

Running Head: CHARACTERISTICS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Characteristics of Domestic Violence: The Controversy over Age or is It Something  
Else?

By

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Author,

Constance L. Massey-Hight

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 2009, the Internet and tabloids were inundated with reports of the domestic violence that transpired between R&B artists Chris Brown and Rihanna. Brown became physically abusive towards Rihanna after both attended a Grammy Awards show, and he was later charged with two counts of felony assault, bodily injury, and making criminal threats. Subsequently, photos were posted online and in magazines depicting the brutal facial injuries caused by the assault. For example, in February 2009, TMZ posted a photograph of Rihanna as she appeared on the popular social media website SNAPCHAT with closed eyes highlighting her swollen, scared, and bruised face (Staff, 2013).

The assault on Rihanna illustrates the prevalence and visibility of domestic violence in our society (Sutherland et al., 2015). Television, newspapers, social media, and other media outlets promote its ugly head as a pervasive part of life. We are inundated with news stories, from professional athletes beating their significant others in public elevators or in their own homes to celebrities publicly abusing their girlfriends. Many of the fans of Brown and Rihanna were obsessed not only with their affluence as entertainers, but with the media coverage of the incident highlighting their tumultuous relationship.

The story, however, also raises questions about whether domestic violence is more likely among some groups of people than others. At the time of the assault, Brown and Rihanna were only 18 and 19 years of age respectively (Staff, 2013). Did their ages have any influence on violence in their relationship? Brown and Rihanna are but two of

many couples who fall into the following categories of young victims having some education and being among those that are more likely to report domestic violence.

The crime of domestic violence often leaves the victim with permanent scars of physical abuse and the criminal justice system is expected to remedy these crimes. However, police and the courts did not always enforce this crime. Historically, domestic violence was legally viewed as a private matter (Bettinger-Lopez & Brandt-Young, 2011; Zorza, 1992). In the 1870s, laws on the books prohibited a man from beating his family. However, law enforcement and the courts did not execute this domestic violence law, offering women little to no protection from their male abusers. It was not until the 1960s that second-wave feminism and the Battered Women's Movement brought domestic violence into the public sphere. In 1973, there came forth the first-of-its-kind shelter for victims of violence—a place for victims that allowed a safe haven from the violence of a domestic partner. In 1979, the National Coalition against Domestic Violence formed, and the Domestic Violence Prevention and Service Act set aside federal funding especially for battered women programs. In 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was signed into law to allocate additional federal funds for programs geared towards preventing domestic violence and helping those women that fall victim to this high crime (GuideStar, 2017).

Today domestic violence remains a major problem in American society. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported domestic violence has become a major public health problem (CDC, 2017). In 2013, President Obama signed into law the re-authorized Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). This reauthorized act

included several new measures, such as granting Native American tribes jurisdiction to prosecute non-native perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence against Native American women (Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016). Homes are seen as a place of serenity, but every year in the United States there are over two million women who are assaulted by their spouse or partner, making their home a more dangerous to live (Karaim, 2002). According to Karaim (2002), battered women are being forced out of their home and are displaced. According to the 2015 National Census of Domestic Violence Services, there are 1,500 shelters for battered women in the United States.

During my studies at YSU, I participated in QUEST, a university sponsored forum for undergraduates and graduate students to submit results of their research. I submitted research on domestic violence and the factors that increase probability of exposure. My hypothesis was that African American women with less than high school education and between the ages of 18 to 24 years are more likely to be victims of domestic violence than others. My hypothesis about age was not supported, although my hypotheses concerning race, gender, and class were.

My disconfirmed perceptions were not in line with what I believe about the characteristics of domestic violence, so I feel there is more research needed to expand upon the subject. This research examines possible contributing factors to domestic violence in the United States and whether young adults between the ages of 18 to 24 are directly affecting the alarming high rates of domestic violence.

