Recommendations for the Effective Prevention of Domestic Violence with the Implementation of a Family Justice Center

Approved by: Dr. Amy Nemmetz

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Recommendations for the Effective Prevention of Domestic Violence with the Implementation of a Family Justice Center

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By Rachel M Evett 2019
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Seminar Paper Abstract

Recommendations for the Effective Prevention of Domestic Violence with the Implementation of a Family Justice Center

By Rachel M Evett

Under the Supervision of Dr. Amy Nemmetz

Purpose of Study

The topic of this paper will focus on domestic violence, the impact that it has on victims of domestic violence and children that witness domestic violence, and the benefit of implementing the multi-disciplinary approach that a Family Justice Center offers to victims and their children to break the cycle of violence. While other terms such as intimate partner violence are used to describe familial violence, this paper will use the term domestic violence to describe all forms of abuse and violence within the family dynamic. This paper will refer to women being the victims of domestic violence, as women are predominately the victim in violent relationships. However, this paper does acknowledge that men are also victims of domestic violence, although at a much lower rate.

Methodology

The main method of approach within this paper includes studies, research, and statistics on domestic violence, the impact of domestic violence, domestic violence prevention, and the use of Family Justice Centers. Data and information were collected from the database EBSCOST which provided a multitude of journals and peer reviewed articles on various aspects of domestic violence and family violence. Data from the Department of Justice and National Institution of
Justice was also used to further explore the domestic violence impact on society.

**Summary of Key Findings**

The findings within this paper support the implementation of Family Justice Centers in communities with high rates of domestic violence and family violence. The Family Justice Center model is identified as the correct method of approach for children that have witnessed domestic violence to prevent future violence. The Family Justice Center model offers a multidisciplinary approach to aid in the prevention of domestic violence by providing the tools and resources needed in one central location to stop the cycle of violence in the home that could carry into adulthood. Victims of domestic violence have stated that the inaccessibility of services and the confusion of the process is the barrier that holds them back from getting proper services for themselves and their children. The key to victims receiving the proper services to ensure safety and security lies in simplifying the process and making it easier for victims, during one of the most high-danger moments of their life, to leave an abusive relationship.
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Section 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Domestic violence is defined as the ongoing physical, emotional, social, financial, and/or sexual abuse that occurs at the hands of a partner involved in an intimate relationship (Buchanan, Power, & Verity, 2014). One in four women (25%) are subjected to domestic violence within their lifetime, but it is found that women with children are three times more likely to experience domestic violence than childless women (Buchanan et al., 2014). Domestic violence results in the death of 1,500 women per year, with more than 3 women being murdered by their partner every day in the United States. Women who have been affected by domestic violence suffer from economic, physical, physiological, and emotional effects that can last a lifetime – even after the abuse has stopped (J Park, 2016). Children who have been exposed to domestic violence are linked to a variety of negative outcomes due to witnessing the abuse. Research shows that boys who were exposed to family violence have a more positive view on the use of violence. Both boys and girls have a higher tolerance for violence if exposed to it as a child (Kimball, 2016). Other studies found that boys who witness their fathers commit domestic violence are more likely to mimic that behavior as an adult with their partners. Girls who witness domestic violence between their parents are more likely to become involved in relationships in which they are abused by their partner (Nitu, 2012). Exposure to trauma in childhood can affect physical and psychological health later into adulthood and can be associated with poor physical and mental health as well as delinquency and addiction in adulthood (DeJong, 2016). Resources available for domestic violence victims and their children are lacking the multidisciplinary approach that Family Justice Centers offer.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to argue that a multidisciplinary approach to reducing the cycle of domestic violence by offering victim services is more effective than current practices. Numerous practices are currently available to victims and their families; however, these services are typically provided by multiple agencies in varying locations. These practices include domestic violence screening by police officers, referrals to local shelters, counseling, assistance filing orders of protection in the court house, and victim advocates. Interviews with domestic violence survivors reflect that inaccessibility of services, confusion of the process, and other barriers made it difficult to end the violence. Family Justice Centers are unique in that they offer all services needed to victims and their children under one roof. This research will argue that Family Justice Centers need to be implemented at a national level to meet the needs of domestic violence victims and their children. Hellman and Gwinn (2017) identifies the Family Justice Center model as the correct method of approach for children that have witnessed domestic violence to prevent future violence, as it provided a multi-disciplinary approach to aid in the prevention of domestic violence by providing the tools needed to stop the cycle of violence that could carry into adulthood. The National Criminal Justice Reference Service states in their report prepared for the National Institute of Justice that Family Justice Centers can have a positive effect on the number of domestic violence related homicides, victim safety, victim empowerment, fear and anxiety of the court system, witness recanting, and the number of victims and their children receiving services (Abt Associates, 2018).

Significance or Implications of the study

Domestic violence is an issue that spans across all social classes, races, and religions. It is estimated that 1.3 to 5.3 million women in the United States experience intimate partner violence
on an annual basis (Modi, Palmer, & Armstrong, 2014). There is not one specific contributing factor to domestic violence. To address domestic violence, and to assist survivors and their children, the multidisciplinary approach that a Family Justice Center offers will help to curb domestic violence in communities to create a healthier path for not only the victim partner, but also the children. This research will seek to create a basis as to why Family Justice Centers aid in decreasing domestic violence with the assistance of the services offered in a central location.

