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Domestic Violence: Identifying the Patterns in Technology and Socio-Economic Factors



Alexa B. Isaguirre Portillo

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by

Alexa B. Isaguirre Portillo

Submitted to The Department of Business and Economics

Project Advisor: Steve Onyeiwu

Second Reader: Aisha Yusuf

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I hereby recognize and pledge to fulfill my responsibilities as defined in the Honor Code and to maintain the integrity of both myself and the College as a whole.



Alexa B. Isaguirre Portillo

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Abstract

Domestic Violence has been recognized as a human rights issue since the 1990s. Over the last thirty years, major changes were made to ensure the safety and resources of victims and survivors. However, many factors come into play, leading victims to be exposed to domestic violence. Legislative bills have been presented and signed by Congress, but that does not stop abusers. Low socioeconomic classes are more prone to domestic violence than any other class. Social media and technological features are causing more harm than good to victims and survivors. In order to prevent this societal issue from increasing, advocacy and women's empowerment are enforced from an economic standpoint. Understanding different policies and patterns in socio-economic factors brings awareness of the need to look for outliers that may be at risk. Technology is a significant factor in everyone's life, from communicating through text to updating followers on social media platforms. The paper uses a combination of a case analysis and analytical approach to examine these characteristics and explain why the patterns exist. Women who earn low to no income are at risk, specifically if their partner has a violent past. Social media platforms established conditions to allow users to block and report anyone who violates their privacy. U.S. legislation and federal laws provide support to victims and survivors in resources.

CHAPTER I: Introduction

Domestic violence resonates deeply with me. This firsthand understanding fueled my passion to be an advocate for victims. Since entering high school, I have consistently engaged in activism and education efforts surrounding the issue through participation in various clubs and workshops. I am an Allegheny ambassador for the One Love Foundation, empowering students to recognize and prevent intimate partner violence. Domestic violence presents in different forms, emotionally and physically. I will be focusing on both aspects, as well as intimate partner violence. Different types of behaviors will be included in the literature review and empirical chapter. The project aims to analyze the different patterns and behaviors related to social media, specific technological devices, and socio-economic classes. From there, I will determine any repeating patterns, focusing on the socio-economic and demographic factors. Governmental policies and legislation pieces will be observed based on the efficiency of the resources and how detailed they are in identifying different types of abuse. Once the literature and the empirical chapters are analyzed, I will give my conclusion, results, and recommendations to help improve policies and manners to bring women empowerment.

Domestic violence has been recognized as a human rights issue for three decades. There are different ways that it can be interpreted. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2024), domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that one partner uses to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. By reading the definition, a partner does not have to be married to be considered. Instead, it can include anyone, from a teenage romance to an elderly marriage. 1993 marked the beginning of recognizing the topic as a social justice issue. Women fought to have the United Nations acknowledge the issue, which

should not be known as a “cultural” aspect of life. Their petition became successful, creating support from the government and establishing international laws for victims. However, it is still an issue today as many victims fight for their rights and safety in the country.

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence agency releases statistics annually to highlight the issue. In the United States alone, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men experience some violence, whether that is physical or emotional violence. It is not limited to age, as it can happen to anyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, sexuality, gender, religion, or nationality. However, different groups are affected in various ways, which can cause more danger to victims. New factors are coming into play, which gives space to domestic violence offenders easier access. For instance, technology and social media provide a pathway for communication with people and the space to stalk and violate an individual’s privacy.

One of today’s biggest problems is technology. More features have become available as the industry evolves, especially with cell phones and the Internet. Cell phone companies introduce well-designed attributes that make it easier to transform personal information from one phone to another. For instance, the new iPhone iOS 17 allows users to share their contact info and social media handles with a tap. Social media outlets allow users to share their location with a single post. More space is open, which results in stalking, harassment, and cyberbullying. Many students receive safety training on social media to protect themselves from harm.

Since the introduction of the World Wide Web, it has been available to everyone. Anyone can search for an individual’s name online with a simple connection. Anyone can approach it if their social media outlets or personal information are public. It has evolved and expanded to where digital footprints are tracked, and nothing can be deleted once it is uploaded.

Socioeconomic status (SES) also plays a factor in domestic violence. It is measured through income level, education level, employment status, occupation, and social resources available. The biggest stereotype when it comes to social class is the following: the lower the class an individual is at, the more prevalent they are to domestic violence or some type of abuse. Whether or not it is true, more research will be done to clarify if the generalization is correct. Race and ethnicity are included in the category because patterns are revealed within POC communities.