**CHAPTER II****LITERATURE REVIEW**

What is domestic violence, and who is affected? On one hand, it can happen to anyone regardless of their race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. It occurs in both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships, and can happen to intimate partners who are married, living together, or dating (U.S. Department of Justice [USDOJ], 2016). In this sense, domestic violence does not discriminate. On the other hand, some people seem more vulnerable than others. Many sociologists have theorized why domestic violence is higher among specific groups. Women, individuals having low socio-economic status or members of racial or ethnic minority groups appear more likely to experience domestic violence than other groups (American Psychological Association, 2017).

Domestic violence is a distinctive and complex type of violence. The intimate relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is historically construed as private and therefore beyond the law. Between 1998 and 2002, the Department of Justice reported 73% of victims of family violence were women. Females were 84% more likely to be the victim of spousal abuse and 86% were more likely to be victims of intimate partner violence (Carlson, 2011). According the Centers for Disease Control [CDC] (2017), women are five times more likely to become a victim to domestic violence in America. The agency goes on to report that five million women across the United States suffer from nonfatal violence at the hands of an intimate partner. Victimization of domestic violence can occur regardless of age, race, education level, or marital status.



**Definition of Domestic Violence**

Ganley (2002) described domestic violence as not just one single event, but a series of physical outbursts from the culprit towards his victim. When it first surfaced in the public consciousness, it was thought of only in terms of physical violence—the perpetrator hitting, kicking, or even sexually assaulting the victim. The Duluth Model, developed from a small, experimental program conducted in Minnesota in 1981, expanded the abuse range of activities to include verbal threats, psychological manipulation, and economic sanctions (Pender, 2012). As a result, the understanding of domestic violence now includes “any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone” (USDOJ, 2016).

The attributes listed above for domestic violence are reflected in its formal definition (USDOJ, 2016). The USDOJ outlines domestic violence as a form of control the predator uses to gain power over his victim. This power is maintained by a set pattern of abusive behavior in the relationship by one partner.

Domestic violence is also called intimate partner violence (IPV) when a husband, ex-husband, boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend causes it (Catalano, 2007). The Centers for Disease Control define IPV as physical violence, sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression (including coercive acts) by a current or former intimate partner. Reports using the National Crime Victimization Survey define an intimate partner as “a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend” and include the crimes of rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault (CDC, 2017).

Both the CDC and the National Crime Victimization Survey highlight a specific concern to protect women. During the General Assembly in 1993 the United Nations adopted the term Domestic Violence Against Women (DVAW). Using this phrase is common among studies produced in the United States (Dahl, 2013). Doing so established and defined it as any act of gender-based violence that produces harm, whether it is physical in nature, sexual or mental suffering of a woman. These acts include threats to harm and malice in a person's public or private life.

The United States also recognizes violence against women is a major health and human rights issue, has been recognized as the world leader in protecting society's most vulnerable population (CDC, 2017). Advocating for greater public attention to domestic violence against women and began providing services to victims by offering their homes as early versions of shelters. The federal government over the last 30 years has increasingly taken action to reduce domestic violence and provide services for its victims (Mcshiras & Tsankov, 2014).

### **Causes of Domestic Violence**

Few researchers have considered how characteristics of perpetrators and incidents differ depending on the victim/perpetrator relationship. Men commit the most domestic violence and their women victims generally know them (Abbey, Pegram, Pierce, Wegner, & Woerner, 2014). The U.S. Department of Justice estimates 95% of violent acts on partners or spouses are committed by men against women (Goldsmith, 2016). According to the FBI, husbands or boyfriends kill approximately 1,500 women each year, and about two million men per year beat their partners. On average, between 2001 and 2005,

nonfatal intimate partner victimizations accounted for 22% of nonfatal violent victimizations against females age 12 or older, and 4% of nonfatal violent victimizations against males age 12 or older (Durose et al., 2005). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey finds that 13% of women were coerced non-physically into having sexual intercourse and 27% of women have experienced unwanted sexual contact (Black et al., 2011). Per the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2017), there are more than 20,000 phone calls placed to domestic violence hotlines nationwide on a typical day. One in four women have experienced domestic violence in her lifetime (USDOJ, 2016).

