

ownership of a gun is a huge risk factor in lethal forms of intimate partner violence.”

Devaluing of women

Rebecca Nickels, executive director of Call to Safety, formerly the Portland Women's Crisis Line, has been working with survivors for over 20 years. Why domestic and sexual violence happens is a question she's been thinking about for a long time — and she believes the answer explains mass violence as well.

“It happens because people think it's OK to hurt women and marginalized people, and that there's less value on their lives,” Nickels said. “And so when I think about this connection between mass shootings and perpetrating domestic violence, it's again, when you have people who think that other lives are less valuable, then you're going to have violence. So anytime that we can see common factors of these people who have committed this violence, I think we should be really paying attention.”

This idea of devaluing the lives of women is one that Nickels, Mankowski and Huffine, three people working professionally against domestic violence in different ways, agree is rooted in what they call “toxic masculinity.”

“It's fairly widely accepted that the significant driving cause of violence in general and domestic violence in particular is masculinity; it's male socialization,” Huffine said. “You're not born this way; you're made this way.”

Some of the most recognized aspects of what is called toxic masculinity — dominance, aggression, control — were apparent in Carsen's abuser.

“He had a thing where if I seemed a little bit smarter than him or seemed a little more inquisitive or something, he didn't like that,” she said. “He had to be in control of everything. Not only of me, but even if I were to correct him for something, in front of people, or even correct him by ourselves.”

Domestic violence can look very different than the most stereotypical images of it. Domestic violence occurs outside of heterosexual relationships, and men can be

victims of this violence too. Yet, Mankowski said it is vital not to leave the gendered aspect of domestic violence by the wayside.

“As women have broken through those glass ceilings more, there's a sense in which, ‘Well, there isn't that much male power, right? We're all equal and gendered violence is more equal. Men do it against women; women do it against men,’” he said. “If we look at the impact of that violence and the fear that people feel, and the injuries they have, the violence against women is much more severe.”

When people talk about ‘toxic masculinity,’ it might seem like something that men need to fix in order to benefit women. While that's a huge part of it, Mankowski said that toxic masculinity is also harmful for men, who are more likely to commit suicide, abuse substances and die younger than women, among other issues. Chipping away at this is liberating for men as well as women, he said, and the result would reduce interpersonal violence and increase men's health and well-being.

“If we could get outside of this confining, very harmful box that we put ourselves in, of (acting) dominant, powerful, stoic, unemotional, nothing like a girl, don't throw like a girl, don't act like a girl, don't cry like a girl, grow a pair, etc. — men have a lot to gain by that,” Mankowski said.

What can we do?

Carsen's abuser decided that he wanted her to get a job. She had been living with him for almost four months when she got a call for an interview from a dry cleaning business.

He sent her to the interview under the watchful eye of his ex-wife. He had split Carsen's lip with a boxcutter and beaten her face so badly she said she was unrecognizable. When she arrived for the interview, the woman at the business asked Carsen to come upstairs to the office to go over the

paperwork.

“The woman at the office asked what happened,” Carsen said. “I said, ‘Help me.’”

The woman got a car to come around the back, took her out a different entrance, and drove her to a safe house in a different town. That afternoon she was on a bus to Portland.

Carsen credits her escape to that woman at the dry cleaners who saw the evidence of abuse and reached out to help her. It was someone in a workplace — not a service provider or domestic violence advocate — who was able to help Carsen finally escape her abuser.

The workplace is one of the places that is well-situated to provide support to survivors, Mankowski said. He collaborated on an Oregon Health and Science University study that worked with employers in service industries to raise their awareness and skills in order to recognize and address domestic violence that their employees may be experiencing.

They worked with employers to develop buy-in for this effort, focusing on everything from relationships at work to their profit margin, when they found that workplace time and resources were affected by domestic violence. For example, they found that workplace vehicles were sometimes used by abusers to surveil their partners, or abusers uncomfortable with their partner working would lie or coerce them in order to keep them away from work.

There have been many improvements, such



CALL TO SAFETY

Offers “crisis intervention, emotional support, information and referrals to other services,” according to its website.

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ALLIES IN CHANGE

Offers “individual counseling, couples counseling, and group counseling for men and women struggling with a variety of issues, including relationship issues, rebuilding trust, anger, depression, stress, anxiety, significant life transitions, PTSD, as well as many other issues,” according to its website.

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See VIOLENCE, page 13