Based on the comprehensive review of articles, I hypothesize that domestic violence exhibits a higher prevalence within lower socioeconomic classes. Additionally, technological advancements and the evolving nature of social media increase the chances of online violence. Whether through their cellular device or online platforms, more daily threats are posed.

This project will examine the impact of technology, from social media usage to the number of active users, and the terms and conditions for specific platforms. I will then give my input on whether the terms and conditions provide enough information for victims to seek help. Analyzing the victim's safety on popular social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok) will help evaluate the improvements and the necessary recommendations.

If the organizations provide the data, I will focus on the sociodemographic factors of age, ethnicity/race, and possibly income and educational level. From here, I will be able to detail patterns within a specific age range and see if POC communities have a higher rate of abuse. Using the *National Domestic Violence Hotline* Impact Reports, I will be able to analyze the national data and two specific states (Texas and California) to see how acknowledged the social justice issue is.

The median income level will be gathered from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to analyze the pay gap and potential patterns and risks for women who do not make enough to live in a stable household. It will specifically come from California and Texas reports.

Furthermore, with the data and conditions collected from the platforms and the organizations, I will be analyzing the governmental policies that aid and support victims of domestic violence and federal laws in Texas and California to see if the issue is taken into massive consideration.

With this goal, I set three specific research questions to reach my hypothesis. The questions I will explore are:

- Do the current U.S. legislations and federal laws help give full support to domestic violence victims?
- Have social media platforms become more of a danger to victims than considered as a safety outlet?
- Why are low socioeconomic individuals more prone to domestic violence than those who are higher class?

This study will use a combined case analysis and analytical approach to explore the patterns of domestic violence in different settings. These settings include age, ethnicity/race, the type of abuse reported, and the analysis of the online platforms and the U.S. legislation and federal laws. I will also look at the national data for the types of abuse reported and the socioeconomic factors provided. Then, California and Texas will be the main states to focus on because of the difference in political stance and to compare the number of reports collected.

Through an in-depth examination of the literature, the research aims to identify potential gaps within U.S. legislation and federal laws and the study of online platforms. The analytical

lens will be applied to the role of digital and technological roles, the patterns in socioeconomic status, and providing recommendations to improve legislation pieces.

CHAPTER II: Literature Review

In this chapter, I will review journal articles, research journals, and criminal studies to provide a context for my project. I also intend to identify some gaps in the literature on domestic violence. I aim to read multiple case studies to identify patterns in all factors (technology and socioeconomic status) and to identify the authors' research, goals, methodology, and gaps in their papers. With the studies provided, I intend to see if they will support or go against the data I gathered for my empirical chapter. As a business major, I will deeply analyze the patterns observed and study the U.S. Legislation and Federal laws, which will also be more in-depth in the empirical chapter.

Technology advancement revealed the dangers and intentions of domestic violence offenders. Many authors discussed the advancement of technology, the accessibility to offenders, and whether regulations were implemented to monitor activity. Stalking and harassment are the biggest issues as it gives the offender the power to control their partner’s actions and behaviors. Social media is becoming part of the problem since it allows for the management and regulation of settings with a simple handle and password. GPS is shared through multiple users online, allowing the offender to stalk and track their partner. Safety issues have become a concern because they reveal a few dangers of the technological world. Are victims harassed more online than in person? Have the online platforms and technological devices implemented safety features and regulations to protect their victims?

Socioeconomic status (SES) also plays a factor in domestic violence. Constructed of different characteristics, it can reveal information about an individual or group. Within those characteristics, I will focus on income, education level, and employment status to determine which community is prone to DV. Demographics will be included in SES because of the

generalization made in POC communities. Is there a higher prevalence for an individual who identifies as a POC and is in a lower SES? Does educational attainment and income level matter in terms of rates?

This literature review will be divided into two subsections: technology/social media and sociodemographic factors. Technology and social media are together because of the similarities in the industry and how they are used. SES and race/ethnicity are combined because of the possible intersection and comparisons. Each section will reveal the author's research, goals, and methodology. Based on how the research is conducted, input will be given to see if it is efficient and informative. Once this is determined, gaps and possible recommendations will be identified in the literature. With the gaps, more explanation will be provided in the empirical chapter to analyze and fill any missing pieces of the research.

Technology & Social Media

Technology has advanced tremendously over the last three decades. Starting with heavy desktop computers and moving to brick phones, where features were limited only to calculations and communication with people, in today's world, most people carry a lightweight cell phone with many accessibility features. The most prominent feature is texting and calling through one single device. With the publication of the *World Wide Web*, more information became accessible to the public with a few simple keywords. Now, the internet is accessed with a simple cellular device.