Methods of Approach

The methodology that will be used in the compilation of this paper will include research studies and statistics on domestic violence, current domestic violence prevention practices, and common domestic violence agencies. Theoretical framework on domestic violence and the perpetuation of family violence from generation to generation will be explained as well as theories behind why Family Justice Centers are effective. Research will be collected using databases such as EBSCO host and research pulled from the Department of Justice and the National Institute of Justice. These will support the implementation of Family Justice Centers models into communities that suffer from a high rate of domestic violence and the positive effect that it will have on victims and children. Three communities with Family Justice Centers will also be explored to show the implementation, history, and success of communities that have already made Family Justice Center’s a priority in their community.

Contribution to the Field

The specific contribution to the research, thus to the communities need of a Family Justice Center, will be to identify the barriers faced by victims and how the Family Justice Center will aid in overcoming those barriers, and therefore creating a bigger impact on the reduction of the cycle of violence. Research shows that a multidisciplinary approach that Family
Justice Centers offer will enhance the independence, autonomy, and dignity of the survivor as they work towards eliminating the violence (Stoever, 2016). While the Family Justice Center model is newer to the field of criminal justice, recommendations for the most effective services to incorporate into a Family Justice Center will be identified and explored as well as the importance of being effectively trained in domestic violence. It will be argued that Family Justice Center, although a newer movement, should be created to offer comprehensive victim services in lieu of varying individual services offered by multiple agencies in multiple areas. These services include domestic violence screening by police officers, referral to local shelters, counseling, assistance filing orders of protection in the court house, and victim advocate assistance. Limitations of the Family Justice Center model will also be identified as research shows that the centers lack in informing clients on the negative implications of providing information to the various governmental and community agencies (Stoever, 2016). Other significant limitations include the funding and coordination needed to implement the center.

**Anticipated Outcome**

It is anticipated that the outcome of this research project is to create an argument as to why a Family Justice Center would be beneficial to survivors and their children due to the multidisciplinary approach that allows for all services that a survivor and the children would need under one roof. This research will be able to be used by communities that are looking for information and background on Family Justice Centers for their own implementation. This research will also serve as a platform for the movement to end domestic violence as this research will educate others on this global issue and encourage people to step up and speak out against domestic violence.
Section II: Literature Review

Domestic Violence History and Laws

Violence among intimate partners was not always seen as a social problem, and was kept behind closed doors. Starting in the 1970’s, with the help of women advocates, women’s movements, and feminists it moved from a social problem to a criminal act in every US state (Lawson, 2012). From the 1970’s to the 1990’s many legal interventions or remedies were created for victims of domestic violence such as “no contact” provisions, child custody and visitation awards, property possession, abuser treatment, etc. (Lawson, 2012).

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which was implemented in 1994, was the first US Federal policy implemented to address intimate partner violence. The VAWA was a collective effort from the battered women’s movement, law enforcement, sexual assault advocates, the courts, and attorneys that stressed to Congress the need for legislation to specifically protect the rights of women involved in domestic violence (Modi et al., 2014). Under the VAWA, the Department’s Office on Violence Against Women (OVAW) was created to support a permanent federal response to domestic violence.

The VAWA addresses a variety of issues - primarily domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The VAWA emphasizes the importance of coordination among law enforcement, prosecutors, victim services, and attorneys. It also provides monetary support for support groups, domestic violence shelters, and training for agencies and entities that provide services to victims. The VAWA also provides grants to states for programs that prevent domestic violence and programs that provide services to victims. Since the passage of the VAWA in 1994, every US state has enacted laws to make stalking a crime and have strengthened their rape statutes (Modi et al., 2014). The VAWA is an essential piece of legislation to keep the domestic
violence movement moving forward in the plight to decrease violence against women and children within the home.

**Current Domestic Violence Prevention Strategies**

**Pro-arrest and Pro-Prosecution Practices**

Practices have been put into place by law enforcement and the courts to arrest, prosecute, and therefore deter, domestic violence offenders. Practices such as pro-arrest policies and pro-prosecution policies ensure that offenders are punished and properly charged. Arrest policies are followed by law enforcement when they respond to domestic related calls. Arrest policies differ between states, with mandatory, preferred, or discretionary arrests in domestic violence situations. In addition, 34 states have adopted primary aggressor policies, which calls for the arrest of the primary aggressor in a domestic incident (Messing, Ward-Lasher, Thaller, & Bagwell-Gray, 2015).

Pro-prosecution policies include a no-drop policy with domestic violence and domestic violence related charges. This practice is being implemented in most prosecutor’s offices across the country. No-drop policies allow prosecutors to move forward with a case despite the victim’s wishes to drop a case. These cases move forward on evidence alone rather than victim testimony. A recent statistic shows that no-drop policies have increased convictions from 15% to 66%, and has lowered dismissal rates (Messing et al., 2015). While pro-arrest and pro-prosecution strategies are criticized from a victim standpoint, ultimately they are put into place to ensure offenders are punished for their crime and receive the proper sanction to deter future violent behavior. Being able to prosecute a case without the cooperation of the victim shows the offender that the criminal justice system will still hold them accountable for their actions. Pro-prosecution policies take the burden and stress off the victim of having to testify, re-live the
trauma, face her abuser in court, etc., and instead places it on the criminal justice system and the prosecution to prove the case. It becomes a stance that the State is prosecuting the offender and pressing charges against the offender, not the victim.

