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Domestic Violence:

Proposed Study on Verification of Reduction of Incidents and Prevalence in the United States

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Abstract

Domestic violence can be defined as a general term for violence that occurs between intimate partners, relatives, individuals who have a child in common, or co-habitants (Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005, 2006). The violence that occurs between the victims and offenders includes physical assault, sexual assault, verbal threats, stalking, robbery, and homicide (GAO, 2006). This research proposal highlights the recent literature associated with domestic violence and the most recent statistics available. It further discusses issues with data collection and analyses used to convey actual incidents and prevalence. Limitations of such research are discussed, which includes underreporting. The methodology used includes a quantitative approach to providing a more comprehensive number of incidents of domestic violence and prevalence among certain groups within Escambia County, Florida. Data were obtained unobtrusively through the Escambia County Sheriff's Office, local police departments, victim advocacy centers, and crisis lines throughout the county. Findings of the study should yield a more comprehensive number of domestic violence incidents and identify prevalence among certain groups within Escambia County. Provided this information, policy makers and grantors of funds should be able to make better decisions in dealing with the social problem of domestic violence and appropriate funds where they are needed the most.

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Introduction

Domestic violence can be defined as a general term for violence that occurs between intimate partners, relatives, individuals who have a child in common, or co-habitants (Violence Against Woman and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005, 2006). In a 2006 report released by the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), domestic violence includes dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Furthermore, domestic violence victims are subjected to different forms of violence such as physical assaults, verbal threats, rape, and murder (GAO, 2006). It is important to note that this definition of domestic violence is the most comprehensive definition found. Generally, the definition of domestic violence has changed over time, but government agencies and researchers tend to use varying definitions to define it for the purposes of their own studies regarding domestic violence (Prah, 2006). For example, when statistics are gathered for the purpose of finding trends in crime rates, the United States Justice Department measures *intimate partner violence* which they define as “violence by a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend or a same sex partner” (Apuzzo, 2006, ¶ 7), as opposed to including other types of domestic violence situations, such as sexual assault or other family members as victims. Therefore, for the purposes of this proposed study, domestic violence will be defined in accordance with the definition given by the GAO.

Historically, domestic violence awareness began during the 1970s with a movement involving battered wives who pressured policy makers and the criminal justice system to revise sanctions, procedures, and services to victims of spousal abuse (Dugan, Nagin, & Rosenfeld,

2003; Prah, 2006). In 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was enacted; it provided funding through Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Departments of Justice (DOJ) to assist domestic violence victims (Prah; GAO, 2006). The VAWA was revised in 2000 and again in 2005 to include services to those victimized by sexual assault, dating violence and stalking (GAO). It also recognized teenage and elderly victims of domestic violence, the economic and housing needs of domestic violence victims, and the response to domestic violence by those in the health care system (Prah; GAO). As a result of the reauthorization of VAWA in 2005, the GAO was required "...to conduct a study and report on data indicating the prevalence of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking among men, women, youth, and children, as well as services available to these victims" (GAO, p. 1, ¶2).

Statement of the Problem

In 2005, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) released new data on crime statistics in the United States. From this report, the Associated Press and other news agencies reported that domestic violence rates dropped 50% between 1993 and 2004 (Apuzzo, 2006, ¶ 2; Prah, 2006, Should the Federal Government Do More to Combat Domestic Violence section, ¶1). However, several questions arise out of this statement. There could be a number of issues that could explain the decrease in domestic violence such as, effective domestic violence services and successful conviction rates for domestic violence perpetrators (Prah). On the other hand, this decrease could be due to underreporting of domestic violence incidents and the failure to recognize the prevalence, as opposed to just the incidence, of domestic violence in general (GAO, 2006). According to the GAO (2006), "Incidence refers to the number of separate times a crime is committed against individuals during a specific time period" (Results in Brief section, ¶ 1); one must note that an incident is one occurrence of one specific crime. For example, an

individual may be a victim of domestic violence incidents nine times in 2001; this is the incidence of domestic violence for one individual. When measuring prevalence, a researcher attempts to identify "...the unique number of individuals who were victimized during a specific time period (GAO, 2006, Results in Brief section, ¶ 1). An example of prevalence is that about 30 percent of women were murdered by an intimate partner between 1976 and 2005 (Fox & Zawitz, 2007, Demographic Trends by Gender, ¶ 2). This proposal will highlight these issues and propose a study to provide clarifications on the current data related to domestic violence by focusing on the quantitative aspects of how the data are gathered and reported by government agencies to the BJS and policy makers, and given this information, how it is depicted to the general public and the media.