Although there is nothing in the definition of domestic violence that limits these offenses to female victims, why is it that women are overwhelmingly targeted? According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2017), gender “inequality and discrimination are root causes of violence against women. Influenced by the historical and structural power imbalances between women and men, which exist in varying degrees across all communities in the world.” However, an abuser may feel the need to control a partner for various reason such as jealousy, low self-esteem, difficulties dealing with their anger, or just inferior to the victim’s educational accomplishments and socioeconomic background.

### **Socio-economic and Racial/ethnic Factors**

Explanations of the causes of domestic violence have focused primarily on socio-economic status and lifecycle demographics. These approaches place the explanations of domestic violence within the mainstream of modern-day criminological theory.

Most studies pertaining to the influences of domestic violence has indicated that a lack of education is a risk factor in domestic violence. In particular, women with less education experience domestic violence at higher rates than women who have achieved a higher level of education. ("Domestic Violence and Education", 2015). An uneducated woman tends to be economically less productive, as she may be viewed as having less bargaining power. This situation places the female victim in an inferior position to the male perpetrator. Women with greater years of education are afforded opportunities to gain knowledge and information, which result in them being less vulnerable or likely to be a victim of domestic violence (Amin & Arends-Kuenning, 2001). This does not mean that people with higher levels of education cannot be victims of domestic violence; it simply means that there is a higher risk of being a victim of domestic violence with those that have lower levels of education.

Two different theories—victim-blaming and social disorganization—can be used explain socioeconomic influences. One of the leading social pioneers of our era includes the work of William Ryan, who explored blaming the victim in his 1971 book simply titled *Blaming the Victim*. He wrote about the tendency to blame the poor for their own predicaments. Ryan theorized holding the victim accountable of her own misfortune of being a victim as it offered disbelieving the victim's story and/or minimizing the severity of the attack. In summary, blaming the victim occurs when we neglect the social environment of the individual, and hold an individual responsible for consequences that may or may not be in their locus of control (Plum, 2012).

Another theory to consider why domestic violence happens to specific groups is social disorganization, which directly links crime rates to neighborhood (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Sampson & Wilson, 1995). In other words, a person's residential location is a substantial factor shaping the likelihood that that person will become a victim of domestic violence. Exploring why some people are more likely to experience domestic violence than others is a variation that drives this paper. The initial section of this chapter defines domestic violence and the frequency of domestic violence. The second section outlines the causes behind domestic violence.

Because there is a socioeconomic influence, it is not surprising that victimization rates are highest among racial and ethnic minority groups historically known for low levels of education and income. Domestic violence reaches across all ethnic and racial groups; it does not discriminate as it can impact people of all races. In 2007, Grossman & Lundy used data from the National Violence Against Women (NVAW) to explore the prevalence of IPV across 5 ethnic groups (African American, White, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander and mixed races, including Hispanic and non-Hispanic). Their findings indicated that American Indian/Alaskan were among the highest to experience some form of domestic violence. Further, they analyzed empirical data that spanned over a 5-year period obtained from the NCVS. Comparable rates of IPV were found among the Hispanic and non-Hispanic racial groups. Black female victims experienced a 35% higher rate of IPV than white females and in comparison to other ethnic groups, Black females were about 2.5 times more likely to experience IPV. There is some correlation with race and domestic violence and that is more prevalent in

some ethnic groups than others. In 2010, 2 in 5 women of American Indian, non-Hispanic Black or Alaska Native race/ethnicity and 1 in 2 multiracial non-Hispanic women have experienced some form of violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Breiding, Chen, & Black, 2010). Clearly, domestic violence is prevalent across subcultures in the United States.

