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**Presentation title:** Giving voice to the silenced victims: A qualitative study of intimate partner femicide

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Scholars highlight the importance of asking victim-survivors of intimate partner violence directly about their 'lived experiences'. Such research has, for example, illustrated how men's coercive and controlling behaviour entrap women in these relationships through subjugation and limited autonomy, thereby reducing their 'space for action' (Stark 2007; Westmarland & Kelly 2013). Such research has also illustrated how fear for their own and their children's safety can act as impetus to women's active help-seeking behaviour (Meyer 2010) and ending the relationship does not necessarily result in an end to violence and control (Douglas 2018). Findings such as these highlight the importance of listening to the voices of victim-survivors.

In cases where the victim is killed, however, those voices are silenced. One alternative is to turn to those close to the victim, who may be able to paint a picture of what was going on in the relationship. Of course, those close to the victim, such as family members and friends are often brought into the court to give testimony or provide victim impact statements. However, the information provided in such dealings with the legal system is by no means a full account of their intimate knowledge of the victim's situation.

In the current study, friends and family members of intimate partner femicide victims participated in qualitative interviews. Results show that, whilst many victims experienced physical violence, they often did not label such violence as 'abuse'. Further, the victims had all experienced coercive control in their relationships with the men who killed them, and most were in the process of regaining some level of autonomy at the time of their deaths. As might be expected, the grief and loss for the survivors was close to unbearable.