



Identifying how to Engage Men in Domestic Violence Research: a Concept Mapping Study

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Abstract

The Engaging Men project aimed to identify facilitators, societal approaches to and support for domestic violence, and barriers to men's participation in domestic violence research, assessing the importance of each factor. Participatory concept mapping was used with a convenience sample of men ($n = 142$) in person and online across Australia, Canada and the United States of America. Engaging Men identified 43 facilitators, societal approaches to and support for domestic violence, and/or barriers to men's participation in domestic violence research. The strongest facilitators related to external connections, such as concern for women around them. Men also recognized societal approaches to and support for domestic violence and the strongest barriers centered on internal feelings, including fear, shame and guilt about being linked to domestic violence. This study suggests that providing a safe environment for men to express genuine thoughts, feeling and views about domestic violence is vital, yet rarely available in domestic violence research. Therefore, research opportunities need to be more effectively designed and incentivized to address challenging issues identified by men, such as fear, shame and guilt and offer meaningful opportunities to demonstrate positive change.

Keywords Engaging men · Intimate partner violence · Intimate partner violence research · Domestic violence · Concept mapping

Background

Globally, domestic and intimate partner violence (IPV) has increasingly been recognized as a critical public health concern (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013; Australian

Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse 2011; Black et al. 2011; Ellsberg et al. 2008; Statistics Canada 2011; United Nations 1993). In Australia, Canada, the United States of America (USA), and indeed globally, it is clear that the majority of men do not use or condone violence against

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women (Minerson 2011), however almost universally, women are significantly more likely to experience negative consequences of domestic violence than men (Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse 2011; Black et al. 2011; Statistics Canada 2011).

National surveys have revealed a wide range of prevalence rates for physical, sexual and other types of violence among women (Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse 2011; Black et al. 2011; Cox 2015; Daoud et al. 2012; Statistics Canada 2011). In Australia, 25% of women reported having experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their adult lives (Cox 2015). In Canada, 11% of new mothers reported experiencing physical or sexual violence during the childbearing year (Daoud et al. 2012). In the USA, 36% of women reported experiencing rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Black et al. 2011). However, these statistics likely under-represent the full extent of violence toward women by an intimate partner due to the narrow definitions of violence used in such surveys (Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse 2011; Black et al. 2011; Statistics Canada 2011).

The majority of the research on domestic violence represents the perspective of women who are the survivors of domestic violence, a more complete evidence base is needed which includes men's experiences and perspectives (Velonis 2013). However, research on men often come from program or intervention samples (for example, men enrolled in Batterer Intervention Programs (Kimball et al. 2013)) and are rarely population based. Moreover, there are reports that recruiting men for population-based studies on the topic of IPV is challenging (O'Campo et al. 2015). While the research on how to include men in domestic violence research is limited and narrowly focused, potential lessons and implications may be gleaned from the literature speaking to men's engagement in gender-based violence prevention efforts. For example, successfully engaging men in discussion groups around prevention activities in which conversations center on healthy relationships, fatherhood, healthy masculinity, and addressing the power and oppressive mechanisms in society that support and facilitate gender-based violence (Casey et al. 2017; Jewkes et al. 2015). Regardless, a stronger evidence-base around engaging men in research-related conversations about domestic violence is needed. This project seeks to address this gap by asking men to identify the barriers and facilitators to impacting men's decision to participate in violence-related research.

Methods

Using concept mapping, a participatory, mixed methods approach that enables researchers to clarify conceptual elements and identify domains that comprise a phenomenon (Burke et al. 2005), we engaged men across three countries in a process of

brainstorming, sorting, rating, and interpreting the collected data that described barriers and facilitators to men's participation in research on domestic violence. According to Kane and Trochim (2007), concept mapping is a structured methodology for organizing the ideas of a group, bringing together diverse stakeholders to help form a common framework that can be used for planning and/or evaluation in a timely manner. This approach draws on elements of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, using statistical tools to provide rigor to data generated through qualitative techniques, leading to the production of *concepts maps* or visual displays that illustrate the relationships between concepts (Southern et al. 1999; Trochim 1985). We selected this approach because of its iterative, interactive relationship between researchers and participants, and the ability to have participant feedback shape all aspects of the research, including the final interpretation of the data.

Concept mapping follows a series of structured phases: (1) brainstorming, (2) sorting and rating, (3) analysis and mapping to produce a graphical representation of how a group views a topic, and (4) feedback from participants on their interpretation of the resulting representations (Burke et al. 2005; Southern et al. 1999; Trochim 1985; Trochim 1989). This structured approach allows participants to identify broad issues and participate in the interpretation and analysis of their group perceptions (Burke et al. 2005; Southern et al. 1999; Trochim 1985; Trochim 1989). Findings from concept mapping are depicted visually and illustrate the relationships between participant generated concepts (i.e. – barriers and facilitators to participating in domestic violence research) (Burke et al. 2005; O'Campo et al. 2015). This provided a good fit for purpose approach to addressing the aims and objectives of the research and allowed for comprehensive men's engagement and leadership from development to dissemination of the research exploring barriers and facilitators to engaging men in domestic violence research (Burke et al. 2005; O'Campo et al. 2015).

In addition to the knowledge generated from the process, participatory concept mapping can lead to participant benefits, partly due to the ways in which participants engage with materials, potentially spending several hours completing various research activities, including idea generation and structuring, personal reflection, and the opportunity to link learning to action (Burke et al. 2005; O'Campo et al. 2015). Further, we had a multidisciplinary (including arts, science and public health) and multinational team that took advantage of our diverse geographic locations to ensure that we included broad range of experiences and perspectives in our study sample. As a result, we used this participatory concept mapping approach with self-identified men across Australia, Canada, and the USA.

