

# UROP Proposal

## **Title of Proposal**

Proposal to Study Non-Fatal Strangulation and Reporting in Cases of Domestic Violence in Utah

## **Problem/Topic of Research or Creative Work**

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, "domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, threats, and emotional abuse" ("NCADV: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence"). Domestic abuse, also referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV), is a pertinent issue in the United States affecting 1 in 4 women nationwide. According to the Center for Disease Control, IPV is prevalent in Utah, affecting 1 in 3 women ("Domestic Violence Statistics in Utah", 2015). In reading Kate Manne's *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*, my attention was brought to the issue of the ineffective responses to non-fatal strangulation. Domestic violence is a public health issue and strangulation often leads to traumatic brain injuries due to the deprivation of oxygen to the brain and the likely accompaniment of blunt force trauma to the head (Snyder, 2017). Non-fatal strangulation as intimate partner violence is also an indicator of later more lethal forms of violence (Manne, 2019).

This proposed project will contribute to an existing study on non-fatal strangulation and domestic violence that is being led by Dr. Annie Isabel Fukushima in partnership with community organizations in Utah - Nonfatal Strangulation Pilot (NFS). In 2019, Dr. ██████████ signed Memorandum of Understandings through the University of Utah to work with the Utah YWCA Family Justice Center to pilot the Nonfatal Strangulation committee. This committee comprises of Utah entities such as the Salt Lake City Dispatch, Utah Domestic Violence Coalition, the Fire Department, and the Police Department. Through the partnership with the YWCA I will be helping to facilitate the study by collecting data on protection orders and also conduct interviews with participating stakeholders, to better understand the outcomes of the NFS Pilot.

## **Relevant Background/Literature Review**

Given the high prevalence of domestic abuse and intimate partner violence in Utah according to the Center for Disease Control and the Utah Department of Health, a comprehensive understanding of the responses and the outcomes of this criminal behavior is a necessity. According to the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition, "since 2000, at least 42% of adult homicides in Utah were domestic violence related." Non-fatal strangulation is concerning as it often creates long-term health concerns in the victim, and it is a risk factor for future serious injury or homicide (Douglas & Fitzgerald, 2014). In a case control study, it was found that "non-fatal strangulation was reported in 10% of abused controls, 45% of attempted homicides and 43% of homicides" (Glass et al., 2008). It appears there is a clear escalation from strangulation to homicide.

Rachel Louise Snyder explained that both emergency healthcare services and law enforcement are not effective in responding appropriately to this violence. Victims of intimate partner violence

are often not screened for strangulation or brain injury, and these patients are often not capable of advocating for themselves as many that have lost consciousness are unable to remember to accurately remember the incident. Most non-fatal strangulation cases report minor or no visible injury; however, many victims suffer internal injuries, and some have died several weeks after their attack due to the brain damage from the strangulation (Douglas & Fitzgerald, 2014). In a study of three hundred non-fatal strangulation cases, only fifteen percent of these cases had injuries deemed visible enough to take photographic evidence (Snyder, 2017). In this study, it appears that law enforcement frequently downplayed the injuries from these incidents. There also appears to be a high prevalence of domestic violence in police families, which could interfere with proper reporting (Mennicke & Ropes, 2016).

In 2017, Utah legislature passed a bill that made strangulation a felony. The effects of this legislation, however, are unclear as it is still relatively new. According to the YWCA Utah, in June 2019, nearly 1,000 first responders were trained in a new screening protocol and in understanding risks and signs of strangulation in order to improve their responses to domestic violence calls ("The Dangers of Strangulation: New Protocol Will Help Save Lives", 2019). With this research, I hope to explore the outcomes of this and other legislation regarding domestic violence, to gain a more exhaustive understanding of intimate partner violence in Utah.

### **Specific Activities to be Undertaken and Timeframe for Each Activity**

This is an ongoing project that I will be participating in. In November 2019, Dr. [REDACTED] is adding me to her existing IRB approvals and scheduling a meeting with the Family Justice Center (FJC) of the YWCA. The following are the current planned activities (the time-table will be adjusted after meeting with Dr. [REDACTED] and the FJC which is currently being scheduled for this fall semester) :

#### January 2020

Training with the Family Justice Center (Liz Watson) on collecting data on protection orders. Additionally, begin researching and collecting retrospective data on a quarterly basis from April 2019 to April 2020 on protective orders in Utah. Update existing IRB to conduct interviews. Dr. [REDACTED] and I will work to update IRB in order to perform interviews for the pilot project.

#### February 2020

Upon IRB approval, I will conduct approximately fifteen interviews for this project in February. These interviews will be outsourced for transcription. Interviews will be immediately sent for transcription after being conducted.

#### March 2020

Analyze interview data through thematic analysis. Continue mining for protective order data during this time. Draft poster for URS symposium.

#### April 2020

Finalize the retrospective data collection and analysis. Present findings at the Undergraduate Research Symposium on Tuesday, April 7th, 2020.

End of April 2020 - May 2020

Schedule with Dr. [REDACTED] and NFS Pilot committee to share findings to the YWCA Family Justice Center the first week of May, 2020.

Other activities:

Currently Dr. [REDACTED] is co-leading the creation of a Gender-Based Violence Consortium at the University of Utah (GBVC). Pending funds, the consortium will meet bimonthly. If the GBVC receives funding, due to my research focus on non-fatal strangulation, Dr. [REDACTED] would like me to attend these meetings as well and participate in the research convenings. Pending GBVC receiving funds, this will be incorporated into my timeline of activities.

### **Relationship of the Proposed Work to the Expertise of the Faculty Mentor**

Dr. [REDACTED] is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Ethnic Studies with the School for Cultural & Social Transformation at University of Utah. She has expertise in gender and sexuality studies, which will be informative in exploring the domestic violence issues in Utah - in 2018 she was funded by the Department on the Status of Women to conduct a mixed methods study of the city-wide needs for Violence Against Women in the city of San Francisco (sexual assault, human trafficking and intimate partner violence). And has served on the Board of Directors for the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. She is author of *Migrant Crossings: Witnessing Human Trafficking in the US* (Stanford University Press, 2019) where she analyzed human trafficking through "sociolegal and media analysis of court records, press releases, law enforcement campaigns, film representations, theatre performances, and the law" - the book is part of Stanford University Press's sociology series. She also was the Secretary/Treasurer for the American Sociological Association's Section on the Sociology of Human Rights. Professor [REDACTED] has been highly praised for her approach in this book. Her knowledge will be extraordinarily helpful in developing mixed methods research skills (interviews and basic statistics) which I believe is essential for a sufficient understanding of any issue.

### **Relationship of the Proposed Work to Student's Future Goals**

As a Health, Society, and Policy student, I have a passion for health and social policies, and as a case manager in the Salt Lake County Criminal Justice System, I have a keen interest in effective responses to violent behaviors. This project will allow me to intersect these interests and to contribute to the ongoing research of domestic violence in Utah. I am also excited to develop my research skills, as I plan to attend graduate school for public policy and to continue researching social determinants of health. Researching and working with the UROP program will help me in applying to graduate programs, as well as developing professional data collection and analysis skills. I believe that partnering with Dr. [REDACTED] and community partners will help me gain invaluable skills for a career in social policy analysis and potentially, for future work in academia.

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