

Orange Kiss of Affection: The Other Face of Domestic Violence

A Case Study in Assessment and Policy Development
Mid-America Public Health Leadership Institute Year 15 Fellows

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study is to demonstrate why domestic violence (DV) against men is a public health issue, as serious as domestic violence against women and to point out the need for policy to address it. The US Department of Justice defines domestic violence as a “pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person.” It is usually viewed as a public health issue because of its contribution to fatal and non-fatal injuries, as well as its long-term health consequences to both women and their children. In response, public health and other organizations have conducted assessments, developed policies and established services to both help female victims and deal with the root causes of domestic violence against women. However, more recent thinking suggests that there may be another, neglected victim of domestic violence. In his book, *Abused Men: the Hidden Side of Domestic Violence*, Phillip Cook states that “Looking at only one side of the domestic abuse equation is not the way to create appropriate public policy, and it does not reflect reality.” Mr. Cook’s belief is that the rate of violence by men against women has decreased while the rate of violence against men has remained steady. The US Department of Justice agrees. Its statistics from 1993 to 2004 show that while the rate per 1,000 females of nonfatal violence victimization by intimates fell from 9.8 to 3.8, the rate per 1,000 males remained relatively unchanged from 1.6 in 1993 to 1.3 in 2004.

The core functions of public health are assessment, policy development and assurance. We believe that to address the problem of domestic violence against men, the first step is to determine the factors that contribute to the problem including economic, behavioral, generational, environmental and biological factors. This information will educate public health professionals, individuals, and communities and lead to the development of policies that groups can use to prevent the problem. The focus of this case study is, therefore, assessment of the contributing factors leading to physical domestic violence against men, followed by a discussion of possible policy development to address this violence.

This case study centers on a fictional account of real events concerning Michael Nordseik of Orange Valley, a small community in Florida. Mr. Nordseik was violently murdered by his ex-wife. As events will

show, Mr. Nordseik tried the legal options available to him while his ex-wife gave several signals that she was intent on doing him harm. This story or a story with similar consequences can be told about many men who suffered either physical or some other form of violence at the hands of their wives or girlfriends. For instance, the story of Ted and Gloria includes decades of violence by her against him including arsenic poisoning. Several famous couples, including politicians and sports figures, have well-publicized histories of wife against husband violence.

The Orange Kiss of Affection is an effort of the MARPHLI team, Eight Karats and a Diamond Stud, to compel others in public health to recognize the neglected side of a serious problem, a problem that affects not only the couple involved but also their children and grandchildren. Domestic violence is a community problem because of its wide-reaching effects that can be transmitted from one generation to the next.

The Other Side of Domestic Violence

In response to the increasing occurrence of domestic violence and, more specifically, violence by women against men, the community of Orange Valley formed a special commission to study the problem and generate possible responses. The community had experienced three local cases of violent abuse by a wife to her husband and one more publicized case of a US senator accused in the media of spousal abuse. These incidents raised fears in the community of a more widespread problem that includes the lack of response and resources when the victim of domestic violence is male.

The commission, formed under the leadership of the Orange Valley Public Health Department, included city leaders, law enforcement agencies, the district attorney's office, and social service agencies. The commission, the Orange Valley Kiss of Affection, began by assessing the problem and investigating the events that lead up to the incidents of domestic violence.

Orange Valley Violence

The warning signs were evident if someone had taken the time to look – allegations of domestic violence, pedophilia, drug use and stalking. No one did, however, and the story of Michael and Rebecca Nordseik had a tragic ending. The ending was tragic despite the steps Michael took to protect himself. On May 18, 2004, Rebecca shot Michael while he was out walking his dog. He died shortly thereafter.

Michael and Rebecca were married in 1998. At the time of their marriage, Rebecca had two children from a former marriage, a son (age 8) and a daughter (age 6). Rebecca was 36 years old and Michael was 28. Rebecca worked as a middle-school custodian in Orange Valley, Florida. Michael was employed at the local Target store.

Due to conflicts over finances and the children, the marriage was not a happy one. At one point, Rebecca allegedly told Michael she was so angry she wanted to run him over with a car. On another occasion, Rebecca falsely accused Michael of molesting her children and placed letters in neighbors' mailboxes accusing him of pedophilia. The couple separated in 2000 and, after several attempts at reconciliation, divorced in 2003. The divorce, rather than alleviate the conflicts between the couple, increased them. Over the next few months, Rebecca stalked and threatened Michael.