**Domestic Violence Courts**

The development of domestic violence courts is a response to addressing domestic violence. Domestic violence courts began forming in the 1980’s and 1990’s to enhance case follow-through and implementation of domestic violence statutes, victim safety, and offender accountability (Messing et al., 2015). Domestic violence courts hold a specialized docket only consisting of domestic violence and domestic violence relates crimes. These courts are unique in that they hold some elements of rehabilitation yet ultimately focus on accountability and deterrence. These courtrooms are often called problem-solving courts; in that they are working towards correcting a societal problem with the help of the courts. Domestic violence courts ensure that everyone involved in the courtroom workgroup understands the power and control dynamics of domestic violence within abusive relationships (Messing et al., 2015). These courtrooms address the seriousness of the problem by creating a courtroom where domestic violence cases are only compared to each other. This specialized court has many characteristics, however the most common across all domestic violence courts is to increase victim safety through the coordination of community services and treatment programs (Messing et al., 2015).

**Domestic Violence Shelters**

Domestic violence shelters and services provided to victims is the number one prevention strategy for women involved in violent relationships. Services for victims of domestic violence emerged from the grassroots advocacy and empowerment movements of the 1960’s and 1970’s when women became aware of their shared experiences of intimate partner violence. From this
realization, safe houses were created to house victims that needed to escape. These safe houses became the first domestic violence emergency shelters, in which shelters are still the main, and largest, entry point for victims to receive services. Services such as emergency housing, transitional housing, counseling, parenting classes, support groups, advocacy, and safety planning are available for women that come to shelters (Messing et al., 2015).

Women that utilize domestic violence shelters often bring children with them. Children in shelters often require specialized programming to address the ways in which domestic violence has affected them. Programs for children differ from shelter to shelter, however programs that address the impact of witnessing violence, being a target in the violence, and the adjustment of leaving their homes and residing in a shelter are the most common. Research has found that group counseling with children teaches and reinforces new behaviors and skills as well as participating in support groups to provide emotional support to the children (Poole, Beran, & Thurston, 2008).

Just as the women work with advocates at the shelter to safety plan, children also receive safety plan services. Increasing safety is a basic goal with children in shelters, and developing a safety plan for when they feel violence may occur or they may witness violence is an important component to their stay in shelter. The availability of programming depends in the shelter; shelters with more resources are able to offer interventions to children in the form of child counseling, school integration, support for healing family relationships, recognizing feelings and behavioral patterns, addressing hurt, adapting to change, child advocacy, and legal advocacy for children (Poole et al., 2008). No matter the programming available to children in shelter, early intervention with children that have witnessed domestic violence shows promise in breaking the cycle of violence (Poole et al., 2008).
**Offender treatment**

Historically, treatment for domestic violence was victim-focused. However, court mandated counseling was introduced in the 1980’s to punish, as well as rehabilitate, offenders (Coulter & VandeWeerd, 2009). The main goal of Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP), Partner Abuse Intervention Programs (PAIP), or Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP) is to have the offender to understand and accept responsibility for their behavior. These programs focus on accountability and responsibility for one’s own behavior and how it affects others, i.e. the victims. These programs go beyond just imposing jail time, as they are aimed at changing offenders for the betterment of the community.

The Duluth approach to treating offenders was developed in response to the shift from victim-centered treatment to including offender-based treatment as well. The “Duluth model” is the backbone of how domestic violence treatment is being delivered to offenders today. The model was developed in Minnesota over 30 years ago with the focus mainly on the ongoing safety for victims (Day, Chung, O’Leary, & Carson, 2009). The model proposes that all batterers share a similar need to dominate their partners, and that abusers must overcome that attitude to change their behaviors. The model also proposes that violence is the cause of a patriarchal belief that compel men to express power and control over their partners through psychological and physical abuse and manipulation (Mills, Barocas, & Ariel, 2012).

The number of batterer intervention programs nationwide is increasing every year. There are an estimated 2,500 batterer invention programs in the United States, all providing offenders the chance at change and rehabilitation (Solinas-Saunders & Thaller, 2015). The first BIP, called Emerge, was established in 1977 in Boston, Massachusetts and followed the Duluth model. These programs use elements of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to change thinking patterns
and develop healthier ones. Cognitive behavioral therapy is a type of psychotherapy where negative thought patterns are challenged in order to change unwanted behaviors and develop pro-social/healthier patterns, as proposed in the Duluth model (Bohall, Bautista, & Musson, 2016). The batterer programs focus on the assumption that offenders share certain attitudes, beliefs, or thinking patterns that contribute to the abusive behaviors, and work to re-educate and change offenders. The model uses the coordination of community responses to empower and protect survivors while holding the offenders accountable (Bohall et al., 2016).

**Impact of Family Violence on Children**

Domestic violence not only impacts the abused party, but the children involved – estimating that 275 million children are exposed to domestic violence each year (Graham, Cater, Miller, & Howell, 2006). Domestic violence was once seen as only violence against women, when it actually affects each member of the family and can leave lasting effects on children that witness violence. It is found that women with children are three times more likely to experience domestic violence than childless women (Buchanan et al., 2014). It was also found that violence within a volatile relationship is at its highest during pregnancy and immediately following the birth of the child (Buchanan et al., 2014). Domestic violence results in the death of 1,500 women per year, with more than 3 women being murdered by their partner every day in the United States. Women who have been affected by domestic violence suffer from economic, physical, physiological, and emotional effects that can last a lifetime – even after the abuse has stopped (J Park, 2016). Women who have experienced violence within their relationship are at an increased risk of physical injuries, developing unhealthy coping mechanisms, and mental health concerns. Chronic stress also plays a part in the long-term exposure to domestic violence and can have negative health effects on victims such as problems with the cardio-vascular,
gastrointestinal, endocrine, and immune systems which can develop chronic health conditions (Voith & Brondino, 2017).

