

**CONTENT
WARNING**

BEYOND GENDER: EXPLORING THE OVERLOOKED REALITIES OF MALE SURVIVORS

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INTRODUCTIONS

Background

Katie Bovington, 2nd year PhD researcher at Edge Hill University.
Teaching on undergraduate programmes at EHU.
Research focuses on how men's intersectional social positions impact the way they experience, process and move past SV.

Research participants needed



Why I'm here today

To begin a discussion around how we can understand overlooked and intersectional experiences of men from different backgrounds as they navigate life after sexual violence.

ISSUES WITH CURRENT RESEARCH ON MALE SURVIVORSHIP

Few studies

Male survivorship has only been begun to be researched in the last 25 years. Societal myths around male victimisation & masculinity → male experiences hidden and historically low on political agendas.

Still under VAWG strategy...

Focuses on specific contexts

Majority focuses on one of the below:

- Sexual violence in prison
- CSA in sport settings
- CSA in religious settings

What about cases outside these very male dominated environments...

Homogenous perspectives

Most research and policy assumes one homogenous survivorship experience:

- Young
- White
- Western
- Middle class
- Able-bodied

What about those who don't fit into these categories...

SO WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE US?

What we (don't) know

We know men and boys experience sexual violence.

We know how masculinities significantly shapes how men experience SV and process it.

We don't know about how race, sexuality, religion, age, class, citizenship interact together and influence these experiences.

Why this needs to change:

The full spectrum of needs of diverse survivors are unknown (Widanaralalage et al. 2024).

Further silencing and invisibility compounded for marginalised groups (Bonner-Thompson et al. 2023).

THE ROLE OF INTERSECTIONALITY IN MALE SURVIVOR EXPERIENCES

Intersectionality

Term coined by Crenshaw (1989) when critiquing feminist and anti-racist movements.

Other influences include Combahee River Collective, Latina Feminist Group, Frances Beal, bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins.

Intersectionality examines how overlapping social factors create unique experiences of both oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989).

Can help explain how multiple aspects intersect to shape their life experiences.

“Fewer studies have examined intragroup differences and how multiple identities intersect, particularly for males. For example, what does it mean to be a gay, African American male victim of sexual abuse?”

Elkins, 2017: 119

WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE?

How social class shapes access to support - e.g. transport, time off work

How sexuality and gender identity influences self perceptions of their victimisation

How cultural or religious expectations in communities influence disclosure

How disability and accessibility requirements can complicate help-seeking

How age influences their processing of experiences

How race or heritage can impact willingness to speak to police or authorities

What if someone experiences all of these together?

A WORKING CLASS, ABLE BODIED MAN OF ASIAN DESCENT...

May grapple with their
masculine identity as a victim
of SV

Do not recognise experience as
abusive as lack of cultural education
around normal sexual behaviour

May not disclose to family
due to fears of bringing
shame to community

May struggle with notions of
vulnerability due to being able-
bodied and physically strong

May fear speaking to police due
to deeply embedded mistrust of
police and institutional racism

May not be able to afford to
take time off work to access
support

...a unique survivor experience

REFLECTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Wary of stereotyping & speaking for others with different life experiences. People with similar backgrounds may face different challenges.

Importance of being conscious of own position, identity, privilege and marginalisation. What power do we experience?

Impact of ethnicity on survivors as they disclose and access support starting to be explored. Further research needed to see how multiple factors overlap & produce individual realities.

Do these factors resonate with what you see day-to day?

How do current policies impact your ability to work intersectionally?

Are there groups of men who seem less visible in services?

THANK YOU!

My research:

- Professional perspectives of diverse survivor experiences.
- Amplify survivor stories through life history research with men.
- Learn from support provider expertise & amplify practitioner voices.
- Build inclusivity into research, policy and practice.

Interested in finding out
more and participating?

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Any questions?

Resources:
[An Intersectional Guide for Male
Survivors of Sexual Abuse and their
Allies: Masculinity Reconnected by
Jeremy Sachs](#)

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Bonner-Thompson, C., McGregor, K. and Preston, J. (2023) Men's Unwanted Sexual Experiences: Barriers to timely and appropriate support in England.

Crenshaw, K. (1989) Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.

Elkins, J., Crawford, K. and Briggs, H.E. (2017) 'Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Becoming Gender-Sensitive and Trauma-Informed'

Sachs, J. (2025) An Intersectional Guide for Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse and their Allies: Masculinity Reconnected

Widanaralage, B.K. et al. (2024) Prevalence, Disclosure, and Help Seeking in Black and Asian Male Survivors of Sexual Violence in the United Kingdom: A Rapid Review.

SOME (FICTIONAL) EXAMPLES TO DISCUSS...

Example 1

In early adulthood.
Southern, middle class.
Experienced SV as an adolescent.
Black British.
Identifies as LGBTQ+.

Example 2

Nearing retirement.
Northern, working class.
Experienced SV as an adult.
White, Eastern European.
Migrant (undocumented).

Example 3

Middle aged.
Southern, working class.
Experienced SV as a child.
British South Asian.
Has a physical disability.

What might disclosure, accessing support, legal assistance, and processing trauma look like?