- January 2004: Rebecca confronted Michael in front of his workplace with a plastic container of kerosene while holding a lit cigarette. She was quoted as telling Michael she had "something he would cherish the rest of his life".

- The following day: Rebecca stood outside Michael's apartment until 3:00 am. When he arrived home, Rebecca followed him into the apartment unit and threw a lighted Christmas ornament filled with kerosene as he hurried to shut the door. The ornament did not ignite, but later detectives found kerosene on the doors and walls.
- March 31, 2004: Michael got a temporary domestic-violence protection order against Rebecca.
- April 2004: Rebecca Nordseik bought a Luger .357 revolver from a Florida gun shop.
- May 18, 2004, 10:30 am: Police received a 911 call from Michael's apartment. Michael shouted on the line "Help me! I've been shot! By my ex-wife!" A witness reported seeing Michael out walking his dog when a woman jogged up with something black in her right hand. A bang sounded and the mystery woman chased Michael as he tried to escape up the stairs of his apartment and dash inside. After forcing the door of his apartment open, police and EMTs found Michael dying on the floor of his apartment and were unable to save him. The bullet had entered his right shoulder and lodged in his aorta.
- May 18, 2004, 5:30 pm: After sitting in her car in a nearby mall parking lot for several hours, Rebecca turned herself in to the Orange Valley Police Department. She told the police that the gun and bullets were in the trunk of her car. She was quoted as saying "No one was supposed to get hurt like this."
- May 19, 2004: A hearing was to be held to decide whether to make the temporary protection order granted in March permanent.
- May 21, 2004: Rebecca Nordseik was charged with first-degree murder of her ex-husband Michael Nordseik. Because of her record of escalating violence and her history of poor mental health and substance abuse, she was held without bond. Her state of mental health has led to a delay in setting a trial date.

The Triple Murder Tragedy

As the Thanksgiving holiday was drawing near, families throughout the nation were making plans to travel on the busiest travel day of the year. The grocery stores were full of customers purchasing turkey, cranberry sauce, the ingredients for dressing and desserts for a grand Thanksgiving feast. Unfortunately, Dr. Leo Lucas would never experience the joy of having his three sons around the dinner table on Thanksgiving again. Their laughter and the pitter-patter of their feet would never be heard again. On, November 22, 1999, Dr. Lucas came home to a crime scene. He found his 3 children ages 11, 8 and 5 dead from fatal gunshot wounds to their heads and his wife alive with a gunshot wound to her head. Mrs. Dora Lucas remarkably recovered from her gunshot wound. It was later discovered and proved that the children suffered death by the hands of their mother and Mrs. Lucas's wound was self-inflicted. Thanksgiving plans were then replaced with funeral plans.

The Lucas Family lived in a very affluent neighborhood in Orangeville County with neighboring homes costing an average of 1 million dollars. Dr. Lucas was a well-respected physician and was the owner of the Lucas Medical Center. As his practice began to flourish, he was able to lavish Mrs. Lucas with trips around the world, fur coats and credit cards at her disposal. There was no need for Mrs. Lucas to work outside the home. Her profession was that of a full time mother.

As Dr. Lucas' salary began to increase, Mrs. Lucas's wants and needs began to rapidly increase. Dr. Lucas began to caution his wife of her spending and these verbal warnings caused Mrs. Lucas to physically assault Dr. Lucas. Dr. Lucas refused to call the police because of the fear he would not be believed. He vowed to himself to remain silent.

Dr. Lucas continued to caution his wife about her frivolous spending. After Dr. Lucas' accountant made a shocking discovery, all expense accounts, credit cards and checkbook privileges for Mrs. Lucas were immediately halted. This enraged Mrs. Lucas and drove her to continue her rampage of violence, with each incident growing increasingly worse.