Literature Review

According to the BJS, this agency collects crime data from many different governmental agencies to, "...analyze, publish, and disseminate information on crime, criminal offenders, victims of crime, and the operation of justice systems at all levels of government" (About, 2007, BJS Mission section, ¶ 1). The BJS collects data from the following agencies: the U. S. Bureau of the Census, the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) Uniform Crime Report (UCR), the U.S. Sentencing Commission, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, and the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys (About). Annual reports that are published by the BJS include data on criminal victimization, correctional populations that are under supervision, Federal case processing, and Federal criminal offenders (About). In addition, the BJS releases a series of periodic data that include prosecutorial policies and practices, felony convictions, and civil and criminal State court processing, to name a few (About). It is important to provide the details of

what the BJS does because it illustrates the magnitude of the data it collects and what it combines in order to give a comprehensive overview of crime in the United States (Rand & Rennison, 2002). Appendix A provides a summary of data-collection efforts of other agencies that report domestic violence related crimes to the BJS. It also describes the limitations that each data set has in its information it provides to the government. Though these agencies provide extensive amounts of information on different aspects of domestic violence, each provide different pieces of domestic violence rather than all aspects of domestic violence. For example, as shown in Appendix A, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are measured separately within NIBRS, and measuring dating violence in the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) does not include other victims of domestic violence, such as sibling violence or violence against a parent (GAO, 2006; Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007). Furthermore, combining these data sets in order to get more comprehensive data can be difficult because of the inconsistencies in definitions of domestic violence (GAO, 2006). However, the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and the CDC have collaborated on “uniform definitions for certain forms of domestic violence in 1999 and for sexual assault in 2002, with the intent of promoting and improving consistency among the research community” (GAO, 2006, Results section, ¶ 3). The GAO (2007) suggests that even though HHS has implemented a more uniform and reliable way of data collection, it does not anticipate full cooperation within all agencies concerned until fiscal year 2010 (Results in Brief section, ¶1). The following programs are designed specifically to provide services directly to victims of sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and domestic violence: Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) Grants, Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors (STOP) Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program, Legal Assistance for Victims Grant Program, STOP Violence Against Indian Women Discretionary

Grants Program, Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforcement of Protection Orders, Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Enforcement Grants, Grants to Reduce Violence Crimes Against Women on Campus, Transitional Housing Assistance Grants Program, Safe Havens: Visitation and Safe Exchange Grant Program, Victim Assistance Formula Grants, and Discretionary Grants (GAO, 2007). These are agencies that will provide statistics and demographics to their respective awarding agencies, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the Office on Violence Against Women (VAW), or the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), who will then provide this information to the GAO (2007). The GAO will audit each program listed above to ensure accurate demographic reporting, which will provide more reliable demographic information for monetary appropriations during the next fiscal year (GAO, 2007). The GAO (2007) provides the following example, "...the number of victims served is not consistent with the number of victims for which age and gender information is provided" (Demographic Data on Victims Served by Type of Service Are Not Available for All Services section, ¶8). This example illustrates the most recent challenge a program has when collecting data and reporting it to its parent resource provider.

Another issue is measurement of the prevalence of domestic violence (GAO, 2006). The GAO suggests that a measurement of prevalence along with measuring the incidence of domestic violence can provide better information when officials make decisions on policy, grants, and other matters associated with sexual assault, stalking, domestic violence, and dating violence. However, when measuring prevalence, privacy and victim safety are the primary issues (Zweig & Burt, 2002; GAO, 2007). A study conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) on the prevalence of spousal abuse and dating violence was an international study on 50 separate population-based surveys (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). These cross-sectional surveys were

given over a 16 year time period and found that of the women surveyed, 10 to 50 percent were assaulted at some point in their lifetime by a spouse or intimate (Watts & Zimmerman, p. 1233). However, Watts and Zimmerman speculate that different cultures cannot be compared when judging which one may have the most prevalence of domestic violence. This study also looked at several other types of domestic violence such as, forced sexual initiation, sexual assault of children, human trafficking, forced prostitution, debt bondage, exploitation of labor, rape committed in war, violence against prostitutes, female infanticide, sex-selective abortion, and deliberate neglect of girls (Watts & Zimmerman; Fox & Zawitz, 2007). It is important to recognize these types of domestic violence because of the wide scope of offenses that encompass it; however, there is no literature found that any the above, with the exception of spousal and intimate abuse, sexual assault on children, infanticide of both sexes, and violence against prostitutes are common in the United States. Furthermore, the above list, with the exceptions noted, is more for international research concerns and is beyond the scope of this proposed research.