According to *Investopedia,* social media is a computer-based technology that facilitates sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through virtual networks and communities (Dollarhide & Drury, 2023). It comprises different features, such as content creation, audience

engagement, and video and photo publications, and it is utilized as a news outlet. Since the development of MySpace in 2004, social media has exploded and expanded into different applications, from posting relationship statuses and photos to sharing social life updates and locations with the public. The biggest platform with the most users is Facebook, with 3.14 billion users. That means 39% of the population is active in one month (Dean, 2023). This is a huge number, considering that not every part of the world has access to the internet. More apps, like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, were developed that share similar features but also share the same safety concerns.

Many authors have explored technological advancements and their dangers. Exploring mobile device settings and social media aspects reveals more information than expected. By collecting and analyzing surveys, shocking and crucial statistics were revealed.

The advent of digital communication technologies such as email, texting, smartphones, webcams, dating sites, and apps caused a significant transformation. It allows people to see innovatively by seeking, maintaining, and ending relationships (Henry et al., 2020, 1833). While it may be exciting to experience these interactions, they can also be used for malicious harm. DV advocates have observed that offenders increasingly use online platforms to perform malicious acts. As cellular devices create and add settings that can be monitored, the more harm it is done.

Henry et al. (2020) defined “digital dating violence” as the use of digital technologies to coerce, control, pressure, monitor, harass, or threaten a dating partner. Sharing personal information online may be fun and exciting, but one should also know whom they share it with. Studies showed in the article that of Americans 15 years and older, at least 12% have experienced some kind of digital partner abuse. This includes offensive names, stalking, and

purposefully embarrassing their partner online. What is frightening is that teenagers receive some type of abuse at an early age. Whether big or small, no child should have the experience.

Behaviors were examined between children and adult victims as their research showed that children and adolescents are more likely to be sexualized online (Henry et al., 2020, 1837). Considering the different generations, the younger population is active through their cell phones and devices, which puts them at risk for digital abuse. Societal norms are part of that problem as well. The internet normalizes everyday life as if it is obligated to portray their life online. What does this mean exactly? It means that users are prone to sexual harassment or stalking. Yes, there are settings to block abusers and stalkers from the social media pages. However, it is becoming more frequent, and it feels overwhelming and may impact their mental health. Meanwhile, Harris and Woodlock (2019) only made a small distinction 6 with digital abuse, providing testimonies but not statistical proof of women who live in rural and urban areas. Are there enough resources and programs in those areas to help the victims?

Even if social media is advocated worldwide, users are told to change their behaviors to stay safe in their relationships. It is not as simple as one thinks. It becomes difficult to escape when one's partner takes control of their phone. Yes, solutions are provided to escape and be free from their controlling partners, but taking action is much harder. That is why knowing the facts is important to help spread that awareness and prevent all potential harm.

Digital media offers a variety of options to control partners effectively. It can be from traditional forms of abuse to the accessibility of digital and social media. Communication and behaviors are becoming dependent in the online world. According to an American survey of 615 teenagers, 36% have asked their partner about “where are you, what are you doing, who are you with, etc.” (Dragiewicz et al., 2018, 611). It worsens when the same partner asks the same

questions ten times daily, inferred as IPV. According to an Australian survey (Dragiewicz et al., 2018, 612), 546 DV practitioners found that the most common form of digital abuse is consistent text messages and the use of Facebook to harass victims.

The concern here is: Do social media platforms offer features and mechanisms to protect victims from harassment and stalking? In some manner, yes, because keywords can be filtered out, profiles have the option to be private, and one can block a profile if it reaches that extent (Dragiewics et al., 2018, 616). However, when reporting a profile, it is up to the platform to see if the user's claim is reasonable and delete their account permanently.

The authors took their time to demonstrate the safety and dangers of digital media. While it is becoming known that platforms should implement easier features for victims, it also leaves it to the company to determine if their claim is strong. Their case analysis proves that seven social media is not the only danger. Phones themselves do not have enough toolbars to protect and prevent. With the constant texting and tracking, it becomes difficult to leave an abusive relationship.

Harkin and Merkel (2022) surveyed Australian domestic and family violence organizations to show that 99.3% of frontline support workers have clients who experience some sort of technology-facilitated abuse (TFA). This includes GPS trackers, hidden cameras, social media, spyware, etc.. Technological threats are harder to track, and authorities are not responding in full effect because they were not taken seriously. Overall, their article focused on providing options to create an effort to “design out” abuse online. It includes implementing safety and privacy designs for IPV and DV victims.