- September 1998: Dr. Lucas was warned by his accountant that his spending should be curtailed. His net worth was decreasing at a rapid rate. Dr. Lucas warned Mrs. Lucas of the accountant's warning. Before the conversation ended, Mrs. Lucas slaps Dr. Lucas and he declines to finish the conversation. The lavish spending habits continue as normal.
- December 1998: Mrs. Lucas goes to *Orange Fifth Avenue* to make a purchase. Her credit card is denied. She suffers embarrassment and vows that she will get even with her husband when she gets home. She immediately goes home and punches Dr. Lucas in the face so severely that he suffered vision loss.
- January 1999: Dr. Lucas undergoes surgery to repair his eyesight loss from the blow he received from his wife. This is the 8th physical attack where severe harm was afflicted on him. He pondered the consequence of reporting the domestic violence incidents to the hospital social worker. He resolved that once again, he must remain silent. He would endure the pain because he feared losing custody of his children to his wife and he felt he could not allow their self-serving and vindictive mother to nurture his children.
- January 1999: Dr. Lucas has become emotionally drained. His wife continues to commit violence against him. He becomes attracted to a nurse in his office. The nurse is able to nurture both his physical and mental wounds. He wants to break the silence, but for the sake of his children's safety, he will not tell. The extramarital affair helps to maintain his sanity.
- May 13, 1999: Dr. Lucas was informed by an external auditor that Mrs. Lucas's parents had been somehow added to his payroll and were being paid as regular employees for work that was not performed. His wife was never satisfied; it wasn't enough that Mrs. Lucas' parents were living rent-free in a home that Dr. Lucas owned. After this information was discovered, all credit cards were immediately cancelled and checkbook privileges were discontinued.
- August 12, 1999: Dr. Lucas visits a lawyer's office. He can no longer be subjected to the physical and mental abuse. Divorce papers are filed, and he vows to become free and maintain his children's safety. Upon receipt of the divorce papers, Mrs. Lucas' only remorse was the thought of her lifestyle being reduced. How could she become subjected to living on a fixed income of alimony? She needed to maintain at least her current level of lifestyle that she had become accustomed to in her later years of marriage. How could she be reduced to living in a smaller home?
- November 22, 1999: Mrs. Lucas calls her mother, "*Mom, he doesn't want us anymore. He's gone now, I don't have any money, and I don't know what I am going to do.*" She immediately hangs up

the telephone and walks to dresser drawer to the gun that has been placed in the box for intruders. She places 5 bullets in the chamber, one bullet for each of her children and herself. She chooses to shoot the children in chronological order. The oldest was murdered first; the second oldest child was murdered next. The third child ran and therefore 2 bullets were aimed at him. By firing 2 shots at the same child, it saved the life of the 18-month old sibling. She then shot herself in the head for a suicide attempt, but was not successful. Dr. Lucas leaves work thinking of the new life he was going to share with his children after he was divorced. His hopes were dashed upon entering the door of his home and witnessing the murder scene; the void of losing three children will never be healed.

- April 5, 2002: Mrs. Lucas receives a guilty verdict and sentenced to death for the slaying of her 3 sons. Judge Justice responded, "*Mrs. Lucas's shootings were a sacrificial symbolic pawn of a failed marriage.*"
- Dr. Lucas was questioned by many as to why he couldn't leave her. Dr. Lucas felt he had nowhere to turn. There was no system of support for domestic violence against males, like their counterparts have. He felt the legal system would not give credence to his claim; his fear and silence led to the death of his 3 sons. Ignoring and refusing to acknowledge domestic violence will not cause it to go away; rather it escalates and can often lead to death.

Decades of Abuse

Ray and Prudence were married on January 16, 1961. Prudence had a two-year-old son, Tommy, from a previous abusive marriage. Rather than happily-ever-after, what ensued for Ray were decades of verbal and physical abuse that included slander, physical injury and suspected arsenic poisoning.

Any newlywed happiness for Ray was short-lived. Soon after they were married, Ray reported that while Prudence appeared friendly and outgoing in public, at home she was a mean, angry wife. At one point, Prudence broke the antenna off Ray's car and beat him with it. Rather than reporting the incident to authorities, Ray escaped the pain of his marriage with alcohol. Ray suspected Prudence of being unfaithful. At about 18 months of marriage, Ray and Prudence moved to her hometown. Ray thought living by her family would make Prudence happy, but he was wrong. While Ray was leaving the house to get away from the harassment, Prudence threw a glass at Ray that hit him squarely in the back of the head and sent him to the hospital ER for stitches.