Children who have been exposed to domestic violence are linked to a variety of negative outcomes due to witnessing the abuse. Children who witness violence within the home are more susceptible to low self-esteem, social withdrawal, depression, and anxiety (Moylan, Herrenkohl, T., Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl, R., & Russo, 2010). Exposure to domestic violence does not only mean witnessing the violent episode. The abused parent may think she is protecting her children if they do not witness the abusive episode. However, it was found that exposure to domestic violence includes not only witnessing the physical altercation, but hearing or feeling the abuse is about to occur, or to be confronted with the aftermath of the episode (i.e. see the abused parent with injuries). Direct and indirect exposure to domestic violence causes problematic physical, psychological, emotional, and behavioral responses during childhood and lasting consequences into adulthood such as depression and aggression in intimate relationships (Graham et al., 2016).

Parents have a responsibility of providing children with a safe, loving, and nurturing environment in which to grow up. Violence within the home strips away all semblance of a secure household and instead violence becomes the center of their life. Children exposed to violence between their parents suffer the same health consequences as children who are directly abused (Nitu, 2012). Children of all ages can become involved in the physical abuse between adults. As previously stated, domestic violence heightens during pregnancy which can cause harm to the fetus. Involvement in violence while pregnant is associated with prematurity, low birth weight, and stillbirths (DeJong, 2016).

Trauma occurring in childhood carries into adulthood. Witnessing domestic violence is traumatic to the development of children. It was found that children who experience trauma early
in life affects their development of attachment, emotional regulation, and impulse control. It also shows in lower social competency, less empathy for others, difficulty recognizing their own emotions, and recognizing others’ emotions (DeJong, 2016). Exposure to violence in childhood can set forth the wrong message to impressionable children, such as reinforcing an internal set of beliefs that violence is an acceptable response. Knowledge structures and expectations about relationships are compromised by the exposure to violence within relationships as a child, which may increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior as an adult within relationships. Children that witness domestic violence are more likely to have ongoing relationship difficulties during adolescence and adulthood and are more likely to engage in violence, condone violence, and view relationship aggression as justified and normal (Graham et al., 2016).

**History of Family Justice Centers**

The first Family Justice Center was developed and opened in San Diego County, California in 2002. The Family Justice Center movement has evolved from the community based domestic violence movement that has been a part of the United States since the 1970’s. The passing of the Violence Against Women’s Act in 1994, allocated federal funding for new programming. Communities were then able to develop many agencies, shelters, and services for victims of domestic violence to offer support and assistance. As a victim, navigating multiple agencies was overwhelming, therefore Coordinated Community Responses (CCRs) were created in the mid 1990’s to unite community domestic violence agencies together to avoid duplication and inconsistency (Gwinn, Strack, Adams, Lovelace, & Norman, 2008). From the development of CCRs came the foundation for the Family Justice Center movement. In 1989, Casey Gwinn and Gael Strack from the San Diego County City Attorney’s Office and Ashley Walker of the YWCA in San Diego County, California saw the issue of inconsistent domestic violence services
and called for a Family Justice Center in their community. A Family Justice Center would be a centralized location housing staff from each domestic violence agency to provide a location for victims to receive all needed services in one location.

San Diego’s goal for their Family Justice Center, the first Family Justice Center, was to consolidate the city’s efforts to reduce domestic violence in order to provide more services, more safety, and more justice to victims and their children (Gwinn et al., 2008). San Diego’s Family Justice Center was the first building in the United States to house the police department’s entire domestic violence unit of forty officers, the City Attorney’s domestic violence unit of thirty-five attorneys, and staff from twenty other community domestic violence and sexual assault agencies in the area (Gwinn et al., 2008). The center was able to provide victims with the opportunity to talk to an advocate, obtain and order of protection, safety plan, talk to a police officer, meet with a prosecutor, receive medical assistance, meet with spiritual or religious services, get transportation help, obtain pregnancy services, and have access to counseling all in one location. According to Gwinn et al (2008) the center works with 1,000 new and returning clients per month and receives 3,000 phone calls per month as well. The San Diego Family Justice Center has also been recognized for continuing the twenty-year decline of domestic violence homicides in San Diego, whom now has the lowest domestic violence homicide rate of any major United States city (Gwinn et al., 2008).

After the implementation of the first Family Justice Center in San Diego County, U.S. President George W. Bush announced the President’s Family Justice Center Initiative in 2003 that was designed to help create family justice centers across the United States modeled after the San Diego Family Justice Center (Gwinn et al., 2008). The pilot program was launched to develop fifteen similar centers in communities across the country with the help and assistance of
the Office of Violence Against Women. The San Diego Family Justice Center served as the technical assistance provider for the fifteen sites to help effectively develop their Family Justice Centers. In 2004, the Department of Justice awarded twenty million dollars to the fifteen communities chosen under the President’s Family Justice Initiative. The fifteen locations were selected based on geographic location, economic and cultural diversity, underserved populations, and service to Native American communities (Gwinn et al., 2008). All fifteen of the federally funded locations under the President’s Family Justice Initiative offer and provide the following services to victims and their children:

1) Medical care: including primary physical care, mental health counseling, and sexual assault forensic evidence collection.