Another study was conducted on the prevalence of domestic violence, but it measured only partner violence observed in rural health care clinics in South Carolina rather than domestic violence in general (Coker, Flerx, Smith, Whitaker, Fadden & Williams, 2007). Coker et al. found that 7 to 29 percent receiving care through rural clinics in that region were victims of partner violence. In addition, this study cited a finding from another study conducted by the CDC that suggested that the costs associated with partner violence is estimated at about \$5.8 billion every year; this amount includes medical costs, productivity loss, and the victims' loss of wages (Coker et al.). They suggest that further studies on the screening processes of partner violence needs to take place in order to consider whether such interventions in a clinical health

care setting are helpful to women who are victims of partner violence; in doing so, they theorize that it may help in diminishing the prevalence of intimate partner violence (Coker et al.).

Another issue with measuring prevalence is the difficulty in combining data from different studies because of inconsistent definitions of domestic violence and incidents that are unreported (GAO). Furthermore, current efforts of measuring domestic violence tend to separate domestic violence into different crime categories, such as sexual assault and homicide, rather than combining domestic violence into one comprehensive analysis; therefore, an overall better statistical analysis cannot be made to illustrate the actual numbers represented by current statistics (GAO). It may be easier to measure prevalence at a local level rather than on a national level; this study proposes to do this.

The BJS (2007) regularly reports on different crime characteristics and trends of victimizations of violence; the most recent was from 1973 to 2005 (Violent Crime Trends section, ¶ 1). It identifies victim and offender relationships in its summary findings (BJS). The BJS separates intimate violence from other types of relationship violence such as, acquaintance, friend, and other relatives (BJS). For the year 2005, the BJS (2007) reported that 70 percent of females who were victims of sexual assault knew their assailant as an acquaintance, friend, or other relative (Victim/Offender Relationship section, ¶ 2). The BJS also found that 26 percent of males and 52 percent of females were robbed by an acquaintance, friend, other relative, or intimate (Victim/Offender Relationship section, ¶2). Furthermore, it found that 40 percent of non-fatal violence in the workplace was committed by someone the victim knew, with one percent of all violent crimes that happened in the workplace was committed by an intimate (BJS, Victim/Offender Relationship section, ¶3). Also, the BJS reported that 43 percent of murder victims were acquainted with or related to the offender and two-thirds of children age five and

under were killed by a family member or parent (Victim/Offender Relationship section, ¶ 4-5).

These statistics highlight the issue that the BJS separates intimate violence from violence committed by an acquaintance, friend, or other family member. By separating these offenses, the BJS does not provide clarification in the actual number of incidents related to domestic violence.

The following are the BJS findings regarding what they define as intimate violence:

About 1 in 320 households were affected by intimate partner violence...[f]emale victims are more likely to be victimized by intimates than male victims...[i]n 2005, of those offenders victimizing females, 18% were described as intimates and 34% as strangers...[b]y contrast, of those offenders victimizing males, 3% were described as intimates and 54% as strangers...[t]he rate of nonfatal intimate violence against females declined by nearly half between 1993 and 2001...[t]he sharpest decrease in number of intimate murders has been for black male victims...[a] 81% percent decrease in the number of black men murdered by intimates occurred between 1976 and 2002 (BJS, Intimate Violence section, ¶1).

Though the current rate of non-fatal domestic violence reported to the NCVS has fallen over time, Table 1 suggests that the rate is increasing slightly (BJS).

