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# **Has Society Created Social Injustice for Male Victims of Domestic Violence?**

**By**

**Deborah Vernon**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree**

**of**

**DEPARTMENTAL HONORS**

**in**

**Social Work  
in the Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Anthropology**

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## Abstract

A contextual analysis was conducted of Utah domestic violence agency websites to determine if these agencies recognized and/or acknowledged male victims of domestic violence and if they provided similar services to male victims that are provided to female victims of domestic violence. A Google search was conducted to obtain a list of Utah domestic violence agencies and their web addresses. The search revealed sixteen (16) Utah domestic violence agencies across the state, however; only twelve (12) agencies had websites. All sixteen (16) agency names were used in the analysis to see if the agency(s) name itself implied exclusivity for a particular population. The results of the study indicated five (5) agencies implied exclusivity to women based on the name of their agency. The remaining analysis pertained to the twelve (12) agencies' home page and service pages of their websites. Analysis of the twelve (12) agency websites resulted in two (2) agencies that recognized men as victims of domestic violence on their website home page. These two (2) agencies indicated men were overcoming domestic violence or fleeing domestic violence. The analysis also revealed two (2) agency website service pages that indicated they provided services to male victims of domestic violence. However, the services provided specifically to men by these Utah domestic violence agencies were limited when compared to the services offered to women. These results demonstrate that men continue to encounter barriers when seeking services or help as a victim of domestic violence, despite evidence that they, too, are victimized in this way. It also demonstrated the lack of resources available to male victims in comparison to the resources available to female victims of domestic violence.

*Keywords:* domestic violence, intimate partner abuse or violence, male victims of domestic violence, men seeking help with domestic violence (the terms domestic violence and

intimate partner abuse or violence are interchangeable; the terms gender and sex are interchangeable)

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## **Introduction**

Domestic violence was considered a private issue for decades and discussions regarding domestic violence in public weren't acceptable or viewed as a social issue (Kronenberg, 2013). In the 1970s, domestic violence became a social issue in the United States, which gained ground through the feminist movements that began during the civil rights and anti-war movement in the 1950s and 1960s (Kronenberg, 2013; Samaritan House, 2017). The spotlight began to shine on domestic violence through existing women movements, such as women's liberation, women's health, and anti-rape movements (Samaritan House, 2017). The battered women's movement began to gain recognition through the assistance of these organizations and the use of their existing resources and networks (Samaritan House, 2017). One of the first battered women's shelter opened in Minnesota in 1973, which began as a conscious-raising group in 1971 (Kronenberg, 2013; Samaritan House, 2017).

The persistence of the battered women's movement led to one of society's greatest achievements bringing awareness to the public regarding domestic violence at the local, state, and national levels (Samaritan House, 2017). National surveys, studies, campaigns, and passing of legislative policies assisted in bringing awareness to society regarding the severity of domestic violence. One of the first legislations Congress passed in response to the seriousness of domestic violence was in 1984, The Family Violence Prevention Services Act (Samaritan House, 2017). The policy provided funds for programs to prevent acts of violence and shelter to victims and their families of domestic violence (Samaritan House, 2017).

As domestic violence awareness increased in society, women became identified as the victim and one population became marginalized. Campaigns were directed towards women as the victims of domestic violence (Wallace, 2015). In 1994, another piece of legislation was



passed, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA, 2013) that was created to protect women against violence and allocated funds for services to assist women who are victims of domestic violence (Hines & Douglas, 2009; McNeely et al., 2001; Violence Against Women Act, 2013). Many websites including the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) and the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition (UDVC) display pictures of women as the victims of domestic violence on their home page (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, n.d.-a; Utah Domestic Violence Coalition, 2016a). However, victimization through domestic violence doesn't pertain to only one population it can happen to anyone, including men (McNeely, Cook, & Torres, 2001).

While male victims of domestic violence have been reported as far back as the 1970s and 1980s, the focus was predominantly on women as the exclusive victims of domestic violence (Douglas, Hines, & McCarthy, 2012; Hines & Douglas, 2009; McNeely et al., 2001; Nicholls & Dutton, 2001; Tsui, 2014). Straus and Gelles (1986) stated "Violence by wives has not been an object of public concern. There has been no publicity, and no funds have been invested in ameliorating this problem because it has not been defined as a problem" (p. 472).

McNeely et al. (2001) stated "...most reports appearing in the popular press, and in scholarly journals, have framed the issue as essentially a masculine form of assaultive behavior, thereby embedding into the national consciousness a false and inaccurate view of the problem" (p. 228). They go on to assert that, "...popular view of domestic violence not only contributes to men's increasing legal and social defenselessness, it also leads to social policies that obstruct efforts to address the problem of domestic violence successfully" (McNeely et al., 2001, p. 228). Awareness regarding domestic violence has identified and targeted one specific population as the perpetrator of domestic violence: men (McNeely et al., 2001; Tsui, 2014). For instance,

research shows that the words "domestic violence" produce two particular images for the majority of the population: the first of a traditional marriage consisting of a husband and wife and the other of women as the victim of domestic violence and men as the perpetrator (Wallace, 2015).

As a result of the awareness of domestic violence exclusively around women as victims of domestic violence, men have become an unrecognized, and therefore underserved, population as victims of domestic violence. The delayed speed with which society and agencies that serve domestic violence victims, such as, shelters, law enforcement, government, and the judicial system has created a social injustice for men experiencing domestic violence. Men who are victims feel isolated and don't know where to seek information for support, "...it is remarkable that society is still not adapted to offer men the same services as women" (Drijber, Reijnders, & Ceelen, 2013, p. 178). Nicholls and Dutton (2001) stated "We propose that social service providers are doing female perpetrators, male victims, and their children a disservice by neglecting the 'other side of domestic abuse' " (p. 53).

## **Definitions**

Domestic violence is defined as "the inflicting of physical injury by one family or household member on another; also: a repeated or habitual pattern of such behavior" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2017). The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) (n.d.-b) defines domestic violence as "...the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another" (para. 1). They go on to say, "It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and emotional abuse"

(National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, n.d.-b, para 1). The Utah Domestic Violence Coalition (2016b) provides a list of abuse as physical, emotional, financial, sexual, digital, and reproductive coercion.

The term intimate partner violence (IPV) has gained ground in several articles since the early 2000s to describe violence among intimate partners (Wallace, 2015). This particular word choice is more inclusive and moves away from the idea that women in heterosexual relationships are exclusively the victims of domestic violence (Wallace, 2015). Wallace (2015) continues to state the term IPV acknowledges that abuse can happen "...in any type of personal intimate relationship, regardless of sexual orientation, marital status or gender" (para. 7). Intimate partner violence (IPV) does not assign gender to the abuser or victims compared to the term domestic violence (Wallace, 2015, para. 7).

Johnson (2005) breaks IPV down further into three (3) sub-categories and defines them as: 1) intimate terrorism, where one partner takes control over the other partner; 2) violent resistance, as the response to intimate terrorism; and 3) situation couple violence, which escalates conflict or a series of conflicts.

Whether the term IPV or domestic violence are used, these terms have the same health problem affects for victims of domestic violence, which consist of physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological abuse (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015; Douglas & Hines, 2011; Douglas et al., 2012; Drijber et al., 2013; Hall, 2012; McHugh, Rakowski, & Swiderski, 2013; Nicholls & Dutton, 2001; Tsui, 2014).

Men sustain the same type of violence women sustain, such as threats, physical violence, emotional abuse, intimidation, isolation, economic, and controlling behaviors. (Barkhuizen, 2015; Hines, Brown, & Dunning, 2007; Hines & Douglas, 2009). Male victims suffer the same

impact as women do from domestic violence, for instance, physical injuries, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal ideation, loss of self-esteem/worth, and confidence (Tsui, 2014).

Women perpetrators commit intimate terrorism and men have reported being slapped, pushed, kick, grabbed, punched, choked, stabbed, and physical attacks in the groin area (Barkhuizen, 2015; Hall, 2012; Hines et al., 2007). Hines et al. (2007) reported the highest rates of controlling behaviors made by women perpetrators toward male victims were listed as threats and coercion (77.6%). They continue to assert men also sustain physical violence from the use of weapons against them, threats to be killed, and intimidation (Barkhuizen, 2015; Hines et al., 2007). The type of threats used by women perpetrators toward male victims consisted of "...threatening to kill themselves or their husbands, threatening to call the police and have the husband falsely arrested, or threatening to leave the husband" (Hines et al., 2007, p. 67).

