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## Help-Seeking Behaviors of Survivors of Intimate Partner Femicide Attacks

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Danielle Marie Santucci

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Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Help-Seeking Behaviors of Survivors of Intimate Partner Femicide Attacks

by

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MS, Walden University, 2018

BA, William Paterson University, 2016

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

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## Abstract

According to recent studies, intimate partner femicide (IPF) is a problem that occurs on a daily basis. Researchers have demonstrated that women lack helpful resources or fail to use helpful resources before they are murdered but have not established why this may be. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand help-seeking behaviors of female survivors of IPF attacks. Marxist feminist theory was used to guide the study. The research questions were aimed to understand the lived experiences of the participants and to identify help-seeking behaviors. Data were collected from individual interviews with 10 female survivors of IPF attacks. Data were analyzed using codes and categories to identify themes. Results from this study indicate that warning signs of IPF attacks were multiple forms of abuse, jealousy, controlling behaviors, and manipulation. Findings from this study include recommended help-seeking behaviors for women, such as seeking a therapist, confiding in a friend, going to a shelter or organization, or going to authorities if necessary. Implications for positive social change include that women in current intimate relationships who suspect they may become victims of IPF may use the findings to implement help-seeking behaviors. Law enforcement may wish to suggest these alternatives to women with whom they come into contact.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to all women who have been victims of domestic violence and intimate partner femicide. You are not alone, and I hope the research found in this dissertation is beneficial in helping others to seek help.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank God for the opportunity to conduct this research in an attempt to help women around the world and for getting me this far in my life. I would like to thank Dr. Deborah Laufersweiler-Dwyer for being a great coach and mentor in this dissertation process. I would like to thank my mother for always pushing and encouraging me to be the best that I can be.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Femicide, or the murder of women, is a huge problem on a global scale. Intimate partner femicide (“IPF”) is the main form of femicide that was addressed in this study. Innocent lives are being lost daily at the hands of an intimate partner. I sought to identify help-seeking behaviors that are beneficial to women who believe that they may be a victim of IPF or are in abusive domestic partner relationships.

The participant group that the study addressed included female survivors of IPF attacks. This study was needed to identify help-seeking behaviors that may be useful for women who feel that they are at risk for becoming a victim. Knowledge of resources and where to get help may help to save innocent lives. Major sections in Chapter 1 include the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

### **Background**

In a review of the research related to IPF, and risk factors, and precautionary measures, the keywords searched were *femicide*, *intimate partner femicide*, *intimate partner violence*, *risk factors*, *intimate partner homicide*, and *abuse*, which allowed me to identify how this research would be addressed. Cunha and Goncalves (2019) found that men who showed an increased risk for committing intimate partner homicide were typically older, exhibited suicidal and homicidal threats, and used weapons. In addition, McPhedran et al. (2018) identified that current research has focused on the perpetrators of IPF rather than the victims. Singh et al. (2019) discovered that between 2007 and 2016,

1,318 cases of femicide cases involved strangulation, which appears to be a common form of IPF. Weil (2018) identified that most studies included male offenders as participants. The current study included female participants as opposed to male. Lastly, Zara et al. (2019) concluded that IPF victims were in an intimate relationship with perpetrators with a high level of contentiousness. This might explain a certain state of mind of the perpetrators.

### **Problem Statement**

IPF occurs daily. The Poynter Institute (2018) found that nearly three women in the United States are killed every day by their intimate partner. Allen and Salari (2020) found that in 2015, 64% of female murders were committed by former or current intimate partners. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) found that in 2017 30,000 women were killed by their intimate partner on a global level, which translates to 82 women per 1 day.

This problem has negatively impacted the friends and family of deceased victims and others around the world who understand this crime as a problem because innocent lives are being lost and loved ones are being lost. Weil (2018) determined that there is a lack of research in understanding the female victims of attempted femicide. Weil also noted that most studies included male offenders as participants, so there is more research known about male offenders compared to female victims. Cunha and Goncalves (2019) identified risk factors of offenders who commit IPF including older age, suicidal and homicidal threats, and the use of weapons. In contrast, there is little research on precautionary measures or help-seeking behaviors that women can take to prevent

victimization by IPF. In one of the few studies on this topic, Evans et al. (2018) examined two case studies with two women in Brazil who were victims of attempted femicide. Two common themes emerged from the case studies of as predictors of a femicide attack: normalized experiences of violence and experiences of psychological abuse prior to the attempted femicide.

Few studies have focused on precautionary measures and help-seeking behaviors for potential victims of IPF attacks. Koppa and Messing (2019) identified that women who are murdered are most likely to be killed by their intimate partner than any other type of offender. In this study, Koppa and Messing gathered criminal information from the Houston, Texas Police Department. This information included demographics, protective orders, and homicide information. Koppa and Messing found that 18.2% of deceased victims reached out for a protective order 1–3 years before their deaths. Koppa and Messing also noted that victims, before death, are unlikely to seek a protective order against their intimate partner. In addition, Murray et al. (2018) used a qualitative approach that included electronic interviews to assess stigma with survivors of abusive relationships. Murray et al. found that most of the women had internalized stigma, which led to negative emotions such as shame and guilt. Murray et al. further identified that because most of the women internalized their stigma rather than externalizing it, they were more likely to underutilize health care services and were less likely to reach out to a friend or family member. Murray et al. concluded that internalized stigma and negative emotions characteristic of victims of IPF prevent the women from seeking help before it is too late.



The current study addressed the gap in the research regarding help-seeking or precautionary measures that female victims of intimate partner violence may take to prevent IPF. The research problem was that help-seeking behaviors and precautionary measures are not known to women who are in current relationships that may be prone to becoming a victim of IPF or are less likely to receive help. There is also evidence that women are not likely to seek help prior to the IPF attack (Murray et al., 2018). I sought to increase the understanding of why women are not likely to seek help of any kind when they are experiencing risk factors and what help-seeking behaviors exist that that will help other women to prevent IPF from occurring. The findings from the current study may be used to encourage women to seek help based on the experiences of those who have had similar experiences.

I interviewed female IPF survivors using a qualitative method to address the research problem. Female survivors of IPF attacks served as study participants. Family and friends of deceased female IPF victims were possible study participants.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to increase the understanding of help-seeking and precautionary measures that victims of IPF experience, and to use this information to develop recommendations that may encourage utilization of help-seeking behaviors for women who are potential victims of IPF. This study addressed the gap in the research regarding help-seeking or precautionary measures that female victims of intimate partner violence may take to prevent IPF.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What are the lived experiences related to help-seeking behaviors of women who were victims of intimate partner femicide attacks?

RQ2: How can the lived experiences related to help-seeking behaviors be utilized by individuals facing this phenomenon?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Feminist theory (Guthery et al., 2019) is used to examine gender-based violence by considering disparate meanings. Marxist feminism focuses on the ways in which women are oppressed through capitalist economic practices and the system of private property (Ask Media Group, 2020). Marxist feminism explains male domination over women in society (The Sociological Mail, 2018). Marxist feminism notices that the gender struggle is related to the political struggle (Mojab, 2015). Marxist feminist theory was used to determine meanings in each case relating to IPF due to male aggression and disbelief in legal change.

### **Nature of the Study**

I used a qualitative phenomenological approach by conducting interviews with 10 women to collect and analyze data (see Patton, 2015). Qualitative interviews were conducted with women survivors of IPF attacks to understand the help-seeking behaviors they used or did not use and why. The phenomenological approach sets aside theories and hypotheses and focuses on human experience to describe the meaning of human lived experience (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). My main focus was to understand participants' personal lived experience of the same event and to identify common themes among the

participants' experiences. Identifying the common themes of help-seeking behaviors that women used or did not use and why aligned with the problem statement.

### **Definitions**

*Femicide*: The murder of women because of their gender (World Health Organization, 2012).

*Help-seeking behavior*: Any form of help that a woman has tried to receive by others (telling a friend or family member, going to the police, leaving the partner, etc.), (Psychology, 2021).

*Intimate partner femicide*: The murder of women because of their gender in an intimate partner relationship. The perpetrator is male (World Health Organization, 2012).

*Intimate partner femicide survivor*: Those who have been attempted to be killed but survived (Academic Council on the United Nations System, 2018).

*Perpetrator*: Male intimate partner who attempted to kill his partner (World Health Organization, 2012).

### **Assumptions**

I assumed that help-seeking behaviors will help stop femicide. This could not be demonstrated as true because it is possible that women who used help-seeking behaviors found them to be ineffective. Women may have gotten help, but the help may have been unsuccessful. I also assumed that help-seeking behaviors among women are similar. This may not be true because every woman has had their own personal lived experience and may not have obtained the same type of help. The assumptions were necessary because

they helped me determine the direction of the study. Assumptions may be confirmed by the results, or assumptions may be disconfirmed based on the results of the study.

### **Possible Types and Sources of Data**

Possible primary data collection types were the following:

- interviews with female survivors of IPF attacks
- interviews with bereaved friends and/or family members of a deceased victim
- interviews with law enforcement and/or doctors (including psychologists) that have had history with the couple
- interviews with personnel working in women's shelters or organizations that the women may reside in

Interviews were conducted by me. Interviews allowed for an understanding of the victim's personal lived experience. Interviews with bereaved friends and family members of deceased victims could have allowed for an understanding of the victims' experiences as told by a bystander. Interviews with personnel in women's shelters or other organizations allowed for information on how the victim is currently living. Data were collected by recording interviews in the facility where the woman resided, in a public place, or in a home where the victim resided. These participants had the same research instruments.

Possible secondary data collection types included the following:

- police records regarding intimate or domestic abuse among the couple to identify history
- medical records that contain abuse history

- autopsies/medical records of deceased victims
- records of hospitals/shelters/police records where women attempted to seek help
- information that had already been collected could have been useful for this study

Records that showcase a history of violence could have helped to determine the relationship between the intimate partners to better understand the history of repeated violence between the couple. Records of women attempting to receive help could have helped in understanding where the women went for help, whether this help was effective, or why this help failed. If these records were needed, I would have had to comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The general social problem addressed in the study was femicide. This is the killing of women because they are females. The specific focus was IPF. IPF is the most common femicide and happens on a daily basis. This subcategory was chosen because it was important to understand the relationship between men and women and what makes women more vulnerable to being killed. It was also important to identify help-seeking behaviors so that IPF can be prevented. Femicides are more likely to be committed by an intimate partner than any other type of femicide, which was the reason for the focus on IPF in this study.

The target populations were females who were potential victims of femicide. These females had been tried to be killed by their male partner. Victims of other forms of

femicide were excluded from this study. This study focused on intimate-partner-related femicides. Marxist feminist theory was used in this study to examine differences between males and females from a capitalist perspective and economic perspective (History, 2018). Traditional Marxism describes capitalism to understand certain situations. Marxist feminist theory describes capitalism as it relates to femicide; men are typically dominant, and women are seen as property. This theory was used to understand why males attempt to kill their female intimate partner. Other feminist theories were excluded because they did not examine the social structure between men and women.

### **Limitations, Challenges, and Barriers**

A limitation to the research design of the study was single group threats. According to Web Center for Social Research Methods (n.d.), single group threats are a validity threat that refers to criticisms that apply when a researcher is studying a single group. This was a validity issue that could have been a limitation to the phenomenological approach used in the study.

Though the study was aimed at one group of participants, it was required that other participants be involved. Other potential weaknesses were not interviewing male offenders or not interviewing male victims and female perpetrators. The focus of this research was femicide, which is the killing of women. Due to the paucity of research on this topic, IPF was the focus. For the crime to be considered femicide, the victim must be female and the perpetrator must be male.

Another challenge was recruiting participants. The participants who were intended to be interviewed were a vulnerable population. These women may have felt

uncomfortable sharing their personal lived experiences. Having the participants talk about their memories may have been traumatizing. Another challenge was finding participants. Participant recruitment required research on where victims of IPF attacks could have been found.

### **Significance**

The original contribution that this study made was identifying common themes among IPF victims that would highlight ways that women who are in similar situations may receive help. The idea was to identify help-seeking behaviors that women who are in a current situation may use, or what behaviors may not be helpful. It was important to note which help-seeking behaviors worked for the victims and which did not work and why. The purpose was to identify positive and successful help-seeking behaviors so that women in current intimate relationships could utilize these behaviors and strategies to save them from this dangerous situation.

Identifying beneficial help-seeking behaviors may help women in these life-threatening situations. This aligned with the research problem that women who are currently in this situation can explain their success or failure with help-seeking behaviors that may reduce the incidence of IPF by encouraging others to use their positives strategies. Too many innocent lives are being lost because women may not know how to receive help. The purpose of the current study was to identify help-seeking behaviors and to encourage women to seek the help that they need to save their lives; the findings may lead to positive social change by helping women and preventing the crime of IPF from occurring.

### **Summary**

This study focused on effective help-seeking behaviors for women who think they may be at risk for becoming a victim of IPF. Data were collected from female survivors of an IPF attack. Marxist theory was used to understand why IPF occurs as often as it does. The phenomenological approach was used to collect and analyze the data to identify common themes related to effective help-seeking behaviors. The focus of the current study was to emphasize help-seeking behaviors and to encourage women to seek the help that they need to save their lives; the findings may lead to positive social change by helping women and preventing the crime of IPF from occurring. Women who are in current abusive situations may learn effective help-seeking behaviors from this current study, which may contribute to positive social change by enabling women to receive the help that they need and to lower the crime rate of femicide. The background of femicide, IPF, and the dominance of men is addressed in the literature review in Chapter 2.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Problem Statement**

IPF occurs daily. The Poynter Institute (2018) found that nearly three women in the United States are killed every day by their intimate partner. Allen and Salari (2020) found that in 2015, 64% of female murders were committed by former or current intimate partners. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) found that in 2017 30,000 women were killed by their intimate partner on a global level for the year, which translates to 82 women per day.