Table 1. Rate of Non-Fatal Intimate Partner Violence per Year per 1,000 persons age 12 or older

Year	Intimates
1993	5.8
1994	5.5
1995	4.9
1996	4.7
1997	4.3
1998	4.8
1999	3.5
2000	2.8
2001	3.0
2002	2.5
2003	2.5
2004	2.6

Source: (Catalano, 2006, Overview section, ¶1)

The reader must recognize that Table 1 only represents intimate partner violence and does not include other types of domestic violence, for example, sexual assault and stalking, nor the fact that other victims or perpetrators could be another family member, acquaintance, friend or co-habitant; therefore, interpreting such data should be used with caution (BJS).

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA) (2005), who cite a National Violence Against Women Survey, nearly one in four women were physically or sexually assaulted at some point in their lives (How Common Is Domestic Violence section, ¶1); this includes only intimate partners and does not include other family members or co-habitants. They further report that about 371,000 men and about one million women are victims of stalking each year (APA, How Common Is Domestic Violence section, ¶1). In addition to these statistics, the APA indicate that 7.7 percent of heterosexual men, 11.4 percent of lesbians, and 15.4 percent of homosexual men are victims of dating or intimate partner violence at some point in their lifetime (APA, How Common Is Domestic Violence section, ¶1). Again, by only measuring intimate

partner violence and separating it from other forms of domestic violence, i.e. violence perpetrated by other family members, individuals that have a child in common, or co-habitants, there is little clarification in the actual number of incidents related to domestic violence.

The statistics released by the BJS related to family violence in general state that between 1998 and 2002, 11 percent of all unreported and reported violence involved family violence; this statistic comes from a comparison of official police statistics, victimization surveys, surveys of inmates who are in local jails and State prisons, and statistics from state and federal courts (Durose, Harlow, Langan, Motivans, Rantala, Smith, & Constantin, 2005). Durose et al. also report that in 2002, 22 percent of all homicides were family murders (Highlights section, ¶ 2). Furthermore, Fox and Zawitz (2007) report men murdered by intimates has dropped 75 percent since 1976 but women murdered by intimates has been stable for the last 20 years (Demographic Trends section, ¶ 1). They further report that males are more likely to be offenders and victims in familial homicide (Fox & Zawitz, Demographic Trends by Gender section, ¶ 1). This furthers the assumption that there needs to be more clarification in the actual number of domestic violence related incidents; by separating homicide from the domestic violence category, it under represents the social impact such numbers can have (Prah, 2006; Ferrand-Bullock, 2007).

Another issue associated with statistical data released may include underreporting of domestic violence. Underreporting has always been an issue regarding domestic violence due to its personal nature and sensitivity of the circumstances (GAO, 2006; Rodriguez, Lasch, Chandra, & Lee, 2001). Furthermore, Miles-Doan and Kelly (1997) suggest that the most serious incidents that involve great injury or death are more likely to be reported than other offenses related to domestic violence. Underreporting of domestic violence pertains to not only women, but also the elderly, men, siblings of offenders, and active duty or dependants in the military

(Prah, 2006; Respecting Accuracy in Domestic Abuse Reporting (RADAR), 2007; Rodriguez et al., 2001; Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007; Gielen, Campbell, Garza, O'Campo, Dienemann, Kub, Jones, & Lloyd, 2006; Graham-Kevan, 2007; Whitaker, Haileyesus, Swahn, & Saltzman, 2007; Moore, Probst, Tompkins, Cuffe, & Martin, 2007). Rodriguez et al. found from a National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), given from 1987 to 1992, 60 percent of the cases represented in the study participated in domestic physical violence (Discussion section, ¶1). The NSFH is a self-reporting survey; therefore, under-reporting is less significant than in data reported by officials, such as law enforcement or courts; though underreporting was still accounted for as a limitation within this study (Rodriguez et al.). Though these data are old, it should be considered when comparing reported and unreported domestic violence. Hart and Rennison (2003) suggest that reporting of violent crimes to the police were higher in recent studies, but those committed by a stranger were reported at a higher rate than those committed by someone the victim knows. Furthermore, they suggest that “[v]iolent crime was most often *not* reported to police because it was deemed a ‘private/personal matter,’ was considered ‘not important enough,’ or because it was ‘reported to another official,’” with the unreported rate at 59 percent (Hart & Rennison, Highlights section, Table 6, ¶5). This percentage of unreported crimes of non-stranger (acquaintance, intimate, or other relative) violence is significant and one could essentially double the rate posited by the BJS pertaining to the number of domestic violence incidents. For example, Table 1 illustrates that the rate for intimate partner violence in 2004 was 2.6 per 1,000 persons over the age of 12, but when using the unreported rate of about 59 %, the rate could increase 1.4 percent to 4.0 per 1,000 persons over the age of 12 (Catalano, 2006, Overview section, ¶1). This further illustrates the impact underreporting has on current data.