## **Statistics**

Statistics from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) (2015c) indicated one (1) in three (3) women and one (1) in four (4) men have experienced some form of physical violence and one (1) in five (5) women and one (1) in seven (7) men have experienced some form of severe physical violence. In the State of Utah, one (1) in three (3) women and one (1) in four (4) men have experience some form of physical violence (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2015d). These numbers may not be representative of women or men who are victims of domestic violence due to the fact that many men underreport or fail to report incidents of domestic violence to the police due to embarrassment, fear of disbelief, and society's view that men cannot (or possibly, *should not*) be victims of domestic abuse (Hines & Douglas, 2009; Shuler, 2010). Johnson (2012) states outright that "The number of cases involving male

victims may be underreported because of difficulties faced by male victims" such as, men feel they would be treated as less of a man, because a woman abused them; feel that the criminal justice system won't believe they were abused; and limited resources for male victims of domestic violence (p. 18).

Recent studies have shown a decrease in domestic violence against women between the years 1975 and 1985, which may be due to public awareness, legislation, and campaigns against domestic violence that has focused only on women as the victims, however, reports regarding men as victims of domestic violence were nearly static over the same years (Hines & Douglas, 2009; McNeely et al., 2001). Imagine if domestic violence legislation, campaigns, and awareness were about people, not just women as victims, new studies would show a decrease in both numbers reported by victims.

## **Legislation**

Government funding through the Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA) (2013) states under section 3, universal definitions and grant conditions, subsection (b) grant conditions, item (13) civil rights:

(A), Nondiscrimination - No person in the United States shall, on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity (as defined in paragraph 249(c)(4) of title 18, United States Code), sexual orientation, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity funded in whole or in part with funds made available under the Violence Against Women Act of 1994... (p. S.47-8).

It continues under section 3(b) (13):

(B) Exception - If sex segregation or sex-specific programming is necessary to the essential operation of a program, nothing in this paragraph shall prevent any such program or activity from consideration of an individual's sex. In such circumstances, grantees may meet the requirements of this paragraph by providing comparable services to individuals who cannot be provided with the sex-segregated or sex-specific programming. (Violence Against Women Act, 2013, p. S.47-8).

There's no dispute that government funding should be available to assist in providing services to victims of violence. However, legislation discriminating against one population over another population sends the implicit message that it's acceptable to discriminate against one gender over another gender. "One-sided governmental policies that fund women-only resources, based on the assumption that women rarely, or never, engage as perpetrators in domestic violence, is key to the problem." (McNeely et al., 2001, p. 245). Men as well as women experience financial problems as a result of suffering severe injuries via domestic violence abuse (McNeely et al., 2001). Therefore, failure to provide funding for all victims of domestic violence regardless of gender would be discriminatory (McNeely et al., 2001).

### **Literature Review**

Some of the highest rates reported by both men and women as victims of domestic violence were from the national surveys in the United States, such as the National Family Violence Survey of 1975 and 1985 and the National Alcohol and Family Violence Survey of 1992, which have been analyzed and referenced in several studies (Douglas & Hines, 2011; Douglas et al., 2012; Hines & Douglas, 2009; McNeely et al., 2001; Nicholls & Dutton, 2001;

Straus & Gelles, 1986). Furthermore, both sexes indicate experience in the role of perpetrator in domestic violence incidents (Douglas & Hines, 2011; Jasinski, Blumenstein, & Morgan, 2014).

An analysis of the national surveys from 1975 and 1985 by Straus and Gelles (1986) reported the rates of severe violence against women by men as "...38 per thousand couples to 30 per thousand couples in 1985." (p.470). They also reported rates from the same national surveys of severe violence against men by women as 46 per thousand couples in 1975 and 44 per thousand couples in 1985, (Straus & Gelles, 1986). They indicated their findings showed a 27% decrease in physical violence against women from the years 1975 and 1985, however, violence against men showed a decrease of only 4.3% (Straus and Gelles, 1986). Straus and Gelles (1986) stated "Our finding of little change in the rate of assaults by women on their male partners is consistent with the absence of ameliorative programs" (p.472).

The surveys of 1975 and 1985 were conducted in the United States, however, studies in other countries indicate domestic violence isn't just a social issue in the United States; it's a social issue around the world. For example, Hall (2012) stated "Domestic violence permeates Western societies such as the United States and the United Kingdom which includes male victims who are frequently denied or overlooked" (p. 34). Hall (2012) continues to state half of all domestic violence victims reported in the United Kingdom are men. He asserts "...domestic violence is then apt to be seen as a female victim/male perpetrator problem, which empirical evidence suggest is untrue" (Hall, 2012, p. 40).

In Australia, Evans (2016) reported from the Personal Safety Survey "The 2012 PSS survey shows that 8.2 per cent of all men have experienced violence by a female intimate partner - roughly one in twelve - with almost a quarter of all victims of intimate partner violence being male" (para 23). Headey, Scott, and de Vaus (n.d.) conducted a study to determine if women

were as violent as men in Australia. Their results revealed both, men and women reported equal rates of assaults by their partner and both genders equally admitted to committing the assaults (Headey et al., n.d.).

Another study conducted in the Netherlands by Drijber et al. (2013) stated 42% of all citizens in the Netherlands have encountered domestic violence at least once in their life and 11% of these victims have suffered permanent physical damage. Drijber et al. (2013) study consisted of 380 men who responded to a questionnaire regarding the characteristics of the abuse they sustained and reported their abuse, whether it was physical or psychological. Their results indicated 96% of men reported they were abused by their female partner or ex-partner and that 67% reported physical and mental abuse (Drijber et al., 2013). Several studies have also shown that some women were more likely than men to be physically aggressive and some women would use weapons and other assaults, such as psychological abuse (Drijber et al., 2013).

A report from Hong Kong acknowledged an increase in male victims of domestic violence between the years of 2010 and 2011 (Cheung, 2012). There were 558 reports made by male victims in 2011, which indicates a 7% increase from 520 incidents reported by men in 2010 (Cheung, 2012). Cheung (2012) mentioned the ratio of male victims to female victims in the New Territories North were "...one man to four women in the first six months from one man to 5.66 women last year," he continues to state ethnic minorities and mainland migrants reside in the New Territories North (para. 4). He asserted "...such a rise was a result of gender equality and Hong Kong becoming no longer a male-dominant society as traditional concepts retreated" (Cheung, 2012, para. 6). He reported the pressures of women working outside the home to support their family may result in violence to reduce their stress (Cheung, 2012).



The literature and data has shown that men are, in fact, victims of domestic violence and that male victimization is likely to be underreported, however, the focus has continued to be about women and society still seems to ignore the fact that men can be victims of domestic violence at the hands of women (Hines & Douglas, 2009; Johnson, 2012; Shuler, 2010). For instance, Johnson (2005) stated women perpetrators commit mostly situational couple violence or violent resistance and not intimate terrorism, where they were defending themselves. He asserted that intimate terrorism was a gender issue for women as the victim and men as the perpetrator, because women respond to a situation couple violence or violent resistant abuse and do not participate in intimate terrorism as the abusers, regardless of what the data shows (Johnson, 2005). His conclusion indicated male perpetrators of intimate terrorism exceeded 87%; therefore, intimate terrorism was a gender issue (Johnson, 2005).

However, Jasinski et al. (2014) tested Johnson's typology of gender symmetry in intimate terrorism and concluded women were not victims any more than men were victims of intimate terrorism. Their findings also concluded women didn't sustain severe injuries or frequent violence any more than men sustained (Jasinski et al., 2014). They stated Johnson continued to claim women suffered more intimate terrorism, symptoms of depression or signs of posttraumatic stress disorder, and missed more work than men; however, their test results did not support these claims (Jasinski et al, 2014). They did report three (3) differences between male victims and women victims of intimate terrorism, where women were more likely to suffer injuries, attempt to leave their husbands, and would report the violence more than male victims (Jasinski et al., 2014).

