same time feel that it is completely acceptable for girls to cry? We also, as a society, seem to think that men are allowed to be angry. Snyder tells us that "Men who yell are being men; women who yell are shrill or they're drama queens or they're hysterical." Why do we have two different standards? This is part of the problem. He also wisely points out "Violent men are aware that they are violent and even take pride in the manliness of it to their friends. But they will often deny that their violence is actually violent when questioned. Their denial allows violent men to maximize the impact of their violence on their victims, blame them for it, and ask their families and friends to collude with them by approving it." So, in other words, these incidents are downplayed. Victims are considered to be overreacting. They, of course, did not mean to "hurt" her when they threw that thing at her or slammed her against that wall. They do not take ownership of their responsibility in the violence (Snyder, 2020, 115).

Is it any surprise that it is, generally, men who are violent? The same men who were taught not to show their emotion through tears or words. It is men who take their violence out on women and masses of others. School shootings are mostly carried out by young men. Snyder informs us that "Mass murders. Gang warfare, murder-suicides and families and matricides and even genocides: all men. Always men" (Snyder, 2020, 113).

### ***ManAlive Program***

Hamish recognized the need for a program to address the ongoing crisis. It was a program centered on the "women's urgency" that addressed male violence. In 1980, he began this program. By 1984, the program had grown in popularity and had been officially renamed "ManAlive." His program was "a fifty-two-week program, divided into three parts. The first twenty-week part tries to get men to be accountable for violence. The second sixteen-week sessions give them a skill set of alternative behaviors to violence. And the third part, also sixteen weeks, teaches them strategies for creating intimacy and fulfillment in their lives." At first, men resisted joining a program that went against everything they believed. When the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) passed in 1994, court began referring men to them. They not only referred men to the ManAlive program, but also to different batterer intervention programs all over the country. In the state of California, a law was passed that required violent men to do the ManAlive program, or a similar program or go to jail. The law was specific that the intervention had to be gender-based, not therapy-based. Although the ManAlive program was based on therapy, it was inspired by gender theory and neuro-linguistic training. That addition of gender theory was a large component. The ManAlive program became a leader of the batterer intervention programs in the area. This program, like the others that were beginning to emerge after VAWA was passed, did something that had not previously been done before. It addresses violence with the abusers, not the victims. The victims need a different type of help, but we have to get to the route of the problem by addressing the violence (Snyder, 2020). However, as mentioned previously, toxic masculinity and patriarchy impedes these efforts.

## **Policy Recommendations**

To effect lasting change, our government must move beyond efforts to appease activists or win votes for politicians and abandon its exclusive reliance on criminal punishment to address violence against women. To achieve lasting change, we must direct our efforts toward prevention practices and policies, as well as educational activities, which are critical first steps toward addressing the underlying issues of violence against women. Despite the fact that prevention efforts have received little attention from VAWA, there are promising areas of broad-based violence prevention against women, such as school-based education programs and other youth initiatives (Garcia & McManimon, 2011). One striking aspect of society's efforts to curb intimate partner violence is that, in contrast to most other crimes, intimate relationship violence has escaped enhanced sentence legislation. For the better part of the previous two decades, the social order has been dominated by retribution ideology. Deserved punishment means that society regards criminal activity as exceeding the bounds of decency. Nonetheless, intimate partner violence has remained a minor offense for the most part. With so much emphasis on regulating and processing intimate partner abuse, on broadening the definition of intimate relationship violence, and on measures to remove this social problem, it's surprising that sanctions have remained relatively lenient (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

### **Criminal Justice Response**

Pro-arrest or mandatory arrest policies act as a social check on police behavior. Intimate violence cases can no longer be ignored by the police. Despite police complaints, the number of arrests for intimate partners violence offenders has climbed. Police departments are faced with new policy shifts to treat all intimate relationship violence as a severe crime. Notwithstanding the police efforts to enhance their rapport with victims of intimate partner abuse, much work must be done in this area. A one-size-fits-all strategy to police intervention is impractical and flawed, especially when the definition of a legitimate victim is shifting. The improvement of police victim services is

the responsibility of police training schools. According to research, minority populations have a high level of distrust for the authorities, and many believe that as a result, the true number of IPV incidences in these areas is unknown. The police must pay more attention to these communities and show more understanding (Garcia & McManimon, 2011) and attempt to avoid arresting both parties or women or “victims” resulting from an unanticipated consequence of these well-meaning laws.

The no-drop and evidence-based prosecution rules raised the court's and police's workloads. Officers are no longer simply accountable for making arrests. The police are also in charge of obtaining evidence under these policies. Because misdemeanor offenses rarely necessitate the assistance of detectives, the uniformed police officer oversees the investigation. This has lengthened the time spent on these instances. While this concept of true police work excluding "family problems" has developed for many officers, we nevertheless witness a persistent reluctance of the police to become involved in issues where victims are perceived to bear some culpability. The main issue is that cops are responsible for following the law, not their personal beliefs (or the beliefs of society). As victims are forced to provide for their own safety, police officers' legitimacy is eroded by their refusal to conduct their tasks properly and equally (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

Orders of protection must be carried out. Law enforcement will need additional time and personnel to take these orders seriously. Victims who have been harmed as a result of police failure to enforce protection orders should anticipate filing lawsuits in the future. In cases of intimate partner violence, enforcement will imply more court appearances and judicial intervention. It is critical, however, for judges to remain active and to ensure that these orders be enforced by enforcement agencies (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

In today's crime-control mindset, correctional services are also centered on custodial punishment rather than treatment. As a result, the victim's immediate needs are frequently disregarded. While incarceration prevents direct offender-victim intimate partner abuse, correctional facilities are unable to prevent ongoing harassment via phone

and letter. Efforts to assist victims in reporting offender harassment and to notify victims when offenders are no longer incarcerated are important steps toward ensuring victim safety. These tools and policies must be made available to all victims and adopted across the country.