Another aspect of unreported crimes involves domestic violence situations phoned in to a crisis line or helpline for domestic violence victims. According to a Web site that focuses on counseling and crisis intervention, the Domestic Violence, Child Abuse, and Sexual Abuse Hotline provides a:

...24-hour-a-day hotline, [which] [p]rovides crisis intervention and referrals to local services and shelters for victims of partner or spousal abuse...[s]taffed by trained volunteers who are ready to connect people with emergency help in their own communities, including emergency services and shelters...[t]he staff can also provide information and referrals for a variety of non-emergency services, including counseling for adults and children, and assistance in reporting abuse...[m]any staff members speak languages besides English, and they have 24-hour access to translators for approximately 150 languages...[f]or the hearing impaired, there is a TDD number...[t]his is a great resource for anyone—man, woman or child—who is experiencing or has experienced domestic violence or abuse, or who suspects that someone they know is being abused (Information, 1998, Domestic Violence section, ¶1).

These hotlines are essential to providing assistance to victims of domestic violence when they feel that contacting law enforcement may not be an option because of the possible repercussions in doing so (Prah, 2006). For example, the Council for Women and Domestic Violence Commission in North Carolina reported that 45,000 calls to a helpline were made in 2003 (Martinez, 2005). While this article does not provide demographics for this statistic or how it may relate to domestic violence reported or not reported to law enforcement, it suggests a need for such programs, especially for victims who choose not to contact law enforcement.

It is suggested that elderly abuse is widely underreported because the victims are usually ashamed and feel they should know better because of their age (Prah, 2006). It is the opposite for young children (Prah; Moore et al., 2007). Some children may not even consider a threat of violence to be a crime, while others may recognize something to be a crime; therefore, underreporting of domestic violence of this age is expected (Moore et al.). Furthermore, sibling abuse is suggested to be one of the most unreported crimes of domestic violence (Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007). Kiselica and Morrill-Richards suggest that 80 percent of youngsters ages 3 to 17 have committed some type of violence against another sibling; this includes physical, psychological, or sexual abuse. However, they suggest that measuring sibling abuse is difficult; the intent and severity of a sibling's act versus the impact it has on the other sibling varies with the situation involved (Kiselica & Morrill-Richards).

Domestic violence that occurs with families in the military is only reported as spousal abuse to the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) of the Department of Defense (DOD) (Gielen et al., 2006). Furthermore, it is speculated to be widely underreported because of the implications to both the victim and offender, whether active duty or independent (Gielen et al.). Any domestic violence that is reported in military settings has no confidentiality and damage to the active duty person's career can ensue; these implications can result in underreporting (Gielen et al.; Prah, 2006). However, Chapin and Mackie (2007) suggest that recent revisions in the DOD mandatory reporting policy allows for more confidentiality for the victims if they choose so that they can receive services through the FAP without a legal investigation ensuing or command being involved.

Finally, literature suggests that men are increasingly underrepresented in domestic violence data as being the victim of domestic violence; however, this is associated with men

underreporting the abuse (Moore et al., 2007; Whitaker et al., 2007; Graham-Kevan, 2007; RADAR, 2007; Hart & Rennison, 2003). Men who are victims of domestic violence are less likely to report than female victims (Hart & Rennison). Moore et al. suggest that "...fathers, 15% of respondents [to the survey], were significantly less likely to report hitting or throwing than mothers or other respondents, possibly reflecting a general tendency of men to underreport violence to a greater extent than women" (Limitations section, ¶1). Dutton (2007) posits that law enforcement officials today respond to men's reported abuse in much the same way as they did to women's reported abuse in the 1960s, which leads to underreporting. Whitaker et al. also suggest that there is more reciprocal violence, that is, both partners participate in the abuse than nonreciprocal; however, men are less likely to report domestic violence no matter who initiated the violence. Graham-Kevan posits that there has been an increase in the arrests of women for domestic violence, though no actual numbers were given. However, the literature clearly illustrates a different picture than what the BJS and other media types suggest in domestic violence rates. The following methods in this research proposal could provide a more comprehensive look at domestic violence incidents and provide a better picture of the prevalence, as well.