Eligibility and Recruitment

For participants to be eligible, they needed to self-identify as male, be 18 years of age or older, and read, write, and speak

English. Potential participants were directed to the Engaging Men website through electronic newsletters, flyers, listserv postings and social media platforms (such as Facebook and Twitter), which allowed men to share the research information among their associated social networks in a snowball sampling approach. Potential participants were also approached through in-person announcements at community events and one-on-one using a community animator.¹ The community animator was identified by members of the research team as someone with experience working across various communities in Toronto, Canada. All in-person and on-line recruitment information was consistent and emphasized the male researchers involved with the study. Recruitment information included a description of the purpose of the project and contact details for further information and participant registration. Once participants registered for the study, including going through the voluntary informed consent process, participants could provide their contact information such as phone numbers and email addresses.

New participants were recruited during both the brainstorming and sorting/rating phases, although those who were already enrolled were invited to continue in one or more of the activities. The interpretation phase, was conducted only with individuals who had participated with sorting and rating. At each data collection stage, we provided participants with an optional 5-question demographic survey. Participants were provided between \$5–\$15 CAD honoraria for each activity detailed in the following sections. Group activities were led and run by the male research team members. This was an attempt to create an environment where participants felt as safe and comfortable as possible in discussing a sensitive topic.

Brainstorming

Data Collection Brainstorming was used to elicit participants' perspectives and responses to a single, focused question about participation in research about violence in general. Participants received \$5 CAD honoraria and we started by providing a definition of research "When we say research about violence, this could include being interviewed by someone about your opinions or experiences with violence, taking part in a group discussion centered on violence, or answering questions as part of survey or questionnaire." We followed this by asking the focal question "One reason that could influence men's decisions to participate, or decline to participate, in research about violence would be _____." This initial focal question was intentionally non-specific to domestic or partner violence so that we could ascertain the most general and wide-ranging reasons that could

influence men's decision to participate in research about violence generally, prior to introducing domestic violence in the sorting and rating stage of data collection as outlined below.

Analysis Participants could provide as many answers as they wished to the question. After the period of brainstorming ended, the research team consolidated the items. From the original list of 215 items, we removed duplicates and combined very similar items which reduced the list of items to approximately 170. We thematically coded the remainder and identified a small subset of items that best represented each code, preserving as much of the participants' language as possible. Working in pairs, this process took several rounds, including comparing across themes to ensure that items were not duplicated. As a group, we reviewed the final list of items and compared them to the master list to ensure that we captured a representative set of items. We then randomly sorted the final list of items so that they did not appear sorted by theme. This approach was a good fit for the broad range of brainstormed responses and is consistent with other research using concept mapping (Burke et al. 2005; Patton 2002; Southern et al. 1999). For example, this approach identified and recorded items within the data, ensured thematic saturation was reached within the responses, and that no new themes were being identified.

Sorting and Rating

Data Collection The sorting process summarized participants' perspective on the interrelationships between items (Kane and Trochim 2007). For sorting, participants were presented with each item on a "card" (a physical card for in-person participants and a virtual card for on-line participants) and participants were asked to sort each statement into conceptually similar groups, or into piles that "made sense" to them. They were then asked to label each pile with a word or phrase that captured that pile's theme (Kane and Trochim 2007).

The rating process determined the relative value of the brainstormed statements for answering the focal question (Kane and Trochim 2007). In this case, rating enabled each participant to record how important each statement was in relation to all items on the list in terms of men's decision to participate in research about domestic violence. Specifically, participants were informed that domestic violence was physical, sexual, or psychological violence or abusive control between individuals who are, or were in an intimate relationship (people who are, or were dating, married, or in a sexual relationship). We hypothesized that motivations for, or barriers to participating in research could vary depending on whether the research was conducted in a manner that was anonymous, versus research where participant identities might be known to the researchers or others taking part in the study (for example, face-to-face focus groups). Participants were asked to rate each of the items in relation to two questions:

¹ Community Animator is someone from the local community(ies) who knows how and where to engage individuals as change agents in the community.

- How important is the item for men's decision to participate in research about domestic violence that was done in a way where they do not have to see or speak to someone? (anonymous)
- How important is the item for men's decision to participate in research about domestic violence that was done in an in-person or group setting? (non-anonymous)

Responses were recorded as a 7-point Likert scale (1 was “this would definitely be a reason why men in my community would participate in research about domestic violence” and 7 was “this would definitely be a reason why men in my community would NOT participate in research about domestic violence”).

Analyses Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) analysis was performed, which organized individual statements along x-y coordinates reflecting the frequency with which statements were sorted together. Next, Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA) was undertaken to partition the data into distinct clusters of statements, locating similar statements into non-overlapping clusters based on the x-y coordinates from the map and representing conceptual domains. The results are displayed as a two-dimensional cluster map, illustrating the relationships (distances) between statements based on a matrix generated from the combined sort data from all participants.

Stress values were generated, reflecting stability within the clusters and the overall map. Ideal stress values are below 0.36 (W. M. K. Trochim 1989). Bridging values were also generated and can take on a value from 0 to 1 (O'Campo et al. 2015). Statements with a value closer to 0 indicate they were often sorted with items that were closer in vicinity on the two-dimensional concept map. These statements have stronger associations to statements in their vicinity and are known as ‘anchoring’ statements (O'Campo et al. 2015). A value closer to 1 indicates a statement that tends to be sorted with statements that are in other regions across the concept map. This indicates that men perceived such statements to be conceptually related to many other statements, and are known as ‘bridging’ statements (O'Campo et al. 2015).