The variations in race and social class can also be mitigating factors to the increase of domestic violence in our society. Conwill (2010) found that domestic violence is a “unique problem” within the black community. Particularly those Blacks at/or below the poverty level are at a greater risk to suffer domestic violence. Sherman, Schmidt, and Rogan (1992) found there were high rates of domestic violence among middle-class women and Black males living in poverty; compulsory arrests had an effect of on repeat offending were the key to reduce domestic violence between the population of middle class and the poor. Is there as link between domestic violence and poverty? Raphael and Tolman (2005) found there was a documented authentic association between domestic violence and women on welfare. Evidence presented by his four studies found female welfare recipients had a consistent high percentages rates of domestic abuse at the hands of their male partners. The studies were conducted between 1992 and 1996 from entire caseloads of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) reported by state and county agencies in New Jersey and Massachusetts. The study sampled 2,840 women on government assistance (welfare). These women were classified as poor or homeless with both current and past prevalence of domestic violence.

### **Lifecycle Approaches**

Crime victimage can also be described as varying over the life cycle. Domestic violence differs greatly depending on the age of the victim. According to the CDC, age is among one of the risk factors of domestic violence in our society (Truman & Morgan, 2016). Young women between the ages of 18 to 24 are considered the most vulnerable population to become domestic violence victims. In 2014, Truman & Morgan examined the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and found a direct correlation between IPV and age. They found the BJS statistics for 1993 to 1999 provided important information on the prevalence rate of domestic violence, and the characteristics of victims of abuse were higher among young women. BJS's results found women in their teens and early twenties are more likely than any other group to experience domestic violence. Similarly, with IPV, the National Center for Crisis Management asserts that women age 16 to 24 were nearly three times more vulnerable to be the victim of IPV than any other age group (Shelter Services, 2017). Alcohol use may influence these statistics. According to the National Institution on Alcohol and Alcoholism, 97,000 college students are victims of alcohol related violence on date rape, an extreme level of violence each year.

Could marital status be a mitigating factor? In legal terminology, the law describes domestic violence as an act that happens or characterized by the intimate relationship shared between two parties. Anderson (1997) looked at marital status as a possible contributor to domestic violence and reported "family violence researchers suggest that sociodemographic indicators of structural inequality influence propensities for domestic assaults." These inequalities are what is driving the increase of violent

behaviors within the marriage: A person's position within this family structured environment brought forth the tendencies of domestic assault to occur underneath its umbrella. The Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (2017) website reported marital violence among young couples are especially common, as the rate is almost 20 percent.

Truman & Morgan (2016) found that female victims of IPV, regardless of their marital status, had a higher rate of exposure than older women. The prevalence of domestic violence was actually higher within the white community than in black that have never been married. This study shows there is a link between marriage and domestic violence. Cano found existing evidence supporting a direct correlation between life stressors and husband-to-wife violence. The study followed men in marital clinics, which explored both violent and non-violent couples. The findings were 61% of married men have been physically aggressive towards their wives (Cano, 2009).

### **Statement of Problem and Hypothesis**

The last few years the media has polarized the visibility of domestic violence amongst the younger population, whether it had been between Brown and Rihanna or young athletes and their significant partners. Truman & Morgan (2014) found that 18 to 24-year olds were amongst the highest reported for domestic violence. As noted in my introduction, the data analysis for this project investigates whether women age 18 to 24 have a greater risk to become a victim of domestic violence than any other age group. Preliminary analysis in one of my classes that leads me to explore this issue further.



I am not alone in raising the possibility that 18 to 24-year olds do not have the highest prevalence of domestic violence, at least some aspects of it. Rennison (2001) estimates that one kind of domestic violence—IPV—may have its highest rates in adults over 25 and over. Hot lines are reporting high call volumes from women over 40 (Reese, 2014). The Supreme Court of Ohio (2009) treats our understanding of domestic violence and age as a “developing concept.”