However, because most offenders are not jailed, they may constitute a threat to the victim. Treatment programs, whether mandated or as part of the offender's probation conditions, have a poor track record of success. Due to a lack of enforcement, noncompliance with treatment mandates is also a big issue. Courts lack enforcement authority, and prison officials frequently fail to follow through on probation treatment restrictions, whether due to high caseloads or staff nonfeasance. As a result, while treating the perpetrator can be a great tool for ending battering, the consequences cannot be seen. Another issue with treatment is the lack of agreement on which treatments work. Many therapy programs still believe in the illusion of the self-controlling batterer; however, the reality is that many abusers have mental health issues that must be addressed, otherwise we welcome future violence (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

For the execution of treatment conditions and protective orders, victims must be able to rely on probation departments. The use of various types of electronic surveillance can also give victims a sense of security. When electronic monitoring programs use victim alert systems, victims of intimate partner abuse are alerted that the perpetrator is close by and can take appropriate precautions. However, because probation authorities are rarely efficient at responding quickly, victims are left on their own to seek emergency protection from the police. Probation officers can use GPS to find out where offenders were at any one time and track their daily activities to ensure that they are not bothering victims. However, this protection is more likely to be reactive than proactive, and victims may develop a false sense of security as a result (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

### **Societal Responsibility**

As previously stated, our social conceptions of intimate partner violence are rooted in gender, family, race, age, class, and sexuality ideas. Additionally, these notions have been institutionalized and are used to direct victim, justice, and land community responses. They are regarded as necessary to society as a whole, as essentialism defines it. Perhaps the most prevalent vehicle for propagating falsehoods about intimate partner violence is the mass media. The media reflect cultural images and make judgments about newsworthiness based on which subjects fit well into ideology (Garcia & McManimon, 2011).

### ***Media Responsibility***

The media is in a unique position to aid victims and communities more effectively. Their subject characterizations and the language they choose to cover a story, in coupled with the stories they choose not to cover, demonstrate how easy it is to perpetuate an issue by euphemism, victim blaming language or to achieve responsible, balanced reporting. Through objective and empirically sound reporting on crime, the media may serve as our most powerful and effective instructional instrument. If we hold the media more accountable, they can foster change in a very large way. By reporting victims' stories honestly and compassionately, responsible media coverage provides victims a voice. Additionally, they are in an excellent position to distribute information to the public and potentially save lives (Meloy & Miller, 2011).

We need to educate members in the media and hold them more accountable for the information they report (and do not report) and the manner in which they report it. I recognize that it is an imperfect solution, as we can't dictate how or what the media reports. If we make a genuine attempt to teach people about this critical problem, some will listen. Even if it does not totally change, any change is beneficial. Change does not occur overnight and frequently occurs very slowly. However, even gradual transformation has the potential to save a life.

### ***Educating our Children/Raising our Children***

Research has shown that educating our children about healthy interpersonal relationships can be an effective way of avoiding violence. Scholars believe that emphasizing the fact that violence is not a natural or necessary aspect of interpersonal interactions is the most effective way to change abusive conduct. Due to the vast number of young people that can be reached simultaneously, school is an ideal place for this form of relationship-focused education. Additionally, school is viewed as a more socially acceptable location for counseling services than mental health facilities or shelters for battered women (Becky & Farren, 1997). Our country needs to make this type of education mandatory in schools beginning in elementary school and continuing through high school. This form of teaching will enable our students to develop healthier relationships, which will have a significant positive impact on our society.

### **Conclusion**

As previously stated, preventing intimate partner violence and homicide is a monumental task. Despite this, efforts must be made to enact change. By keeping the topic relevant, even the smallest of changes can be made. Education regarding healthy relationships is unquestionably crucial to the success of any plan aimed at reducing women's exposure to interpersonal violence. The combination of education and policy development, coupled with enforcing policy, should lead to beneficial outcomes. To that end, it will never totally disappear, yet it is still possible to improve.

In closing, I provide a final journal entry in Daniella's story.:

*Sometimes when the Justice System appears to fail us, karma steps in. Today, after spending the day working on my Capstone on Intimate Partner Violence and Intimate Partner Homicide, I learned that the monster who killed Daniella was found dead in prison. I know that I shouldn't feel happy or relieved over someone's death, but the truth is I do. It feels like he got the life sentence he deserved for taking Daniella's life and taking her away from all of us. I'm sure Sabrina will sleep well tonight knowing that her mom's killer is dead. Rest in peace, Daniella. It's over now... he will never do this again. Sabrina will never have to face him on the streets again. How fitting that the anniversary of your death is this week. I love you!*

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