A major insight from their article was the different protection methods for TFA victims. While the list provided is a glimpse, there are more dangers than one realizes. For example,

Apple's Airtag and AirDrop capabilities cause negative effects on victims. App development and detection can aid their strategy scan for any dangers. Whether through website development or providing additional services, it was fully listed in their strategic planning. I will consider their ideas when observing governmental policies in the United States and evaluating their effectiveness.

Additionally, technology can be utilized positively in addition to the strategies provided above. These authors' strategy holds promise due to its accessibility, low cost, and potential for rapid information exchange (Murray et al., 2015, 258). The communication could be improved, but it has received minimal attention. The first section of this article is about the gaps the authors have witnessed. I am content that they have acknowledged the lack of relevancy and limited communication between the researchers and the practitioners. Stating that researchers are missing information makes it feel reliable.

Murray et al. (2015) conducted an online survey evaluating the knowledge level of technology usage. Participants were allowed to provide comments and details on what they hoped to see. Some of their responses mention that they wished to see more program evaluations and statistics and how well the resources are provided (Murray et al., 2015, 268). This research provided the space for all victims to share their concerns and what type of source they are looking for.

This article is interesting because it shows that not everyone was comfortable using a technological-based approach to communication. Stating that general information is missing for a person to learn more about DV concerns me because the world and community are supposed to help share that knowledge. That is what advocacy is all about. Talking and discussing the prevention of IPV or DV helps victims be aware of who they are in a relationship with. For

general advocates, 50% of participants would love to know more about general violence and abuse (Murray et al., 2015, 273). The responses help to see where my research should aim for.

What exactly has each country done to help victims facing abuse and violence from their partners? Australia received government recognition from several councils. They have identified technology-facilitated abuse as a national problem (Woodlock et al., 2019, 369). Meanwhile, the United States has implemented laws that have made stalking and harassment a crime, but it is not enforced as expected. An example is the 18 U.S. Code Chapter 110, where DV and stalking have several federal statutes related to Title 18 U.S. Code 2261A. It provided different felony charges to offenders depending on the number of times they committed the crime (Eisner Gorin LLP, 2024). Yes, laws exist as it is a felony to stalk, but it feels like it is not enforced enough or charges are diminished.

Social movements such as the #MeToo movement are built to increase advocacy. It allows survivors to call out inadequate systemic responses to DV and share their validated experiences (Storer et al., 2021, 214). These hashtags bring survivors worldwide to share their experiences and have a comfortable space to share their stories. Not only does it allow 9 for sharing experiences, but it also provides information to discredit any misconception related to the topic.

As the authors proceeded with their research, they concluded that social media today is used for public outreach and regarding the organization's goals and missions (Storer et al., 2021, 222). The public utilizes the opportunity to spread awareness. While dangers do exist, knowing that some coalitions and organizations help victims and survivors helps to diminish fear. This is the positive effect of the internet. The amount of support presented brings a comfortable level for users.

As the positives and negatives are listed, it makes an individual think if their profile is safe online. The iPhone is expanding its devices by including wireless transfer of information and can track a person's device by accepting permission to share. Social media platforms include new settings that track a user's activity status, last posting, and GPS tracking. It may seem exciting to have options to use a platform, but it is important to know how it is used. Safety and dangers must be recognized to avoid cyber harassment or stalking.

Socioeconomic Factors

Socioeconomic status (SES) is defined by the individual's position in a society determined by wealth, occupation, and social class. It measures an individual's or group's standing in the community (Sarsani, 2011). These determinants are related to income, occupation, educational attainment, and available resources. For example, a high SES would be someone with a high income ($100,000 and greater), a high-status occupation, and adequate living conditions. Someone with a low SES has a low income, low occupation, and inadequate living conditions.

Wealth and education are not the only determinants of SES; race and ethnicity are also intertwined. Low SES is stereotypically implied in communities of color. The American Psychological Association provided statistics demonstrating the relationship between people of color and SES. In the United States, 39% of African-American children and adolescents and 33% of Latinx children and adolescents are living in poverty, which is more than double the percent poverty rate in white communities (American Psychological Association). It is not justifiable to assume a POC community is at a low SES, but race and ethnicity will be included as a factor. An

example is Steele et al. (2017), where their discovery proved that lower SES individuals reported higher rates of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).

Authors made suggestions that low SES provides a trigger point for violent situations. Unemployment plays a huge role in many households. Lack of access to resources also creates an increased acceptance of violence, specifically to individuals who have a history of violence, which causes them to act violently when they notice that they lack the simplest resources. While this is not only the determining factor, other emotional cues can be potential triggers for emotional abuse (Anderberg et al., 2016, 1948). The authors presented a gender-specific model to find results and determine which gender holds more power in marriage. It revealed the violent predisposition between men and women who hold high unemployment risk. Men who face a high unemployment risk and have a violent predisposition will hide their violence and imitate the behavior of a non-violent man. The reason is that the spouse will have the opportunity to leave the relationship because of his risk. However, when a woman faces a high unemployment risk, men with a violent predisposition will not conceal their violent acts. They will act toward their spouse since there is some confirmation that she will not leave the relationship (Anderberg et al., 2016, 1948).