## **Barriers Men Encounter**

### **Law Enforcement and Judicial System**

Male victims of domestic violence have reported the barriers that prevent them from contacting law enforcement, such as, fear that law enforcement would not believe that they had been a victim of domestic violence; believing that their reports of domestic violence victimization would not be taken seriously; and/or fear of being accused of perpetrating the violence themselves (Barkhuizen, 2015; Douglas et al., 2012; Hines & Douglas, 2009; Shuler, 2010; Tsui, 2014; Tsui, Chung, & Leung, 2010).

In other countries around the world, there appears to be a trend among male victims as to why they don't report the abuse to law enforcement. In the Netherlands, Drijber et al. (2013) asserted in their study, men don't report the abuse to law enforcement, because men didn't believe law enforcement would act on the report. In the United Kingdom, Hall (2012) stated "...male victims of women perpetrators are more often ignored by the police," he continues to state "...women are more often released from police custody in a shorter span of time" (p. 40). Evans (2016) reported the Australian police have told victims to "...grow some balls" (para. 31).

A case study that interviewed five (5) male victims of domestic violence and their experience with law enforcement, where male victims of domestic violence in South Africa "...is so belittled and not considered a social problem..." (Barkhuizen, 2015, p.301). It was reported that several male victims encountered similar responses by law enforcement when they were called to the scene; where their female abusers were in rages or waving a knife and the police responded by telling them to calm down and go to sleep or issued them a warning ticket (Barkhuizen, 2015). Another situation reported by a male victim, "...he experienced several

occasions where the police officers would arrive at the premises where she was being abusive and proceeded to drive away so that they would not have to deal with the situation" (Barkhuizen, 2015, p.299). Unfortunately, female abusers in South Africa know that if they claimed they were the one abused, law enforcement would believe them over their male victims and the female would not be arrested or punished (Barkhuizen, 2015).

Barkhuizen (2015) states "The fact that so many people in general, including some academics and government officials, are so unwilling to accept the unilateral abuse of men by women, is testimony to the deep-rooted stereotypes which are accepted by society" (p. 301). "The lack of training regarding this hidden side of domestic violence has fueled the stigmatization of the male victim..." (Barkhuizen, 2015, p. 301). She continues to assert "... and therefore ensure the re-victimisation of men by police officers and criminal justice officials alike" (Barkhuizen, 2015, p. 301).

A recent study conducted by Roark (2016) on the predictors of dual arrests of heterosexual offenders involved in domestic violence suggested men were not recognized by law enforcement as victims of domestic violence. Roark's (2016) results indicated when the arrest involved only one person, it was usually the man arrested for domestic violence, whereas when women were arrested for domestic violence their male partner was arrested at the same time. Roark (2016) reported "...if a man had contact with police as victim in previous domestic violence arrest, this increased the odds of a dual arrest by over 300%" (p. 60). She continues to state "This suggests that police officers possibly view male domestic violence victims differently than female victims and may not take their victimization seriously" (Roark, 2016, p.60).

Douglas et al. (2011) reported that domestic violence agencies, the police, and hotlines did not believe men's account of the abuse they sustained, nor did these entities respond to male

victims' expressed need for help. Furthermore, the men were, as feared, not taken seriously compared to female victims of domestic violence by law enforcement (Douglas et al., 2011; Drijber et al., 2013). It is noteworthy to mention that men would seek help from police or domestic violence agencies only half the time, however, men who sustained a severe assault were more likely to contact law enforcement and seek medical attention immediately (Douglas et al., 2012; Drijber et al., 2013). Muller, Desmarais, and Hamel (2009) stated that while law enforcement were willing to provide information to female victims of domestic violence regarding restraining orders, they were not as willing to provide the same information to male victims experiencing the same abuse.

The judicial system represents another barrier men encounter when attempting to obtain protective orders. Muller et al. (2009) study of judicial courts in Sacramento, California regarding protective orders issued to male petitioners compared to female petitioners was determined by the level of violence, which had an impact in granting them. The results demonstrated female petitioners were granted temporary protective orders with low levels of violence 91.2% of the time, whereas male petitioners with low levels of violence were granted temporary protective orders 25% of the time (Muller et al., 2009). Permanent protective orders with low levels of violence were granted 42.9% of the time to female petitioners and 0% of the time for male petitioners with the same low levels of violence (Muller et al., 2009). According to Muller et al. (2009) these results demonstrated a "sex-based bias" regarding temporary and permanent protective orders with low levels of violence (p. 632).

The literature mentioned above demonstrates the causes of fear men encounter when they have contact with law enforcement and the judicial system, which would explain why male victims may be reluctant to report the violence.

## **Societal Views and Service Agencies**

Men experience many barriers when seeking services for domestic violence, which include internal barriers and external barriers, possibly due to society's misconception that domestic violence has always been a woman's problem (Douglas et al., 2012; Hines & Douglas, 2009; Johnson, 2012).

The type of external barriers men encounter from service providers of domestic violence entail being accused as the perpetrator, being referred to batterer programs, being told the agency only served women or their services were not useful for men (Douglas et al., 2012; Hines & Douglas, 2009; Johnson, 2012; Tsui et al., 2010). When men were asked about the reason that they don't always report the abuse or seek help for domestic violence services, they stated denial, fear, and the stigma that men can't be abused, and/or shame and embarrassment in admitting they were abused (Barkhuizen, 2015; Douglas et al., 2012; Drijber et al., 2013; Hines & Douglas, 2009; Shuler, 2010; Tsui, 2014; Tsui et al., 2010). Drijber et al. (2013) stated men usually won't report the abuse due to ridicule and the lack of support services to male victims of domestic violence.

The lack of services for male victims occurs in many countries besides the United States, for example, England and Wales have 60 shelter locations available for male victims, whereas, 7,500 shelter locations were available for women victims of domestic violence (Hall, 2012). In the Netherlands, it appears services for male victims weren't available, however, "...a recent pilot has started to offer shelter to male victims of DV to get more insight in this issue" (Drijber et al., 2013).

In Australia, Moore (2015) reported the federal government provided \$100 million towards women's safety package in the fight against domestic violence for women and children.

Two million of that \$100 million was allocated for men from that package, however, the funds were used as resources and tools for men as perpetrators, to mitigate the potential that they will re-offend (Moore, 2015). The funds were not used as resources for men as victims of domestic violence (Moore, 2015). Moore (2015) continued to report "With the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women just passing many men continue to feel excluded as victims. Excluded from government funding, from help services and from awareness and recognition" (para. 5). Evans (2016) stated "In Victoria, the Royal Commission into Family Violence has recommended support services should develop joint arrangements to ensure that male victims of family violence are supported in obtaining the help they need within the next two years..." (para. 31). Evans (2016) continues to state "...New South Wales the Baird government recently announced a plan to spend \$13 million over the next four years on support programmes for men" (para 31).

So the question becomes, where do male victims of domestic violence search for help in today's society with all the barriers they encounter from formal services mentioned above: the internet (Tsui, 2014).

## **Current Study**

### **Internet Usage by Male Victims**

The internet has become one of the primary resources for information and is a powerful tool for people seeking a variety of services. Today, continued awareness about domestic violence can be obtained using the internet by searching the phrase "domestic violence," which produces several websites of agencies that serve victims of domestic violence, along with national and state coalitions against domestic violence.

Douglas et al. (2012) indicated that men use the internet approximately 2/3 of the time searching for help. Tsui (2014) stated male victims listed informal networks of friends and family as their preferred resource for help and the internet was a valuable resource due to access, being anonymous, and "...less threatening to their masculine self-image and ego while still maintaining their autonomy" (p.128). Some men use the internet to seek mental health professions, which were reported as the most helpful formal service provider compared to other service providers, law enforcement or domestic violence hotline agencies (Douglas et al., 2011).