2) Law enforcement and civil legal assistance: including assistance with orders or protection, investigation and prosecution of offenders, and victim-witness assistance.

3) Information sharing and case management systems.

4) Social services: including state and federal welfare assistance for parents and their children.

5) Employment assistance: including career counseling and training through local employment centers.

6) Substance abuse treatment and services

7) Children related services including: parenting classes, pregnancy services, supervised visitation and safe exchange programming, services for child witnesses of domestic violence, relocating services for children moving to new schools, and youth mentoring programming.

8) Housing and transportation assistance to cover short and long term needs.
9) Faith based counseling programming open to adult and child victims.

In 2005 Congress added Family Justice Centers to the Violence Against Women’s Act (VAWA). Under Title I of the VAWA Congress recognizes the importance of Family Justice Centers by calling it a “purpose area” and as a best practice in the field of domestic violence intervention and prevention. The term “wraparound” service was coined to describe the variety of services in one location. It was found from early evaluations that Family Justice Centers reduced domestic violence homicide, increased victim safety, increased victim self-sufficiency, increased victim and professional empowerment, reduced fear and anxiety for victims and their children in the court system, increased peer support, decreased witness recanting, and increased the number of victims and children receiving services (Gwinn et al., 2008). Gwinn et al. (2008) stated that before the Family Justice Center initiative was born, the problem was that the system was designed for the professionals who work with victims, not for the victims who need to work with professionals. The Family Justice Center model works to put the victim and her/his children first by putting as many needed services as possible in one location.

**Camp HOPE America**

Camp HOPE America is the first local, state, and national camping and mentoring program in the United States for school aged children whose primary purpose is to focus on children exposed to domestic violence with a curriculum that is designed to change the way children view themselves and their futures. Camp HOPE America is a program that was developed by the Alliance for Hope International, which is the organization that oversees all Family Justice Center’s. The first Camp HOPE America started in San Diego, California after the creation of the first Family Justice Center in San Diego County. Camp HOPE America’s vision was to intervene with children exposed to domestic violence in order to break the cycle of
generational violence. Research shows that exposure to violence within the home leads children to be at risk for increased anxiety, depression, social isolation, increased physical and psychological aggression, and the likelihood of perpetuating the cycle of domestic violence into adulthood (Hellman & Gwinn, 2017). Camp HOPE America’s summer program offers a value based camping and mentoring model to children with follow-up activities during the school year to combat the negative effects of exposure to violence.

The camp uses hope theory as the foundation of its activities and curriculum. Hope is defined by Hellman and Gwinn (2017) as the positive expectation one has towards the attainment of a future goal. Hope theory is a goal-orientated psychological strength that promotes well-being across one’s lifespan. Camp HOPE America focuses greatly on strengthening children’s hope level while at camp. Hope is measured before and after camp using the Children’s Hope Scale which measures the extent in which the child believes they can set and achieve goals as well as develop and maintain the will power and determination to follow through with their goals (Hellman & Gwinn, 2017). Studies have been done on the success of Camp HOPE America in increasing children’s levels of hope. In one study done on 229 Camp HOPE America participants that filled out pre-camp and post-camp assessments it was found that hope and psychological strengths increased after camp. The findings concluded that hope is a coping resource for children exposed to domestic violence and supports that Camp HOPE America is a positive intervention for children (Hellman & Gwinn, 2017).
Section III: Theoretical Framework

Domestic Violence Theories

A multitude of theories can be associated with intimate partner violence to help explain why this issue continues to occur within our nation, communities, and neighborhoods. General strain theory, neutralization theory, feminist theory, and power and control theory will all be used to explain the occurrence of intimate partner violence within relationships. Attachment theory will be used to explain how domestic violence can affect the healthy development of children, while social learning theories will be used to explain why violence perpetuates from generation to generation.

General strain theory proposes that people of all social and economic classes deal with frustrations within daily life (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015). The ability or inability to cope with such stressors is what breeds anger and can lead to criminal behavior. There are three categories of strain identified by general strain theory: failure to achieve goals, noxious stimuli, (i.e. the presence of bad things), and the removal of positive stimuli (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015). The presence of these three categories combined with lack of coping skills is when anger is present and can lead to criminal behavior. This theory can be related to intimate partner violence in that when perpetrators experience the three categories identified in strain theory, and are unable to cope with the stress, violence within the relationship can occur. Recent struggles with finances and employment are two of the characteristics/risk factors often present in a violent relationship. If the abusive individual loses his job, is having financial issues due to losing his job, and can not find another job he/she is most likely to become frustrated and angry and lash out.