**CHAPTER III****METHODOLOGY**

In light of the fact that most domestic violence is perpetrated against women, this paper explores domestic violence as a form of violence in which a male is the perpetrator of this violence and a female as the victim of the violence. This thesis presents an analysis from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), the principal source of data for annual prevalence rates of a variety of crimes including intimate partner violence (United States Department of Justice, 2016).

The NCVS is an ongoing self-report survey in which interviewed persons are asked about the number and characteristics of victimizations experienced during the prior 6 months. The main objective of the NCVS is to (1) develop detailed information about the victims and consequences of crime, (2) to estimate the number and types of crimes not reported to the police, (3) to provide uniform measures of selected types of crimes, and (4) to permit comparisons over time and types of areas. At this point in time, approximately 90,000 households and 160,000 people are surveyed annually.

Domestic violence is underreported in official police statistics; however, the NCVS is an excellent source for examining this type of crime because it includes offenses that are not reported to the police. A victim might be more likely to report a broken limb such as an arm or getting stabbed, but might be less likely to report getting pushed, scratched or shoved around.

This thesis explores domestic violence using the concatenated file of the NCVS for the years 2010 to 2014. Professor Rogers of Youngstown State University, last

updated on February 17, 2016, prepared the data collected for this study. This data source is appropriate and secure, as Professor Richard Rogers directly obtained it for his own use and use by his students and the raw totals for offenses closely matches BJS estimates. The data reported in this thesis is based on collection year and uses weight to adjust to the population. The population limited to women and sample size totaled 133,871,981.

### **Variables**

The presence (prevalence) of domestic violence was my dependent variable. Domestic violence was defined using the NCVS incident file and attaching the results to the NCVS person file. Victimization was identified as violent if it was referred to as a rape or sexual assault, aggravated assault, simple assault, or robbery, or an attempt or threat to commit one of these crimes. An intimate partner is defined as a spouse, ex-spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, or former boyfriend or girlfriend, someone that the victim would have maintained a sexual relationship.

The independent variable in this thesis is age, which was grouped into five different groups ranged in ages 12 to 65 and older. The control variables were marital status, race/ethnicity, and education level. Marital status had five categories—married, widowed, divorced, separated, and never married. Race and ethnicity was collapsed into five categories—White, Black, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander and Other. The control variable education used the categories less than high school education, graduated high school, or if they were a college graduate.

All data analysis was conducted using SPSS. The principal technique used was a binary logistic regression. The analysis looks at domestic violence among the female

group and is categorized into 5 different groups ages 12 to 65 and older. It looks at the independent variable, age; including control variables: education, race, marital status. The total number of people in this survey meeting these criteria was 459,285, which projects to 133,871,981 people when weighted.

**CHAPTER IV****RESULTS****Frequency Distributions (Table 1)**

Table 1 reports frequency distributions for all variables, both unweighted and weighted. I looked at variables that identified if a person in a particular age group would have higher rates of domestic violence. It is a dichotomous response—0 for no (not a victim) and 1 for yes (victim). The percentage for the dependent variable affected by domestic violence is 0.2%.

Individuals ages 46 to 64 and 25 to 44 are the two largest categories by age with 31.4% and 30.9%, respectively. Whites are the modal category for race/ethnicity at 65.7%. High school graduate who did not complete college are the modal category for education at 51.4% of respondents. Married individuals account for 46.7% of the data.

**Unadjusted Model (Table 2, Column 1)**

The unadjusted model for age reported in Table 2 reaffirms that standard position on the relationship of domestic violence. It shows all age groups less likely to experience domestic violence than the reference group of individuals ages 18-24. Individuals aged 25-44 years are closest to the reference group ( $b=-.183$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and individuals 65 and older the farthest ( $b=-2.696$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Associations are also found between domestic violence and the control variables. The unadjusted models also show that Blacks have an increased likelihood ( $b=.204$ ,  $p<.05$ ) to being exposed domestic violence relative to the reference group (other). However, the likelihood of experiencing domestic violence for Whites ( $b=-.126$ ) and