Three and a half years into the marriage, a son, Caleb, was born to Ray and Prudence. The couple and their children then experienced a somewhat calm ten years of family life. However, when he was 16, Tommy was arrested for drug use. Dealing with Tommy's drug problems continued to occupy Ray and Prudence until Tommy graduated from high school and joined the Army. Tommy was only in the army for a short time before being discharged because of his continued drug dependency. To make a fresh start, Ray, Prudence and Caleb moved to Orange Valley in January 1978 when Caleb was thirteen. Tommy remained with his grandmother and lived off his drug and alcohol disability allotment.

Trouble began anew for Ray and Prudence a few years later. Tommy's grandmother died and his disability payments ran out. Tommy contacted Prudence, who began using household money to support Tommy and buy him things. Soon Ray and Prudence were in debt. Ray's health had been deteriorating over the years and he was forced to retire from his job because of back pain and depression. To add to the family's burden, Tommy announced that his girlfriend was pregnant.

During this period in their lives, Caleb and his family had been living in a trailer next to Ray and Prudence. In February 1997, Caleb announced that he and his family were moving. Caleb gave the reason that he had to move his family away from Prudence's influence. Caleb and his wife were also experiencing health problems because of the constant stress generated by Prudence and Tommy.

At this point in their relationship, the attacks on Ray by Prudence increased. A timeline of the couple's troubles reads as follows:

- February 21, 1997: While Ray was getting ready for an appointment with a pain specialist, Prudence instigated an argument about his health, telling him his pain was all in his head. Prudence grabbed his cane and shoved Ray down the porch steps. When he tried to get up, Prudence pushed him down again.
- May 1997: Ray spent four weeks in a pain management program at a rehabilitation hospital. When in the hospital, Prudence slandered Ray to family and friends by telling all he was in an addiction recovery program. She claimed that Ray had abused her and had stolen money from her.
- August 1998: Prudence went on a rampage and told Ray he was despicable and that his physical ailments were all in his head. Prudence blocked Ray's path when he tried to leave. Ray then locked himself in a room but Prudence became even more enraged and broke down the door. She then attacked Ray and threatened to call the police and accuse Ray of abuse.
- October 11, 1998: Prudence went into another rampage and threatened Ray with a knife. Ray was able to get out of the house this time until Prudence calmed down.
- October 19, 1998: Ray experienced dizziness and nausea while driving. An ambulance was called and took Ray to a nearby hospital. Ray had low blood pressure, double vision, and a rapid pulse. Two days of tests did not reveal the cause of Ray's symptoms. About this time, Ray began suspecting that Prudence was poisoning him, possibly with arsenic. Ray recalled many times when Prudence had prepared food that she fed to Ray or gave to Caleb's family but did not eat herself. Ray believed that both his health problems and Caleb's were due to something Prudence had been adding to their food.
- October 30, 1998: Ray left their home while Prudence was away. After living with Caleb for a short time, he rented a mobile home. Prudence stalked Ray's home and continued to tell people that he was abusive. When Ray suggested to the police that they investigate the possibility of arsenic poisoning, he was told to forget about it.
- February 25, 2000: Their divorce was finalized. Prudence was awarded the home, car, half of Ray's disability pay and alimony for life. Although Ray brought up the possibility of arsenic poisoning, it did not enter into the court's final decision.
- August 2000 to December 2001: Prudence continued to harass Ray and also Caleb. During this time period, Ray and Caleb received a total of nine threatening and obscene letters. Prudence continued to slander Ray, calling him an abusive husband and father and a drug addict.

- October 1, 2002: Ray filed a civil law suit against Prudence for defamation of character and slander.
- September 19, 2003: As part of the ongoing legal battle between the couple, Ray and Caleb submitted blood specimens for paternity testing. Ray found out after 39 years that he was not Caleb's biological father.

Senate Investigation

"Is There a Batterer in the US Senate?" That's what an article by Glenn Stokes of Cyberweb News Service asked in his article on May 21, 2003. Mr. Sacks reported that the Senator's spouse had been attacked on several occasions by the Senator in front of witnesses. Why had nothing been done and who was this domestic abuser? Florida Senator Haley Clark.

