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Examining Intimate Partner Violence

Christine Wagner
cwagner9197@gmail.com

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Honors Project Description

For my senior honors project, I would like to research and write an informational book concerning the issue of domestic violence. Domestic violence is an issue that has gained a great deal of media attention in the recent years. When hearing the phrase “domestic violence,” many people automatically picture an angry man beating a defenseless woman. While this may occur in some cases, the majority of domestic violence incidences do not reflect that stereotype. In this book, I hope to challenge the mainstream assumptions surrounding domestic violence by presenting thoroughly researched information surrounding the topic.

The book will begin with an opening chapter dedicated to defining domestic violence. It will address the various definitions of domestic violence, the meaning of unidirectional and bidirectional violence, and statistics concerning the prevalence of the issue. The chapter will close with an explanation as to why this is an important issue. Chapter two will focus on the causes of domestic violence. Here, I will identify common risk factors of domestic violence and theoretical explanations of why domestic violence occurs (such as the intergenerational transmission of violence theory). Chapter three will be an explanation of the barriers people face when leaving domestic violence situations. The chapter will open with an explanation of why using language such as “why do people stay in abusive relationships” is victim-blaming language and should be replaced with more neutral language. Then, I will explore common factors that serve as barriers to leaving domestic violence situations (having children, religious beliefs, etc.). The rest of the chapter will focus on theoretical explanations of barriers to leaving a domestic violence situation. There are several theories surrounding this topic, so depending on how much information I choose to include, I may need to break this chapter into two separate chapters.
Chapter four will focus on social movements concerning domestic violence, such as the women’s rights movement, the #metoo movement, and the No More Campaign. I will talk about the history of movements such as these and then link them to policy changes concerning domestic violence, such as the mandatory arrest laws. Chapter five will focus on the gender differences concerning the rate of victimization, the rate of perpetration, and barriers to reporting and leaving domestic violence situations. Chapters six and seven will address these same issues based on race/culture and social class, respectively. Chapter eight will address how issues of domestic violence are treated when the perpetrator is a celebrity, as there have been several instances of domestic violence cited in the lives of major athletes, actors/actresses, and other superstars (Ray Rice). Chapter nine will conclude the book, citing the available resources for victims of domestic violence.

Upon completing this project, I hope have garnered a greater understanding of the many different facets of the issue of domestic violence. This is an important learning outcome because in my future line of work, I will likely be working with people who have experienced, witnessed, or participated in domestic violence situations. By understanding the intricacies surrounding domestic violence, I will be able to assist my clients in a sensitive and informed manner. A second learning outcome I hope to have accomplished through the completion of this project is to have refined my research, citing, and referencing skills that will be needed when I enter graduate school in pursuit of a Master’s Degree. While I plan to take a gap year between completing my undergraduate work and entering graduate school, I believe the work I do on this book will help prepare me for my master’s research work. The third learning outcome I hope to have gained upon the conclusion of this project is to understand how a person’s social context impacts his/her experience of domestic violence. A person’s social context includes factors such
as their race, gender, sexual identity, and socioeconomic status. In my future career, I will be working with individuals who come from several different, intersecting identities of disadvantage. Understanding how their social context impacts their experience of domestic violence will allow me to be culturally competent and sensitive.

The majority of the project will consist of library research. In completion of this book, I plan to conduct an extensive literature review into the issue of domestic violence. Additionally, I will create an original manuscript summarizing (and properly citing and referencing) the material in a logically organized way. I do not foresee having an issue finding resources as there are entire scholarly journals dedicated to the issue of domestic violence. Additionally, my faculty sponsor, Dr. Van Wyk, the faculty expert on this topic has already expressed her ability to direct me to further resources if I find myself stuck. I plan to utilize the University of Rhode Island (URI) library database as well as articles from my own subscriptions to scholarly journals.

I believe I am well prepared to complete this project. From other relevant course work (SOC 403 Gender and Crime, SOC 420 Family Violence, SOC/PSY 430 Intimate Relationships), I have a strong base knowledge about issues surrounding domestic violence. In Family Violence, we read a plethora of research articles that are related to this topic that I plan to utilize. In Gender and Crime, I did a short paper concerning theories surrounding domestic violence. I plan to expand upon the research I began here, using some of the sources I have already found. Furthermore, as a writing tutor for URI, I have extensive training concerning the writing, revising, and editing processes that I believe have well-prepared me for this endeavor. Finally, as a hard-working and determined student, I firmly believe I will be able to complete this project in the allotted time.
Domestic violence is an issue that many people experience in their lives. I think this is an important topic to explore because it has historically been ignored, even swept under the rug, because of the shame and stigmatization associated with it. This project is especially important to me as someone who has experienced domestic violence in my own life. Learning about it will not only help me cope with my own experiences, but also help understand the topic more thoroughly and allow me to help others with the knowledge I have gained.

Upon graduation, I want to work as a social worker with child protective services. I know that many of the children I work with will likely have experienced, in one way or another, the impacts of domestic violence on their lives. By being informed about the topic, as well as being knowledge to the resources surrounding the issue, I will be better equipped to advocate for and serve my clientele. Additionally, after taking a gap year, I would like to enroll at Rhode Island College to pursue a Master’s Degree in either family counseling or social work. Not only will this project provide me with excellent research experience, it my also even turn into a dissertation project.