Hispanics ( $b=-.100$ ) both decreased. Among the education groups with college graduates as the reference group, high school graduates had the highest rate of exposure ( $b=.918$ ) to domestic violence, followed by those with less than a high school education have a greater likelihood of exposure to domestic violence ( $b=.637$ ,  $p<.05$ ). In terms of marital status, the highest likelihoods of domestic violence were associated with those separated ( $b=3.016$ ,  $p<.05$ ), divorced ( $b=1.681$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and never married ( $b=1.357$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Currently married individuals also exhibited a higher rate of domestic violence, but only slightly so ( $b=.132$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

### **Adjusted Models (Table 2, Column 2)**

The adjusted model for age shows a substantial change in the effects of age. Individuals ages 25-44, for whom the likelihood of domestic violence was less than the reference group 18-24 in the unadjusted model, were more likely to experience domestic violence ( $b=.049$ ,  $p<.05$ ) in the adjusted.

A substantial change is also present in marital status. Married individuals, who were slightly more likely to experience domestic violence in adjusted model, were now less likely to experience it ( $b=-1.031$ ,  $p<.05$ ) in the adjusted.

### **Further Analysis**

The comparison of the unadjusted and adjusted analyses yields an important conclusion. The oft accepted conclusion that domestic violence is highest among individuals ages 18-24 does not hold in an adjusted model. The switch in the highest rate to individuals 25-44 corresponds with changes in the coefficients for marital status. Further analysis was done to confirm this finding.

The remain equations in Table 2 present adjusted logistic regression models by marital status. Note that the individuals age 25 to 44 are consistently lower than 18-24-year old across all categories except never married ( $b=.322$ ,  $p<.05$ ). This analysis suggests that marital status may moderate the relationship between domestic violence and age.

To explore the interaction of age and marital status further, Table 3 presents the results of the prevalence of domestic violence controlling for those to variables. Among those never married, Domestic violence peaks the highest among 25-44-year olds (45.2 per 10,000 women), which is slightly higher than those in the age range of 18-24 (44.6). However, among those married, domestic violence clearly peaks among those 18-24 (18.4)

**CHAPTER V****DISCUSSION**

My hypothesis was that women age 18 to 24 years had a greater risk to becoming a victim of domestic violence than any other age group was refuted. Although the statistics gathered between 2003-2012 special report for nonfatal domestic violence indicate that prevalence were higher amongst 18-24-year olds (Truman & Morgan, 2014), this study finds evidence of a shift occurring due to the interaction of age and marital status.

Seeking to end the cycle of domestic violence requires both insight and skill. Victims of domestic violence seek to achieve an ultimate goal of ending this form of abuse in their lives forever (Campbell, Curry, Dienemann, & Landenburger, 2002). In order to accomplish this goal, we must first increase our knowledge about women survivors and what their cognitive process was to achieve their non-violent lifestyles. Landenburger's theory of entrapment and recovery, known as the Domestic Violence Survivor Assessment (DVSA), can aide counselors to successfully resolve victims' dilemma of their abusive relationships while experiencing personal growth.

Domestic violence is an important public health problem. Many communities around the United States have preventative programs in place to aid in the reduction of domestic violence. These community providers include physicians, nurses, social workers and therapists. They are considered the first non-family members that an abused woman turns to for help and guidance. This creates a unique opportunity that allows the provider to intervene (Bennett, et al., 2004).



If, as my results indicate, that marriage may be a moderating factor in predicting domestic violence rates, then we must gain a deeper understanding of not only women survivors, but the insight and skill needed to help the male abusers to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence overall. An emphasis on the male perpetrator is missing from many support services. Help Hotline and shelter care services are traditional programs aimed primarily to assist female victims of domestic violence. Per the Shelter for Help in an Emergency website, Help Hotline was created to provide resources to women and their children who have been exposed to violence to break through barriers in hope to provide them with strength and empowerment to navigate away from their abuser (2017). Similarly, traditional domestic violence counseling is designed to assess and aide battered women and their children to utilize community services to shield and/or prevent any further violence from the abuser (Harding, 2009).