This problem has negatively impacted the friends and family of deceased victims and others around the world who understand this crime as a problem because innocent lives are being lost and loved ones are being lost. Weil (2018) determined that there is a lack of research in understanding the female victims of attempted femicide. Weil also noted that most studies included male offenders as their participants, so there is more known about male offenders compared to female victims. Cunha and Goncalves (2019) identified that risk factors of offenders who commit IPF include older age, suicidal and homicidal threats, and the use of weapons. In contrast, there is little research on precautionary measures or help-seeking behaviors that women can use to prevent victimization by IPF. Evans et al. (2018) examined two case studies with two women in Brazil who were victims of attempted femicide. Two common themes emerged from the case studies as predictors of a femicide attack: normalized experiences of violence and experiences of psychological abuse prior to the attempted femicide.

Few studies have focused on precautionary measures and help-seeking behaviors for the women of IPF attacks. Koppa and Messing (2019) identified that women who are murdered are more likely to be killed by their intimate partner than any other type of offender. Koppa and Messing gathered criminal information from the Houston, Texas Police Department, including demographics, protective orders, and homicide information. The researchers found that 18.2% of deceased victims reached out for a protective order within 1–3 years before their deaths. Koppa and Messing also mentioned that victims, before death, are unlikely to seek a protective order against their intimate partner. In addition, Murray et al. (2018) used a qualitative approach with electronic interviews to assess stigma with survivors of abusive relationships. The researchers found that most of the women had internalized stigma, which led to negative emotions such as shame and guilt. Murray et al. further identified that because most of the women internalized their stigma rather than externalizing it, these women were more likely to underutilize health care services and were less likely to reach out to a friend or family member. Research has demonstrated that internalized stigma and negative emotions characteristic of victims of IPF prevent the women from seeking help before it is too late.

The current study addressed the gap in the research regarding help-seeking or precautionary measures that female victims of intimate partner violence may take to prevent IPF. The research problem was that help-seeking behaviors and precautionary measures are not known to women who are in current relationships that may be prone to becoming a victim of IPF or are less likely to receive help due to the lack of knowledge of help-seeking behaviors. There is also evidence that women are not likely to seek help

prior to the IPF attack (Murray et al., 2018). I sought to increase the understanding of why women are not likely to seek help of any kind when they are experiencing risk factors and what help-seeking behaviors exist that may help other women to prevent IPF from occurring. The findings from the current study may be used to encourage women to seek help by using the knowledge from women who have had similar experiences.

I interviewed female IPF survivors using a qualitative method to discover the help-seeking behaviors that can be used to remedy the situation. Female survivors of IPF attacks served as study participants. Family and friends of deceased IPF victims were also possible study participants.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to increase the understanding of help-seeking and precautionary measures that victims of IPF experience and to use this information to develop recommendations that may encourage utilization of help-seeking behaviors for women who are potential victims of IPF. This study addressed the gap in the research regarding help-seeking or precautionary measures that female victims of intimate partner violence may take to prevent IPF.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I selected articles relating to intimate partner femicide, risk factors, and precautionary measures. The keywords searched were *femicide*, *intimate partner femicide*, *intimate partner violence*, *risk factors*, *intimate partner homicide*, and *help-seeking behaviors* in the following databases: SAGE Journals, ScienceDirect, Complimentary Index, and Thoreau. The terms *femicide* and *risk factors* revealed many

articles in which femicide was described and risk factors were reported from recent research. These key terms helped me identify that research that exists but provided very broad studies that did not completely relate to the current study. The terms *intimate partner femicide*, *homicide*, and *help-seeking behaviors* revealed very few research studies, so dissertations were most relevant to this study. This literature search helped me identify the gap that indicated more research needs to be conducted with female potential victims of IPF.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Feminist phenomenology addressing lived experiences was developed in the 1930s and the 1940s (McIntosh and Wright, 2019). Social policy issues can be explored using the phenomenological approach. Judging women's lives cannot be as accurate as understanding their lived experiences. Using the phenomenological approach to understand lived experiences allows voices to be heard and makes the invisible visible. Sharing lived experiences helps in many ways by allowing women to identify with one another and to understand answers to certain topics. Lived experiences allow for communication and expression.

In the feminist approach, or feminist theory, there are four main components as listed by Lumen (n.d.):

1. Gender is a central focus or subject matter of the perspective.
2. Gender relations are viewed as a problem: the site of social inequities, strains, and contradictions.

3. Gender relations are not immutable; they are sociological and historical in nature, subject to change and progress.
4. Feminism is about an emancipatory commitment to change: the conditions of life that are oppressive for women need to be transformed.

In the current study, females were the central focus. Females may be perceived as the weaker sex and therefore are more likely to be killed by their intimate partner. In femicide, females are the victims. There needs to be a change because more and more females are becoming victims of IPF by their male partners. The conditions of life that need to be transformed are help-seeking behaviors. Many women may fear seeking help in their abusive relationship that may lead to femicide for multiple reasons, which were explored by interviewing female survivors of IPF attacks. In society, males are viewed as more dominant and masculine, and females are viewed as less powerful. In recent times, this opinion has been changing. It is necessary to understand the social differences and inequalities between men and women to understand how a female is likely to become a victim of IPF. The term *femicide* refers to a female victim and male perpetrator. The commitment to change is to identify help-seeking behaviors that are successful so that females specifically can receive the help that they need.

Using feminist theory, Guthery et al. (2019) discovered four main effects of globalization have contributed to social and economic experiences of domestic violence: economic uncertainties and workplace conditions, economic inequality, cultural flow, and migration. For example, a man may be unemployed, which may threaten his masculinity be projected into domestic violence against an intimate partner to sustain the masculine

role. Though there may be different reasons why a male may contribute to domestic violence on a global scale, it remains the same that women are abused physically, emotionally, sexually, and economically. A related reason why men contribute to these crimes is controlling behaviors. Feminist theory was used to explain why there are differences between how men and women behave and what leads to domestic violence or femicide.

### **Marxist Feminist Theory**

According to History (2019), Marx was born in 1818 in Prussia. He was a philosopher who drafted “The Communist Manifesto” in 1847. A lot of his work focused on communism, which led to Marxist theory. Marxist theory focuses on economics. The capitalist system is the core of the theory because it leads to economics that determine how people have relationships with one another. Marxist theory relates to feminism because economic status determines the relationship between partners.

Feminist theory is broad and has many interpretations. Marxist feminism refers to a particular feminist theory focusing on the ways in which women are oppressed through capitalist economic practices and the system of private property (Ask Media Group, 2020). Marxist feminism focuses on men being dominant over women by societal factors. Women do not believe that legal change will help, and men are aggressive and can take this out on women, which leads to domestic abuse (The Sociological Mail, 2018). According to Marxist feminism, the gender struggle is related to the political struggle (Mojab, 2015). Marxist feminism has the idea that gender relations are a parallel class (Baturenko, 2019). I used Marxist feminist theory and the phenomenological approach to

analyze the data. This consisted of in-depth interviews with female survivors of attempted IPF. The women in this study had a chance to explain their lived experiences related to feminist theory. The women explained differences between them and their partners, and how those differences led to abuse and a killing attempt. The women in this study had lived experiences that allowed them to explain what they had experienced firsthand. From this, common themes were derived.

According to Matwijkiw and Matwijkiw (2018), Marxist theory says that a person's relationship to another person depends on their economic status. Economic relations can determine gender inequality. Marxist theory links women's suffering to private property. For example, privileged women are held in slavery because of a jealous husband, or they are not allowed to leave the house or are accused of infidelity. In these situations, Marx would interpret that women are private property, which would cause the man in the relationship to act in these ways. In Marxist theory, women and men have different roles. Women are seen as caretakers and men are supposed to have the more masculine role. However, because some women are working and holding high positions such as men would, this can affect an intimate relationship because the women are not supposed to hold a higher position in the working field than men. This may lead to jealousy or demasculinity.

### **Marxist Feminism Theory in Recent Research**

In a dissertation study, Scholz (2018) used Marxism to analyze novels to determine what role power plays in relationships and the significance of being human. Scholz found that according to Marxist and feminist theory, many novels and fairytales

produced fears such as poverty and abandonment. There were many cultural fears involved with female characters in novels and fairy tales that can relate to real life.

In another dissertation study, Mohammed (2019) aimed to create a platform for feminist political struggles of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq. There had been mass amounts of violence against women from 2003 to 2018. To investigate the cases, Mohammed used Marxist feminism to understand the feminist agenda to dismantle patriarchy. Mohammed noted that organizations should be created using the foundation of Marxist feminism to understand women's struggles in the patriarchal capitalist system and to find ways to overcome inequality. Mohammed found women in Iraq are facing severe gender abuse and also a struggle for power. Using Marxist feminism, organizations can be created that uplift women and help them to achieve equality in the capitalist system.

This current research used Marxist Feminism Theory to understand the roles between men and women and how gender roles play a key role in attempted femicide. Gender inequality was examined to determine why a woman might be at risk for becoming a victim of femicide. This theory helps to understand gender issues and how it relates to femicide.

### **Phenomenological Approach**

The phenomenological approach as explained by Patton (2015), is gaining a deeper understanding of the meaning of our everyday experiences. The phenomenological approach was first introduced by German philosopher, Edmund H. Husserl, to describe how people use their senses. To gather data for this type of approach,



participants must experience in-depth interviews. Participants of this type of nature have “lived experiences”, which means that they have experienced something first-hand as opposed to second-hand. This is to identify a phenomenon of interest and the gain is to understand common themes among others that have similar lived experiences.

Moran (2000) continues that Edmund H. Husserl explained that the phenomenological approach must include pure expression. Human experiences will posit empirical fact. Moran further explains that the phenomenological approach is a practice rather than a system. All impositions placed on experience in advance must be avoided; the phenomena must be understood from within before any imposed explanations.

The phenomenological approach refers to a phenomenon, which humans experience through the five senses and can be seen as observational data (Cunnington, 2019). Human consciousness is how humans have experiences which can then be investigated and described as a phenomenon (Paradowski, 2019). Edmund H. Husserl began developing phenomenology in 1913. The meaning of a lived experience is what is necessary to be understood to examine a phenomenon. The meaning of conscious experiences through lived experiences is used to develop themes (Miller et al., 2003).

Related to this current study, the phenomenological approach was used to analyze data using feminist theory. Marxist Feminist theory was used as the theoretical framework of this research. Marxist Feminist theory helped to explain the social inequalities between men and women. This further explained economic differences, cultural difference, and historic differences. This theory explained what the differences

between the two genders are and why those differences occur. It was further determined how these differences effect an intimate relationship.

### **Phenomenological Approach in Recent Research**

A current study conducted a total of 10 over the phone interviews with incarcerated men who killed their intimate partner in the Namibia (Duff, Nampweya, and Tree, 2020). The men were interviewed from 20-45 minutes about the victim, incident, and what they thought about women. The transcripts were analyzed using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, which focused on personal lived experiences. There were two themes that emerged from using this phenomenological approach. First, the men blamed the victim. This included blaming the victim themselves, blaming the victim's friends, and blaming witchcraft. Second, the men took responsibility. Some men explained that they just wanted to hurt the victim and not kill. Others explained that fighting was the only way out or that they could not handle the situation anymore. It was found that there is a lack of programming for men to receive help. Developing culturally specific programs is suggested for further help to reduce the lack of intimate partner violence and homicide. It can be seen from this study that the phenomenological approach is effective in identifying common themes.

In a student dissertation, Lewis (2017) used a phenomenological approach to understand available services to women survivors of intimate partner violence. Adlerian theory was used to support the idea of feminist therapy. The research question proposed by Lewis aimed to answer, "what are the lived experiences of survivors of IPV and their subsequent help-seeking behavior?". The female participants were recruited from

universities, domestic violence shelters, churches, counseling centers, the community at large, and other non-profit organizations that serve survivors of intimate partner violence. A total of 10 women participated in the study and were interviewed which led to the result that women who had children with their abuser believed they could not seek help because they had financial or cohabitation issues that were tied with the abuser. Others that did not have these ties with their abusers were more likely to seek help. Having knowledge of recourses for help did not indicate that the women would seek help. A total of six of the 10 women did reach out for the police for help. Friends and family were not likely to be reached for help in fear of negative responses. It is further identified in this dissertation that more research is needed from the survivor's perspective. Women ages 18-24 and 25-34 are vulnerable populations, so further research is needed with women of these ages.

From this dissertation, it can be clear that the phenomenological approach is a beneficial approach in identifying common themes. It is also noted that further research needs to be conducted with women survivor's perspectives. More lived experience is needed, which creates a clear ground for the phenomenological approach and interviews about lived experience for this current research. This current research may build upon the results founded by Lewis (2017).

In another student dissertation, Gandarilla-Javier (2020) sought a phenomenological examination of lived experiences with undocumented Latina survivors of intimate partner violence. 15 women were participants in this study. 28 open and closed questions were asked in the interview, focusing on demographics, and lived

experiences. There were five themes that emerged from this study using the phenomenological approach: multiple forms of abuse, impediments to reporting, facilitators that encouraged reporting, adverse encounters with the court, and experiences with help-seeking. Many of the women, 8 out of the 15, reported not going to the police out of fear of deportation. Since these women were undocumented, not many had family members that they could turn to for help. Some of the women also feared of losing their children. Seeking help services was a challenge because the women were “illegal”. Two of the research participants in this study were deported. It is noted that further research needs to consider with specific research parameters due to the vulnerability of this population.