These authors have demonstrated in their study that unemployment affects both genders differently. As the research was based in England and Wales between 2004 and 2011, the estimates implied that men with unemployment reduce the risk of domestic violence by up to 12%. Meanwhile, an increase in women's unemployment increases the incidence of abuse by 10%. (Anderberg et al., 2016, 1949). The results show that each gender handles unemployment emotionally or 11 physically differently. In a heterosexual marriage, women are inclined to file

for divorce if their spouse is at high risk. If the roles were reversed, women would be afraid to leave because of their circumstances and the violent predisposition their partner revealed.

A study in Pakistan was done that uses income and dependency between a heterosexual couple. Connecting to the previous study, the wives are entirely dependent on their husbands, meaning they have no financial independence. So, if the husband is identified with low educational attainment and low income, they are more likely to execute violence against their spouse (Chatha et al., 2014, 230). As the data confirms my hypothesis, it also demonstrates South Asian culture. Women are culturally known not to have financial independence as they depend on their husbands. However, the patterns still repeat in a low SES household.

Reichel (2017) analyzed the determinants of IPV in the European Union (EU) with a survey of 42,000 women who experienced some sort of violence. The determinant he specifically looked into was SES, which includes household income and educational attainment. Using an analytical and regression approach, he evaluated the influence of physical violence against women with their current partners. Similar to the results from previous authors, partners with lower educational attainment are more violent toward their partner. Women who have difficulty with their income report higher rates of IPV (Reichel, 2017, 1861). With all EU countries, they all report that women who do not have an equal say in household income have a higher pattern of IPV.

His methodology and studies are reliable. His data focuses on the EU states, each country having a sample size between 1,500 and 1,620, excluding Luxembourg, with a sample of 908 (Reichel, 2017, 1858). The goals were clear, and his hypothesis was correct, as almost every country had similar results. It explains that patterns are universal, meaning it does not matter

what part of the globe 12 an individual is in. SES plays a significant role, and authors reveal comparable data, which is not strange to see once the results are shown.

Next, several authors reached out in three Canadian provinces to women who had separated from their abusive partners. In Table 2 of their research, employment status and personal income were analyzed. Women categorized as "IPV Dominant" had a mean income of CAD$25,610 and a 41% unemployment (Davies et al., 2015, 41). While it reveals that income and employment status matter in identifying patterns, other variables cannot give a definite answer.

The article focused on all types of abuse, including child abuse. Isolating IPV and DV was difficult because all forms were tied together. The authors mentioned that it was difficult to isolate all variables when analyzing the survey. Their analytical approach was reasonable when looking at a big sample, but it should have been distinct. It was difficult to distinguish the data, and I could only find a small section that summarized the SES factors.

Another study describes the racial differences in intimate partner violence (IPV) against women in the United States, including a sample size of 2,316 women: 644 identified as white, 62 as African Americans, 864 as Latinx, and 746 as Asians. Their results demonstrate that 17.3% of African Americans were victimized, followed by Latinx or White at 15.2%. The Asian community had the lowest percentage at 10.3%, but it does not mean they will be excluded from the study (Cho, 2012, 352). When defining IPV, all types of severity were included in the research. The problem with this study is the difference in sample sizes for all races. The only group that did not have a big sample was African Americans, which made me determine if the study accurately represented their community. To trust the accuracy of the percentage, the sample size needs to increase or gather more people from the African-American community.

Steele et al. (2017) provided research based on femininity, masculinity, race/ethnicity, and SES on IPV among sexual-minority women (SMW) in the United States. They examined the levels of severity not only in heterosexual couples but also in the LGBTQ+ community. Results showed that POC communities have higher rates of IPV than the white community. African Americans and Latinx households reported higher rates of severe IPV than whites, which does not surprise me (Steele et al., 2017, 467). Concerning household incomes, individuals earning more than $50,000 annually reported less risk than those earning less than $10,000. Even with educational attainment, women with Bachelor's degrees or higher were less likely to experience IPV.

Overall, women with higher SES had a lower risk of violence. It can be assumed that those with greater economic status are less likely to stay in an abusive relationship. If a woman experiences poverty and identifies as a Latina, there is a possibility of violence within her household. No matter the sexuality of the relationship, SES and race/ethnicity intersect, as it aids in determining the patterns of DV and IPV. I enjoyed reading this article, as it used data from an organization in Chicago and found gaps in their research. While not all factors relate to each other, it is important to acknowledge the patterns. The analytical approach helped to see and differentiate the SES and race/ethnicity visually.