One study conducted by Douglas et al. (2011) indicates that men have positive experiences using informal services and have experienced negative results from use of formal services. Informal services, such as, family, friends, and the internet were used by men to seek help or information as victims of domestic violence, before using formal services, such as, police, religious institutions, or medical doctors (Douglas et al., 2012; Tsui, 2014). Men were more inclined to discuss their experiences of domestic violence with informal services; their relatives, their colleagues, family members, or a medical doctor (Drijber et al., 2013).

A more recent study revealed men would seek informal help from friends 77.5% of the time, family 72.5% of the time, and through the use of the internet 70% of the time; whereas formal services such as mental health professionals was used 63.8% of the time and the police 58.8% of the time, which were sought out less (Tsui, 2014). It also revealed the police were very or somewhat unhelpful and was rank on a liker scale of 1.68, whereas friends received a 3.63 score, the internet 3.5 score, and family members 3.41 score as being the most helpful (Tsui, 2014). He also mentioned shelters were ranked as the least helpful service provider by men (Tsui, 2014).

## **Purpose and Goal of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to analyze whether or not Utah domestic violence agencies indicate they recognize men as victims of domestic violence on their websites and if they provide similar services for men as they do for women. The study also seeks to analyze whether these domestic violence agency websites are inviting and inclusive of men as well as women or if it's directed exclusively towards women. According to Johnson (2012) "...some shelters are expanding their services to men who are victims of domestic violence" (p. 7).

The goal of the study is to bring awareness and open a dialogue with these Utah agencies and the impact their website may have on male victims of domestic violence in search of help. It is not intended to decrease the serious matter of women who experience domestic violence, but to address the social injustice and discrimination male victims of domestic violence have endured for decades, which have created barriers and unequal services for them.

## **Methodology**

A Google search was conducted to identify agencies in the state of Utah that provide services to domestic violence victims. The Utah Domestic Violence Coalition (UDVC) was selected from the search, because UDVC provided a complete list of agencies throughout the state of Utah. The list was found under the UDVC menu on their home page titled "Survivor" and then under the submenu titled "Find a Shelter." There were sixteen (16) agencies listed across Utah that provide services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. A Google search was then conducted of the individual agencies to determine if they provided a website.

Several agency websites were very detailed and contained several sub-pages and other agency websites had very few sub-pages to view. Since each website contained a home page and



some section that listed their services, only the home page and service pages were analyzed in this study to determine if these agencies recognized men as victims of domestic violence and if they provided similar services to men that they provide to women.

The home page of each agency's website was analyzed for words that utilized language specifically referring to "men as victims or survivors of domestic violence," rather than how many times the agency mentioned men on their home page. Because men are often referenced in the domestic violence community specifically as perpetrators of abuse, it was important for the purposes of this study to focus on the overt connection between men and victimization.

Further analysis was conducted of each agency's websites under the service sections, where agencies may list the type of services they provide to victims of domestic violence and what population (gender) they may serve. Some websites had different menu headings that detailed their services, for instance, "get help" or "programs" which were used in the analysis as these were the equivalent of the "services" page for these sites. Again, each of these sections and any subsections were analyzed for specific words that referred to men as victims of domestic violence rather than how many times the agency mentioned men on their service pages.

An Excel spreadsheet was created that listed all sixteen (16) agencies, their website address, if applicable, and whether or not each agency website home page and service page included males in the population as victims of domestic violence. The Excel spreadsheet created the following graphs to present the data.

## **Results**

There were sixteen (16) agencies listed in Utah that serve victims of domestic violence. Since websites are public domain all sixteen (16) agency names and their websites, if applicable, are listed on Table 1. Out of sixteen (16) agencies listed in Utah, only twelve (12) agencies (75%) had websites that were found. Listing the names of the agencies was in no way to point

fingers, but for the ease of discussion. Data was accrued and analyzed between September and November, 2016.

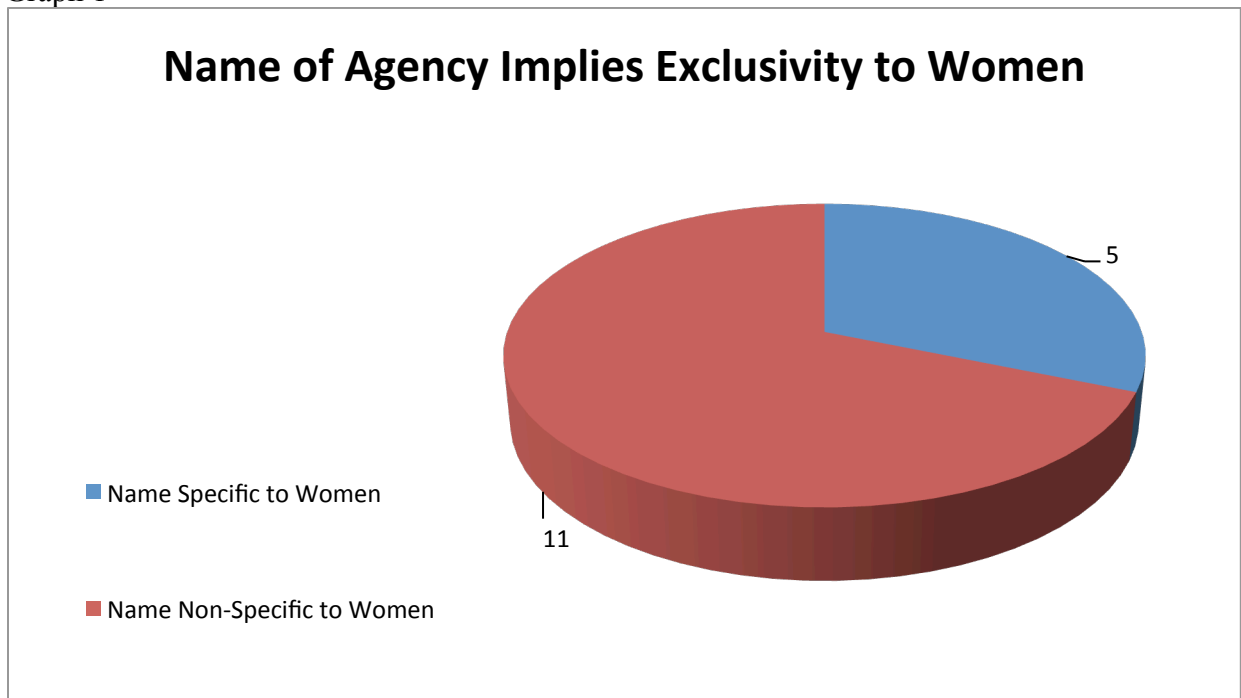
Table 1

Agencies/ Shelters	Website
Gentle Ironhawk Shelter	<a href="http://www.gentleironhawkshelter.com/">http://www.gentleironhawkshelter.com/</a>
New Hope Crisis Center	<a href="http://www.newhopecrisiscenter.org/">http://www.newhopecrisiscenter.org/</a>
Canyon Creek Women's Crisis Center	<a href="http://ccwcc.org/">http://ccwcc.org/</a>
Safe Harbor	<a href="http://www.safeharborhope.org/">http://www.safeharborhope.org/</a>
Citizens Against Physical and Sexual Abuse (CAPSA)	<a href="http://www.capsa.org/en">http://www.capsa.org/en</a>
Seekhaven	<a href="http://seekhaven.org/">http://seekhaven.org/</a>
Your Community Connection of Ogden/Northern Utah	<a href="https://www.ycchope.org/">https://www.ycchope.org/</a>
Peace House	<a href="http://www.peacehouse.org/">http://www.peacehouse.org/</a>
Colleen Quigley Women's Center	No website found
Center for Women and Children in Crisis	<a href="http://www.cwcic.org/index.php">http://www.cwcic.org/index.php</a>
New horizons Crisis Center	No website found
YWCA Women in Jeopardy	<a href="http://www.ywcautah.org/site/c.emJ1KgOQJhlaG/b.7965121/k.BCF0/Home.htm">http://www.ywcautah.org/site/c.emJ1KgOQJhlaG/b.7965121/k.BCF0/Home.htm</a>
South Valley Services	<a href="http://svsutah.org/en/home/">http://svsutah.org/en/home/</a>
D.O.V.E. Center	<a href="http://www.dovecenter.org/">http://www.dovecenter.org/</a>
Pathway, Tooele Safehouse Offices of Social Services	No website found
Women's Crisis Shelter	No website found

First, the names of all sixteen (16) agencies were reviewed in the study to analyze gender specificity, which may indicate services were exclusive to a particular population rather than being inclusive of all victims. Five (5) agencies (31.3%) implied exclusivity to one population by having the word "women" in the name of their agency, see graph 1.