This dissertation used the phenomenological approach to identify common themes. Since common themes were discovered, there are reasons as to why undocumented women may not seek help. They may be fearful or do not have access to resources. In this current research, it is important to discover if there are any similar themes using the same approach and how lived experiences of other women compare to those of undocumented Latina survivors of intimate partner violence.

### **Continuing Research**

There are many organizations in this chapter that encourage the help to stop femicide. The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (2020) focuses on documenting femicide and identifying vulnerabilities. This organization intends to identify legislation and policies related to femicide. The Purple Roof Foundation (2021) is a women’s shelter based in Istanbul, Turkey, where women can

seek help for domestic violence. This foundation emphasizes that women are not at fault and teach about social and legal rights. The We Will Stop Femicide Platform (2015), also located in Turkey, assists women in need of help and also joins criminal court cases to support women of femicide. This organization encourages the stop of femicide in Turkey. There are also thousands of women's shelters located throughout the United States which can be found in each state (U.S. Legal Attorney Services, n.d.). These shelters assist help in legal and medical needs, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, social services, financial assistance, education, therapy, and other forms of services.

Though organizations and shelters can be found around the globe, it is difficult for women in some countries to seek the help they deserve. Women take matters into their own hands. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, of Mexico, reported that he was a humanist, not a feminist, and agreed to make femicide a priority, to which the Senate voted to make femicide a separate felony (Sandin, 2020). About 10 women are killed a day in Mexico and the people feel that The President is indifferent. Therefore, activists have been protesting in such ways: splashing red paint and graffiti at Palacio Nacional in Mexico City, a nationwide walkout, which included disappearing for 24 hours from their schools and jobs, and the leaderless movement, known as UnDíaSinNosotras ("a day without us"), challenged the government on the issues of femicide. Similarly, a movement called Ni Una Menos ("not one less") originated in 2015 in Argentina where people protest on the streets to get attention from government policymakers (Giving Compass, LLC, 2020).

Though the above-mentioned studies and dissertations in this chapter relate to intimate partner violence, there is little to no research with survivors of an intimate partner femicide attack. The difference is that in an attempted femicide, a woman was attempted to be killed, though she could have faced intimate partner violence throughout the intimate relationship. The goal was to discover which help-seeking behaviors are successful. From their lived experiences, the participants had the opportunity to discuss what help-seeking behaviors they took and why or why not these behaviors were successful. Also, it was possible that some of the participants did not seek help at all. It was necessary to understand why no help was sought among these participants and what they would have done differently through their personal lived experiences. In understanding what help-seeking behaviors are successful, women in a current abusive situation will have the advantage of understanding how to receive help. Feminist theory was used to help discover the changes that need to be made and the phenomenological approach uncovered common themes which will lead to identifying successful help-seeking behaviors.

### **Literature Review**

Femicide is the killing of women strictly because they are female (Russell, 2011). The perpetrator is usually male and can be committed by intimate partners, random killings, serial killings, and many other types. It is not known who first discovered the term femicide, but Diana E. H. Russell, Ph. D, author and participant in the African Resistance Movement, first publicly used the term “femicide” when she testified at first International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, in Brussels, Belgium in 1976 (Russell,

2011). She heard the term “femicide” from a friend who lived in London 1974 who said their friend was going to write a book titled *Femicide*. Ms. Russell also believes that this word helps to substitute for the gender-neutral word “homicide”.

On August 11, 1979, China introduced their “one-child” policy rule. Under this policy, a family can only have one child. This was seen as supposing to control population. Again, since males were always favored, women who were pregnant with female fetuses often got abortions. Cases of female infanticide and abandonment of female babies were often reported in China. There is an estimated 50 million more men in China than women (Salem Press Encyclopedia, 2019). In addition to adult females being killed in numerous ways for various reasons throughout the globe, female infanticide also occurs at an unspeakable young age. Men are always favored in countries around the globe and try to make it so men are being born into families more than females.

In postcolonial India, between 1979-1983, it is estimated that about 78,000 female fetuses were killed by the Indian Association for Women’s Studies (Bhatnagar, Dube, and Dube, 2005). Women are seen as worthless objects and cannot bring the family wealth. Female infanticide is one way of how India handles the patriarchal capitalist system, or women are likely to be killed as adults as well. Females are blamed for the destruction of the environment as well as being blamed for the violence that happens to them even though they are victims.

Throughout entire history, femicide has existed to maintain patriarchal society and occurs in cultural practices, which still exist in today’s society (Campbell, 2020). Many women in different cultures throughout the world have been accused of adultery or

witchcraft, which led to honor killings and the killing of witches. Women, in many cultures, were also seen as property, therefore, killing a woman because she disobeyed the family or her intimate partner, was justified. Female infanticide was also happening throughout the beginning of history. Hundreds of thousands of female infants were being killed because males were preferred in most cultures. Campbell identified that males were most likely to bring wealth to the family, as women were not going to bring this wealth because the family of the female would need money for the daughter's husband or would have to pay for the daughter's wedding. In most cultures throughout ancient history, males were preferred to be born into the family.

### **Witchcraft**

Though this term "femicide" did not become public until the 1970's, it has been existing in our world for centuries. Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger wrote a book in 1486 called *Malleus Maleficarum*. In this book, the authors explain to the magistrates on how to identify, interrogate, and convict witches. *Malleus Maleficarum* translates to "the Hammer of Witches" (Kramer and Sprenger, 1486). Though this book is written in Latin, which can be found translated into English, it dates to the year 0. This can infer that witchcraft, which involved killing and burning women, was happening for many centuries.

In Greek mythology, women were seen as witches because they would find ways to kill men. Deianeira smeared a tunic with love potion, which was a form of poison that consisted of Hercules' semen, olive oil, and blood. Hercules tried to rape Deinerira and killed her husband when she called out to him. Caesonia was to be believed that she had



given her husband a love potion that caused him to go mad. He would lose sleep at night and had troubles of sleeplessness (Ogden, 2002). There are many tales of witches in Greek and Latin mythology that explain examples of women supposedly killing their husbands with potions. These potions were a form of magic which gave them the title as a witch. Supposedly, every magic potion or other form of magic was seen to be against men and ways to get rid of them.

During the Middle Ages, which lasted for about 1,000 years, Europe had witch hunts. The most intense time period of witch-hunting lasted from 1400-1800. Most of Europe at this time was Roman Catholic and those that were “witches” were seen as devil worshippers that went against the current religious beliefs. A lot of the time, punishment for witchcraft was to be killed. Some women were intimidated to admit that they were a witch when they were not (Pavlac, 2009). Tens of thousands of women were burned at the stake for witchcraft during the Middle Ages. It was believed that women had magic that they would use against men, like in the Greek and Latin mythology. Women apparently used their magic for bad and were worshippers of the devil. Since the Catholics do not believe in worshipping the devil, these women that were apparently witches and putting spells on men had to be killed. Devil worshipping was not tolerated in Europe during the Middle Ages.

In 1692, the famous “Salem Witch Trials” existed in Boston Massachusetts. The Puritans, who were the group of people living at this time, believed that witches should be destroyed for the good of the community. 85% of the accused witches in Salem were female (Loiselle, 2017). Many women were accused falsely of witchcraft. Salem had

prisons for these witches which were overflowing. Many of these women were also killed as punishment for being or accused of being a witch. Salem believed that witchcraft was a common phenomenon in the community and there was to be no such thing. People also intimidated and pressured women into admitting they were witches, just like in the Middle Ages. Many women were abused and murdered because they were believed to be devil worshipers.

Being accused as a witch, or being a witch accuser, took a mental and physical toll on the young women involved in the Salem Witch trials. Laskaris (2019) explains that under these circumstances, young women were facing emotional and physical pain. It was believed that women suffering from mental disorders were helplessly irrational, so there was no mental help available. In addition, women were also accusers of witches, not just men. Some of the female accusers experienced bodily contortions, torturous pain in body parts, and going into trances. Female accusers often accused women out of anger and fear. There were a lot of emotions that happened during this time, and women were accusing other women because they were fearful. Moreover, there was no help for mental illness. If a mental illness was noticed, it can be perceived that that person is a witch. There was no help for these women, and they were constantly accusing each other of being a witch which derived from fear. Because of this, physical reactions started to show in these women because they were fearful and knew that they were not accusing an actual witch.

From witchcraft, it is seen that in the beginning of time, witches were women who were trying to kill men. Then, it progressed to women who worshipped the devil.

Between the imagination of women wanting to kill men and worshipping the devil, innocent women were killed in various ways because they were believed to be a “witch”. Thousands of women lost their lives globally because they were falsely accused of being a witch. There is no actual “proof” that women were purposely worshipping the devil and creating “magical” potions to kill their husbands. The illusion of witchcraft was costing the lives of innocent women all over the globe. There was no chance of women to seek help from anybody. Help did not exist in this time.

Witchcraft in current times is much different than it was in historic times. It is reported that witches, or Americans practicing Wicca, has developed since the 1990’s (Fearnow, 2018). Over 1.5 million Americans consider themselves as witches or follow Wicca as a religion. This is an alternative to any other religion such as Christianity. Spirituality and astrology are main factors in this practice. In today’s society, people cannot be killed for identifying as a witch. There is no forced religion in the United States, so people are now allowed to practice freely as compared to historic times.

### **Honor Killings**

Along with femicide regarding women who were witches, femicide also existed in other forms throughout the world. Honor killings is a form of femicide that has been happening in past centuries and still continues in some cultures today. Honor killing is the murder of girls and women who are killed by family members such as a father or husband. It is seen as a form of punishment for disgracing the family. A woman in Pakistan was stoned to death when she refused to marry her cousin and married someone

else of her choice – and she was three months pregnant. In Arizona, a father ran over his daughter with a car because she rejected an arranged marriage (Selby, 2016).

The British Penal Code in 1860 introduced such concepts as “chastity” and “abduction” to the framework of “honour”. Women were seen more as objects than individuals. Women were kept as slaves. Women had a protector, such as a father or husband, under the British Penal Code. Women could be abducted or kidnapped by their guardian. However, if a woman committed adultery, the husband had the right to kill her under the British Penal Code. In India, a similar law was in place. A man could kill his adulterous wife (Welchman, Hossain, and Warraich, 2005).

In the 1800’s, or 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire existed in Egypt. During this time, women were abducted as slaves and apart of the slave trade that was occurring at this time. Slaves could buy their own freedom if they were able to afford it or were free when the master died. These slaves were typically traded from Africa and could convert to Islam. Majority of these female slaves were abused by their masters. A lot of these women committed suicide or were killed by their master. In one case, a female slave was beaten so badly that she died of injuries. Another woman threw herself out the window and was killed in that instant. The man who beat the slave attested that he only beat her mildly as punishment. This man was acquitted (Kozma, 2011).

Honor killings still exist in society today in some countries throughout the world. Robina and Nawaz (2020) found that gender-based killing in Pakistan is a huge problem that is increasing in the country. Pakistan is male-dominated, and women are discriminated against. Domestic violence remains an enormous concern. Women are

raped and forced into marriage. Pakistanis practice Jirga and Panchayat, which is a system that protects the powerful. Under this system, women are treated barbarically and inhumane. Domestic violence occurs in 80% of women in Pakistan. Honor killings can occur when a woman resists an arranged marriage, reports a sexual assault, seeks a divorce, or commits adultery. Some women have been stoned to death amongst other forms of killing. Women in this country are treated like this daily in current time. Pakistan is male dominated which means the women suffer great abuse and death. This is allowed by the government under laws and the Jirga and Panchayat system.

Most killings involve intimate partners. A lot of women were killed by their intimate partner for many reasons stated above. Again, in some countries around the world, these killings are allowed. In other countries, killing is prohibited and illegal.

Not only are women killed for the above-mentioned reasons in past times, but they are still currently being murdered throughout the world daily. According to the Honour Based Violence Awareness Network (n.d.), it is impossible to determine the current statistics of honor killings due to lack of reporting and concealment by perpetrators and their family and friends. But, in 2000, it was estimated that 5,000 honor killings a year are committed globally.

According to Health Research Funding (n.d.), in America, 91% of honor killings are due to the victim appearing to Western in beliefs and appearances. Half of American victims originate from the family of origin. Globally, one in two victims are tortured before the honor killing. Again, by the Honour Based Violence Awareness Network (n.d.), the total amount of honor killings per year globally is estimated to be 5,000.

Additionally, 1,000 occur in India, 1,000 occur in Pakistan, and 25 occur in the United Kingdom, estimated. The AHA Foundation (2021) reports that thousands of honor killings take place in the United States annually. It is difficult to estimate an exact number due to lack of reporting and the crime being undetected.

In some countries, like Pakistan, the honor killings can be justified. In other countries, such as the United States, killing is a crime no matter the reason. Many states in the United States have their own laws regarding murder, but there are also federal statutes under the Title 18 U.S. Code Section 1111 which includes, “Murder is the unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought. Every murder perpetrated by poison, lying in wait, or any other kind of willful, deliberate, malicious, and premeditated killing,” and then also includes certain crimes that relate to murder, “committed in the perpetration of, or attempt to perpetrate, any arson, escape, murder, kidnapping, treason, espionage, sabotage, aggravated sexual abuse or sexual abuse...,” (Legal Information Institute, n.d.). In some countries throughout the world, the murder of women is legal under their laws. In other countries like the United States, murder is illegal, but still occurs daily.