Methodology

In this proposed study, domestic violence is defined as physical assaults, sexual assault, verbal threats, stalking, robbery, or murder that occur between intimate partners, other relatives, individuals that have a child in common, or co-habitants. Co-habitants are friends or acquaintances who live together. This study will analyze secondary data already available in the State of Florida, specifically Escambia County, through the following agencies: the Escambia County Sheriff's Office, local police departments, victim advocate centers, and crisis lines

throughout the county. These data sources are useful for this proposed research because the information is already available (Hagan, 2005). In addition, less time is used in this method of data gathering (Hagan). It is important to note that secondary data were collected with a specific purpose for the agency that originally gathered it (Hagan). Therefore, the operationalization and accuracy of the data may not represent what the researcher wants to know (Hagan). However, certain demographic information, such as age and gender, needed for the purpose of this study is provided. For example, law enforcement agencies and victim advocate centers in Escambia County usually document the victim and offender relationship in domestic violence incidents reported to them; this is needed for this study. Therefore, data collected with the victim and offender relationship known will only be used; the relationship of the victim to the offender will fall under the following categories: intimate partners, other relatives, individuals that have a child in common, and co-habitants.

When measuring domestic violence, it is important for the collection of data to be as unobtrusive as possible; this ensures the safety and the identity of the victims (Zweig & Burt, 2002; Hagan, 2005; GAO, 2007). Data that will be collected include the following: type of domestic violence offense, victim and offender relationship, agency called, age, and gender of the victim. The data will be collected by gathering offense reports from the Escambia County Sheriff's Office and all police departments in Escambia County from 2000 to 2005, examining victim advocacy center files of victims throughout the county created from 2000 to 2005 and contacting crisis lines throughout the county for information on domestic violence related calls made to the crisis lines from 2000 to 2005. The data analyzed will be quantified by those incidents reported to the agencies listed as they relate to domestic violence as it is defined above, victim and offender relationship, agency called, age, and gender. The variables measured will

include how many incidents of physical assaults, sexual assault, verbal threats, stalking, robbery, and murder were committed by intimate partners, other relatives, individuals that have a child in common, and/or co-habitants, and the agency that was called for service from 2000 to 2005.

Independent variables included are age, gender, victim and offender relationship, and the agency contacted. Age will be divided into the following subcategories: children under the age of 12, youths age 13 to 17, 18 to 29, 30 to 34, 45 to 59, elderly over the age of 60, and unknown.

Gender will be divided into male, female, and unknown. By using the “unknown” category, the research can include incidents reported to agencies, specifically the crisis lines where this information may not always be obtained. Appendices B, C, and D will provide the reader with a visual example of how the data will be displayed after analysis. Appendix B illustrates the number of domestic violence victimization incidents by age and gender. This may also help with finding prevalence of domestic violence within a certain demographic by age category, gender, or both. For example, prevalence may be found in women who are over the age of 18 and less than the age of 60; they may make up most of the victims in a certain category of offense, such as verbal threats. Appendix C identifies the type of crime perpetrated against the victim by the offender’s relationship to the victim. This may provide information of prevalence by providing the type of relationship that could potentially have more incidents of domestic violence.

Appendix D provides the number of domestic violence calls for service to a particular agency by type of victimization. This may provide information on prevalence by providing what type of victimization is more likely to be unreported to law enforcement. For example, there may be more calls to a victim advocacy center than to law enforcement for verbal threats or more calls to law enforcement than to a crisis line for a robbery. It is important to include all of the variables

listed because it adds validity to the expected findings. Furthermore, this may provide a more comprehensive overview of domestic violence incidents and prevalence within certain groups.

Usually the main limitation in studying domestic violence is underreporting. This issue discussed in the literature review above illustrated that more than half of domestic violence is unreported due to its personal nature and sensitivity of the circumstances (GAO, 2006; Rodriquez, Lasch, Chandra, & Lee, 2001). Hart & Rennison (2003) suggest that the unreported rate is at about 59 percent. (Highlights section, Table 6, ¶5). It is difficult to remove this limitation completely. However, analysis of calls for service to agencies by type of victimization may provide a better understanding of perhaps what type of victimization is more or less likely to be reported or unreported to law enforcement.