Jill Sherwin, author of the biography *Haley's Choice*, reported that Haley Clark had attacked her husband, Phil Clark, violently on several occasions. In 1993, Haley allegedly slashed Phil's face with her long fingernails that left a slash along his jaw line. The slash was first attributed to a shaving accident and then blamed on "Mittens" the cat. Neither explanation was accepted by those who observed the cut. Phoebe Byers, the Senator's spokeswoman, later explained that Haley's rage was due to a visit to the family home by an old friend of Phil's.

The Mona Lebrowski revelations that Mr. Clark had been unfaithful lead to another attack on Phil by Haley in 1999. According to observers, Haley rose to her feet and slapped Phil across the face hard enough to leave a red mark that was visible to all. As Phil left the room, Haley was heard to yell at him, "You stupid, stupid, stupid bastard."

Phil Clark reacted to the incidents of domestic violence in the same way female victims react. He covered up the incidents and blamed himself for provoking her through his marital infidelities. The public reaction to these incidents has also been to blame the victim for his behavior. Media coverage has been almost nonexistent. The case of the Clarks shows that domestic violence is only taken seriously when the husband is the abuser and the wife is the victim.

Contributing Factors of DV by Women

There are many factors that may be associated with domestic violence (intimate partner violence, or IPV). When reviewing characteristics, one must consider both the abuser and the victim. Women who are abusive and violent usually fall into three categories: alcohol abusers, those with psychological disorders and those with unrealistic expectations and conclusions. Alcohol intoxication leads to increased frustration and a decrease in impulse control. According to the Oregon Counseling Organization, 1-2% of the women who abuse have a Borderline Personality Disorder. This personality disorder is also associated with severe mood swings, lying, suicidal behavior, sexual problems and alcohol abuse. Women who have unrealistic expectations and demands usually suffer from depression, anxiety, frustration and irritability. This state is usually a result of their own insecurities, problems, childhood trauma or alcohol withdrawal, however they blame the man for their problems. Most assume the man is being problematic on purpose.

Characteristics of many abusers are the same among men or women. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists several characteristics that include individual and community factors. Individuals may have low self-esteem, be unemployed or have some type of economic stress. Insecurity,

anger, or hostility may also be factors. Other individual factors may include aggressive or delinquent behavior as a youth, having few friends or being isolated. Some abusers may also have been victimized in the past. Community factors include poverty and overcrowding. There may also be a lack of relationships or poor community involvement against IPV.

Victims of IPV also share many of the same traits as the abuser. Insecurity and low self-esteem may have a great impact. Other similar factors include alcohol/drug use, lack of education, unemployment and many of the same community factors. Relationship factors include disparities in income, education or job status.

Discussion of Themes

Similarities Between Cases

There are glaring similarities between the Orange Valley Violence, Triple Murder Tragedy, Decades of Abuse, and the Senate Investigation stories. All of the men are victims of domestic abuse at the hands of their wives. There are various precipitating factors associated with domestic abuse. Financial difficulties within the home setting were one common factor noted. The second factor was marital infidelity. The abuses inflicted upon the men were physical and emotional. The females involved used the emotional tactics of false allegations and slander of character. The physical abuse escalated from assault to murder. The males in question showed signs of being upset, confused, frustrated, feelings of hurt or disappointment, low self-esteem, and depression. According to the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, as a result, the men felt emasculated and marginalized, and tended not to express their fears, ask for help, or even discuss details of their violent experiences. Disclosure of the abuse was often met with disbelief and skepticism of the legal system, retaliation by the perpetrator, loss of financial assets, possible incarceration and loss of parental rights. Even when the abuse was documented and ended in death, the perpetrator's crime was minimized and blamed for other than its true spirit – abuse.