The five (5) agencies with women in their name were Canyon Creek Women's Crisis Center; Colleen Quigley Women's Center; Center for Women and Children in Crisis; YWCA Women in Jeopardy; and Women's Crisis Shelter.

Graph 1



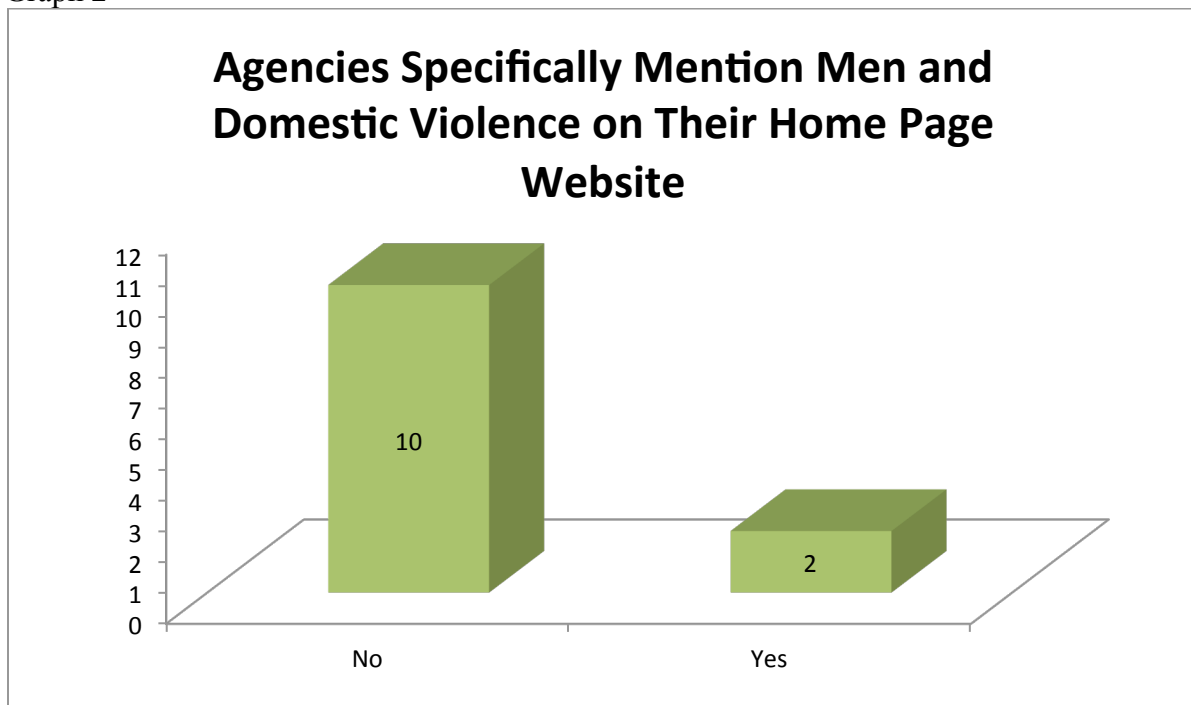
The four (4) agencies Colleen Quigley Women's Center; New Horizons Crisis Center; Pathway, Toole Safehouse Offices of Social Services; and Women's Crisis Shelter were excluded from the remaining analysis, because websites for these agencies could not be found.

Second, the home page of the twelve (12) agency's websites were then reviewed for the phrases that included men as a population of individuals who may be victims of domestic violence or experience abuse.

Only two (2) agency's home pages out of the twelve (12) agencies, Citizens Against Physical and Sexual Abuse (CAPSA) and South Valley Services acknowledged men as victims of domestic violence or noted services for men that were abused on their home page, see Graph 2. Both agencies, CAPSA and South Valley Services acknowledged men as victims of domestic violence under their "Donate" or "Give Money" section on their home page.

Citizens Against Physical and Sexual Abuse (CAPSA) described male victims as fleeing domestic violence under their donation sub-heading. South Valley Services described men as a population that could need services to overcome domestic violence. Further down on South Valley Services home page they briefly described a few of their services under the sub-heading "Shelter, Advocacy, Prevention," which included men as being impacted by domestic violence.

Graph 2



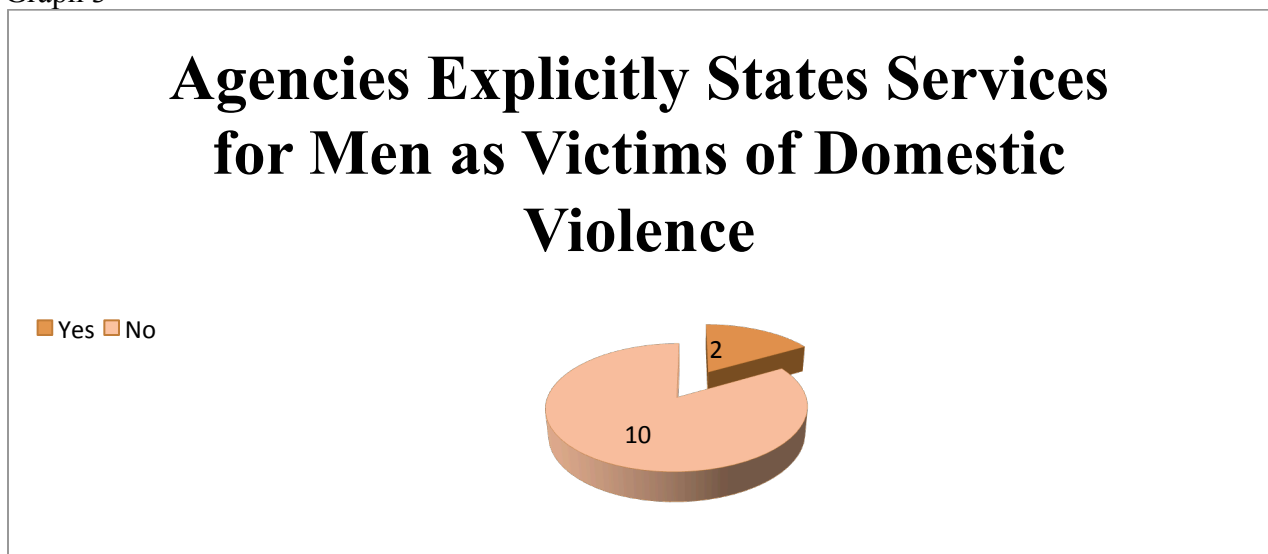
Finally, the twelve (12) agency websites were then analyzed for the type of services they provided to victims of domestic violence, in particular, what services if any, they provide to male victims of domestic violence.

Two (2) agencies, CAPSA and Safe Harbor indicated they provided services to men who were victims of domestic violence or abuse on their service pages, see Graph 3.

Under CAPSA's "Service" tab sub-section "Domestic Violence Services" sub-heading "Educational Support Group" stated they provide support groups for incarcerated men who have experienced or been impacted by abuse. This agency also mentioned they have plans to expand support group services to male victims of domestic violence under the "Service" tab, sub-section "Educational Support Group" sub-heading "Women's Support Group" third paragraph down.

Safe Harbor's "Get Help" tab, sub-section "Support Groups" sub-heading "Domestic Violence Support Groups" stated they provide support groups for male victims of domestic violence as part of their "special populations." They also mentioned providing outreach services to male victims of domestic violence seeking support services who don't need shelter, under their section "Get Help" sub-section "Outreach Program."

Graph 3



## Discussion

It's important to mention for the purpose of discussion that all twelve (12) agencies used common language throughout their websites which were "victims," "survivors," "individuals," "adults," or "families," and a couple agencies actually identified women and children on their web pages.