Another limitation is that some specific demographics may not be available, such as all victims' gender or age. For example, age and gender are not always recorded by crisis line employees and volunteers. However, the researcher will try to offset this limitation by including an unknown category for gender and age.

The final limitation may be overlap in information. For example, a victim may contact two or all three agencies for one incident. The only way to possibly offset this is a more obtrusive method of gathering the data. For example, the data must have a name attached to it; therefore, overlap of the information would not likely occur. However, as discussed above, measuring domestic violence should be as unobtrusive as possible; this ensures the safety and the identity of the victims (Zweig & Burt, 2002; Hagan, 2005; GAO, 2007).

Expected Findings

Once analyses of all the data are complete, the expected findings of this study should yield a more comprehensive look at domestic violence in Escambia County, Florida. The findings may be generalized if one may look at data from a different county with a similar population. The analyses should also counter the claims of the BJS and other media that domestic violence is down. In this study most victims of domestic violence are identified as intimate partners, other relatives, individuals that have a child in common, or co-habitants as opposed to just a certain group, i.e. intimate partner violence in the BJS statistical data. By using a more comprehensive definition of domestic violence in this study, it may provide a better representation of how many are affected by domestic violence. Furthermore, it may also provide a more representative amount of the prevalence of domestic violence to a certain age group or certain offense. For example, a researcher may find prevalence within a certain demographic such as, by age category, gender, or both; perhaps specifically, women who are over 18 and less than 60 will make up most of the victims in a certain category of offense, such as stalking. Moreover, by analyzing agency calls for service, by type of victimization, it may provide insight to the issues discussed above, such as, unreported incidents of domestic violence. For example, homicide could be reported more often to law enforcement than stalking.

Policy Implications

This proposal should provide an example of how domestic violence could be defined when conducting research on domestic violence in general. Further research on specific areas of domestic violence can be taken from the general definition given. For example, by using the general definition of domestic violence, future research can be narrowed down to certain groups,

such as youths, or the elderly, or type of victim, such as individuals who have children in common, or a specific offense such as homicide or assault. This research should provide more awareness of the amount of incidents and prevalence of domestic violence against men, women, children, youths, and the elderly. It may also reinforce the need of domestic violence services for a particular group, such as the elderly or men.

Another implication of this study may provide more validity in government issued press releases from agencies concerning domestic violence rates. Future statistics should include all types of victims of domestic violence, i.e. intimate partners, other relatives, individuals that have a child in common, and co-habitants, and all types of victimizations, i.e. physical assaults, sexual assault, verbal threats, stalking, robbery, and murder. Furthermore, press releases should include limitations of the data given, for example, underreporting. By not including limitations, it distorts the data that are released by suggesting all domestic violence incidents are measured in one category, but in reality only a certain type of domestic violence, i.e. intimate partner violence, is measured. Moreover, it should be explicit in press releases that not all agencies provide data and there are conflicting definitions of domestic violence. In other words, statements should provide readers with the fact that data are inconsistent and/or incomplete. Though the GAO (2007) has implemented a more uniform and reliable way of data collection, full cooperation is not anticipated within all the agencies concerned until fiscal year 2010 and still it may take several years subsequent to this to realize full results of such changes.

Other implications of this study may be found in policy. By finding certain prevalence among certain groups victimized by domestic violence, policy makers and those who make decisions on grants can be better informed on services provided to victims. Furthermore, when policy makers are more informed of the actual number of incidents and prevalence of domestic

violence as a whole, as opposed to just one aspect of domestic violence, better decisions on how to deal with this social problem can be initiated. Agencies who are grantors of funds in the system will be able to make informed decisions as to where to appropriate funds where they are needed the most.