Neutralization theory, a type of learning theory, can be used to explain violence within relationships. Neutralization theory states that individuals justify and rationalize their behavior
and actions to avoid feeling guilt for their immoral acts. The techniques of neutralization are used as an excuse to keep acting immorally without damaging one’s conscience or self-image (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015). The five common techniques of neutralization are denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties. The aggressor in a violent intimate partner relationship rationalizes and justifies the abusive incidences using the same pattern as the techniques of neutralization. The cycle of violence wheel, a tool developed to help victims see the techniques and patterns that occurs within their relationship, is similar to techniques of neutralization. The cycle of violence wheel describes the abusive episode in three stages. The first stage is described as the tension building stage where the abuser starts to get angry, the victim feels they are walking on eggshells, there is a breakdown in communication, etc. The second stage is described as the incident or explosion where any type of abuse can occur, whether it be physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual. The third stage is described as the making up stage or honeymoon stage where the abuser may apologize for the abuse, promise it won’t happen again, blame the victim for causing the incident, or deny any abuse ever occurred (Thawley, n.d). This process occurs again and again within the relationship. The abuser is following a pattern, and during the three stages is exhibiting rationalization and justification for his abusive acts just as it occurs in the four techniques of neutralization.

Feminist theory is another theory that can be associated with intimate partner violence in that feminist theorists believe that gender inequalities and patriarchal attitudes influence how men treat women within intimate relationships (Giordano, Copp, Longmore, & Manning, 2016). Traditional gender stereotypes have taught men that they will be the ones to ultimately hold the dominant position within the relationship. This teaching spirals out of control when the man feels
he has lost his dominant position and uses violence and controlling behaviors to maintain his control over the female partner. A central theme within violent intimate partner relationships is power and control. Abusive men develop a way to use violence as a strategy to maintain the power and control within the relationship. Power and control theory proposes the idea that individuals must be socialized to act a certain way, and gender differences in their socialization will make a difference in how people will act throughout their life and within relationships (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015).

Attachment theory can be used to explain the effects that domestic violence has on children. It is detrimental to infants to attach to their caregiver. Attachment theory is the psychological theory of human connection and suggests that humans are wired to connect with one another, especially their mothers (Snyder, Shapiro, & Treleaven, 2012). According to attachment theory, the early relationship that the mother and the baby form will directly affect the baby’s brain development, wellbeing, relationships, and interactions throughout their life (Buchanan et al., 2014). Attachment theorists place great emphasis on the early attachment between infant and caregiver, and if early attachment is disrupted, insecure attachment patterns can develop. Such patterns are avoidant, ambivalent, and disorganized attachment. Not being able to form the early attachment to the mother can be the predictor of later difficulties. Disorganized attachment, which occurs when attachment is disrupted, is categorized as the most concerning attachment and is predicted to lead to borderline personality disorders later in life, all based off the lack of early attachment (Buchanan et al., 2014).

Buchanan et al. (2014) describes how some women involved in domestic violence are constantly on guard and exhausted from preventing violence that the early attachment with their infant does not occur. A study found that out of 72 women who were living in abusive
relationships with infants, 37.5% of those mothers and babies had developed secure attachments. This is compared to the general population of 65% of mothers and babies that form a secure attachment (Buchanan et al., 2014). Attachment to the mother is said to be the initial template in which the child is taught the correct behavior. Secure attachment during infancy lays the groundwork for all future relationships. Snyder et al. (2012) states that depressed mothers have more negative interactions with their children which leads to future behavioral problems while secure attachments lead to positive development and wellbeing for the children. Mother’s affected by domestic violence are more susceptible to depression, and therefore are more susceptible to forming insecure attachment with their infants. Attachment theory can be used to explain the psychological and behavioral effects that domestic violence has on children that are exposed to violence within the home. Attachment theory explains how women living in high risk violent relationships struggle to have the emotional availability to connect with their child while also trying to protect themselves from ongoing abuse at the hands of their partner.

**Generational Effect of Violence**

Social learning theory can be applied to intimate partner violence in that learning theories are said to be based on the concept that individuals are blank slates and are shaped by cultural norms and by imitating what they see others do. It was found that early exposure to violence within the family is a heightened risk factor for violence in relationships later in life (Giordano et al., 2016). Researchers have concluded that children who witness parents’ violence, or have been abused as a child, etc. can develop different anger expression styles than children who were not exposed to violence within the family (Giordano et al., 2016). Maladaptive beliefs about violence, due to witnessing violence as a child, breeds further violence into adulthood.

Social learning theory provides an explanation for the passing down of violence from
generation to generation. McRae, Daire, Abel, and Lambie (2017) uses the cycle of violence hypotheses which states that children who witness their parent or parents use violence against each other are at a greater risk for imitating violent behavior in their own interactions, both as children and later as adults. Social learning theory states that adult behaviors are learned in early childhood through observing. This theory can be used to explain why boys who witness their father’s abuse are more likely to abuse their partners later in life. McRae et al. (2017) also states that if children observe the abuser gain a reward for the violence, i.e. violence occurring over and over again with no punishment, then they are learning that using violence is an effective way to get what you want and that the use of violence is acceptable. When children are exposed to the negative effects of violence, such as being held responsible for violence, then the child learns that there will be consequences to using violence.

**Why Women Stay**

The reason a woman stays in an abusive relationship cannot fully be explained. The assumption that it is easy to leave an abusive relationship and that the abuse will stop once a woman leaves is false. Consequently, leaving an abusive relationship is the most dangerous time for a woman, as well as with children if children are involved. Violence is shown to escalate once a woman leaves as the abuser is desperate to regain control over the victim. Common experiences for women upon leaving a relationship are threats of physical harm, child abduction, financial abuse, sexual assault, stalking, and homicide (Fotheringham, Dunbar, & Hensley, 2013). Nitu (2012) names social isolation as the most severe factors in women failing to leave their abuser as their interaction with others has been limited for a period of time. Other reasons a woman may rationalize staying in an abusive relationship is fear of increased violence, fear of losing children through custody disputes, involvement of child protective services (CPS),
embarrassment, shame, lack of emotional support, lack of affordable housing, and financial stability (Fotheringham et al., 2013).