These services put in place separate or exclude the male abuser from the healing process, often alienating the abuser as he is removed from the home and therapeutic settings. Many domestic violence programs do not have the expectation of the male completing the programs that are geared towards preventing domestic violence. With this being said, we must go further to explore the disconnect between societal norms and the family unit. Preserving the family through counseling; marital stressors can be addressed resulting in prevention of future domestic violence.

Couples counseling that includes the victim and her abuser/partner together in a therapeutic setting may be effective as long as the problem is addressed directly. It must avoid provoking the male abuser or creating a false sense of security for the female

victim (Babcock, Green, & Robie, 2004). Family counseling is also considered a traditional method of treatment for domestic violence. Family counseling encompasses the family unit to engage in therapeutic analysis to promote healing and reduce violence (Harding, 2009). A statewide evaluation from the University of Illinois found that 12% of the participants that were engaged in family counseling for domestic violence issues which were geared predominantly towards helping women and children, not the abuser (Bennett, Howard, Riger, Schewe, & Wasco, 2004).

Other solutions should include the collaboration of micro and macro level agencies such as Help Hotline and community based family counseling centers geared towards reducing domestic violence within the family. Providing empowerment and education for adolescents both male and female will aid in the recovery for the victims; providing appropriate coping mechanisms for abusers, which will result in strengthening the family unit. The practice notes website states by approaching domestic violence from a family centered approach this will spearhead the global reduction of women being abused (2003).

Analyzing the intervention literature as a whole, Riedel and Welsh (2008) have stated “research and evaluation regarding several topics such as civil or criminal protection orders, batterer treatment, and community interventions have generated weak or inconsistent evidence of deterrent effects on either repeat victimization or repeat offending”; they were not conducted through a family centered approach. This reiterates my earlier discussion that the reduction of domestic violence will occur if intervention and non-traditional treatments including the male batterer within the scope of treatment.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. These include gathering of information through surveys, lack of reporting through counseling, victim blaming, and a misconstrued definition of domestic violence.

NCVS collects data from victims of domestic violence. The interviews present barriers which may influence or prevent victims from accurately reporting their abuse. Barriers with questions on the NCVS that are generalized and not applicable to all victims. These questions may need to be revised so that reporting is not under or over reported in any certain group. Victims looking for protection from their violent abuser may feel pressure to leave their home, although they are engaged in an extremely volatile relationship it is difficult to remedy by leaving their home. This may cause a significant financial burden on the victim and if children are involved the hardship of becoming a single parent with and the loss to child of not having that other parent in the home. In this vein, Johnson (2016) concluded, “another common limitation in research on intimate partner violence is derived from the fact that women who are accompanied by their partner at the time of the interview or questionnaire are systematically excluded from samples.”

Counselors face barriers of confidentiality and if the female victim has no reported imminent danger for the children in the home, abuse may go unreported. Johnson 2016 report studied changes in prevalence of IPV over time with the focus on African Americans as there had been no rate change in reporting since 2003. Johnson discussed the following, “underreporting of domestic crimes may be another issue.

Victims might not report their crime if they feel they have no way out, or that their attacker will make things worse on them.” Counselors attempt to build trusting relationships with their clients and the breach of trust is difficult to the professional to sort through with a fear of losing the client all together and not knowing if the family is safe together. Couples counseling presents the fear by the victim of retaliation by her abusive partner.

Victims of domestic violence may feel if it is their fault they are being abused. They may take the blame as to why the violent episode happened: “if I just would have” or “he is under a lot of pressure”. Victim shaming is another tool that can be used by the abuser to have the victim return or providers in the community that fail to act or protect.