Conclusion

Domestic violence awareness began during the 1970s (Dugan et al., 2003; Prah, 2006). In 1994, the VAWA was enacted; it provided funding through HHS and the DOJ to assist domestic violence victims (Prah; GAO, 2006). Domestic violence can be defined as a general term for violence that occurs between intimate partners, relatives, individuals who have a child in common, or co-habitants (Violence Against Woman and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005, 2006). The definition of domestic violence has changed over time, but government agencies and researchers tend to use varying definitions to define it for the purposes of their own studies regarding domestic violence (Prah, 2006). The VAWA was revised in 2000 and again in 2005 to include services to those victimized by sexual assault, dating violence and stalking (GAO). Domestic violence victims are subjected to different forms of violence such as physical assaults, verbal threats, rape, or murder (GAO). The revised VAWA also recognized teenage and elderly victims of domestic violence, the economic and housing needs of domestic violence victims, and the response to domestic violence by those in the health care system (Prah; GAO). The GAO was required to research and report on the data to indicate possible prevalence of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking among women, men, children, and youths, including the services that are available and apply to these victims. The BJS (2007) released new data on crime statistics for 2005 in the United States. From this report, the Associated Press and other news agencies reported that domestic violence rates dropped 50%

between 1993 and 2004 (Apuzzo, 2006, ¶ 2; Prah, 2006, Should the Federal Government do More to Combat Domestic Violence section, ¶1). However, several questions arose out of this statement. The clarification of such numbers is needed with regard to number of incidents and prevalence. This proposal highlighted these issues and proposed a study to provide clarifications on the current data related to domestic violence by focusing on the quantitative aspects of how the data are gathered and reported by government agencies, and given this information, how it is depicted to the general public and the media.

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Appendix A

Domestic Violence Data Collecting Efforts of Agencies Since 2001

Data Set	Sponsor/Agency	Crime Measured	Limitations
Summary Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR)	Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI)	Sexual Assault	Does not include unreported crime, all types of sexual assault (i.e. male rapes), or prevalence data; 94% law enforcement participation
National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)	Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI)	Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Stalking	Does not include unreported crime or prevalence data; minimal law enforcement participation
National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)	Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)	Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence	Does not include children < age 12, persons not living in the household, homicides, or prevalence data
National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence	Records only violent deaths; used in only 17 states
Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	Sexual Assault, Dating Violence	Does not include children who are not in school or that are not in grades 9-12; questionnaire has only one question for sexual assault and one question regarding dating violence
National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS)	Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF), and Children's Bureau (CB)	Sexual Assault	Does not include unreported child abuse
National Electronic Injury Surveillance System—All Injury Program (NEISS-AIP)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)	Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence	Does not include injuries not reported in emergency rooms or prevalence data
Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Rape Victimization: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey (January 2006)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Institute of Justice (NIJ)	Sexual Assault	Does not include children < age 18, persons not living in the household, or persons who do not have a telephone; data is > 10 years old

The Harris Poll® #50 (June 2006)	Harris Interactive	Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence	Does not include children < age 18 or persons without internet access or computer; non-probability sample
The Victimization of Children and Youth: A Comprehensive, National Survey (February 2005)	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and University of New Hampshire	Sexual Assault, Dating Violence	Does not include persons > age 17 or persons who do not have a telephone
Injury Control and Risk Survey-2 (2006)	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	Stalking	Does not include persons < age 18 or persons who do not have a telephone

Source: (GAO, 2006, 49-52)

Appendix B

Domestic Violence Incidents by Age and Gender from 2000 to 2005

Victimization

*UNK = Unknown

Age	Gender	Physical Assault	Sexual Assault	Verbal Threat	Stalking	Robbery	Homicide
<12	Male						
	Female						
	UNK						
13-17	Male						
	Female						
	UNK						
18-29	Male						
	Female						
	UNK						
30-44	Male						
	Female						
	UNK						
45-59	Male						
	Female						
	UNK						
>60	Male						
	Female						
	UNK						
UNK							
Total Incidents							

Appendix C

Domestic Violence Incidents by Victim/Offender Relationship from 2000 to 2005

Victimization						
Victim/Offender Relationship	Verbal Threat	Physical assault	Sexual assault	Stalking	Robbery	Murder
Intimate Partner						
Other relative						
Individuals that have a child in common						
Co-habitants						
Total Incidents						

Appendix D

Number of Calls for Service by Agency Type and Victimization from 2000 to 2005

Number of Calls to Agency

Victimization	Law Enforcement	Victim Advocacy Centers	Crisis Lines
Verbal Threat			
Physical assault			
Sexual assault			
Stalking			
Robbery			
Murder			
Total Calls			