### **Current Femicide**

The World Health Organization “WHO” (2012) defines femicide as “intentional murder of women because they are women, but broader definitions include any killings of women or girls”. Following this definition, WHO continues to describe that intimate partner femicide is committed by a current or former husband or boyfriend. Women are the victims and males are the perpetrators. WHO also estimates that about 5,000 women

are murdered each year due to honor killings worldwide, but mostly in the Middle East and South Asia, though other countries have been reported.

According to the Femicide Census (2020), in 2018, in the United Kingdom, 149 women were killed by 147 men. 91 of those women were killed by their current or former intimate partner, which translates to 61%. Some of the other women were killed by sons, stepsons, or sons-in-law. 94% of the women were killed by a man that they knew. From these findings, it can be determined that majority of women murdered were by an intimate partner. Otherwise, it was by a male that they knew. More times than not, the woman knew the perpetrator in these cases.

The United Nations report that El Salvador has one of the highest rates of femicide in the world (UWIRE Text, 2020). There is a lot of gang activity in El Salvador, which can be a reason for the high rate of femicide. Women have also reported being sexually abused by their partner, in addition. The most common reason for the killings in El Salvador is gender-based. Because a woman is a woman, they are killed.

The WHO also found that an estimated 3,529 women were killed in 2018 in 25 Latin American and Caribbean countries (States News Service, 2019). Bolivia has the highest rate of femicides in South American, with an average of 2.3 femicides for every 100,000 women. Patriarchal, discrimination, and violent cultural patterns are some of the main reasons and risk factors as to why these femicides occur in these countries.

The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (2020) estimates that at least one woman or girl is killed on an everyday basis somewhere in the country on Canada. A woman is killed on average at least once a week by their male

intimate partner. The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability is an organization that empowers women and girls to prevent the spread of femicide and to increase awareness. The aim of this organization is prevention.

Femicide is a term that can cause confusion. Femicide is a broad term that relates to many different types of offenders. Specifically, in femicide, males are the perpetrators and females are the victims, as defined previously by Russell (2011). This is the same as a homicide, in fact it is a homicide, it is specifically given the term “femicide” because the victim was specifically a female, and the perpetrator is specifically a male (WHO, 2012). In intimate partner femicide, the female and the male are in a current or have had a previous intimate relationship. This can be husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend, or intimate partners with no labels. Again, this is also seen as intimate partner homicide, which is it, it is specifically intimate partner femicide because the victim is female, and the perpetrator is male.

### **Risk Factors**

In current times, there are many risk factor identifications that can determine if a woman is at risk for becoming a victim of femicide that can be seen in the below-mentioned studies. On the other hand, there are few studies that identify what help-seeking behaviors are available to women if they are in a current abusive relationship or suspect that that may be a potential victim of femicide. As mentioned earlier in this literature review, some women in different countries do not have as much access to help as other countries such as the United States.



The WHO identifies some risk factors that perpetrators of femicide may demonstrate unemployment, own a weapon, have made previous threats, or have committed sexual violence. A female may be at risk for becoming a victim of femicide if there was previous domestic abuse (The Advocates for Human Rights, 2019). Other risk factors that were found related to the perpetrator according to Campbell and Wolf (n.d.), were alcohol use, controls victim's activities, threatened to commit suicide, and jealousy.

In Jamaica, 27 cases of homicide-suicide from 2007 to 2017 were analyzed to identify themes and patterns (Pottinger, Bailey, and Passard, 2019). Reports from different sources such as police records and radio records were used to collect data. In all of the cases reviewed, the male was always the offender. Common themes of risk factor behaviors that were identified were jealousy and fear of separation. Accordingly, it was identified that there is limited mental health resources for the victim and the offenders. In the Caribbean, domestic disputes are seen as normal and therefore not paid much attention to. The authors explain that mental health resources need to be expanded and granted more access for these types of intimate partners. Mental health resources are limited in the Caribbean, making it difficult for a woman to seek help when she is in an abusive relationship which ultimately leads to a femicide. From this study, like many others, risk factors can be identified. Jamaica, one of many countries, has limited resources for women to seek help, therefore, it is very difficult. More resources need to become available to women all around the globe.

There are many studies that identify risk behaviors that women may identify if they are in an abusive relationship or may be become a victim of femicide. Matias et al.

(2020) used a meta-analysis approach to conduct a systematic review of 28 articles that addressed risk factors of intimate partner homicide. In this review, it was clear that jealousy and disputes are main risk factors for a female to become a victim of this crime. In addition, most perpetrators had a previous criminal history record and were more likely to commit the murder when they had a gun or other weapon accessible.

In other study conducted by Loinaz, Marzabal, and Andres-Pueyo (2018), information of intimate partner homicide offenders, which included attempted homicide, was collected through the Correctional Services of Catalonia. The information was included of 21 convicted males who killed their female intimate partner and nine convicted males who attempted to kill their female partner. From the results, it can be determined that some risk factors for these murders and attempted murders are use of alcohol, difficulties in socialization, lack of family support, mental illness, promiscuous behavior, and family responsibilities.

In addition, there are many studies that have convicted male offenders as participants in regard to intimate partner femicide. This can include research determining risk factors and why the male committed the crime. For instance, Testoni et al. (2020) used a qualitative assessment called the Client Change Interview and the Helpful Aspects Therapy, which are both semi-structured interviews, to motivate and change male convicted offenders of intimate partner femicide and domestic abuse in Italy. Testoni et al. further explains that though these types of therapies helped to change the incarcerated men's opinions on women, one of the convicted men reported that: "Before I used to think the woman should be controlled by the man. I used to spend my time controlling

my wife. I wanted to know what she was doing, and I got angry if I thought she wasn't telling me everything because I thought she was hiding something from me." In addition, other convicted men in this study reported that women are evil and that men are superior to women.

Micki (2018) from the Florida Gulf Coast University, submitted a dissertation where he looked identify femicide in a forensic anthropological context. This student looked at reports that had blunt force trauma that were distinguished between males and females. 76% of males had medical records to explain antemortem trauma such as a car crash or a fall. 14% of female has similar. 57% of the cases that the student identified indicated unknown manner of death in females but where domestic violence history was known. The skull was mostly commonly fractured by blunt force trauma in females. It is determined from this dissertation that more information is needed to examine female cause of death as it relates to femicide.

In the above-mentioned dissertation, most of the female victims that had blunt force trauma had deaths that were unknown. Since most of the male cases were able to be identified, there should theoretically be no difference in determining the female's cause of death. The predicted cause of death is most likely femicide. Since there was domestic violence known, it leads to believe that these women were killed by their intimate partner. This study identifies that female need more examination to determine cause of death but also raises awareness that men can have a cause of death known more frequently than females. Or is raises a question, is the cause of death known but just not discussed or mentioned?

From these types of studies and research, it is determined that there are identifiers that can be risk factors for women and that male convicted offenders have overwhelmingly participated in multiple research studies. To reiterate, from the above-mentioned studies, risk factors can include jealousy, disputes, women being evil, and masculinity.

### **Domestic Abuse**

According to the United Nations, domestic abuse or intimate partner violence can appear in many forms. This can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional/psychological abuse. These forms of abuse are meant to terrorize, humiliate, threaten, hurt, or injure someone else (United Nations, n.d.).

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (“NCADV”) reports that an average of 1 in 3 women are physical abused by their intimate partner; 1 in 7 women have been injured by their intimate partner; 1 in 10 women have been raped by their intimate partner; and that 94% of intimate partner homicides result in a female victim (NCADV, n.d.). It is also reported by NCADV that 19.3 million women in the United States have been stalked in their lifetime, which the number increases every year.

Campbell et al. (2020), examined domestic violence officer information sheets in Marion County, Indiana, that were collected by law enforcement officers that responded to domestic violence incidents. These sheets recorded a “yes” or “no” response, or “unable” or “unwilling” response that the officer’s documented on the sheet. The results of the findings showed that 88% of the victims were female. 48% of the suspects were

unemployed and 51% of the suspects had a mental illness or alcohol/ drug abuse history. Strangulation and/ or weapon use was found in 44% of the incidents reviewed.

In the province of Punjab, Pakistan, the conviction rate for domestic violence is 1-2.5% in all cases which were reported: 6,107 in 2013 and 5,548 in 2014 (Tanwir et al., 2019). Some forms of domestic abuse included violence (murder or other), honor killing, acid burning, rape, and harassment in the workplace. Other forms of domestic abuse or punishment for women in Pakistan include acid burning, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, stoning, and other mutilation. In 2015, it is reported that there were 900 reported rapes/ sexual assaults, 143 reported cases of burning, 987 honor crimes, and 833 kidnappings. Victims explained that police did not express concern or sympathy related to these crimes.

In a Midwestern city in the United States, police reports and court records from all adult sexual assault incidents were collected between 2000 and 2010. A total of 570 reports were collected to analyze factor that influenced police and prosecutor decisions (Wentz, 2019). 231 of the 570 cases resulted in charging the offender. The rest of the cases were dismissed or reduced to a lower charge. Some of the factors that influenced police and prosecutors to charge the offender included victim injuries, timely reporting, and weapon use. Reasons for dismissing the charges or lowering the charges were the victims not having evidence, not having witnesses, not having physical injuries, and no weapon involvement. It is noted by Wentz that police and prosecutors should be reinforced to understand “real rape” to help reduce rape myths. They should also be educated on how to properly interview traumatized victims. This study shows that sexual

assault cases may not always be brought to justice because police and prosecutors tend to look at only physical evidence. There is a need to better assist in sexual assault cases.

### **Help-Seeking Behaviors**

There are very few studies that have female survivors of intimate femicide partner attacks as participants. Also, since risk factors are identified in numerous studies, help-seeking behaviors for women in these situations are not easily identified. It is difficult to know which help-seeking behaviors are successful and which ones are not without asking the actual female herself. This brings about this current study in attempting to identify successful help-seeking behaviors for women that may believe they are subject to become a victim of intimate partner femicide.

In one of the very few studies conducted on help-seeking behaviors for women who are in situations where they believe they may become a victim of intimate partner femicide, Koppa and Messing (2019) collected criminal information from the Houston, Texas Police Department to determine that 18.2% of deceased victims reached out for a protective order within 1-3 before their deaths. It is further mentioned that victims, before death, are unlikely to seek a protective order against their intimate partner. From this information provided by Koppa and Messing, it can be a clear determination that women are not likely to seek help for fearing that they may become a victim of intimate partner femicide.

From the above-mentioned study, it is the goal of this current study to identify why women are not seeking help, why seeking help failed, or what help-seeking behaviors were successful. With the results of this current study, it can be made clear to

women who are in current situations that involve fear of death where successful places to turn to help are. It is also important to encourage women in these situations to utilize the proposed successful help-seeking behaviors.

According to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network's ("RAINN") analysis of the Bureau of Justice Department Statistics, 20% of victims said they did not report abuse from their partner because they were afraid of retaliation (Forde, 2018). Also, according to RAINN, one in three sexual assaults are reported to police. If the perpetrator is the victim's intimate partner, they are 25% likely to report the crime. On the other hand, if the perpetrator is not the victim's intimate partner, they are 40% likely to report the assault (Lewis Griffith, 2018). Women's Aid performed a survey in 2017 in the United Kingdom that revealed that 28% of women used community-based domestic violence services and 44% of those same women reported their experiences to police. Fear of reporting derived from fear of what the abuser might do, fear of not being believed, and fear of being judged by others (The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 2019).

A mail survey study was collected from a sample of African American sexual assault survivors recruited from the community through advertisements (Ullman and Lorenz, 2020). The aim of the study was to identify help-seeking behaviors. 77% of the assaults were by someone that the victim knew, with 35.3% being an intimate partner. Over half of the participants did not disclose the sexual assault to anybody from months to years after the assault occurred. 61.3% of the women did not seek mental health counseling or therapy.

Some reasons as to why women did not seek help was because of money related issues regarding counseling bills, fear of not being believed, self-blame, and fear of reprisal from the offender (Ullman and Lorenz, 2020). The role of mental health professionals is extremely important. Women should be able to see and trust a therapist. This may lead to more reporting of sexual assault. Help-seeking behaviors need to be destigmatized.

### **Women as Participants in Research**

In addition to having few studies on help-seeking behaviors, it is also important to note that having surviving female victims as participants in research studies is also limited. Evans et al. (2018) examined two case studies with two women in Brazil that were victims of attempted femicide. Two common themes emerged from the case studies of the women that the authors identified as predictors of a femicide attack: normalized experiences of violence and experiences of psychological abuse prior to the attempted femicide.

In research conducted by Sabri, Bhandari, and Shah (2019), 16 women from South Asia were recruited by verbal and written invitations and were given in-depth interviews in their homes. The goal was to identify common themes among these women in regard to intimate partner relationships which could lead to abuse or homicide. The requirement for these participants is that they had to have experienced intimate partner violence within the past two years of the study. Some themes of the violent men were anger control issues, history of childhood issues, two-faced personality, controlling behaviors, threatening behaviors, threaten to kill/possess weapon, severe physical abuse,



stalking, and lack of family support. It was identified in this study that there is a lack in help resources for these women in South Asia. Several of the survivors were fearful of seeking help for purposes of losing financial stability if she had gone to the police and getting their partner in trouble if they went to the police. It can be determined that there needs to be a better understanding of cultural and gender differences and how women can feel safe to reach out for help when they need it before the violence potentially turns fatal.