Observing and analyzing the demographics of a previous article, individuals who identified as "other" had the highest exposure to physical abuse—then followed the white, Asian, and African American races (Anderberg et al., 2016, 1959). It visually provided a chart to show the educational attainment and who had the most exposure. It revealed that lower education levels have the highest exposure.

Considering this, it is essential to recognize the prevalence of DV, as patterns can repeat in specific communities. SES and demographics help reveal those patterns and evaluate 14 available resources/programs. While I am unsurprised that lower SES relates to higher risk, acknowledging the issue improves advocacy and benefits.

In conclusion, the gaps identified in this literature review will guide me in looking for data that are not discussed. One of the first gaps identified is the communications and positive benefits of technology. It is stated that how the study was handled can be improved, but noting the negatives of technology is important. The second gap identified is the study done on the Latinx community. The research noted their issues and how some of the factors did not relate to one another. Considering this, I plan to communicate how I will analyze the data and provide the pros and cons of the results. Ensuring the similarities are there is important to see where the connection is portrayed. Considering that I will observe patterns, it is good to know how they connect or if there is anything to compare them to.

Especially with social media platforms will allow me to explore and see what has been done to help users with their privacy. Reading the terms and conditions aids in evaluating if it provides the right resources and is truly accessible.

SES and race/ethnicity divide the general statistics to help give a perspective. There is more to analyze than studying the numbers. Looking at different reports (nationwide, Texas, and California) will tighten the data into a more specific area. Age will be included in the analytical approach to help divide the group and identify patterns more easily. The type of abuse will be mentioned briefly, but demographics are the main priority for this project.

Lastly, I will study different U.S. legislation and federal laws in Texas and California to make recommendations. The recommendations will be based on how supportive each state is

towards DV victims and women's shelters. The Federal Laws will help me compare whether each state justifiably treats the offenders.

My goal for the empirical chapter is to locate the patterns. Since it will combine a case study and an analytical approach, I will be reading the *Impact Reports* provided by the *National Domestic Violence Hotline.* From here, social media's terms and conditions will be studied to see how accessible and reliable their information and resources are. If resources are provided, do it include an in-depth description of what stalking, harassment, or bullying is? With the U.S. legislation and federal laws, it is to determine if the charges applied are justifiable. As a business major, I aim to determine if the DV patterns help allocate resources better and if any piece is as effective as written.

CHAPTER III: Empirical Analysis

In my empirical chapter, I will use a combination of a case study and analytical approach to determine the patterns of domestic violence. For the first subsection, I gathered data from the *National Domestic Violence Hotline* using their *Impact Reports* released between 2019 and 2022. While these reports are missing a few years, it is also important to note that the pandemic occurred after 2020, which caused a big shift in how victims and DV advocates report abuse. The Impact Reports include different sectors of the years. For instance, half-year reports are available to the public between January and June and from July to December. I will strictly look at a full-year report that starts in January and concludes in December. Additionally, the report includes overall national data for all 50 states and U.S. territories averaged into one data. I plan on utilizing this data in two specific U.S. states, California and Texas.

Going into the second subsection, I will primarily examine social media platforms. Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok will be the top three applications. I will focus on how accessible and resourceful their terms and conditions are and evaluate whether the resources provided are enough for victims to feel safe on the platform.

Finally, the third subsection of this chapter will focus on the governmental policies implemented in the United States. Policies include legislation pieces directed toward Domestic Violence victims and how supportive and supportive they are, especially with non-profit organizations and shelters. I will also be reading into specific Federal Laws in California and Texas, specifically comparing and contrasting whether the current laws are justifiable.

My overall goal is to identify the patterns in a socio-demographic manner and analyze whether the observed data supports or goes against my hypothesis.

Socio-Demographics

Domestic Violence, as mentioned before, should not be taken lightly. Different types of abuse are reported, meaning that there is more than one manner of experiencing abuse. Each case varies, from emotional to verbal abuse and even physical and financial abuse.

In order to gather data, I utilized the *National Domestic Violence Hotline* for all the reports. These reports include the number of people who contact the hotline, the age, ethnicity/race, the type of abuse, and the first ten cities that receive the most calls. I will mainly prioritize analyzing the age, ethnicity/race, and the difference between "calls received" and "calls answered" from the organization.

