

It's **YOUR** business

THE IMPACT OF ABUSE ON MALE VICTIMS

What of the male victims' experiences of abuse? Researchers have extensively documented the effects on women of having been abused by male partners, but we know little about the effects of abusive behavior by women on their male intimate partners. According to Canadian researchers Garndin, Lupri and Brinkerhoff (1997), both men and women who are either psychologically or physically abused reported emotional distress.

Two unpublished qualitative studies, both conducted in Alberta and cited in Tutty (1999), constitute one of three studies that attempt to understand the experiences of men abused by their intimate partners. Gregorash (1990) interviewed eight men, while Tutty (1997) reported on 10 interviews. Such qualitative studies are limited by small sample sizes, but the in-depth nature of the results is thought to balance to small numbers.

Across both studies, the 18 men ranged in age from 30 to 55. Only one was still married when interviewed; the rest were either separated or divorced. The relationships ranged from several years to 25 years, and most couples had children. There was quite a range in educational background for both men and women. A number of both the men and the women had university degrees and worked in professional jobs.

Much of the abuse was psychological rather than physical. Two men reported no physical incidents, while the others reported at least one incident of physical abuse in which their wives scratched them with fingernails, hit with an object such as a wooden clothes-hanger or fist, or kicked them in the back. Four of the men were kicked or kneed in the groin. The men described their partners as being "enraged, destroying things with a baseball bat", "attacking with scissors" or "threatening to do damage with a hat pin". One man had lost teeth in one incident; several reported being afraid of their wives during these attacks.

Although 11 of the men reacted to the abuse only by restraining their wives from hurting them, nine men admitted using aggressive behaviours toward their partners at some point. Most of this involved throwing an object, pushing, or grabbing, but three men admitted using more force by hitting or punching and one man forced sexual intercourse on his wife a number of times. As such, half of the men could be described as being in mutually violent relationships.

While some men reported only one or two incidents of serious behaviour on the part of their wives, others noted that the physical attacks were more chronic, occurring throughout the relationship. None of the men contacted a doctor to treat their injuries. Eight men claimed that at some point their partners either threatened to contact the police to charge them for being abusive or to get a restraining order or had done so.

The men described the abuse as continuing even after the marital separation. A number were involved in custody disputes and two men complained that they had been unjustly accused of child abuse and one of marital rape.

Magliaccio (2001) examined the narratives of 12 men who suffered mental, physical, or emotional abuse from their wives, obtaining information about these men's experiences, beliefs, and reactions to their violent marriages and how their fear of being feminized impacted their relationships often prolonging the violence. All but one of these men had been physically abused and suffered bruises, lacerations and one case of minor head trauma. The injuries were caused primarily by thrown objects (five), by weapons including steak knives (three) and scissors (one) among others. Ten of the twelve men sought medical assistance for the injuries.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a family violence emergency, call 911 or contact your local police.

Family Violence

PREVENTION

SERVICES FOR ABUSED MEN

Alberta's two major cities have services specific to abused men offered by professional counselors: Calgary Counselling's Turn for the Better groups and the City of Edmonton Community Services, "From Chaos to Peace" groups. The National Clearinghouse of Canada has created a document listing services across the country for men (both victims of different forms of abuse and abuse perpetrators).

RESOLVE Alberta is part of RESOLVE, a tri-prairie research network that co-ordinates and supports research aimed at ending violence, especially violence involving girls and women. The RESOLVE network is affiliated with the University of Calgary, University of Saskatchewan, University of Manitoba, University of Regina, University of Alberta, University of Winnipeg, and Brandon University.

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