Participants' average ratings of clusters and of individual statements were analyzed to gain an understanding of participants' overall opinions in relation to factors that could influence decision to either agree or decline to participate in research about domestic violence. To compare the extent that ratings differed by subgroups (defined by the survey only elicited information: age, education, country of residence, and country of origin), we used correlations between groups of interest

using Concept Systems Global Max© software (CSGS). A Spearman correlation was calculated between the participants' ratings on their decision-making process done anonymously and in-person to assess if the two ratings were reasonably independent. A correlation below 0.5 indicates that a correlation between anonymous or in-person participation could not be ruled out.

Mapping and Map Interpretation

Data Collection The results from the analyses of the sorting and rating data were used to generate a preliminary cluster map of how men conceptualized barriers and facilitators to participating in research about domestic violence. The researchers used an iterative process to review the cluster content. The researchers, first individually, then as a group, examined and compared the content of a variety of cluster solutions; from 3 to 13 clusters to identify the best fit. The research team reached consensus supporting the seven-cluster solution map which was identified as the preliminary solution map. Participants were then invited to a group session to review the preliminary concept map and comment on its face validity. We shared the preliminary seven-cluster solution map and went through each statement within each cluster, discussing the alignment within the associated cluster and modifying the clusters according to group feedback. All statements and clusters were displayed iteratively using a projector to allow the group to follow and validate the process in real time. Participants also assigned labels to the final set of clusters to reflect the content of the respective clusters (Kane and Trochim 2007; W. M. K. Trochim 1989) (Table 1).

Ethical Review

The research was informed by the Responsible Conduct of Research and the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (TCPS2), receiving ethics approval from St. Michael's Research Ethics Board (Research Ethics Board number: 15–109).

Results

The Sample

In total, 142 unique participants were included in the research, with some participants completing more than one component of the concept mapping process. Specifically, 86 participants completed brainstorming, 44 participants completed sorting,

Table 1 Participatory concept mapping method summary

	1. Brainstorming	2a. Sorting	2b. Rating	3. Mapping & Interpretation
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants received \$5 CAD reimbursement for their time, knowledge, and expertise - Project information distributed by: newsletters, flyers, list-serv postings, social media platforms, community event announcements - Community animators were used to approach potential participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants received \$5 CAD reimbursement for their time, knowledge, and expertise - Brainstorming participants invited to continue session was applied to recruit new participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants received \$10 CAD reimbursement for their time, knowledge, and expertise - Brainstorming participants invited to continue session was applied to recruit new participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants received \$15 CAD reimbursement for their time, knowledge, and expertise - Selected brainstorming participants were invited to participate in the mapping and interpretation
Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face - Community animator was used - Participants answered focal question as many times as necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of interrelationships between 43 statements generated through brainstorming - Sort each statement into conceptually similar groups - Groups cannot consist of one statement, each statement can only be put in one pile (i.e. – not duplicated), and there has to be more than one group - Label respective piles to reflect contents - Undertaken in person and online via CSGS - Multidimensional analysis conducted via CSGS - Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA) was undertaken to partition data into distinct clusters of statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asked to rate the 43 statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 being reason for why men would participate in research, 7 being for why men would not) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cluster map (generated from sorting and rating responses) was reviewed by participants and asked to comment on validity - Jointly developed final clusters by confirming location of each statement in cluster and moving statements into new clusters as necessary
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thematic analysis was used to consolidate the identified 215 statements to a master list of 43 statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Correlations were used to determine differences between subgroups of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research team independently commented and assessed clusters on solution maps - Discussed independent assessments, reached consensus to support seven cluster map solution 	

66 participants completing rating question one and 43 completed rating question two.

Table 2 details the characteristics of the sample that completed the demographic questions, outlining that 39% of the sample received a university degree, with 54% of the sample aged under 35 years and 36% of the sample aged between 25 and 34 years. Nine per cent of participants lived in Australia; 53% resided in Canada and 16% lived in the USA, with 22% not responding to the country of residence question. Across the three countries, participants were from urban, rural and remote locations across various states, territories and provinces. Of the sample, 89% of participants residing in Australia identified Australia as their country of origin, 63% of participants residing in Canada identified Canada as their country of origin, and 87% of participants residing in the USA identified the USA as their country of origin.

Factors that Facilitate or Hinder Engaging Men

After brainstorming and item reduction was complete, 43 items comprised the final list of barriers and/or facilitators, which participants sorted into thematic clusters. Within each cluster, items were sorted by order of importance to participating in any type of research about domestic violence (see Table 3).

However, two changes were made in the mapping and map interpretation phase. Participants re-categorized statement (8)

Table 2 Summary of study participant characteristics

	Percentage (%)
Sex	
Male	100.0
Female	0.0
Age	
18–24 years	18.0
25–34 years	36.0
35–44 years	14.0
45–54 years	18.0
55 years and older	13.0
Education level	
High school or less	19.6
Some college or university (no degree/diploma)	22.8
Associate Degree/College Trade Diploma	8.9
University degree	48.8
Country of Residence	
Australia	9.1
Canada	52.5
United States of America	16.2
Did not respond	22.2

Table 3 Master list of 43 statements representing perceptions, attitudes or activities that could influence men's decisions to participate, or decline to participate, in research about violence