Ratliff, (2017), conducted a dissertation study that used the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test in victim-survivors of an abusive relationship. The student did not request any personal information for this study, so all participants remained anonymous. They were provided an access code and password to log onto a website for the interview process for the study which the IP address could not be traced. The participants took an online survey. Participants were recruited through social media and flyers. 124 females were recruited along with 50 males. There were statistical differences in emotional intelligence by gender. Males had a higher score of perceiving emotion (.60) than females (.57). There were no emotional or statistical differences meaning no type of abuse effected emotional intelligence more than the other. From this dissertation, it can be noted that further research can be done to understand if higher emotional levels can determine healthier responses. Moe importantly, it is noted that there needs to be focus on dissuading a victim from returning to the abuse relationship that they had escaped from.

### **Bereaved Friends and Family of Victims**

Similarly, there are very few studies that interview bereaved friends and family members of deceased female victims of intimate partner femicide. Vatnar, Friestad, and Bjorkly (2017) conducted interviews with bereaved friends and family members of these victims for purposes of identifying risk factors in Norway. The most common risk factor was previous intimate partner abuse, which was physical, psychological, and sexual. This study is like the ones previously mentioned because it aims to identify risk factors. This study does not identify help-seeking behaviors from the bereaved friends and family members. If bereaved friends and family of female victims of intimate partner femicide are a part of this current study, help-seeking behaviors will be identified rather than risk factors.

Using eight national data sources and children demographics, Alisic et al. (2017) found that 256 children lost a parent due to intimate partner homicide in 137 cases over a ten-year time frame. The average age of the child was 7.4. Most of the children did not receive help after these experiences and were more likely to have psychological difficulties than those children who did not experience losing a parent to intimate partner homicide. One in three women are likely to become a victim of this crime. Children who had experienced the abuse with their parents have a higher risk at becoming a violent perpetrator in the future.

From these limited studies, it is determined that there is a lack of research with having female survivors of intimate partner femicide and having these participants explain help-seeking behaviors rather than risk factors. The current study aimed to piece

the two together: utilize female survivors of intimate partner femicide attacks as participants and to use a semi-structured interview to help identify successful help-seeking behaviors. There is no other study, to the researcher's knowledge, that uses this pool of participants to help identify help-seeking behaviors related to intimate partner femicide.

### **Summary**

It was determined that there is a lack of research in the intended pool of participants and help-seeking behaviors. There are many studies conducted on risk factors but little on help-seeking behaviors. Research showed that intimate partner femicide had existed for centuries and that it still exists in current time. Intimate partner femicide is a huge problem in today's society as it occurs on a daily basis on a global scale. What is known are risk factors. What is not known is effective help-seeking behaviors to prevent intimate partner femicide. With this, the present study sought to fill the gap in literature as it aimed to determine these effective help-seeking behaviors amongst the intended pool of participants. Since there is little to no research using female survivors of intimate partner femicide attacks as interviewed participants, this leads to the research design of qualitative interviews. To address the gap in the research, methodology in Chapter 3 will describe which participants were relative to this study and how the study was conducted.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to increase the understanding of help-seeking and precautionary measures that victims of IPV experience and to use this information to develop recommendations that may encourage utilization of help-seeking behaviors for women who are potential victims of IPV. This study addressed the gap in the research regarding help-seeking or precautionary measures that female victims of intimate partner violence may use to prevent IPV. Major sections in this chapter consist of the research questions, methodology, research design, role of the researcher, and issues of trustworthiness. The phenomenological approach was used to analyze the data collected from the participants. Participants' identities were kept confidential. Semistructured qualitative interviews took no longer than 90 minutes.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

#### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What are the lived experiences related to help-seeking behaviors of women who were victims of intimate partner femicide attacks?

RQ2: How can the lived experiences related to help-seeking behaviors be utilized by individuals facing this phenomenon?

#### **Research Problem**

IPV occurs daily. The Poynter Institute (2018) found that nearly three women in the United States are killed every day by their intimate partner. Allen and Salari (2020) found that in 2015, 64% of female murders were committed by former or current intimate partners. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) found that in 2017

30,000 women were killed by their intimate partner on a global level, which translates to 82 women per day.

This problem has negatively impacted the friends and family of deceased victims and others around the world who understand this crime as a problem because innocent lives are being lost and loved ones are being lost. Weil (2018) determined that there is a lack of research in understanding the female victims of attempted femicide. Weil also noted that most studies included male offenders as their participants, so there was more known about male offenders compared to female victims. Cunha and Goncalves (2019) identified that risk factors of offenders who commit IPF include older age, suicidal and homicidal threats, and the use of weapons. In contrast, there is little research on precautionary measures or help-seeking behaviors that women can take to prevent victimization by IPF. Evans et al. (2018) examined two case studies with two women in Brazil who were victims of attempted femicide. Two common themes emerged from the case studies as predictors of a femicide attack: normalized experiences of violence and experiences of psychological abuse prior to the attempted femicide.

Few studies have focused on precautionary measures and help-seeking behaviors for women of IPF attacks. Koppa and Messing (2019) identified that women who are murdered are more likely to be killed by their intimate partner than any other type of offender. Koppa and Messing gathered criminal information from the Houston, Texas Police Department, including demographics, protective orders, and homicide information. The researchers found that 18.2% of deceased victims reached out for a protective order within 1–3 years before their deaths. Koppa and Messing also mentioned that victims,

before death, are unlikely to seek a protective order against their intimate partner. In addition, Murray et al. (2018) used a qualitative approach with electronic interviews to assess stigma with survivors of abusive relationships. Murray et al. found that most of the women had internalized stigma, which led to negative emotions such as shame and guilt. Murray et al. further noted that because most of the women internalized their stigma rather than externalizing it, these women were more likely to underutilize health care services and were less likely to reach out to a friend or family member. Murray et al.'s research has demonstrated that internalized stigma and negative emotions characteristic of victims of IPF prevent the women from seeking help before it is too late.

The current study addressed the gap in the research regarding help-seeking or precautionary measures that female victims of intimate partner violence may use to prevent IPF. The research problem was that help-seeking behaviors and precautionary measures are not known to women who are in current relationships and may be prone to becoming a victim of IPF due to the lack of knowledge of help-seeking behaviors. There is also evidence that women are not likely to seek help prior to the IPF attack (Murray et al., 2018). I sought to increase the understanding of why women are not likely to seek help when they are experiencing risk factors and what help-seeking behaviors exist that may help other women to prevent IPF from occurring. The findings from the current study may be used to encourage women to seek help.

I interviewed female IPF survivors using a qualitative method to discover the information that may be used to remedy the situation. Female survivors of IPF attacks

served as study participants. Family and friends of deceased IPF victims were also possible study participants.

### **Research Design**

This was a qualitative study that included a phenomenological design. According to Patton (2015), the phenomenological approach focuses on everyday lived experiences. The idea is to transform these experiences into consciousness and find a shared meaning. It was important to identify common themes in the women's experiences using the phenomenological approach to understand how the common themes may help women in similar situations.

The phenomenological approach was appropriate for the current study. First, it was important to conduct individual interviews with each female. This allowed for phone conversations. Once the data were collected from all participants using individual interviews, it was then important to interpret the data using the phenomenological approach.

I used the phenomenological approach to discovered commonalities among the data set of the females who identified a shared meaning. Similar themes were identified. If themes differed, it was important to understand why they differed and why women may have had different experiences in their IPF attacks. Identifying the commonalities was necessary so that the topic could be further studied.

### **Role of the Researcher**

There were no personal or professional relationships with the participants. The participants were female survivors of IPF attacks who were unknown to me. I had a

researcher–participant relationship for the purpose of this study and terminated the relationship upon completion of the study. Participants had the right to remain confidential and to not give personal identifying information. Participants were told what information would be used in the study and they had the right to object. Participants had the right to leave the study at any time.

### **Methodology**

I used a qualitative approach. Methodology consisted of qualitative interviews with female survivors of IPF attacks that included the phenomenological approach to analyze the data (see Patton, 2015). Qualitative interviews were conducted with female survivors of IPF attacks to understand the help-seeking behaviors they used or did not use and why.

### **Participant Selection**

The group of interest was female survivor of IPF attacks. The criteria for participant selection was that the participants had to be female, adults, and survivors of an IPF attack. The ideal sample size was five participants. These participants were from a vulnerable population, so the sample size was smaller. The idea was to identify common themes among a few women who had similar experiences. After receiving approval (approval # 05–18–21–0694234) from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), participants were to be contacted by organizations that they belonged to. It was necessary to first reach out to women’s shelters and organizations by telephone and/or email to ask if there were willing participants. If the organization was willing to ask women to participate, it was then necessary to have the organization forward the



invitation email to the participants. I then contacted the participants directly by telephone through the organization. All protocols regarding the organizations that agreed to participate in this study were followed. To protect this vulnerable population, all participants were confidential and assigned a number. No personal identifying information was asked of the participants, which was explained to them on their consent form given before the interview was conducted study and was agreed upon by me and the participants. All interviews were conducted via telephone to protect anonymity and for COVID-19 pandemic reasons. The participants consented to give only information that they chose to give. All participants were protected by being assigned a number in the study. In the event that personal identifying information was given, it was to be redacted so that it would not be included to protect the population. Participants had the right to terminate their participation in the study at any point.

### **Instrumentation**

The participants were female survivors of IPF attacks. The interview questions addressed their personal experiences to develop common themes using the phenomenological approach (see Patton, 2015). The open-ended interview questions addressed the participants personal lived experiences and allowed for follow-up questions.

### **Data Sources**

Interviews were recorded with an electronic device. The recorder was preferred in case the participants were intimidated by a cell phone under the suspicion of someone listening. Participants were debriefed by thanking them for completing the study.

Participants could review the transcribed recording after completion. The participants were made aware that they could have a copy of the recorded interview if they wished. It was important to make the participants comfortable so they would be willing to speak during the interview. Participants were also allowed to ask questions.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The data were collected from participants at participating organizations. Interviews were done over the phone and the interviews were recorded on a recording device. The data were collected solely by me. The length of each interview was no more than 90 minutes. Data were protected by a locked computer and a locked safe containing the recorder with the interviews. If there were too few participants, other organizations would be asked if they had any participants who wished to participate in the study.

Duff et al. (2017) used a phenomenological approach to conduct interviews with 10 male convicted offenders of intimate partner homicide in Namibia. All victims were female. Interviews consisted of questions asking the male offenders about victim information, the length of relationship with the victim, what the incident meant to the perpetrator, their personal upbringing, and what women meant to them in general. One major theme that emerged from the phenomenological study and that men typically blamed the victim.

This was one of the few studies that included a phenomenological approach related to the topic of IPF. This demonstrated that the data analysis was consistent with the chosen approach. The phenomenological approach is used to identify common themes through qualitative interviewing (see Patton, 2015). In the current study, this approach

was used to find common themes among women survivors of IPF attacks. Though Duff et al. (2017) used male offenders as their participants, my intent was to do the opposite and have the women victims as participants but use the same methodology. The phenomenological approach was appropriate to answer the research questions.

### ***Codes and Categories***

From other studies addressing IPF and from current interviews with female survivors of IPF attacks, the following keywords were identified: *boyfriend, domestic partner, anger, jealousy, mental health, alcohol, therapy, and counseling*. This is not all of the data, but the data summarized. Boyfriend and domestic partner were used to create the code “offender.” These were the types of offenders that the participants believed to be of IPF perpetrators. Then, anger, jealousy, mental health, and alcohol were used to create the code “motives” as to why this crime was committed. Finally, therapy and counseling were used to create the code “alternatives” or “help-seeking behaviors.” This referred to alternatives to experiencing IPF or ways that women can receive the help that they need.

From the summary of codes above, I answered the research question saying that risk factors are that the offender is male, motives for wanting to kill are anger, jealousy, mental health, and alcohol related reasons, and that alternatives to killing or help-seeking behaviors for women can be therapy and counseling. In this current study, each code and category was unique of their own because this study has not been conducted before. This generated new codes and categories that answered the research questions. Codes and categories identified in this current study can be compared to those of the findings in the

above-mentioned studies to see if there are any similarities. Overall, the codes and categories identified were of unique nature.

### ***QDA Software***

C.A.T. (Texifter, LLC, n.d.) is a free text analysis service. On this software service, they offer electronic coding and annotations. The company came into existence in 2007 and received the “Best Research Software” award in 2008. C.A.T. has very positive reviews. Reviews stated that C.A.T. was very easy to use, practical, convenient, and reliable. It was highly recommended by reviewers.

QDA software is less time consuming, can help identify unknown or missed codes, and can help the researcher to find codes in their data that they were not able to find on their own. QDA software can also be time consuming because the researcher then needs to go through to ensure that the codes provided by the QDA software is accurate. It was important and necessary to conduct both hand-coding and QDA software.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Credibility in the interviewing process is achieved by showing that people who have been talked to are informed of the research concerns (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). To ensure credibility, it was important to have research participants that are related to the topic being studied. In this research, the topic of intimate partner femicide was being studied. Therefore, participants that were involved in IPF attacks were used and were credible sources.

Transferability is when working hypotheses can be transferred from one context to another. This is to ensure studies are not replicated but can be related to another

(Maxfield and Babbie, 2018). To ensure that a current study will not be replicated or that this current research will not be replicated, it was important to choose a different set of participants but use the same approach to determine similar results. Participants were from different areas. In the example in the above-mentioned study conducted by Duff, Nampweya, and Tree (2017), male convicted offenders were used as participants to study IPF using the phenomenological approach. In this current research, female survivors of IPF attacks were used as participants using the phenomenological approach. These studies are completely related but are not replicas.