Citizens Against Physical and Sexual Abuse (CAPSA) was the only agency that indicated they recognized men as victims of domestic violence on both their home page and on their service pages. The agency mentioned providing services to men on their home page under their "Donate" section, which seeks donation from the community that provides shelter for men, women, and children who were overcoming domestic violence. This would indicate that CAPSA recognizes men as victims of domestic violence and the donations they received would provide shelter services to men. However, upon further examination of this agency's service pages, they reverted back to the common language such as, "individuals, adults, families, and children," under their "Service" tab, sub-section "Domestic Violence Services" sub-heading "Emergency shelter and food." In fact, all sub-sections under their "Service" tab used the common language mentioned above including "victims and survivors." The only time CAPSA actually mentioned men under their "Service" tab, was under the sub-section "Domestic Violence Services" sub-heading "Educational Support Groups" for incarcerated men who had experienced or were impacted by abuse and under their "Service" tab, sub-section "Educational Support Groups" where they plan to expand their support groups to include male victims.

It's possible that by using common language throughout their website, CAPSA would appear to be providing services for men. However, it is difficult to say without actually contacting CAPSA and asking them if they provide shelter to male victims of domestic violence,

as their "Donate" section on their home page indicates, or to identify any other services they may provide.

Men seeking services for domestic violence may at first believe they found an agency that provides services to male victims of domestic violence based on CAPSA's home page. One thing it does imply is that this agency provides shelter to men fleeing domestic violence and the donations they receive will be used to assist their needs. However, if men search further into the agency's website for shelter services, they may experience disappointment and/or could be re-victimized, because they discover the only services this agency actually state they provide to male victims of domestic violence must be incarcerated.

It would be beneficial for CAPSA to re-examine their home page "Donate" section to clarify the actual services they provide to male victims of domestic violence to match their service pages or update their service pages to match their statement under their donation section. This would avoid the possibility of re-victimizing male victims of domestic violence who are seeking help as well as convey a consistent, reliable message to those accessing the website.

South Valley Services also recognized men as victims of domestic violence on their home page in two (2) areas, under their "Give Money" section and under the sub-heading "Shelter, Advocacy, Prevention" that clearly indicates they provide safe shelter and supportive services for women, men and children overcoming or impacted by domestic violence. Again, this indicates to the community that donations made to South Valley Services would be used for women, men, and children to sustain and enhance their services, as well as, communicating that they provide shelter services for men.

It was interesting to discover upon further analysis of their service pages that South Valley Services didn't mention men or any particular type of services they actually provided to

male victims of domestic violence, despite what their home page stated. Instead, South Valley Services reverted back to using common language "family" under their "Service" tab, sub-section "In-House Client Services." In fact, all of South Valley Services sub-sections under their "Services" tab used common language.

Once again, men searching for help may think they found an agency that acknowledged men as victims of domestic violence that would provide shelter and other services based upon their home page. However, upon further exploration of their "Services" tab to obtain additional information, they would discover no mention of services in particular for male victims of domestic violence, only common language referring to women, children, and families used again.

As mentioned above, it's possible South Valley Services does provide shelter as stated on their home page for male victims of domestic violence. However, in order to know for sure, South Valley Services would need to be contacted. It would be advantageous for South Valley Services to re-examine their home page and their service pages to list exactly what services they provide for male victims of domestic violence and provide consistency for the sake of clarity.

There appears to be an inconsistent message between CAPSA and South Valley Services home page and the service pages. Their message to the community indicated all donations would be used for men, women, and children to provide shelter and other services or needs. This could be potentially misleading and problematic to anyone donating money to these agencies with the idea that these services support all victims of domestic violence, including men. In addition, their service pages were inconsistent due to the fact they did not confirm they actually extend shelter services or provided similar services to male victims of domestic violence that are provided to women that was indicated on their home page.



As stated, Citizens Against Physical and Sexual Abuse (CAPSA) recognized men on their service pages and the second agency that recognized men on their service pages was Safe Harbor. Before discussing the results from Safe Harbor regarding their service pages, it's worth noting what they did mention on their home page. Safe Harbor did not recognize men as victims of domestic violence on their home page, however, the words they used on their home page was "men in crisis," under the heading "How We Do It" sub-heading "Safe Housing." Safe Harbor was excluded from the results in Graph 2, due to the fact "men in crisis" was found to be vague and confusing and does not necessarily recognize men as victims of domestic violence on their home page. So what exactly does the term "men in crisis" mean? It could mean a variety of things: men who are homeless, in need of assistance to pay rent for the month, or hungry and need help with food for themselves or their families. However, it does not necessarily acknowledge men as victims of domestic violence. To know exactly what Safe Harbor means by "men in crisis" one would need to contact them.

Safe Harbor did recognize men as victims of domestic violence on their service pages, which was included as part of the results on Graph 3. They mentioned men as victims of domestic violence under their "Get Help" (services) tab, sub-section support group as a "special population." This was potentially confusing due to the inconsistency that men can't be victims of domestic violence, that men can't be abused, and men would not be treated the same as women who are victims of domestic violence. Male victims of domestic violence shouldn't be considered a "special population," because it implies that it may be exceptional or unusual for a male to be a victim of such violence, further stigmatizing or shaming those who have experience it. In fact, literature has shown men have reported they were victims of abuse and women reported being perpetrators of abuse (Hines & Douglas, 2009; McNeely et al., 2001; Nicholls &

Dutton, 2001). Providing a service to male victims of domestic violence as a "special population" could prevent men from seeking help and re-victimize them.

Safe Harbor also mentioned men as victims of domestic violence under their sub-section "Outreach Programs," which acknowledged male victims of domestic violence who may need services, but not require shelter. It appears that Safe Harbor may provide similar services to men that women receive from this agency, however, they would need to be contacted for clarification.

It would be constructive for this agency to remove the words "special population" under the support group they provide to male victims of domestic violence. The words "special population" describes exclusivity and could possibly re-victimize male victims or they could feel isolated in their victimization. It would also be beneficial for this agency to list the services they provide to men on their home page. The possibility of men searching several web pages within this agency's website could decrease, if the home page doesn't specifically recognize men as victims of domestic violence or what services they provide to men.

Another agency that did not specify that men were victims of domestic violence was New Hope Crises Center, however, it's worth mentioning the words they used on their home page. The words they used were "all-inclusive," which was found under the sub-heading "Welcome," where they mentioned providing victim-centered services for families, individuals, and the community. This would imply they provide equal services to male victims of domestic violence that women received. However, their "Services" page lacked details or explanation and only listed the name of services they provided. There weren't any additional sub-pages that might have provided further clarification or information. New Hope Crisis Center did mention "all-inclusive" again on their service page with a non-discrimination disclosure statement, along with a notation that their services were free of charge.

In order to determine exactly what they mean by "all-inclusive" services, New Hope Crisis Center would need to be contacted, therefore, they were not part of the results in Graph 2 or Graph 3. It would be beneficial for New Hope Crisis Center to expand the information on their website to describe exactly what they mean by "all-inclusive" services, what those services consist of, and exactly what populations they serve, (if it's women only or men *and* women who are victims of domestic violence).

The most interesting of all twelve (12) agency's websites was Canyon Creek Women's Crisis Center. The analysis of their service pages, revealed that Canyon Creek Women's Crisis Center used the phrase "men who need a safe place to stay can call 24 hour crisis hotline for assistance." Again, Canyon Creek Women's Crisis Center was excluded from the results in Graph 3, because the phrase was found to be vague and did not necessarily recognize men as victims of domestic violence . These words were found under their "Our Services(/Get Help) tab, sub-section "Emergency Safe House." An interesting point, this agency actually contains the word "women" in their name, which was included in the results of Graph 1 that implies exclusivity to women, despite the fact that they indicate some type of services available to men.

So what does "men who need a safe place to stay" mean? It could mean they are homeless, which can be unsafe, they could be fleeing from law enforcement, or it could mean they are fleeing a domestic violence situation. It is possible they provide some type of service to male victims of domestic violence, however, knowing exactly what Canyon Creek Women's Crisis Center means by "men who need a safe place to stay" would entail contacting them.

