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Masculinity, myth and male victimisation: a study exploring professional discourses on male victims of intimate partner violence (IPV)

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Abstract

IPV directed against male partners is a contentious and notorious topic within the study of domestic violence (Barkhuizen, 2010). Together with this it can be established from the research that even though there is a willingness amongst professionals to acknowledge males as victims of IPV there remains a lack of awareness both amongst professionals and society in general. Therefore, the issue of female-to-male IPV within the South African context is in need of extensive research. Accordingly, this research aims to fill the gap in the literature concerning male victimisation. Six key professionals- who work with domestic violence and have knowledge pertaining to the laws surrounding domestic violence- provided expert, educated opinions on the topic which were drawn from interviews that were transcribed and analysed with the use of thematic content analysis and critical discourse analysis. Key findings revealed the complexities of female-to-male IPV in South Africa. The research revealed that yes, South African law does make provision for male victims but the law is poorly implemented due to many intricacies. The most interesting results related to police perceptions of IPV (both female and male perpetrated). As such this study will bring about greater awareness of the issue and thus provide victims of female-to-male IPV the opportunity to report such incidents without fear of disbelief, reprisal or humiliation. In addition, this research will assist in addressing many of the academic debates and legal issues that surround this controversial aspect of abuse.

KEY WORDS: Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Domestic Violence, Male Victimisation, Female-to-male IPV, Professionals, Police, South Africa