Not only is separation from an abusive partner a risk factor of increasing violence, but the presence of children also poses as a risk factor of increasing violence and continuing abuse. According to Fotheringham et al. (2013) there are four ways in which abusive partners use the children and the courts to further the abuse: 1) using custody disputes as a means to maintain power and punish the victim, 2) not paying child support to punish the victim for obstructing access to the children, 3) using visitation and exchange times to increase contact with the victim to provide opportunities for ongoing abuse, and 4) using the children as a tool for violence through threats of harm or abduction. Continued abuse and violence during separation as well as the negative involvement of children after separation are critical factors that lead to children’s maladjustment as they grow up (Fotheringham et al., 2013).

**Theoretical framework of Family Justice Centers**

The theoretical framework that surrounds Family Justice Centers is rooted in stopping the cycle of violence. Hellman and Gwinn (2017) identifies the Family Justice Center model as the correct method of approach for children that have witnessed domestic violence in order to prevent future violence, as it provided a multi-disciplinary approach to aid in the prevention of domestic violence by providing the tools needed to stop the cycle of violence that could carry into adulthood. Early intervention with children whom have witnessed domestic violence is essential in stopping the cycle of violence from being handed down to the next generation.
Section IV: Implementing a Family Justice Center

Multidisciplinary Approach

The multidisciplinary approach of a Family Justice Center allows for victims to receive all the services needed in one location. A victim of domestic violence will no longer need to travel to or call multiple agencies and services in order to talk to the detective, prosecutor, advocate, probation officer, social worker, etc. about her situation and case. All criminal, civil, and legal issues as well as community resources and referrals needed will be addressed at one location. A victim of domestic violence and children affected have already experienced intense trauma, and the traumatized victim is then expected to travel around to different agencies and government entities to repeat her story and relive the trauma. Offering victims the ability to go to one location to tell their story and receive the help they need to address their needs, press charges, petition for an order of protection, receive emergency housing, etc. will increase survivor’s feelings of hope. The Family Justice Center model offers hope to survivors by making their already life changing journey a little bit easier.

Current Family Justice Centers

There are over eighty Family Justice Centers in the United States today, with the planning of many more in the works. Communities have even opened centers across the country in lieu of federal funding. The Family Justice Center movement is spreading internationally with centers open in Canada, Mexico, and Great Britain and centers being planned for Africa, Europe, and the Middle East (Stoever, 2016).

Nampa Family Justice Center

Nampa Family Justice Center, located in Nampa, Idaho opened its’ doors in 2005. The
vision of the Nampa Family Justice Center was to create and grow a partnership of skilled, motivated, decision makers who share the vision of a community without family violence and are willing to commit the resources necessary to see that vision recognized (Gwinn et al., 2008). Nampa’s center provides victims access to advocacy, counseling, law enforcement, prosecution, legal services, housing, employment services, and medical/forensic services. Nampa, Idaho saw a need for a Family Justice Center because in 2001 50% of the thirty-two homicides that year were domestic violence related. In the years prior, 30% to 50% of homicides were domestic violence related in Nampa. From 2005 – 2007 after the center was opened, Nampa had only four domestic violence related homicides (Gwinn et al., 2008). Nampa credits their Family Justice Center with helping to have a streamlined community response to help prevent the duplication of services and speed up the referral process for victims so they can receive services efficiently.

**St. Louis Family Justice Center**

St. Louis Family Justice Center located in St. Louis, Missouri opened in 2006. This center was one of the fifteen areas selected by the President’s Family Justice Center Initiative. The Saint Louis Family Justice Center provides centralized resources and services in a safe and accessible environment that promotes the healing of individuals who experience violence in their relationships and families (Gwinn et al., 2008). The Saint Louis Center has 45 agencies that work on-site and off-site towards a common goal: addressing domestic violence and helping victims. They house on-site medical services, legal services, spiritual services, counseling, safety planning, law enforcement, and prosecution services. They also work with off-site services for housing and employment services (Gwinn et al., 2008). The mission of the Saint Louis Family Justice Center was to break the cycle of violence, bring safety to adult and child victims, and
reduce the rate of family violence in their community. The center allows for the reduction of barriers that victims face, such as lack of transportation to get from agency to agency and the lack of ability to make phone call after phone call to service providers.

**Crystal Judson Family Justice Center**

Crystal Judson Family Justice Center, located in Peirce/Tacoma County, Washington opened in 2005. With a population of 773,000 people dispersed across urban, suburban, and rural areas within the two counties and two military bases, Pierce/Tacoma County had a need for a centralized location for domestic violence services. Pierce/Tacoma County had one of the highest violent crime rates in the state of Washington. Leaders in Pierce/Tacoma County made the implementation of a Family Justice Center a priority and an urgency after the Tacoma County Police Chief murdered his wife and kids and them himself in 2003. The counties applied for the President’s Family Justice Center Initiative in 2004. The initiative did not select Pierce/Tacoma County for the funding; however, they were prepared to move forward without federal funding. Without federal funding, the board of directors for the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center faced many challenges including finding space for the building, establishing partnerships with service providers within the community, and funding (Gwinn et al., 2008).