Cluster	#	Statement	
Map region: Facilitators			
1. External Motivation	43	Because some men want to do what is right. Men are aware that domestic violence is rampant and they want to help prevent it.	
	40	Because some men might want to share their stories for the benefit of fellow victims and survivors of violence.	
	15	Because some men may believe that they will personally benefit if they and the people they care about are at less risk of violence.	
	35	Because some men might want to develop a better understanding of why many men perpetrate violence against people they care about.	
	33	Because some men might believe their input will help the research and help other participants.	
	38	Because of the efforts of celebrities or athletes championing anti-violence efforts (e.g., Patrick Stewart, Daniel Craig, Peter Gabriel, Tim McGraw).	
	17	Because participation requires time and effort.	
	21	Because a close friend or family member has told them that s/he is a survivor of physical or sexual violence.	
	27	Because of high profile cases like Ray Rice, Alec Baldwin, Sean Penn.	
	8	Because participants will be compensated for their time.	
	2. Positive Framing	3	Because the research is explained in terms of what men are FOR as opposed to what they are AGAINST (for example, the research focus on "gender respect" rather than on "dating violence").
		29	Because the research is presented as "objective" and does not label men in general as being "the problem".
	Map region: Societal support for domestic violence research		
	3. Normalization	2	Because some men may prefer to be in denial and not accept that many men are violent.
10		Because some men believe they need to defend themselves from being perceived as violent, even if they have done nothing wrong.	
34		Because the people they know don't talk about violence and healthy relationships and masculinity.	
9		Because some men may have grown up in hostile environments and view violence as "normal".	
18		Because of personal religious beliefs, culture, and/or social background.	
4. Lack of knowledge and/or confidence	23	Because, as men, they do not have to deal with sexual harassment and discrimination as often as women do.	
	16	Because some men may not believe that the research will do anything to change the problem of domestic violence.	
	42	Because some men may not believe the research will benefit men in any way.	
	4	Because some men may be confused about where they stand on the issue of domestic violence.	
	19	Because some men may think that if they are not perpetrators or victims of this type of violence, then it is not relevant to them.	
	37	Because some men may think violence is an overrated topic and are tired of hearing about it.	
	12	Because some men may not think that domestic violence is a serious problem.	
	13	Because some men may not think that the researchers have the credibility to do this research because they (the researchers) probably have not experienced violence.	
36	Because some men may lack knowledge about the subject of domestic violence.		
Map region: Barriers			
5. Shame and guilt	7	Because some men may be ashamed to talk about their own experiences as victims of violence.	
	1	Because some men may feel shame about times in the past when they used violence against people they care about or times when they did not stop it from happening.	
	22	Because some men may feel guilty about violence that has been done to women; men are supposed to protect women, and if violence has happened to women, it means that men have failed in their duties	
	14	Because some men may feel guilty about their own past violent behavior against people they care about and want to make amends or make it right.	
6. Fear	26	Because some men may think they will be asked to share personal experiences.	
	30	Because some men may not want to find themselves in a position where they are asked to admit to their own experience of using violence against loved ones because others may see it as socially unacceptable or wrong.	
	41	Because some men may want to avoid uncomfortable conversations and prefer to suppress undesirable emotions.	
39	Because some men may believe that sharing their own experiences of being a victim of violence could threaten their masculinity.		

Table 3 (continued)

Cluster	#	Statement
	6	Because some men may be concerned that researchers will ask about past acts of violence against people they care about and then share this information with law enforcement or child protective services.
	5	Because some men may be afraid their answers will not remain confidential and will be shared with others.
	20	Because some men have had personal experiences with police and other legal authorities.
	31	Because some men may be concerned about their personal safety and fear being hurt by violent men who are also part of the research.
	7. Perceived Image	32
	25	Because some men may think that they will be seen by other men as being on the side of women if they participate.
	11	Because some men may believe that participating in social research like this is “unmanly.”
	24	Because some men may believe the research will be anti-male.
	28	Because they don't want to feel like someone's “research subject.”

Because participants will be compensated for their time, and (17) Because participation requires time and effort into the External motivation cluster. Statements 8 and 17 had initially been grouped with statements within the Positive framing cluster. Fig. 1 illustrates the final seven-cluster solution map. The statement numbers only reflect the statements location on

the associated concept maps (Figs. 1 and 2), and do not represent any other meanings or values.

The final seven cluster solution map, (Fig. 1) illustrates the location of the 43 statements in relation to each statement and grouped by cluster. Points that are closer together represent statements that were sorted together more frequently by participants.