System Failure

System Failures: In Law Enforcement and Congress

Far too often, present laws make adequate response to this problem difficult by denying men the due process required to defend themselves against allegations of domestic abuse. The real damage these men suffer often isn't at the hands of their intimate partner, though many are maimed and murdered before they can escape. But, almost inevitably, the primary abuse these men suffer is at the hands of a legal system. The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) was created for a good purpose: to provide legal services so poor Americans could have adequate representation in court. But while taxpayers and lawmakers looked the other way the Legal Services Corporation has fallen under the influence of a radical gender ideology. The Journal of Family Psychology recently published a study that revealed wives and girlfriends are more likely to engage in domestic violence than their male partners. According to researcher Renee McDonald, 18.2% of the couples had experienced female-on-male violence, while male-on-female aggression was found in only 13.7% of partners. Apparently poor men are never subjected to false allegations of abuse, or at least are unworthy of receiving free legal services.

Sometimes a man will call the police because the woman has attacked him (usually with a weapon), and the police will come and arrest him, or make no arrest at all. For revenge, the female then will call the police and claim he attacked her, and the police may then arrest him, if he hasn't already been arrested.

Many men become disabled as a result of the stress of false allegations and thought of losing their children, homes, jobs, and livelihood. Another example according to *Stories of Abused Men* by Charles E. Corry, PhD, states that abused men that contact authorities may have problems with the officials. Cited is a case wherein the police were called because the woman was abusing the children and when he tried to protect their kids, she attacked him. When the police arrived they arrested him and the courts subsequently gave her full custody of the children she was abusing. Some men find evidence their wives are having affairs; the wives then charge their spouses with domestic violence or obtain a restraining order to cover their adultery. By doing so, these women obtain possession of the kids, the house, the car, the checking account, and everything else the man owned. For married men this is the largest single grouping with about half the married men falling in this category. More than half the men are married or include instances wherein he was living with the woman (common law).

According to Louise Malenfant, men simply don't matter. A new study finds that the *ex parte* order is a woman's best weapon prior to divorce. The term *ex parte* means that the party affected by all of this is given no notice of the court proceeding, and no opportunity to defend himself. A phone call, or a trip to the courthouse gives the woman the house and kids *ex parte* (he has no notice or hearing) and with little or no risk to her for making false statements. Should the man object, she can have him thrown in jail and convicted in absentia.

The phenomenon may be explained by the fact that the older, infamous Ex Parte Order is still available and still the process of choice, given the extensive family law relief it provides. The making of an *ex parte* order is troubling to many because only scant evidence from one party who benefits most from the order is heard. Protection orders have become a sword of vengeance; it is clear that gender biases have left a flawed system.

An indication of this is vindictive wives or girlfriends who get a restraining order that keeps a man from his home or apartment, which she then often trashes or steals everything from. For those men who can afford to defend themselves in these cases, legal fees commonly exceed \$100,000 and minimum attorney fees are likely to be at least \$5,000.

On January 9, 2006, in a little-noticed end-of-the-year action, Congress reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act. The final version includes text that, for the first time, recognizes male victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. This is a step in the right direction of a balanced approach to family violence, but only the first step. The new language, included due to lobbying by men's advocacy groups, states that authorized federal grants can be given to programs that "provide assistance to female victims, male victims, or both." There has been confusion over this issue in the past, and clarification is most welcome. No less important, the bill directs the General Accounting Office to "conduct a study to establish the extent to which men, women, youth, and children are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking and the availability to all victims of shelter, counseling, legal representation, and other services commonly provided to victims of domestic violence." The text of this provision specifies that the study should rely not only on crime statistics, but on **public health** and academic studies and should investigate whether services are available to male as well as female victims.

Whether men as well as women are victims of domestic violence has been the subject of many arguments and dueling statistics. Men's rights activists cite numerous family violence surveys showing that women are just as likely to be aggressors in the home as men, but often downplay the fact that women are at greater risk of injury. Battered women's groups point to Justice Department statistics from crime

victimization surveys, which show that 85 percent of intimate partner violence victims are women, but fail to mention that these surveys miss many violent acts that the victim does not regard as a crime.

The 1996 National Violence against Women Survey, co-sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institute of Justice, found that 38 percent of the approximately 2.3 million Americans who experience partner violence every year are men. Yet many domestic violence programs offer minimal or no services to men and male victims often have to deal with attitudes that are considered Neanderthal (rude or primitive) if expressed toward women (i.e. that they must have done something to provoke the assault).