Dependability is when a study is reported in full detail so that future researchers can repeat the work (NSF Consulting, n.d.). The study should be easy to follow and not leave out any parts or details. Leaving out a certain aspect of the study can result in misleading information. Therefore, it could not be possible for future researchers to conduct the same study. This research was written step-by-step to ensure dependability. It was also listed in the limitations section on what limitations were and what some recommendations can be for others who are going to conduct a similar study.

Confirmability is the qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity. The researcher must admit predispositions (Shenton, 2004). In this research, there were some predispositions that must be admitted. In the current time, there was the predisposition that there would be little differences between participants' personal lived experiences and there was no doubt in finding common themes. After the study was completed, it was important to note what predispositions were thought of before the study took place.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Participants were to be given a consent form in which they would verbally agree to the terms of the study. The participants were aware, as stated on the consent form, that they would not be asked any personally identifying information and that the study is completely and entirely confidential. The participants were also aware and agreed that they could terminate the study at any point, and all recordings or data collected would be destroyed. Since this was a completely confidential study, participants were recorded giving consent to perform the study. There was no written communication except when reaching out to organizations to ask if they have any willing participants, giving the consent form, and gift card among completion. All communication otherwise was handled over the phone. The protection of these participants was most important, and all information was kept safely. Participants were made aware of potential effects of participating in this study such as anxiety or depression. As stated on the consent form, there was a phone number for help should the participants choose to use the help provided. All participation was voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. More information can also be understood in “Participant Selection” of this research.

### **Reflection on Social Change**

Walden University, (n.d.) defines social change as, “a deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and societies” (See Walden University and Connecting people, knowledge, and opportunities

for positive social change). As Walden University students, we strive for the mission to contribute to social change. This makes an impact on our society.

For this current research, the mission is to help women that are in need. From the findings of the study, it was intended to identify helpful resources that women can use to help get the help that they need. They can hopefully leave abusive relationships and protect themselves from a possible IPF occurring. This research is to encourage women to use the helpful resources to help save lives.

### **Summary**

This was a qualitative approach that interviewed female survivors of intimate partner femicide. The phenomenological approach was used to analyze data. Participants were recruited through contact of organizations. Participants did not need to give personal identifying information. Participants were protected by changing their names in the current study and not revealing personal identifying information that would be included in the study. Participants could stop the study at any time. Interviews were over the telephone. The participants did not have to be seen by the researcher if they so chose. There was no sort of relationship or conflict of interests with the participants. All of the participants were unknown to the researcher and the relationship was researcher/participant only until the study was completed. The study was trustworthy. For this current research, the mission is to help women that are in need. From the findings of the study, it was intended to identify helpful resources that women can use to help get the help that they need.

## Chapter 4: Results

Ten participants of IPF attacks were recruited for this study. All participants fit the inclusion criteria, and interviews took place over the phone. Major themes and help-seeking behaviors were identified. The setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results are included in this chapter.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to increase the understanding of help-seeking and precautionary measures that victims of IPF experience and to use this information to develop recommendations that may encourage utilization of help-seeking behaviors for women that are potential victims of IPF. This study addressed the gap in the research regarding help-seeking or precautionary measures that female victims of intimate partner violence may use to prevent IPF.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What are the lived experiences related to help-seeking behaviors of women who were victims of intimate partner femicide attacks?

RQ2: How can the lived experiences related to help-seeking behaviors be utilized by individuals facing this phenomenon?

### **Setting**

Participants were recruited through women organizations or shelters throughout the United States. Participants were located throughout the country, and the interviews took place over the phone. Location of the participants was not relevant to the study. No conditions were experienced that may have influenced the interpretation of the results.

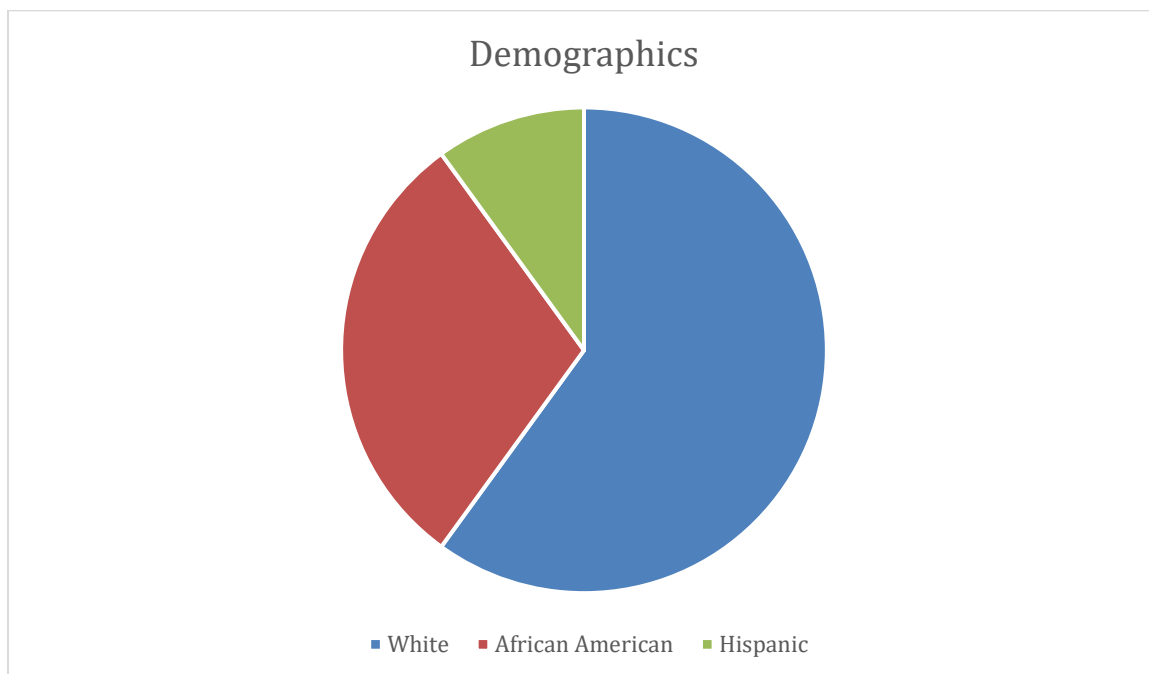


## Demographics

Six participants were White, three participants were African American, and one participant was Hispanic. There were no significant differences in ethnic background and results. Most participants had similar experiences with mental illnesses imposed and effects on children. Participants usually experienced physical or verbal abuse, which was similar among all backgrounds. Also, the mode of killing was similar between participants. White, African American, and Hispanic participants experienced strangulation and severe physical abuse as a form of attempted femicide. All participants had similar help-seeking behaviors. Participant demographics are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Demographics of Participants*



*Note.* To protect the privacy and confidentiality of the organizations and shelters who recruited participants, they were not named in this study.

Age range in intervals of 5 years was used to protect that participants' actual age. The three most common age ranges were 30–35, 45–50, and 50–55. The participants ranged from 25 to 75 years old. There were no significant differences in the ages of participants and their personal lived experiences. Participants of all ages experienced similar forms of abuse and attempted femicide attacks. All participants experienced similar help-seeking behavior techniques.

### **Data Collection**

Participants were recruited through women's organizations or shelters throughout the United States. The organizations and shelters were emailed an invitation email, flyer (see Appendix A), and consent form. Women who were interested in taking part in the study contacted me through email and were then sent another copy of the consent form. Interviews took place over the phone wherever the participant was located throughout the country. Verbal consent was given over the phone. Semistructured interviews were recorded on a recording device. After the interviews were completed, the interviews were played from the recording device into a transcription application (Transcribe) on the computer, which transcribed the verbal interviews into physical words, using voice to text, which were saved in Word documents. I manually went through the interviews for accuracy of the transcription.

Ten participants were recruited from organizations and shelters throughout the United States. Thirteen participants were originally supposed to take part in this study.

Two participants did not answer the phone on the selected date and time. I felt personally disrespected by one participant, who also chose to decline the study; therefore, I terminated the study before it began. These three participants were not included in the study; therefore, there were 10 participants who completed the study. Participants were named Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on to mask their identities. Each interview lasted from 40 minutes to 90 minutes. Participants received a \$15 Amazon gift card upon completion of the interview. The participants were included based on the following criteria:

- was an adult female
- was attempted to be killed by their intimate partner
- was no longer in contact with the intimate partner for at least 6 months
- had counseling for at least 6 months to process the attempt
- had no current open cases with the perpetrator

The participants were asked interview questions and follow-up questions (see Appendix B).

### **Data Analysis**

Each interview was recorded and transcribed. Each word of relevance was labeled as a code. As interviews were conducted, common themes among the women started to appear. The codes were then transferred into categories. The participants shared similar experiences, which was important for coding. The participants explained mental illnesses that they experienced, how they were attempted to be killed, and recommendations for help-seeking behaviors.

When I noticed something similar during the interviews, I was able to begin the coding process. For example, each participant experienced a mental illness imposed on them by the perpetrator, which was a common theme. Codes such as “PTSD” and “depression” were categorized as “mental illness imposed.” After I created the category “mental illness imposed,” a common theme was identified: In any form of abuse or IPF attack, the perpetrator imposed a mental illness on the woman in the relationship.

Each participant in this study was attempted to be killed by their intimate partner, which created the theme of IPF attack. Each participant explained how they were attempted to be killed. Each type of attempted killing created a code. For example, some participants experienced strangulation and others experienced extreme physical abuse. These codes were used to create the category of “mode of killing,” which was used to create the theme of attempted IPF attack. I noticed that each participant shared similar details from their personal lived experiences. Each category, as described in Table, was created through similarities of codes given by the participants. No discrepant cases were identified in this study.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Credibility in the interviewing process is achieved by showing that people who have been talked to are informed of the research concerns (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Current participants were recruited through credible organizations or shelters throughout the United States. All participants who were associated with these organizations or shelters were informed that the study was about IPF. All participants fit the criterion for inclusion in this study.

Transferability refers to working hypotheses that can be transferred from one context to another. This is to ensure studies are not replicated but can be related to another (Maxfield and Babbie, 2018). In Duff, et al.'s (2017) study, male convicted offenders were used as participants to study IPF using the phenomenological approach. In the current study, female survivors of IPF attacks were used as participants using the phenomenological approach. These studies were related but were not replicas. The participants used in this study were female victims of IPF attacks. This study was independent and did not replicate another study. This study allowed for transferability if a similar study were conducted.

Dependability is when a study is reported in full detail so that future researchers can repeat the work (NSF Consulting, n.d.). Dependability is important to trustworthiness because it establishes the study's findings as consistent and repeatable. This research was described step-by-step to ensure dependability. I also listed the limitations for others who may conduct a similar study. I described how participants were recruited, the criteria for inclusion, the results of the data analysis, and limitations for future studies.

Confirmability is the qualitative investigator's comparable concern for objectivity. The researcher must admit predispositions. Each participant had a different lived experience. There were major common themes among the participants. Themes identified included mental illness imposed by the perpetrator and help-seeking behaviors. Although each lived experience was personal and different, there were related themes among the participants.

## **Results**

RQ1: What are the lived experiences related to help-seeking behaviors of women who were victims of intimate partner femicide attacks?

RQ2: How can the lived experiences related to help-seeking behaviors be utilized by individuals facing this phenomenon?

The personal lived experiences of participants are shown in Table 1. Based on the lived experiences, help-seeking behaviors were identified that may be used by other individuals facing this phenomenon.

**Table 1***Attempted Femicide Results*

Participant	Type of relationship	Mode of attempted killing	Years away from perpetrator	Mental illness imposed	Alcohol present in offender	Warning signs
P1	Married/ divorced	Strangulation	20+	PTSD, anxiety, depression	Occasionally	Physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse
P2	Never married/ partner	Other, fears of attempted death during physical abuse	10+	Complex PTSD	Yes	Emotional and physical abuse
P3	Married/ divorced	Strangulation	5+	Depression, weight gain (as a symptom)	No	Verbal and physical abuse
P4	Never married/ partner	Strangulation	20+	PTSD	Yes	Verbal abuse, sexual abuse, animal abuse, and negative comments towards women
P5	Never married/ partner	Severe injuries, attempted to be run over by car	2+	Complex PTSD, anxiety	Drug use	Physical abuse and emotional abuse
P6	Never married/ dating	Severe injuries from physical attack	3+	None reported	No	Verbal abuse, financial abuse
P7	Never married/ dating	Strangulation	4+	PTSD	No	Physical abuse, verbal abuse
P8	Never married/ dating	Death threat, smashed glass on participant's face	30+	Depression	No	Sexual abuse, physical abuse
P9	Married/ divorced	Strangulation and tried to be thrown over a bridge	10+	Self-esteem	Yes	Emotional abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse
P10	Never married/ dating	Thrown down a flight of stairs	5+	Self-esteem, depression, PTSD	Occasionally	Emotional abuse, verbal abuse

All of the participants have not spoken to their perpetrator in at least 2 years or more. Some participants experienced incidences at a younger age, therefore not having spoken to their perpetrator within over 20 years. Alcohol use did not have a significant impact to determine whether or not that was a factor in attempted killing. The type of relationship with the perpetrator did not have a significant impact to determine whether or not that was a factor in attempted killing.

Some participants reported that alcohol use was there, but not all the time. Other participants reported no alcohol use. Participant 10 stated, “alcohol use escalated situations sometimes, but he always acted this way whether he drank or not”. However, most participants have felt that their intimate partner was jealous, controlling, charming, and played mind-games. Participant 1 stated, “he terrorized me for the entire night... I was his trash... and he told me he was never ever going to let me go”. All participants were victims of manipulation.