It's also possible men may not even look at this agency's website based on their name, Canyon Creek Women's Crisis Center, which implies exclusivity to women. Therefore, male victims of domestic violence would be unaware that this agency may provide some type of

assistance if they needed a safe place to stay. If they are wanting to inform male victims of domestic violence they provide shelter assistance, it would be beneficial for this agency to consider changing their name, which would increase the chances of male victims reviewing their website. It would also be valuable to list that they recognize and provide services to male victims of domestic violence on their home page.

There was a theme that developed between all twelve (12) agencies, which consisted of the common language used throughout their websites. As mentioned above, the common language used by these agencies would indicate they provide services for domestic violence to men and women, however, further analysis clearly indicated differently. The use of the terms "victims or survivors" could be perceived as vague and misleading to those seeking services who are male victims of domestic violence. Men might consider themselves a victim or survivor of domestic violence, and could get the impression these agencies would assist them, when in reality, they may be excluded from services. It's possible these agencies are using this language to indicate they do serve all victims of domestic violence including men. However, many of their web pages conveyed a level of exclusivity through omission of the word "men" and, therefore, indicate they serve only women. The use of the words victim(s) and survivor(s) could also be considered politically correct, so these agencies don't appear to be discriminating against male victims of domestic violence. Either way, these agencies use of these words was found to be vague and confusing and should consider listing exactly who they serve.

The inconsistent message these websites presented would require male victims of domestic violence seeking help to actually contact these agencies who indicated their services were inclusive. As indicated by the literature above, male victims contacting these agencies could encounter the risk of being told they only served women, treated as the perpetrator, and/or

referred to batterer programs, all of which could possibly re-victimized them (Douglas et al., 2012; Hines & Douglas, 2009; Johnson, 2012; Tsui et al., 2010).

One last point to mention is the appearance of the web designs of the twelve (12) agencies regarding the pictures displayed. This analysis will refrain from delving into discussion about the websites background colors or research on the meaning of colors, or femininity versus masculinity and focus strictly on picture/image elements. Several of the agencies websites had pictures of women and children, which could be interpreted that these agencies exclusively served one population, women, regardless of them mentioning services they do provide to male victims of domestic violence. There was one agency that displayed a picture of men with the heading of "Education and Awareness." This could be interpreted that men were perpetrators and needed to be educated about domestic violence and made aware of their actions towards women. The interpretation was based up the facial expressions of the men displayed in the picture, which appeared to demonstrate remorse and shame, whereas, the pictures of women and children displayed happiness and smiling faces. What's most interesting about this, is that this agency actually recognized men as victims of domestic violence.

### **Conclusion and Limitations**

The researcher agrees to a certain point with the literature from Johnson (2012) who reports that some agencies are expanding services to men. However, out of twelve (12) agencies, only three (3) different agencies (25%) actually acknowledged men as victims of domestic violence and indicated they provided some type of services to them. However, their acknowledgement and services they stated for male victims were limited and clearly demonstrated that male victims continue to be an underserved and under-recognized population

as victims of domestic violence. As the literature above indicates, male victims of domestic violence continue to encounter barriers when seeking help from formal services to obtain equal services that women receive from these agencies.

The analysis of this study has several limitations. The first limitation pertains to the content being analyzed. Agency websites can quickly change in appearance, content, language, services, and statements about who they serve as victims of domestic violence. In fact, two (2) agencies have completely changed their website in appearance, format/layout, and content since the analysis of each agency website. This demonstrates the ease with which these agencies were able to update/improve their websites and provide a clear and consistent message to the public detailing their services for the population they target. However, changing the name of an agency as mentioned above, could be a longer process, though it is certainly not impossible.

A second limitation lies in the interpretation of the researcher analyzing the twelve (12) agency websites. The researcher did not contact any of these agencies to determine the meaning of the words victims, survivors, individuals, adults, families, "men in crisis," "men who need a safe place to stay" or "all-inclusive" or the exact population they serve. The use of the common language or politically correct language used by these agencies was construed as misleading and vague by the researcher, however, other researchers' analysis of the common language might disagree and consider the researcher's analysis/conclusion to be bias.

The final limitation was the exclusion of the four (4) agencies that did not have websites and were excluded from the analysis of the home page (Graph 2) and service pages (Graph 3). It is possible these agencies do acknowledge male victims of domestic violence and/or provide services for men, however, in order for the researcher to determine who they serve, men or

women, or both, would required contacting each agency, which was beyond the scope of this study.

## **Recommendations**

### **Future Research**

The current study was an initial assessment of domestic violence service agency websites and warrants further investigation of these agencies by contacting each one to determine if they actually recognize males as victims of domestic violence and if they provide the equal services to men that they provide to women. The agencies with websites, in particular, should be contacted to determine if the words "victims, survivors, or families" are inclusive of services for both men and women or if they used them to refer to women, in order to make any concrete conclusions regarding what each agency does or does not do. When contacting these agencies, it would also be advantageous to discuss their websites regarding the importance of listing exactly what services they provide to male victims of domestic violence and the importance of having these services listed on their home page. Agencies that have the word "women" in their name and listed some type of services for male victims of domestic violence on their website would also benefit from a discussion, in regards to the potentially inconsistent message being perceived, which may reduce the likelihood that male victims would search their website.

Similar studies of domestic violence agencies can be conducted regionally, nationally, and/or globally to determine if websites in a larger context were presenting a consistent message, acknowledging males as victims, and if they provide similar services for men that they provide to women. This would provide an opportunity to educate and bring awareness to the

marginalization of male victims of domestic violence to many domestic violence service agencies.

### **Future Education/Training**

Analysis of these domestic violence agency websites demonstrate the need for further education and training of service providers, law enforcement, and the judicial system in order to initiate change in society's views about the possibility that men can be victims of domestic violence. As Tsui (2014) stated "There is a need to provide unbiased and gender inclusive and culturally sensitive training for domestic violence service providers and law enforcement officers who are at the front line in working with the male victims" (p. 129). Educating helping professionals working in the field of domestic violence, including employees of shelters and hotlines, law enforcement personnel, and those in the judicial system, about domestic violence or intimate partner violence, the fact that domestic violence isn't just a woman's issue, it's a human issue and services should be all-inclusive (Barkhuizen, 2015; Douglas et al., 2011; Johnson, 2012; McNeely et al., 2001; Tsui, 2014).

Shuler (2012) asserted "Mandatory sentencing laws or better training of judges on male victims of intimate partner violence should be given in order to be fair in the sentencing of both male and female perpetrators" (p.171). She continues to state that law enforcement and the judicial system were in need of training to increase awareness about domestic violence as more than a woman's issue and advocate that they should be trained on domestic violence (Shuler, 2012).

However, Hall (2012) made an interesting point when he stated that "Many Social Workers may find the topic of males as domestic violence victims to be insensitive to women



and thus may view it as charged material" (p. 41). He stated many service providers and social workers lack the training to recognize male victims of domestic violence, their needs to obtain similar services, and advocating for male victims of domestic violence (Hall, 2012). He also asserted equal services that are provided to female victims of domestic violence should also be provided to male victims of domestic violence (Hall, 2012).

It's time society acknowledges male victims of domestic violence/intimate partner violence and end the social injustices and discrimination male victims of domestic violence encounter. Education and training programs about victims of domestic violence need to include male victims in order to dispel the myths, stereotypes, and stigma about the notion of men as victims of domestic violence (Tsui, 2014). Education and awareness begins at the micro level by having an open dialog with friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers acknowledging men can be victims of domestic violence. At the mezzo level awareness through education/workshops for service providers, social workers, law enforcement, and the judicial system is needed. Finally, at the macro level, providing information to society through public announcements and/or national media campaigns during the Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October about the fact, that both men and women are victims of domestic violence would be appropriate (Tsui et al., 2010).

Education and awareness can also be accomplished through the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) and the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition (UDVC) by acknowledging male victims of domestic violence on their websites, which could influence local domestic violence agencies. For instance, the website format used by several of these agencies in the study appeared to be uniform with the NCADV and the UDVC websites. This would indicate the national and state domestic violence coalitions have a great deal of influence on the

local domestic violence service agencies. If the national and state coalitions began to acknowledge male victims of domestic violence on their websites that men sustain the same type of abuse, such as, control, physical, psychological, and financial and the need for equal services for both men and women; it's possible local domestic violence service agencies would design their services and websites to coincide with the state and national coalitions websites. This would begin the process of closing the gap of barriers male victims encounter when contacting these service agencies for help. It would also be a huge step toward the elimination of the social injustice male victims have encounter for decades.