First, I would like to analyze the overall rating of the hotline's calls. The overall rating means I will focus on that data nationwide, including all 50 states and U.S. territories. According to the organization, "calls received" refers to calls, chats, and emails through the hotline. "Calls answered" refers to calls, chats, and emails a hotline representative answered and responded to. Information was collected by the caller, including their race, age, and the type of abuse. Then, resources and support are provided, depending on a case-by-case basis. So, if any individual calls or texts the hotline, they will receive help to ensure their safety and eventually leave their domesticated partner.

Table 3.1 shows the national report of all calls, texts, and chats received from 2019 to 2022. 2022 was labeled as the most contact record since the hotline began. What does this mean exactly? This means that all types of communication have been at an all-time high since previous years. I feel proud that victims and DV advocates are reaching out and reporting abuse simultaneously; it concerns me that the numbers keep increasing year by year.

Table 3.1: Total Calls Received and Answered Nationwide

Impact Reports	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Calls Received	622,695	636,968	620,193	775,073
Total Calls Answered	362,867	363,185	408,370	446,320

Source: National Domestic Violence Hotline, *A Year of Impact* (2019-2022)

Comparing between 2019 and 2022, there are an additional 150,000 calls. Remember that this only accounts for the calls received by the hotline. Looking into the calls answered, only around 58% of those calls or chats entered were honestly responded to by a representative for all four years. The number is relatively low, as significant improvements can be made to ensure all victims are heard. Yes, it is frustrating to see a low percentage, but it is essential to acknowledge that more calls are being made each year, meaning that staff needs to increase their size.

Another characteristic to remember is the pandemic that occurred beginning in 2020. The Pandemic took a massive hit for everyone, including staff, DV advocates, and victims. This is one of the reasons we see calls received an increase, but calls answered stayed consistent, especially in 2020. As mentioned, not all the calls were answered because there were not enough representatives to take many classes.

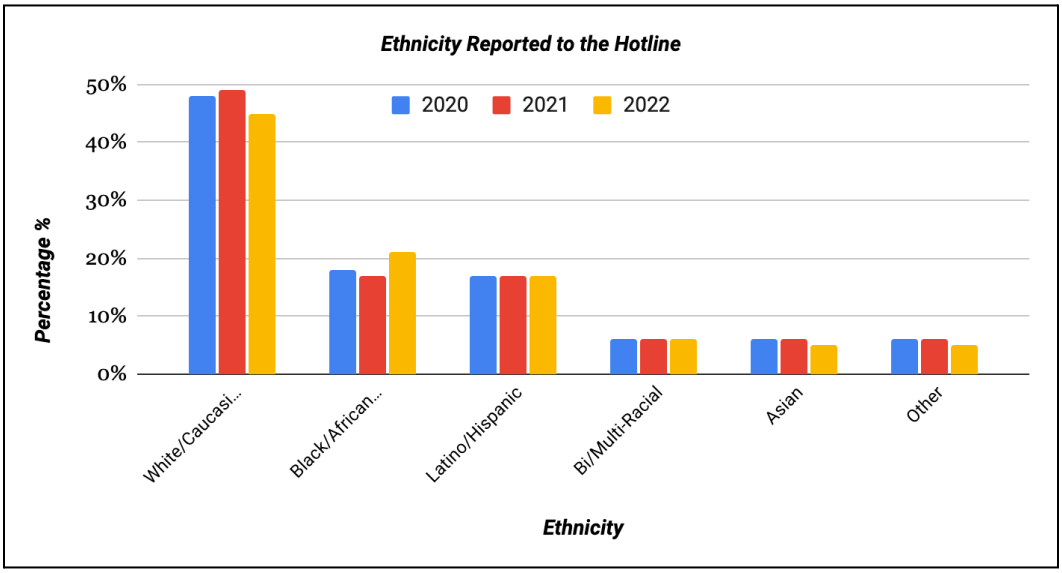
Improvements were made in 2021, as 65% of calls were answered. The hotline made changes within the organization to make a giant leap. Once the pandemic dwindled in 2022, it reported its all-time high. There are plenty of reasons why many calls were received. Since businesses and shelters started opening up, it allowed access for victims to find a safe space to make those reports. Another reason is that victims are not quarantined with their domestic partners, so it gives them the freedom to leave their homes and find a local organization to aid in

their safety. Lastly, Google's enhanced search optimization increased calls, as it is easier to locate the hotline's number and website.

Next, the data follows the socio-demographic factors mentioned previously. Age and ethnicity will be the main focus since I am determining patterns in different age groups and POC communities. I attempted to find more information, especially on immigrants, income level, and education, but I did not have luck. Since reports have been released annually, callers can disclose any personal information. As the year progresses, the *Impact Reports* evolve in gathering details, outlining different forms of abuse, and including the top major cities with the highest callers. Organizations and nonprofits are also listed, especially when looking at the individual states' reports.