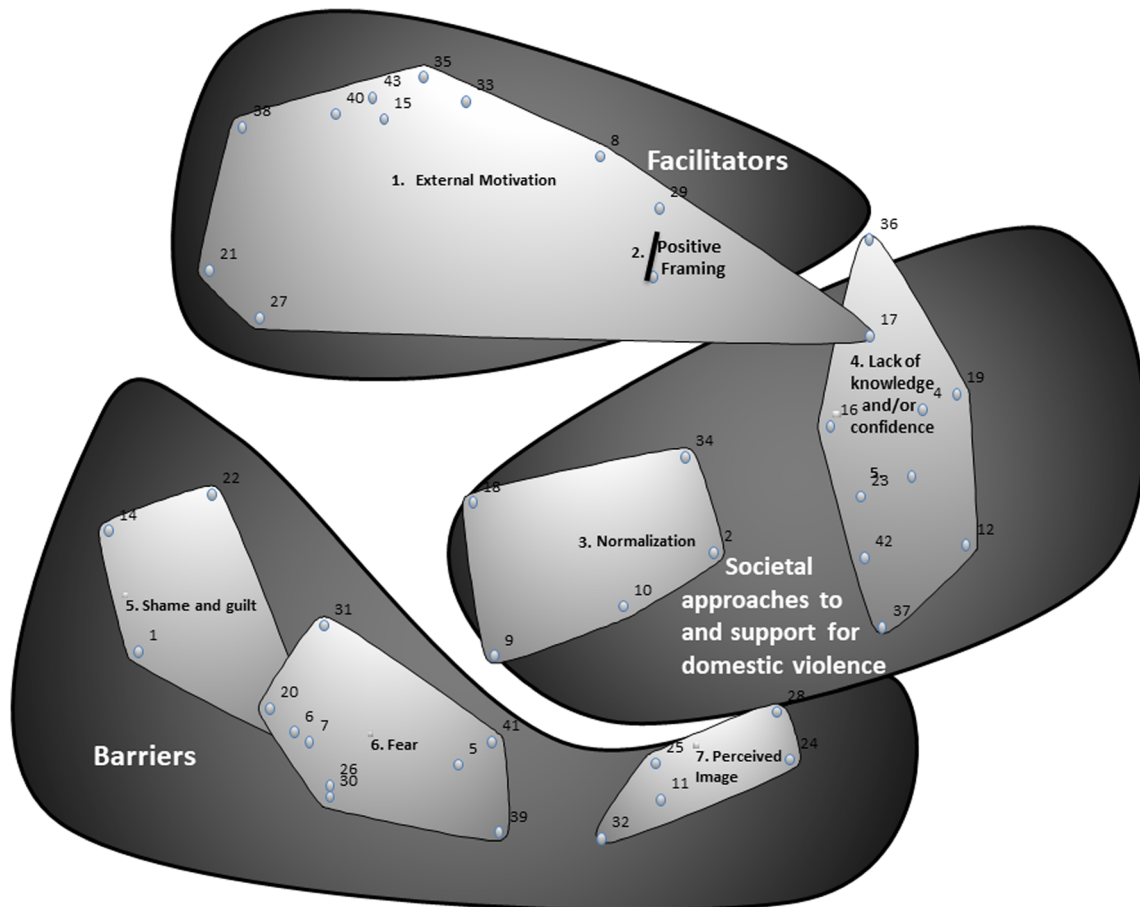


Fig. 1 Final seven cluster solution map

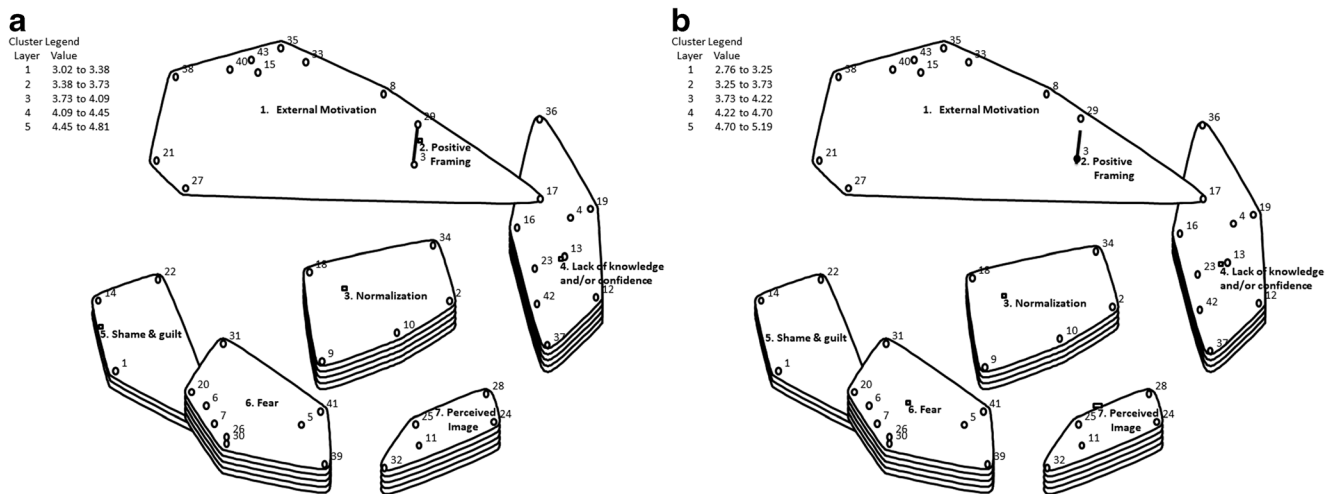


Fig. 2 **a** Seven cluster rating map - men's decision to participate in research about domestic violence that was being undertaken where men do not have to see or speak to someone (anonymously) **b** Seven cluster rating

map - men's decision to participate in research about domestic violence that was being undertaken in an in-person or group setting

The Cluster Map

The MDS and HCA are depicted as cluster maps in Figs. 1 and 2, in which points on the map represent individual statement from the master list detailed in Table 1 (numbered 1–43). Based on their close proximity on the map, statements in clusters 5 and 6 (*Shame and guilt*, and *Fear*) appear to be conceptually close, as do clusters 1 and 2 (*External Motivation* and *Positive Framing*). In both sets of clusters, some individual statements appear to be close based on their proximity to individual statements in the neighboring cluster, when compared to statements within their own cluster. This indicates that some items may be closely related. For example, statements 1 and 22 (Because some men may feel shame about times when they used violence against people they care about or times when they did not stop it from happening; and feeling guilty about violence) in the *Shame and Guilt* cluster are conceptually similar to statement 30 (Because some men may not want to find themselves in a position where they are asked to admit to their own experience of using violence against loved ones because others may see it as socially unacceptable or wrong) in the *Fear* cluster. The relatively close placement of these factors suggests that participants perceived these statements to be conceptually similar.

Because bridging values also indicate the closeness between items or clusters, we looked at bridging values to gain a sense of cohesion between clusters. Most clusters had relatively low bridging values, especially *Fear* (0.28), suggesting that participants clustered those factors together frequently. In contrast, *Positive Framing* and *Shame and Guilt* reported bridging values of 0.79 and 0.64 respectively. These higher values reflect that participants sorted statements within these clusters with statements in other areas of the map, suggesting such clusters are not as internally cohesive as those clusters

with lower bridging values. Finally, we looked at stress values to evaluate the map's goodness of fit. Stress values reflect the stability within the clusters and the overall map. Ideal stress values are below 0.36; the final stress value was 0.24 after 31 iterations which is considered to be within acceptable limits (Kane and Trochim 2007; Trochim 1989).

Clusters

During the map interpretation, participants discussed the following three regions (*Facilitators*, *Societal approaches to and support for domestic violence*, and *Barriers*), and seven clusters as follows.