The most important macro level intervention is changing legislation, which currently describes exclusivity to one population to a policy that is, in fact, inclusive of all victims of domestic violence. The spirit of Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) (2013) which states that services are to be equal for all victims of domestic violence and therefore, does not discriminate against gender, is actually contradicted by the name alone, which does exclude male victims of domestic violence and creates social injustice against men. The name VAWA indicates to society and service providers that funding is for women only as victims of domestic violence. Therefore, it's time to change the title to one that wouldn't be gender specific, such as, Violence Against Intimate Partner Act (VAIPA) or Violence Against Humans Act (VAHA) and eliminate the discriminatory title that currently exists and that continues to marginalize one population.

These changes can be accomplished by acknowledging and increasing awareness that men are victims of domestic violence/intimate partner violence through service providers, media campaigns, judicial systems, law enforcement, and legislation. As Tsui (2014) stated so

eloquently, "To heal from abuse, an important first step is to acknowledge the problem..." (p. 129).

Again, the analysis of the twelve (12) Utah domestic violence agency's websites was not intended to minimize the serious matter of women being victims of domestic violence, or reduce the services provided to them. Rather, it was intended to bring awareness of a marginalized population that has also experienced the role of victim in domestic violence incidents as historically as women, but have been forgotten.

The intent of this study was to provide an opportunity to open a dialogue with these and other domestic violence agencies about the issue of social injustice and the unequal services offered for male victims of domestic violence. Furthermore, the hope is that part of that dialogue can bring awareness to how the agency websites appear to be exclusive to one population, along with the inconsistent message they are presenting to male victims of domestic violence.

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## Reflection Writing

The reflection writing is directed toward future honor students and many of the recommendations mentioned represent the challenges I encountered during my journey. I would like to mention, one of the greatest assets a student has during their thesis capstone is their advisor/mentor. It's important to collaborate with your professors, whether it's for your contracts or your thesis take advantage of their knowledge, because they are there to help you succeed.

The first challenge I encountered at the beginning of my honors program as a regional campus and distant education student was the professor who began this journey with me became unavailable. I was very fortunate that my advisor/mentor moved to my campus and was willing to continue this journey with me. As students begin to work with their professors on each of their contracts, you will develop a working relationship and should keep in mind each of these professors are potential thesis advisors. Some of my greatest achievements through my journey, I give credit to my advisor. Her support and encouragement assisted in my success. We developed a working relationship and she created a learning environment with each contract that enhanced my critical thinking and writing skills.

Another challenge I encountered was not having any idea for the topic of my thesis going into my fourth contract. I wanted to utilize my fourth contract as my bibliography for my thesis, however, I didn't have a topic which became very stressful and felt I was running out of time.

I would recommend to future students if you utilize your fourth contract for your bibliography and have a long break before beginning your thesis capstone, you will need to review the articles again. I had a summer break between my fourth contract and the beginning of my thesis capstone; therefore, I needed to review the articles before I began my study. When I

re-read the articles I found additional information I missed the first time, which was beneficial in writing my thesis.

I would also recommend students begin to think about their thesis topic during their contracts or tailor their contracts towards their thesis, if possible, which will assist them when they are ready to begin their thesis capstone. It would also benefit students to read the requirements for their final thesis project early in their honors journey. This would provide time to begin thinking about the direction they want to take with their thesis. For instance, if you want to conduct a survey you might begin to draft survey questions and edit them, so when you submit your thesis proposal the survey questions have been submitted for the appropriate university approvals, which will prepare students ahead of time. I considered doing a survey, however, I did not begin the process early enough to prepare survey questions in order to obtain the appropriate university approvals, therefore, my thesis took a different direction.

Despite the challenges I encountered at the beginning of my fourth contract for my thesis bibliography, I heard about a social injustice against male victims of domestic violence, which became the topic of my thesis. I chose my career as a social worker to help people in my community and many of my undergraduate classes in social work provided the foundation towards this goal. As a social worker it's my responsibility to recognize injustices that prevent people from obtaining the necessary services they require to meet their basic needs and to advocate for change. Utilizing the information I obtained from my social work research class, I began researching available literature to support my thesis topic. The literature I found indicated male victims of domestic violence were being denied basic services to meet their needs as victims. They encountered barriers when seeking help from formal services and would utilize informal services, such as the internet. Through many discussions with my advisor regarding the

literature and writing my bibliography, I was able to narrow my topic to the contextual analysis of Utah domestic violence service agencies websites.

One of the greatest challenges I encountered in writing the thesis was obtaining the word requirement. Most papers I wrote for my class assignments had limitations on the number of pages or words, whereas, writing an honors thesis required 10,000 words, which became overwhelming at times. Fortunately, my advisor took the time to discuss the writing of my paper that decreased my stress. She explained that sometimes she begins her writing with her study and not to worry about how it looks in the beginning, because I would probably move sentences or paragraphs around as I write.

The most important processes of writing a thesis capstone are to meet with your advisor often to discuss the progress of your paper. My advice is to prepare for your meetings with your advisor in advance, by emailing drafts of your thesis several days in advance, if possible, so you can discuss your progress and any recommendations they may present. I meet with my advisor frequently; we discussed the content and layout of my thesis. The first draft I emailed to my advisor was disorganized and really didn't flow; however, we discussed how to pull themes out of the paragraphs I had written and the benefit of utilizing subheadings that would organize the paper and flow. Writing a thesis takes a great deal of time and research, along with many, many drafts and revisions, however, in the end it is all worth the time.

There is one lesson I learned during the process of writing my thesis, which was to implement self care techniques to reduce my stress. I would take breaks from writing the thesis portion of my paper by creating the title page or write the acknowledgement page, which I found to be easy, not stressful, and provided a break from the body of the thesis.

Most importantly, I would put the thesis capstone completely aside and spend time with my family or did something I enjoyed. There would be times I felt stressed, because I wasn't working on my thesis and had to remind myself, I needed the break.

Remember to take care of yourself while writing your thesis, walk away from writing and do something fun, so when you return to your thesis your mind will be clear, you will be present in the moment, and ready to continue writing your paper.

The process has demonstrated my ability to conduct studies in the future, the benefit of collaboration, and the importance of advocating for change that will benefit the well being of people everywhere. The experience I have gained from this process will enhance my skills as a social worker, whether I'm advocating for them on a micro level, individually; on a mezzo level within my community; or on a macro level at the state, nationally, or globally.

## Author's Biography

Deborah Vernon was born in Wichita, Kansas and moved with her family at a young age to St. George, Utah and then to Moab, Utah, where she attended Grand County High School through her junior year. Deborah moved back to Wichita during the summer of her junior/senior year in high school, obtained her G.E.D., got married and enrolled in Business College. Deborah returned to school at Butler County Community College, while raising a family and working full time. She transferred to Wichita State University where she graduated with an Associate of Science degree in Respiratory Therapy. After graduation, Deborah moved back to Moab with her children and worked as a Respiratory Therapist for a durable medical equipment company for sixteen (16) years. Deborah returned to school at Utah State University (USU) after a life changing event and with the help and support from the State of Utah Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Deborah believed she still could help people in her community and has shown resilience by learning how to navigate her disability. She changed career fields and enrolled in the bachelor level social work program. During her time at USU, Deborah worked diligently to learn her new career field and adapted to the necessary changes in order for her to succeed. Many of the obstacles she faced and overcame would demonstrate to future clients that no matter what life brings, people can learn new normals, obtain help, and with perseverance achieve their goals in life.

Some of Deborah's accomplishments as a student at USU were in her community practice social work class where her student monograph reflection of her experiences with the Fair Housing Community-Based Project was selected for publication. Deborah was also the first

Regional Campus and Distant Education (RCDE) student at USU to participate in the Honor's Program. Deborah graduated with honors from USU and plans to continue her education and obtain her Master's in Social Work (MSW), which will open additional doors for Deborah to continue to help people in her community.