Despite the challenges that Pierce/Tacoma County faced with the implementation of the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center they opened their doors in December 2005 with sixteen on-site partners and programs. In 2007, the Center reported that they provided service and intervention to more than 2,000 victims of domestic violence. The Crystal Judson Family Justice Center believes in “wrapping” a client in services and providing more than support during a single visit to the Center, and doing follow-up calls when a victim leaves the Center. One
important component of the Pierce/Tacoma County’s Center is their constant evaluation of their programs and services to determine if they are meeting the needs of clients. By listening to clients and the community, the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center of Pierce/Tacoma County is able to ensure their services are positively affecting their community (Gwinn et al., 2008).

**Barriers and Limitations**

Stoever (2016) states that there are negative implications for the survivor with providing information to various governmental and community agencies. Family Justice Centers promote confidentiality as the leading reason for victims to seek services. Most service providers located within a Family Justice Center are mandated reporters such as police, prosecutors, advocates, and medical professionals. Stoever (2016) argues that victims entering Family Justice Center’s need to be counseled on the implications of providing information to numerous community and governmental agencies in order to understand all the possible consequences that may occur with giving their statements. Providing information to the professional entities located within the Family Justice Center could result in unintended criminal justice involvement for the victim or unintended child protective services involvement.

The involvement of child protective services can be an unintended consequence of a victim seeking help to end the violence and sharing her story to Family Justice Center professionals. Mandated reports are required to report child abuse and neglect. A victim divulging that the children were present in the home when the abuse occurred requires a mandated reporter to make a call to child protective services. Even if a child is not physically harmed the presence of a child in a home with domestic violence in which they could see or hear constitutes as neglect. Reporting this can result in a child protective services case being opened and the children possibly being taken away from the victim parent (Stoever, 2016). Victims that
report abuse in the home and then return to the abuser also suffer the consequence of the child welfare system. Other barriers and limitations identified by Stoever (2016) that occur with victims of domestic violence entering the Family Justice Center are immigration status issues (undocumented), victims whose abusers are law enforcement, victims that have outstanding warrants for their arrest, and LGBTQ victims.

Gwinn et al. (2008) also identifies fears that Family Justice Centers can invoke into certain groups of survivors of domestic violence. Some believe that having the government take a leadership position with helping victims of domestic violence will have negative consequences. Gwinn et al also identifies that battered undocumented immigrant women may be fearful of seeking help at a Family Justice Center due to the multiple on-site governmental agencies. Sharing information between agencies is also a concern and a fear that has been brought to light in order to keep victim’s confidentiality intact and her safety the main concern. Finally, the fear that victims who are also defendants may be arrested, not helped, or turned away by the Family Justice Center is also real among a certain group of people.

Funding will always be a limitation and barrier for Family Justice Center’s around the country and the world. Existing Centers have found that educating the public on the issue of domestic violence and how Family Justice Centers can help has brought attention to the problem and gained financial support from the community. Not every community can be the recipient of federal or state grants to fund their centers, therefore outreach programs and public relations efforts are necessary to gain funds. Raising funds for a Family Justice Center in which the community is not fully on board can cause the implementation of a Center to fail. Lastly, coordination between the public, community agencies, and governmental agencies poses as a barrier in implementing a successful Family Justice Center. Agencies being on the same page in
regards to how their Family Justice Center model is going to look is essential. Gwinn et al (2008) stated that input from the community and the stakeholders is key in determining the right model of the Family Justice Center for each community and to gain community buy-in, long-term support, and sustainability.

**Section V: Summary and Conclusion**

Domestic violence happens across all social classes, races, and religions. One in four women are subjected to domestic violence within their lifetime, and women with children are three times as likely to experience domestic violence (Buchanan et al., 2014). The number of children that witness domestic violence is estimated to be 275 million (Graham et al., 2006). The negative consequences of domestic violence not only plague the woman, but the children as well. It was argued within this paper that Family Justice Centers, although a newer movement, should be created to offer comprehensive victim services in lieu of varying individual services offered by multiple agencies in multiple areas. Stopping the cycle of violence by intervening effectively into victims and their children’s lives is essential and can be found within the Family Justice Center model of a multi-disciplinary approach to the availability of services. Family Justice Centers have been found to have a positive effect on the number of domestic violence related homicides, victim safety, victim empowerment, fear and anxiety of the court system, witness recanting, and the number of victims and their children receiving services (Abt Associates, 2018).

The implementation of Family Justice Centers in every major community in the United States, despite the barriers and limitations each Center faces, will serve as a message to domestic violence perpetrators. A message that the response to domestic violence is now stronger and more unified and abusers will be held accountable for their actions. The vision of the Family
Justice Center model is as follows: “a future where all the needs of victims are met; where children are protected; where violence fades; where batterers are held accountable; where economic justice increases; where families heal, and thrive; where hope is realized and where we all work together” (Gwinn et al., 2008). This vision is the dream held by all who have experienced domestic violence and all who work within the domestic violence movement that one day this complex problem, and all its underlying consequences, will be solved. The implementation of Family Justice Centers allows communities to come together to help solve the issues of domestic violence within their community and dream of a day in which there is no violence in the home.
Section VI: References