Facilitators to men's Participation in Research

Cluster 1 – External Motivation describes factors that promote men's involvement in domestic violence research, specifically extrinsic reasons that may motivate potential participants to be involved in domestic violence research. For example, "Because some men may believe that they will personally benefit if they, and the people they care about are at less risk of violence" and "Because a close friend or family member has told them that s/he is a survivor of physical or sexual violence".

Cluster 2 – Positive Framing outlined that the framing of participation benefit/s (or risk/s), may influence participation in domestic violence research. Specifically, participating or not participating in domestic violence research depends on how the research is presented. For example, the following statements frame domestic violence using a strengths based or positive approaches that assists with creating a safe or more comfortable space for men, and somewhat promotes men's involvement in domestic

violence research: “Because the research is explained in terms of what men are FOR as opposed to what they are AGAINST—the research focus on “gender respect” rather than on “dating violence”; and “Because the research is presented as “objective” and does not label men in general as being “the problem”.

Societal Approaches to and Support for Domestic Violence

Cluster 3 – Normalization outlines a range of barriers and facilitators that can hinder and/or promote men’s involvement in domestic violence research. Specifically, *Cluster 3* includes statements that may conform to a standard or expected behavior within the participants’ social environment—violent to non-violent norms—that influences men’s participation in domestic violence research. This cluster is central to the map and the boundaries were not adjusted during the mapping interpretation and finalization session, suggesting homogeneity within the cluster and the distinctiveness of *Normalization*.

Cluster 4 – Lack of knowledge and/or confidence is predominantly composed of factors that hinder men’s involvement in domestic violence research, predominately due to potential participants’ limited knowledge and awareness regarding the scope of domestic violence. Similarly to *Normalization*, when discussing this cluster, participants outlined tendencies to avoid challenging one’s beliefs about domestic violence as directly irrelevant, by not engaging in activities (such as research on IPV) that might be inconsistent with this belief. In efforts to reduce cognitive dissonance, potential participants may downplay the role they believe they—as men—play, thereby, consciously or subconsciously creating separation from any potential calls to action. For example, potential participants in research about domestic violence could self-define as distanced or dissociated from domestic violence, and consequently do not participate in domestic violence research activities.

Barriers to men’s Participation in Research

Cluster 5 – Shame and Guilt generally relates to barriers or factors that hinder men’s involvement in domestic violence research, while noting that this could also relate to shaming men into participating in domestic violence research. During the interpretation session, participants discussed that sometimes shame and guilt go hand in hand and can be difficult to differentiate; also, the same action may give rise to feelings of both shame and guilt. The former may reflect the feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonorable or improper, and

the later could reflect a feeling of responsibility or remorse for some real or perceived offense or wrongdoing. For example, being directly or indirectly aware and conscious of domestic violence prevalence, and the feeling of direct or indirect responsibility or remorse for domestic violence.

Cluster 6 – Fear describes a variety of barriers or factors that generally hinder men’s involvement in domestic violence research relating to the feeling of apprehension, trepidation, vulnerability, and markedly fear. Fear is a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, in this case, directly or indirectly stimulated by domestic violence. For example, this could be caused by the belief that domestic violence research is likely to be associated with negative connotations, feeling vulnerable and/or raising concerns about personal safety. As a result, this cluster reflects participants’ fear in having such negative connotations associated with themselves. In other words, there is a fear of the real or perceived negative consequences of participating in domestic violence research.

Cluster 7 – Perceived Image includes barriers and facilitators to involving men in domestic violence research resulting from participants’ perceptions of domestic violence research. For example, engaging in domestic violence research could be associated with perpetrating domestic violence, or supporting women against men in a flawed binary gender challenge. Further, some research and discourse about domestic violence research may be perceived as anti-male or may be perceived as purporting participants as being “on the side” of women in a binary challenge of “us versus them”. While this may not necessarily be a direct result of social and cultural norms, there could be some alignment. As a result, participants in domestic violence research could be linked to such perceptions by others in their social circles, which for some participants may be conflicting and/or uncomfortable.

The Importance of Influencing Factors to men’s Participation in Domestic Violence Research

Participants rated each item based on how important each statement is in influencing men’s decision to participate in research about domestic violence that was being undertaken in two ways:

- Anonymous research, where they do not have to see or speak to someone?
- An in-person or group setting?

The average importance ratings for all statements combined, as they relate to men’s decision to participate in

research about domestic violence fell in the range of low to high likelihood of participation, for both anonymous and non-anonymous research. There were few significant differences between the rating questions at either the individual statement or cluster level (not shown).

At the cluster level, participants tended to rate statements in the *External Motivation* and *Positive Framing* clusters in the lower range of the 7-point scale, indicating that men *would* participate in research about domestic violence due to the statements in these clusters.

On average, statements within *Shame and guilt*, *Normalization*, *Lack of Knowledge*, *Perceived Image* and *Fear* reflected a higher range of the 7-point scale on average. This indicated men *would not* participate in research about domestic violence based on the statements within the aforementioned clusters. For example, statement 14, “Because some men may feel guilty about their own past violent behavior against people they care about and want to make amends or make it right” scored medium importance on average for anonymous and in-person participation in research about domestic violence. Statement 30, “Because some men may not want to find themselves in a position where they are asked to admit to their own experience of using violence against loved ones, because others may see it as socially unacceptable or wrong” scored low importance on average for men’s decision to participate in research about domestic violence that was either anonymous or in-person or group settings. This indicated on average, that this statement leans towards the reason men would be unlikely to participate in domestic violence research. Further, the *Shame and guilt*, and *Fear* region predominantly included factors that hinder men’s involvement in violence research. These factors are generally characterized by the negative undertones and connotations of domestic violence and are inherent to discussions about domestic violence. However, they are not necessarily directly about domestic violence, for example how potential participants feel about themselves when they discuss domestic violence.