The most common form of attempted killing was strangulation, followed by severe physical abuse. Participants 1, 3, 7, and 9 experienced strangulations by hands, while Participant 4 experienced strangulation by legs. Participant 3 stated, “he tried to kill me... he tried to choke me in front of my son”. Participant 4 stated, “he wrapped his legs around my neck so that I couldn’t breathe, and I tried different ways to move and I couldn’t move.”

Participant 2 experienced fears of death while being physically abused. Participant 5 suffered severe injuries, such as broken ribs, and was attempted to be run



over by a car. Participant 5 stated, “he tried to run me over... he threw me in the car and just beat me the whole way to work.”

Participant 6 suffered from severe injuries from a physical attack. One weapon was used in an IPF attack among these participants with Participant 8. The perpetrator through glass at her face, causing extreme bleeding. Participant 8 stated, “he said he was going to kill me... he took a glass jar of Vaseline, and he threw it at my face but it hit the wall and my head was full of glass and there was blood everywhere”. Participant 10 was attempted to be killed by being thrown down a flight of stairs, and then the perpetrator falling on top of her, crushing her.

Most participants reported having a mental illness imposed on them by the perpetrator and have seen a therapist or counselor as a result. The most common mental illness identified was PTSD. Depression and anxiety were another significant mental illness that some participants experienced.

All participants experienced abuse prior to the attempted killing by their intimate partner. Most participants experienced physical, verbal, and emotional abuse. Few participants experienced sexual abuse. One participant reported animal abuse by the perpetrator. Participants experienced manipulation, fear, and lying by the perpetrator. Effects on children can be seen in Table 2.

## Children

**Table 2**

*Children Effects Results*

Participant	Number of Children	With perpetrator?	Effects on children
P1	1	No	N/A
P2	2	No	One child suffers from trauma because she was sexually assaulted by same perpetrator
P3	1	Yes	Suffers from anger issues and PTSD, currently in therapy because he saw the attempted IPF attack and prior abuse
P4	0	N/A	N/A
P5	3	No	Knew of abuse, stayed with their father
P6	1	No	Anger prior to perpetrator
P7	0	N/A	N/A
P8	1	No	Experienced effects not imposed by perpetrator (uncleanly living conditions)
P9	4	No	N/A
P10	1	No	Experienced negative effects from verbal abuse by perpetrator

Participants who did not have children or had children after the relationship with the perpetrator were not affected. Participants who shared children with the perpetrator or had children with a different person, but lived with the perpetrator, displayed affects from the domestic violence abuse and IPF attempted attacks.

Participant 1 had children after she had left the perpetrator years later with her current husband. They did not witness any abuse. Participant 2 had reported that the perpetrator who had been abusing her had also abused her female child, sexually. Participant 2 stated, “my daughter revealed to me that she remembers waking up to him touching her, on more than one occasion.” In addition, child pornography was found on

his computer after seized by law enforcement. He is currently serving a prison sentence for both crimes. This placed trauma on the adolescent as she was taken out of high school and placed into an alternative school.

Participant 3 had disclosed that her young son, whom she shares with the perpetrator, had witnessed his father strangle his mother, in addition to other physical and verbal abuse. Participant 3 stated, “he had a lot of anger issues because he knew that his father was hurting me”. She had reported that her son was placed into and is still currently in therapy for anger issues and PTSD because of witnessing these crimes. The father is not in the child’s life nor has served any jail or prison term. Participant 5 has 3 children who witnessed the abuse. The children stayed with their father most of the time for safety reasons. Their father was aware of the abuse taken place.

Participant 6 had a child who was angry with her for personal reasons not related to the perpetrator. They had not spoken in over a year at the time but started speaking again after the incident with the perpetrator. Participant 8 has one child not with the perpetrator. The child lived with the father and was not aware about the abuse her mother was facing. This child faced uncleanly behaviors by the father. The father lived in a very dirty place, and the child was usually never showered or fed properly.

Participant 9 had 4 children prior to being married to the perpetrator. The perpetrator ultimately pulled Participant 9 away from her family. They lived in vans and motels so that Participant 9 could not see her children. The children were living with their father. They did not know about the abuse or IPF attacks at the time. Participant 10 had a 3-year-old son when she was with the perpetrator. The perpetrator would verbally abuse

her son, causing feelings of sadness and he felt like he was doing something wrong. He would ask his mother, Participant 10, why he was so mean to him. Participant 10's son still remembers the perpetrator and certain instances about him to current time when five years have passed. Help-seeking behaviors can be seen in Table 3.

## Help-Seeking Behaviors

**Table 3**

### *Help-Seeking Behavior Results*

Participant	Police involvement	Places visited for help	Belief of help-seeking behavior
P1	Once, no arrest. Protective order later in place. Police are involved with organization in regard to training and funding on domestic violence	Friends, therapists, police	Confide in someone trustworthy, like a friend. Involve police if necessary. Therapists highly recommended.
P2	After disclosure of sexual assault against child	Police, therapists, women organization	Police can be helpful but wishes there was more training on the psychology- go if violent, therapist, shelter/ organization, talking about it, writing
P3	Called police on several occasions, told police she did not want him arrested because of getting him in trouble; they stopped showing up after a while; eventually got protective order	Women shelter; therapists, police	Shelters/ organization, group therapy, talking about it, writing
P4	Went to police years after IPF attack; Police would not do anything because no open case; wanted police to be aware of him	Friends, therapists, police	Friends and therapists, talking about it
P5	Called police every time there was an incident. Arrested perpetrator after IPF attack	Police, women's shelter, therapist	Police, women shelter, therapists, talking about it
P6	A friend called the police after she had run to a neighbor's house. Arrested perpetrator after IPF attack and violating restraining order	Police, women's shelter, friends	Police, women's shelter, someone you trust, or a person that doesn't know you (such as a person working in the domestic violence field)
P7	No reported police involvement	Therapist, women's shelter, family and friends	Women's shelter, family and friends, therapists, police as necessary
P8	No reported police involvement	Pastor, therapy, meditation	Women's shelters, police as necessary, friends, talking about it
P9	One time, after leaving the perpetrator to get stolen property back	Spiritual therapy, talking to a loved one, pastor	Women's shelters, police as necessary, friends and family, whoever the person is most comfortable speaking to, talking about it, writing about it
P10	Asked neighbor to call police after IPF attack	Counseling, talking to a friend	Women's shelters, police, friends, family, talking about it

Most participants involved the police at some point during their relationship with the perpetrator. Participant 1 reported having a friend call the police for her, when she witnessed an abuse incident happen. When the police arrived, the perpetrator fled. A protective order was put into place. Participant 1 brought up a key point in police involvement that is relevant to be mentioned for future help. This participant works for an organization who helps domestic violence victims. In this community, police are funded to be trained on domestic violence. Participant 1 stated, “they are funded to have and to give women phones specifically for domestic violence related encounters.” Women can use these phones, at no charge to them, to call police who automatically know that they will be responding to a domestic violence call. This creates trust between civilians and law enforcement. This has brought the community positive outcomes.

Participant 2 sought authorities when her daughter had disclosed the information that her daughter had told her about being sexually abused by the perpetrator. Both the participant and her daughter underwent interviews with authorities, in which it was disclosed that he may have had something on his computer, which was able to allow the police to seize the computer. Child pornography was found on the computer and the perpetrator was charged with both crimes. Participant 2 stated, “he is still currently serving a prison sentence”.

Participant 3 had called authorities on multiple occasions. Participant 3 stated, “(she) first remembers calling when a domestic violence incident broke out during (her) pregnancy with their shared son.” When the police asked if they wanted them to arrest her partner, she said “no”. She remembers feeling scared and afraid of getting the

perpetrator in trouble. She had called numerous times throughout their relationship but has always told the police that she did not want the perpetrator arrested. After a while, she reported that the police stopped showing up after placing a phone call. She later was able to receive a protective order.

Participant 4 was afraid to call the police because she felt threatened by the perpetrator. Years after the last incident, she had called local police. She was told that they could not help her because “there was no current open case against the perpetrator”. She stated that she “warned the police that if his name were to ever come up in the system on a related charge, that this is what he had done to (her) in the past.”

Participant 5 called the police on every physical abuse situation. The police appeared to be of no help until the final incident. Participant 5 had suffered severe physical abuse, broken ribs, and was attempted to be run over by a car. She was taken to the hospital for her injuries. Police arrested the perpetrator. Participant 5 stated, “(the perpetrator) had a prior conviction of sexual assault with minors and was a registered sex offender.” Several women had been raped by the same perpetrator after the IPF attack attempt with Participant 5. The perpetrator was charged with these crimes and there is a protective order in place.

Participant 6 had escaped a near lethal attack by running to a neighbor’s house. The neighbor called the police and they had arrested the perpetrator. The perpetrator had spent time in prison but was released on good behavior. Participant 6 was able to receive a protective order, and the perpetrator was arrested again for violating it. Participant 6 stated that the perpetrator “illegally took sexual videos without her knowledge and leaked

them.” Police involvement was necessary to address this crime. Participant 6 brought up an interesting idea relevant for further help-seeking. Some women may be intimidated to talk to police. Participant 6 found that some police officers were helpful and caring, while others did not care. She reported having an officer say, “Oh, another one! Do you know how many women we have had come in the past few weeks?” Another officer laughed at her and asked her why she had been so stupid to be put in the situation that she was in. In these situations, police may not be helpful. On the other hand, Participant 6 requested to speak to another detective, who was caring and helpful in her proceedings against the perpetrator. Participant 6 had this experience and found that when she spoke to someone at the courthouse, dressed in regular clothing, there was a more comfortable feeling to talk. If there can be people in regular clothing, not uniform, trained to talk about domestic issues, women may feel more comfortable to speak.

Participant 7 stated that she “did not involve the police at any time during the relationship”. Participant 7 is from the United States but was living in a Middle Eastern country during the period of the relationship. Participant 7 stated that she did not attempt to contact the police for help “because of the language barrier and the negative way police in this country were treating American women. When Participant 7 returned from this country, there was no need to go to the police since the perpetrator did not reside in the United States. Participant 7 had negative beliefs in the criminal justice system regarding domestic violence, which is why she suggested that women only reach out to them is severely necessary. Participant 7 does not believe strongly in police involvement



because of her belief that they will be of no help. She believes more training in domestic violence for law enforcement is needed.

Participant 8 did not involve the police at any time during the relationship. Participant 8 experienced repetitive sexual abuse daily. The anxiety eventually caused her to have stomach ulcers. The perpetrator threatened to kill Participant 8's daughter if she ever tried to leave. Participant 8 stated that she was "fearful to seek help through authorities as she was told she would be killed if she had tried." Participant 8 feared for her life when the perpetrator told her he was going to kill her while smashing glass on her face, causing severe bleeding. Participant 8 confided in a Pastor, with whom she had therapeutic sessions with. The perpetrator was never reported to authorities. Participant 8 believes police can be helpful when a woman is backed up by an organization. She suggests to get help from an organization first, and then going to police with an organization as backup. Participant 8 is a part of an organization that involves police training on domestic violence, which creates trust in the community.

Participant 9 had involved the police on one occasion. After the participant left the perpetrator, he refused to give back stolen property, so Participant 9 involved the police. She had not involved the police at any time during the relationship. Participant 9 stated that she was "attempted to be killed on three separate occasions." Two times included strangulation and one time she was attempted to be thrown over a bridge. The perpetrator constantly made threats about killing Participant 9. She stated that she "experienced extreme verbal abuse, which led to low self-esteem." Participant 9 was fearful to speak to anyone about what was happening because she did not know how the

perpetrator would respond. After the last IPF attack which included strangulation, Participant 9 was able to escape and ran to her sister's house, staying there for the time being that she could finally leave the relationship. Participant 9 reported alcohol use in the perpetrator which emphasized his actions. Also, the perpetrator was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Participant 9 was able to escape and divorce the perpetrator.

Participant 10 suffered from emotional and verbal abuse. She was attempted to be killed by being pushed down a flight of stairs. The neighbors had heard and came over and Participant 10 had asked them to call the police; they did not. Participant 10 had called a friend and stayed with her for a few days. Participant 10 asked her son's father to take over of their son until she was able to remain in a safe place. The perpetrator was intoxicated the night of the IPF attack, but alcohol was not really a factor in other situations, though alcohol could sometimes escalate the emotional abuse. Participant 10 stated that she "did not speak to police about any incidences with the perpetrator." Participant 10 was able to move out of their shared apartment and get one of her own with her son without fear of the perpetrator.

### **Themes**

1. Strangulation is the most common mode of attempted killing, followed by severe physical abuse
2. Weapons are not likely to be used in an IPF attack in this study
3. Feelings of feeling like everything is woman's fault
4. Participants experienced manipulation, fear, and lying by the perpetrator
5. Verbal, emotional, and physical abuse as warning signs

6. Children who witnessed abuse or IPF attack were affected negatively
7. Mental illness imposed by offender PTSD most common
8. Police are less helpful the more times they respond to the same situation, but more helpful when they are trained on domestic violence
9. Therapists are the best people to turn to for help
10. Shelters/organizations are helpful
11. Talking about it, to anyone, is most common

### **Help-Seeking Behaviors**

The most common place to turn to for help was therapists. All participants had sought help through some form of therapy. Shelters and organizations were also reported to be beneficial. Friends and going to the police fall behind therapists and shelters/organizations. Going to family for help was not a significant source of help. The most common form of therapeutic help was to write about the incidences or talk about it to other individuals who have had similar experiences.