Too often, abused men have to fight an uphill battle to be taken seriously. Men are presumed to be able to take care of themselves because they are generally bigger and stronger, but that advantage can be neutralized by a weapon, a surprise attack, or a man's reluctance to use force against a woman even to fend off her assault.

Bias against male victims is harmful not only to men. It hurts children whose fathers are unable to remove them from abusive households and women whose brothers or sons are victims of abuse. Actually, it's bad for all women, who will never be truly equal unless they are held equally accountable for their actions. The recognition of violence toward men in the new law is an important achievement. But some major problems with the legislation remain; as the gender-specific title of the legislation still perpetuates the notion that violence against women deserves special concern.

Why This Is a Public Health Issue

Domestic abuse is not simply a case of violence that involves a man against a woman. In fact, there are many cases documented and undocumented of abuse involving women as the abusers. Domestic violence has a long reaching effect that covertly trickles through a community affecting all who know the people involved. Domestic abuse touches the lives of the immediate family as well as the extended family, the victim's and offender's colleagues, the children's schoolmates and friends, and those in the educational, social, health and judicial systems. According to the Center for Disease Control, approximately 5.3 million incidents of domestic violence occur each year against U.S. women, and 3.2 million occur against men. Although most assaults were reported as minor and consisted of pushing, grabbing, shoving, slapping, and hitting (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000a), why should the public health institution be overly concerned with this issue?

Healthy People 2000 recognized domestic violence as a public health issue but its objectives focused only on addressing the reduction of violence against women. According to the advocacy group The Ripple Effect, Healthy People 2010 lists violence prevention as one of its major focus areas, and deems violence as 1 of the 10 leading indicators of the country's overall health (<http://www.the-ripple-effect.info/frameset.html>). The Ripple Effect also contends that the "...remaining health indicators are very much related to domestic violence; among them are: substance use, mental health, responsible sexual behavior, environmental quality, and access to medical care." Yet, are there more?

One of the goals of Healthy People 2010 is to increase the length and quality of life by reducing and eliminating domestic violence. Through prevention and promotion, this goal's effect is to eradicate domestic violence as well as improve the quality and safety of relationships, upon which life is based. Focusing on improving the quality and safety of relationships is our focus. If the public health institution continues to turn a blind eye on domestic violence of women against men, it may see a continuance of the problem. The research reviewed shows a mixture of responses in regards to the effect of domestic violence on the children. Some research states that domestic violence breeds violence in children, causes

depression, and lends towards learning difficulties. In that sense, the possibility exists that through silence, the social normal can imply that domestic violence against men is acceptable.

Healthy People 2010 seeks to increase life expectancy and quality of life over the next 10 years by helping individuals gain the knowledge, motivation, and opportunities they need to make informed decisions about their health. At the same time, Healthy People 2010 encourages local and state leaders to develop community wide and statewide efforts that promote healthy behaviors, create healthy environments, and increase access to high-quality health care. Because individual and community health are virtually inseparable, both the individual and the community need to do their parts to increase life expectancy and improve quality of life. (http://www.healthypeople.gov/document/html/uih/uih_2.htm#obj)

Public health roots are prevention - prevention of illness, injury and disease. Therefore, the Healthy People 2010 objective of reduction of domestic violence must be pursued to greater depths. It is not feasible to examine domestic violence only from the female aspect without the incorporation of the male and family aspect. The public health system must become involved in the preventive aspect of domestic violence to preserve the family. Domestic violence is not gender-based.

Public health systems must educate the public aggressively regarding the effects of violence upon the family. Most of the statistics and programs are related to female abuse victims only. The plight of the male abuse victims is becoming more visible to the public through media coverage. However, there is still no complete refuge or comprehensive assistance for male victims and the children of domestic violence.

Call to Action for Public Health

In his book, *Abused Men: The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence*, Phillip Cook detailed new approaches to reducing domestic violence. These approaches are not dependent on whether the abuser is male or female and see the problem as a couple or family issues rather than a "he vs. she" confrontation. Mr. Cook believes the response to domestic violence is a community issue and needs input from law enforcement, the judiciary system and the community social services.