As illustrated in Fig. 2, *External Motivation* received the lowest average rating based on how important each statement is on men’s decision to participate in research about domestic violence that was being undertaken in a way where they do not have to see or speak to someone, scoring a medium and a high average score for the statements importance on men’s decision to participate in-person or group setting respectively. In contrast, *Fear* had the highest average impact on men’s decision to participate in research about domestic violence that was being undertaken in a way where they do not have to see or speak to someone (low importance), and an in-person or group setting with low importance—suggesting men *would not* participate in-person or group setting research about domestic violence due to reasons associated with fear.

On average, participants rated statement 33, “Because some men might believe their input will help the research

and help other participants” (part of the *Lack of Knowledge and/or Confidence* cluster) as having the highest importance to men’s decision to participate in research about domestic violence that was anonymous and for research that was being undertaken in an in-person or group setting. The lowest score of importance in relation to undertaking activities in a way where they do not have to see or speak to someone was statement 30, “Because some men may not want to find themselves in a position where they are asked to admit to their own experience of using violence against loved ones because others may see it as socially unacceptable or wrong”. This statement scored “low importance” on average for importance in men’s decision to participate in research about domestic violence that was being undertaken anonymously, as well as participating in research about domestic violence activities in-person or in a group setting.

Discussion

There is a need to generate a strong evidence base across the gender continuum that draws from diverse literature to describe motivations for, and solutions to domestic violence. Moreover, some studies report challenges in enrolling men in research that concern domestic violence. Our findings indicate that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to engaging men in domestic violence research, but offers insights into facilitators, societal approaches to and support for domestic violence, and barriers to men’s participation in domestic violence research. Our goal in conducting this project has been to create a comfortable space to allow men to lead and gather knowledge around engaging diverse samples of men in domestic violence research. These results have implications for researchers’ capacity to develop and refine a comprehensive domestic violence research agenda that includes men’s perspectives.

Facilitators Men’s motivations to participate in domestic violence research included facilitators that promoted men’s involvement in domestic violence research. *External motivation* included factors that promote men’s engagement in domestic violence research for extrinsic reasons such as men wanting “to do what is right” and their awareness that “domestic violence is rampant and they want to help prevent it.” We also learned that the preponderance of negative framing of men’s roles in research (for example, as the perpetrator) can turn men away from opportunities to participate. Further, *Positive framing* can facilitate participation in domestic violence research by creating a more comfortable space for men’s involvement, such as presenting research as “objective” and not always labeling men as the “the problem”. Consequently, this can help ensure that we do not lump all

men in the same category—as perpetrators—when designing and describing research.

Societal Approaches to and Support for Domestic Violence

Our findings indicated that men recognized societal approaches to and support for domestic violence, including factors that facilitate or provide barriers to men’s participation in domestic violence research. Our findings suggest we can foster an environment where men conform to a standard or expected behavior within a social environment—violent to non-violent. Our findings suggested tendencies to avoid challenging one’s norms and beliefs, with *Lack of knowledge and/or confidence* identified as predominantly hindering men’s involvement in domestic violence research. This may indicate the need to garner societal approaches to and support for preventing domestic violence, including the opportunity to emphasize the importance of the research potential to influence society and societal structures, improving our understanding of gender inequities and domestic violence prevention.

Barriers Our findings indicated that men recognized various barriers or obstacles to participation in domestic violence research. *Perceived image* outlined that perceptions of domestic violence research may be anti-male or may be viewed as purporting participants as being “on the side” of women in a binary challenge of “us versus them”. Further, the *Shame and guilt* and *Fear* men may embody regarding domestic violence may also act as a barrier to participation in domestic violence research, but could also be influenced by addressing facilitators to participation in domestic violence research and increasing societal approaches to and support for preventing domestic violence.

Engaging Men in Domestic Violence Research Our findings offer insight, gleaned from men themselves, into identifying facilitators, societal approaches to and support for domestic violence, and barriers to men’s participation in domestic violence research, helping to create a more comfortable space to allow men to lead and gather knowledge around engaging diverse samples of men in domestic violence research. Through this research, we identified interrelated and dynamic characteristics regarding men’s decision to engage in research about domestic violence. The individual statements and the aggregated clusters can be addressed, minimized, or strengthened (depending on their effect). However, specific efforts that address the dual criteria of engaging men and triggering mechanisms that can lead to evidence based changes in order to eliminate gender-based violence should also be made (Flood 2010; Funk 2006; Grove 2012).

Framing domestic violence research recruitment and exploring strategies that result in population-level increases in men’s knowledge about the commonality

and effects of domestic violence, could facilitate participation in domestic violence research, particularly if they spark an awareness of the likelihood that women and children they know have experienced domestic violence. Further, approaches that challenge the perceived image by shifting population-level social constructs, including dichotomous gender paradigms, can address and remove the “us versus them” mentality. For instance, shifting assumptions and framing domestic violence research recruitment to potential participants in a strengths-based approach, such as how men are *needed* as accomplices, co-conspirators and allies, connecting the need to do good with potential participants individual strengths; “Join us to rally our friends and siblings to end domestic violence” or “Most people reject bullying on the playground or at home. Learn how you can help create a safer future for our children.” Another approach includes shifting the framing of domestic violence research to actively use gender neutral pronouns, consequently de-gendering victim/perpetrator bias and assumptions. Shifting gender norms and common binary gender paradigms that may underpin recruitment, could further support recruitment for domestic violence research. Specifically, de-gendering victim/perpetrator language in domestic violence research recruitment can assist to increase inclusiveness, open space for victims, and create clearer focus on prevention regardless of the perpetrator’s gender. Such framing can also assist to engage men and activate motivations that facilitate participation in domestic violence research activities, triggering men’s awareness, self-interest and understanding that preventing domestic violence is not “unmanly”. This could benefit the domestic violence research agenda, supporting the generation of a comprehensive and inclusive evidence base that describes motivations for, and solutions to domestic violence across the gender continuum.