There may be a definition change to domestic violence that presents limitations as well. The act of domestic violence towards the older population is conceptualized as elderly abuse (Brandl & Cook-Daniels, 2002). This goes back to limitations of reporting as this form of violence is not considered domestic violence. Thus, effecting the Rates of domestic violence which were lower among 65 or older (Truman & Morgan, 2014).

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**Table 1**  
*Frequency Distribution for Study Variables*

	Unweighted N	Weighted N	Weighted %
<b>Dependent Variable</b>			
<i>Domestic Violence</i>			
Victim	841	291,195	0.2
Not Victim	458,844	133,580,786	99.8
Total	459,285	133,871,981	100.0
<b>Independent Variables</b>			
<i>Age</i>			
12-17	39,218	12,110,867	9.0
18-24	42,818	14,934,117	11.2
25-44	139,750	41,358,557	30.9
46-64	151,696	42,102,565	31.4
65 =>	85,503	23,365,875	17.5
Total	459,285	133,871,981	100.0
<b>Control Variables</b>			
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>			
White	310,012	87,983,286	65.7
Black	52,740	17,206,845	12.9
Hispanic	65,881	19,773,569	14.8
Other	30,652	8,908,281	6.7
Total	459,285	133,871,981	100.0
<i>Education</i>			
<High school	95,412	28,907,075	21.6
High school grad	235,778	68,864,008	51.4
College grad	117,680	33,829,967	25.3
Total	448,870	133,871,981	100.0
<i>Marital Status</i>			
Married	226,433	62,467,434	46.7
Widowed	39,723	11,228,646	8.4
Divorced	48,795	14,266,224	10.7
Separated	9,961	2,988,491	2.3
Never Married	130,206	41,856,555	31.3
Total	455,118	133,871,981	100.0

*Notes:* Number of people are weighted and rounded to the nearest whole number. Sums may not equal totals due to rounding error.

**Table 2**  
*Beta Coefficients from Logistic Regression – Marital Status*

Variables	Unadjusted	Adjusted	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	Never Married
<i>Age (ref=18-24)</i>							
12-17	-1.174*	-1.301*	.946*	-16.854	-17.005	-17.591	-1.219*
18-24							
25-44	-.183*	.049*	-.923*	-1.831*	-.398*	-.419*	.322*
45-65	-.969*	-.824*	-1.437*	-2.643*	-1.382*	-1.377*	-.562*
65>	-2.696*	-2.593*	-3.374*	-4.186*	-3.588*	-1.933*	-15.475
<i>Race (ref=other)</i>							
White	-.126*	-.061*	.063*	-.678*	-.316*	-.103*	.037*
Black	.204*	-.206*	.435*	-.560*	-.476*	-1.343*	.022*
Hispanic	-.100*	-.508*	-.311*	-1.606*	-.806*	-.666*	-.488*
Other							
<i>Education (ref=College grad)</i>							
<High school	.637*	.838*	1.281*	-.093*	.713*	-.346*	1.376*
High school grad	.918*	.804*	.810*	.615*	.548*	-.013*	1.364*
College grad							
<i>Marital Status (ref=Widowed)</i>							
Married	.132*	-1.031*					
Widowed							
Divorced	1.681*	.571*					
Separated	3.016*	1.666*					
Never Married	1.357*	-.042*					

Notes: \*p<.05

**Table 3**  
*Domestic Violence: Prevalence by Age and Marital Status*

Age	%	Never Married	Married	Total
12-17	9.0	18.0	0.0	18.0
18-24	11.2	44.6	18.4	41.2
25-44	30.9	45.2	7.1	23.5
45-64	31.4	8.9	5.5	5.5
65 or Over	17.5	3.6	0.0	1.2

*Note:* Extracted from the 2014 National Crime Victim Survey on Domestic Violence. Rates are per 10,000 women. A total number of 133,871,981 people sampled: marital status; overall percentage married=46.7, widowed=8.4, divorced=10.7, separated=2.3, never married=31.3.