Initially, Mr. Cook proposes that domestic violence calls should result in an automatic arrest being made by the responding law enforcement officials. This arrest would take place without the victim pressing charges. The responding officers must make an arrest when there is apparent physical injury caused by a family or household member. An arrest would also occur if there is fear of imminent serious injury or involuntary sexual relations. In areas where these types of laws are already in place, Mr. Cook believes that they are not enforced. He calls for further police education and increased law enforcement.

Mr. Cook's next step is the issuing of mutual restraining orders. Mutual restraining orders require both parties to stay away from each other while not placing blame on either party. If the situation involves children, temporary joint custody is granted. Exchange of the children would take place in a public place in the presence of a supervisor or witness.

Mr. Cook sees the use of criminal charges as ineffective in domestic violence cases for a number of reasons. First, overworked district attorneys are reluctant to pursue domestic violence cases when compared to other crimes such as armed robbery or murder. DAs also see domestic violence cases as less solid cases because there may be a lack of cooperation on the part of the victim if the couple reconciles. Moreover, the imprisonment of domestic violence offenders takes up space in overcrowded prisons that could be used to jail a person who represents a greater threat to society. Lastly, often victims or offenders may not be able to afford legal representation, which further taxes the legal system.

As an alternative to the traditional legal system approach, Mr. Cook suggests the use of deferred sentencing. With deferred sentencing, the offender pleads guilty to domestic violence charges and is sentenced to a 6-12 month sentence. The sentence, however, is deferred and the offender is required to participate in anger management and other counseling and education. The offender reports to a parole officer and undergoes substance abuse treatment if needed. If the offender violates the program or commits another offense, the sentence is served in full. This approach has the advantages of keeping the offender out of jail while treating the underlying causes of the problem.

To address the problem of domestic violence without overwhelming the judicial system, Mr. Cook proposes first the coordination of legal and social efforts through the formation of a multidisciplinary task force. This task force would be formed at the county level and include representatives from the police, district attorney's office, probation office and the courts. The task force would coordinate meetings, facilitate cross training among agencies, increase communication and promote public awareness. Representatives from each county would then collaborate with others on a state level committee to share resources and ideas.

Also important to Mr. Cook's proposed efforts would be to increase and standardize data collection about domestic violence. The first step would be to define what constitutes a domestic violence incident based on the response to that call, the people involved, and the outcome of the call. Law enforcement officers would then be mandated to report the number and type of calls. This information would be used by the task force to determine the best way to use resources.

Probably the most controversial part of Mr. Cook's approach is the statement, "Domestic relations cases should be taken out of the adversarial court system." Domestic violence cases are not adversarial by nature since the goal is to reconcile or mediate between the parties involved rather than to find someone guilty or not guilty. In addition, lawyers are not trained to deal with the psychological and social problems of a family in turmoil. Sedgwick County in Kansas has tried a new system in which judges no longer hear custody or visitation cases. Instead, couples involved in a pending divorce first attend classes on the effects of divorce on children. The classes teach the parent how to avoid involving the children in marriage problems and support continuation of dual parenting roles. Also covered are conflict management and preparation of mediation. Couples move on to mediation in the presence of a trained neutral party to try and resolve problems. If necessary, a trained arbitrator is then employed to try to reach an out-of-court settlement. If no agreement is reached, the arbitrator will then make a recommendation to the judge. The judge then rules on the case but is not legally bound to follow the arbitrator's recommendation.

Conclusion

The assessment by the Orange Kiss of Affection of male-victim domestic violence shows that the problem is not taken seriously by law enforcement and the courts. We have tried to show that society has failed the male victim of domestic violence by showing a lack of services and resources for male victims. The commission believes that this problem is a public health issue as defined by Healthy People 2010. Lastly, we have discussed policies that have been effective in select areas and need more widespread use. We feel applying these policies to Orange Valley would decrease the incidence and effects of domestic violence.

Case Study Questions

1. What is the US Department of Justice definition of domestic violence?
2. What are some interventions for public health officials/administrators to implement to reduce the incidence of domestic violence against men?
3. What are three common traits for male victims of domestic violence?
4. Why are men not taken seriously when they report intimate partner violence?
5. What are some of the symptoms of a male victim of domestic violence?
6. What is the role of the media with men as victims of domestic violence?
7. Who should public health partner with to reduce the rates of domestic violence?
8. How do men react after being abused by their partner? Why do they react that way?

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