We note that some of the identified statements and clusters may be more easily influenced than others. This is particularly pertinent when considering the required resources (such as time, financial resources, human resources, and political will) to address the factors reflected in these statements. For instance, fear could be challenging in relation to addressing personal experiences with violence, potentially incorporating the need to resolve personal trauma and address other sensitivities. However, there may be other statements and clusters that can assist to mitigate or off-set such challenges. For example, addressing barriers with positive framing, knowledge, and confidence to discuss and participate in domestic violence research, in contrast to “what is wrong with men” could help address fear. This could also provide opportunities to share personal experiences

in relation to domestic violence research in a safer environment, fostering an environment for increased participation.

We acknowledge that “men” are not a homogenous group. For meaningful change to occur, context and opportunities for change in domestic violence research needs to be considered. As a result, there are two fundamental recommendations:

- Foreground the strengths of individuals, families, organizations and communities in discussions about how to address the identified facilitators, societal approaches to and support for domestic violence, and barriers to men’s participation in domestic violence research. In addressing each of the identified statements and clusters, researchers should adopt a strength-based approach, including external motivators (such as “wanting to do the right thing”) and positive framing (such as “Because the research is presented as “objective” and does not label men in general as being “the problem”) to address domestic violence and help develop a safer and more comfortable environment to meaningfully discuss domestic violence, addressing a lack of knowledge and/or confidence, perceived image, normalization, shame and guilt, and fear. Strength-based approaches do not mean glossing over domestic violence issues in favor of a rosy representation; rather, they start with the premise of developing and advancing social change. In contrast to deficit models, the approach emphasizes people’s self-determination, empowerment and strengths; giving them voice, insight, and political will to shift assumptions and prevent domestic violence (Fetterman 2001). It is a philosophy and a way of viewing participants as resourceful, influential, and employing the multiple strengths of individuals, families, organizations and communities to prevent and overcome challenges in domestic violence research participation within complex and dynamic contexts (Fetterman 2001).
- Understand and use individual, organizational and community strengths to prioritize and engage the identified facilitators, societal approaches to and support for domestic violence, and mitigate barriers to men’s participation in domestic violence research. To better assist in facilitating men’s engagement and retainment with domestic violence research, the community of researchers should prioritize these insights based on their own individual and contextual strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. As a result, outreach efforts to engage men in domestic violence research will more effectively and efficiently fit the context of men’s lives.

Expected results of such strength-based approaches are the counter-hegemonic practices that can emerge as individuals and social groups engage critically with historical and current

discourses, social meanings, and power relations, offering promising insights into factors that serve as barriers and facilitators to men’s participation in domestic violence research. As a result, the potential challenge to engage men in domestic violence research, could yield meaningful results.

Limitations

This research has numerous strengths and limitations, including being among the first male led research projects to explore men’s engagement in domestic violence research. All data collection phases of the study were led and run by self-identified male researchers, in an attempt to ensure participants felt as safe and comfortable as possible in discussing a sensitive topic. However, we acknowledge the research limitations, particularly given the context of this research, including the general heteronormative nature of this project, the self-selection bias and the data collection processes (such as the brainstormed responses), and the dominant roles of cis-gendered males promoting the study. This also resulted in limited gender diversity within the sample, and accordingly a narrow heteronormative view of domestic violence and the associated barriers and facilitators to engaging men. Consequently, continuing the normalization of the dominant gender paradigm (i.e. – gender binary social constructs), which was identified as a barrier to improving discussion and engagement regarding domestic violence research. In alignment with Flood (2015), this research acknowledges the need for critical assessment of underlying assumptions that contribute to the engagement of men in domestic violence research, including exploring diversities and pluralities in the organization of sexuality, and the purported homogenously heterosexual male constituency. Furthermore, the sample was recruited from North America and Australia, racial identity data was not collected, and this is not a representative sample. Consequently, there are limitations for generalizability. We acknowledge that our experiences and perspectives on violence are not all the same, and while there are many similarities, there are also many points of diversity and difference. There are also many strengths to this research. This includes male engagement from conception to dissemination of research findings. Furthermore, given the relationship with gender and domestic violence, we need to continue developing safer spaces for research to promote discussion, critical thinking and critiquing of dominant gender paradigms, to better understand gender and domestic violence.

Conclusion

This research identified 43 barriers and/or facilitators, across seven clusters to increase men’s engagement with domestic

violence research. These statements and their associated clusters have potential to create change. Further, these barriers, societal approaches to, and support for domestic violence, and/or facilitators appear to have interrelated and dynamic characteristics that we can and should address to engage men in domestic violence research. However, for meaningful change to occur, the context and opportunities for change in domestic violence research needs to be considered.

We can all play a part in addressing each of these statements and clusters, particularly challenging the domestic violence research discourse and challenging deficit-based approaches to recruiting men in domestic violence research. This research highlights the urgent need to focus on strength-based approaches and *Positive framing* to develop a safer environment to facilitate engaging men in discussing domestic violence and to address *Lack of knowledge and/or confidence, Perceived Image, Normalization, Shame and guilt and Fear* in relation to domestic violence research. Finally, our local, national and international community of researchers should address these statements and clusters based on their own individual, organization and community strengths, weaknesses and opportunities; assisting to better engage with all communities in relation to domestic violence research. Researchers exploring domestic violence all have an important role, and there is a crucial need to stand up, speak out and act in a positive manner to engage all people in domestic violence research, ultimately assisting to prevent domestic violence.

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