The recommended places to go to for women who need help are seeking a therapist, confiding in a friend, going to a shelter or organization, or going to authorities if necessary. The most common phrases used by most the participants are that “you are not alone”, “don’t let your mind fool you”, “trust your gut”, and “go with your instinct”.

### **Summary**

The personal lived experiences of the participants are revealed in this study. The most common form of attempted killing is strangulation, followed by severe physical abuse. The most common mental illness imposed by the perpetrator was PTSD.

Participants that had children with the perpetrator or had children during the course of the relationship with the perpetrator, saw negative effects and behaviors within the children.

The use of weapons was only identified with one participant, seeing that the use of weapons in a IPF attack is uncommon in this study. Alcohol use was not a main factor in IPF attempts, but escalated situations when present. Most participants did not go to the police unless it was completely necessary. The most common successful help-seeking behaviors are to go to for women who need help are seeking a therapist, confiding in a friend, going to a shelter or organization, or going to authorities if necessary.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to increase the understanding of help-seeking and precautionary measures that victims of IPF experience and to use this information to develop recommendations that may encourage utilization of help-seeking behaviors for women who are potential victims of IPF. This study addressed the gap in the research regarding help-seeking or precautionary measures that female victims of intimate partner violence may take to prevent IPF. I used a qualitative approach. Methodology consisted of qualitative interviews with 10 women to analyze data (see Patton, 2015). Qualitative interviews were with women survivors of IPF attacks to understand the help-seeking behaviors they used or did not use and why. The phenomenological approach sets aside theories and hypotheses and focuses on human experience. The phenomenological approach is used to describe the meaning of human experience. The research design focuses on human lived experiences (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). The main idea is to understand how participants experienced their own personal lived experience of the same event and to identify common themes among the participants' experiences. Identifying the common themes of help-seeking behaviors that women used or did not use and why aligned with the problem statement.

Key sections in this chapter include the interpretation of the findings, theoretical framework, limitations, recommendations, implications for social change, and the conclusion. Warning signs were identified in this study, such as multiple forms of abuse, jealousy, controlling behaviors, and manipulation. The recommended help-seeking behaviors for women were seeking a therapist, confiding in a friend, going to a shelter or

organization, or going to authorities if necessary. Limitations included single group threats. If this study is repeated, researchers should consider a larger sample size and more diversity among the participants. The importance of this study in regard to social change was to help women who are currently in abusive relationships and to end the crime of IPF.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

Warning signs aligned with some previous research. The WHO (2012) identified some risk factors that perpetrators of femicide may demonstrate, including unemployment, owning a weapon, having made previous threats, or having committed sexual violence. A female may be at risk for becoming a victim of femicide if there was previous domestic abuse (The Advocates for Human Rights, 2019).

In this current study, physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse were identified with all of the participants; some experienced one or two types of abuse while others experienced all. Findings confirmed that previous domestic abuse can predict whether a woman will be a victim of IPF attacks. The WHO (2012) identified some warning signs as perpetrators owning a weapon. One current participant had a glass jar thrown at them, but none of the participants reported the perpetrator owning a weapon.

A. M. Campbell et al. (2020) examined domestic violence officer information sheets in Marion County, Indiana, that were collected by law enforcement officers who responded to domestic violence incidents. Results indicated that 51% of the suspects had a mental illness or alcohol/drug abuse history. Strangulation and/or weapon use was

found in 44% of the incidents reviewed. In the current study, strangulation was the most common form of attempted killing. However, alcohol use and weapons were not common among the participants in this study. Participants explained that if there was alcohol use, it escalated the situation but was not a huge factor in how the perpetrator acted on a regular basis. Alcohol use and weapons were not confirmed as common among women who face IPF attacks in this study.

Loinaz et al.'s (2018) study of intimate partner homicide offenders, which included attempted homicide, was conducted through the Correctional Services of Catalonia. Results indicated that some risk factors for these murders and attempted murders were use of alcohol, difficulties in socialization, lack of family support, mental illness, promiscuous behavior, and family responsibilities. Alcohol use did not play a significant role in IPF attacks in the current study. Of all the risk factors identified by Loinaz et al., the most common was mental illness. Most participants reported that their partner had a mental illness, whether it was professionally diagnosed or thought by the participant. Other factors listed by Loinaz et al. were not common among the participants in the current study. Alcohol use was not a major factor in predicting IPF attacks. Difficulties in socialization, lack of family support, promiscuous behavior, and family responsibilities were not mentioned by the participants in the current study. Findings confirmed that mental illness can be a risk factor for attempted IPF; however, the other risk factors were not confirmed by the participants.

According to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network's analysis of the Bureau of Justice Department Statistics (date, as cited in Forde, 2018), 20% of victims

said they did not report abuse from their partner because they were afraid of retaliation. Every participant in the current study reported feeling manipulated by the perpetrator at some point in the relationship. At least half of the participants in this study did not report abuse because of fear of retaliation. This finding confirmed that fear of retaliation is a reason why women may not report abuse.

As reported in Chapter 2 regarding help-seeking behaviors, Koppa and Messing (2019) collected criminal information from the Houston, Texas Police Department to determine that 18.2% of deceased victims reached out for a protective order within 1–3 years before their deaths. Koppa and Messing also found that victims, before death, were unlikely to seek a protective order against their intimate partner. In the current study, 3 of the 10 participants reported receiving a protective order against the perpetrator, And 70% of the participants did not receive a protective order. This finding confirmed that victims are not likely to seek a protective order.

Some factors predict whether a woman is at risk of becoming a victim of IPF or IPF attacks. Domestic abuse was the most reported risk factor in the current study. Mental illness identified with the perpetrator was also common. Alcohol use or drug use was not a main risk factor in predicting whether a woman will become a victim of IPF attacks. Also, findings confirmed that victims are not likely to seek a protective order before the IPF attack.

The phenomenological approach as explained by Patton (2015) is gaining a deeper understanding of the meaning of participants' everyday experiences. The phenomenological approach was used in the current study to understand the meaning of



participants' experiences related to IPF attacks. Each participant in this study reported their personal lived experience. Each participant shared their experience by explaining how she and the perpetrator met and explained daily experiences within the relationship until the relationship ended. Common themes were identified among the participants' personal lived experiences.

Marxist Feminism is a particular feminist theory focusing on the ways in which women are oppressed through capitalist economic practices and the system of private property (Ask Media Group, 2020). Marxist feminism explains male domination over women in society (The Sociological Mail, 2018). Marxist feminism notices that the gender struggle is related to political struggle (Mojab, 2015).

All of the lived experiences of the current participants can be explained by Marxist feminist theory. All of the participants were controlled by the male perpetrator at some point during the relationship. Many of the participants felt like they were being played mind games by the perpetrator. Most of the perpetrators used threats as a way of controlling the participants. Similar responses included that the perpetrator would "kill" the participant if she were to ever go to the police or tell somebody about abuse that was taking place. The participants were fearful at some point during the relationship because of the threats made by the perpetrator.

Another reason for not reporting the perpetrator or staying with the perpetrator despite abuse and IPF attacks was money-related issues. About half of the participants reported staying with the perpetrator because of financial responsibility. Participants were

fearful of leaving because they either had nowhere to go or did not have the finances to do so.

Male domination can be seen in all of the lived experiences of the participants. This included physical domination, sexual domination, financial domination, and extreme controlling behaviors that created mental domination over the participants. Marxist feminist theory can clearly be seen through the participants' lived experiences.

### **Limitations**

Single group threats was a limitation in this study. Single group threats relate to one type of population. In this study, one population was included in this study, which was women victims of IPF attacks. There were not a lot of studies that included this population. There were many studies that included using the perpetrator as the participant group. Focusing solely on women survivors of IPF attacks allowed me to understand their personal lived experiences and identify successful help-seeking behaviors through the population that had experienced this phenomenon. To understand IPF attacks, it was necessary that a single group population be used for this study. The size of the participant sample and demographics can also be seen as limitations of this study. The sample included 10 participants of mainly White background. Using a larger sample size with more diversity may change the outcome of future research on this topic.

### **Recommendations**

For further research on this topic, it is recommended that single groups be continued to be used. Having a mixture of participants who do not fit the inclusion criteria can confuse the results if not attempting to focus on the population of women

survivors of IPF attacks. Focusing on more than one type of population for this study is not recommended because the lived experiences explain successful help-seeking behaviors.

It is also recommended to use a larger sample size with more diversity among the participants. A larger sample size will allow for more personal lived experiences that may increase similarities among the participants or demonstrate dissimilarities. It is important to recognize the vulnerability of the participants in this area of research; therefore, it may be difficult to reach a larger sample size unless inclusion criteria are altered.

### **Implications**

Walden University (n.d.) defined social change as “a deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and societies” (see Walden University and Connecting people, knowledge, and opportunities for positive social change). Walden University students strive for the research to contribute to social change. For the current study, the mission was to help women who are in need. Findings of the study may provide helpful resources that women can use to get the help that they need. Women can hopefully leave abusive relationships and protect themselves from a possible IPF attack. This research was conducted to encourage women to use the helpful resources to save their lives. The personal lived experiences of IPF attacks described by women in this study reflected experiences that may be similar to women who are currently in these situations. It was important to understand the personal

lived experiences and the recommendations for help-seeking behaviors provided by the participants in this study.

The goal was to eliminate the crime of IPF. The participants who shared their experiences in this study understand what it is like to be in an unhealthy, abusive relationship. All participants had been attempted to be killed by their intimate partner. Women who are going through similar situations are not alone, and there is a way to receive help based on the recommendations provided by the participants in this study. With more acknowledgement of this topic, women can have a clearer understanding of what is similar among their abusive relationships, understand warning signs, and know where to turn for help if they are experiencing the same situation. With more knowledge on this topic and focus on how to get help, the crime of IPF can be reduced and eventually eliminated.

Methodological implications include the difficulty of obtaining participants who fit the selection criteria for this study. Women survivors of IPF attacks are a vulnerable population, and responses to partake in the study may take some time. It is recommended that anonymity or confidentiality be ensured. It is necessary to take into consideration the potential negative effects the participants may undergo during the interview. It is important to be prepared with helpful resources if a participant needs to use them at any point.

### **Conclusion**

IPF is a crime that occurs daily that needs more acknowledgement. Some women do not know where to turn for help or may be afraid of trying to receive help. Based on

the lived experiences of the participants in this study, successful help-seeking behaviors were identified. Women who are in similar situations can understand the lived experiences of these participants and understand what help-seeking behaviors were successful for them and can use these behaviors for their own advantage. Being a victim of abuse or IPF attack is not the woman's fault, and taking action to help save their life can be understood by the lived experiences of the participants in this study. The goal is to help women in these situations put an end to IPF.

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## Appendix A: Flyer

## **Phone interview study seeks participants who are survivors of near lethal attack by their previous intimate partner**

There is a new study called “*How Women Can Protect Themselves and Put an End to Intimate Partner Femicide*” that could help women in abusive relationships to seek successful help. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences in a past relationship involving a near lethal attack.

This survey is part of the doctoral study for Danielle Marie Santucci, a Ph.D. student at Walden University.

### **About the study:**

- One 30-90 minute phone interview
- To protect your privacy, no names will be collected

### **Volunteers must meet these requirements:**

- adult female
- was attempted to be killed by their intimate partner
- no longer in contact with intimate partner for at least 6 months
- have had counseling and have at least 6 months to process the attempt
- have no current open cases with the perpetrator

**To confidentially volunteer,  
please email**

**or call**

## Appendix B: Interview Guide

### Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences/ help-seeking behaviors of women who were victims of intimate partner femicide attacks?
2. How can the lived experiences/ help-seeking behaviors be utilized by individuals facing this phenomenon?

### Interview Guide

If at any time you need to speak with someone, please call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 1-800-662-HELP (4357). (All Local numbers based on the individual's current residency will also be provided).

Please understand that some of these questions may bring up painful memories. If at any time you need to stop or take a break, please do not hesitate to ask. In no way are these questions placing blame on you for this attack. It is not your fault.

1. For the purposes of this interview, it will be necessary to get some information regarding you and your family. This will help us to understand how these traits relate to this study. If you do not mind, could you please share your age range and ethnic background?
2. For the purpose of this interview, I am going to focus on intimate partner femicide attacks. Do you understand the term "intimate partner femicide", or would you like me to explain what this means?
3. Tell me a little bit about yourself. Do you have children? What are things that you like to do?
4. Tell me about your intimate partner? Were you married or dating? For how long? What was his profession?
5. When did problems with your (husband/ intimate partner) first begin? What were the problems? Are there times when the problems got better? Are there times (triggers) when the problems got worse?
6. How did these actions effect your physical or mental well-being? Has this affected your ability to work, or relationships with other friends or family members?

7. If you have children, has this affected them in any way?
8. Many individuals when looking back often identify warning signs, did you experience this? Do you feel comfortable sharing what those warning signs were? Did someone other than you that noticed warning signs and express concern prior to an IPF attack?
9. Did you reach out for help or speak to others about the occurring problems? What were their responses? Do you think they were helpful you? Do you think there is more that they could have done? Expand on questions regarding any criminal justice response
10. Did anyone share information regarding safe spaces where you could have gone prior to the attack? Did you attempt to leave?
11. If you were able to talk to a woman who is facing problems similar to those you encountered what advice would you give them?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the topic of intimate partner femicide that I did not mention?
13. Do you have any questions for me?