Next, *Figure 3.1* represents the percentage of each ethnicity based on the number of callers who self-willingly gave their personal information.

Figure 3.1: Ethnicity Reported to the Hotline (Nationwide)

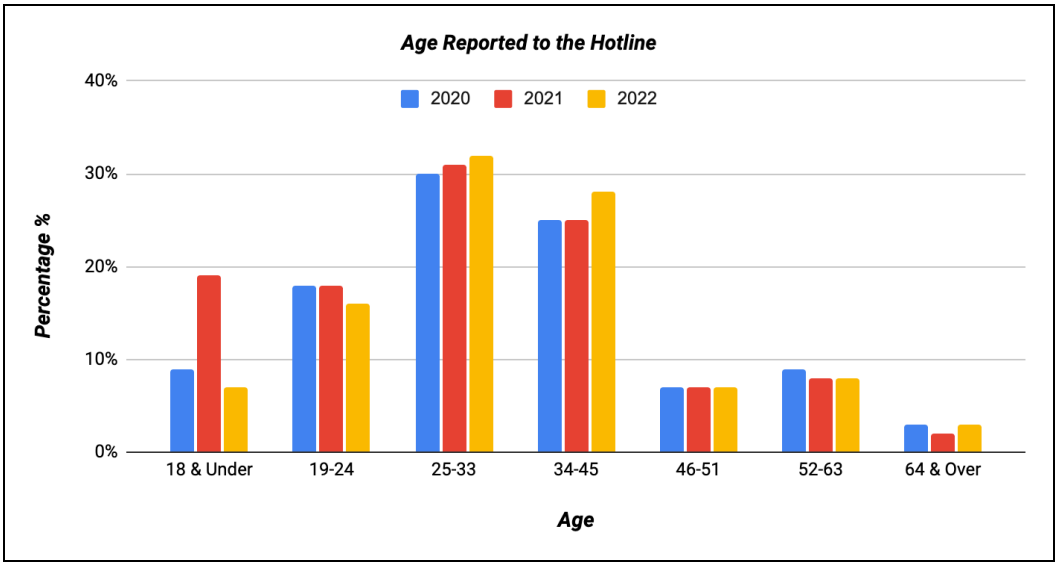


Source: National Domestic Violence Hotline, *A Year of Impact* (2019-2022)

Starting with the year 2020, it is highly noticeable that Whites and Caucasians make up 50% of the callers answered, followed by Black or African Americans (17%) and Latinx/Hispanic (15%) communities. This is surprising because I expected that POC communities would comprise the majority of callers, but I was utterly wrong. The reason why White and Caucasian communities have the highest percentage is because they have more accessibility to resources, such as the hotline. It becomes easier to look for non-profits or organizations willing to help and have the privilege of receiving the best aid. When it comes to POC communities, it becomes difficult to access the same resources. Lack of transportation, knowledge, and a general idea of how to ask for assistance can be challenging. Culture can also play a part, as it is a big part of their identity.

Figure 3.2 labels the age of the callers nationally. Based on the graph provided, callers between the ages of 25 and 33 have the highest reports, making up over 30% of callers during these three years. Then, the ages of 34-35 are the second highest callers, ranging between 25-27%. One year that I would like to explore is 2021, when callers 18 & and under reached an all-time high. It surprised me because I did not expect the percentage to increase dramatically by 10%. The COVID pandemic may have caused an increase in reports, but it is never safe to assume. When looking at the patterns, it is best to explore the ages of 18 to 45 because they make up the majority of callers.

Figure 3.2: Age Reported to the Hotline (Nationwide)



Source: National Domestic Violence Hotline, *A Year of Impact* (2019-2022)

The reports only show limited information since they include all 50 states and U.S. territories. However, I want to explore two states based on their political views: California and Texas. California is recognized as a liberal blue state, while Texas is known as a conservative red state. With these two states, I can analyze the number of callers received/answered, the age, ethnicity, and the type of contact reported to the hotline. One important note is that the *Impact Reports* for the individual states run from 2015 to 2019, a completely different timeline than the national report. The reason is not specified why it has not been updated, but I assume the organization started focusing on the national records.

California is ranked number one in terms of contact volume to the Hotline. However, reports are only available between the years 2015 and 2019. Within these years, the types of reports changed from the kind of contact to the top 10 cities with the most calls. *Table 3.2* demonstrates the number of contacts reported in the state of California. The total population for each year was gathered from the United States Census Bureau.

Table 3.2: Total Contacts and Population in California

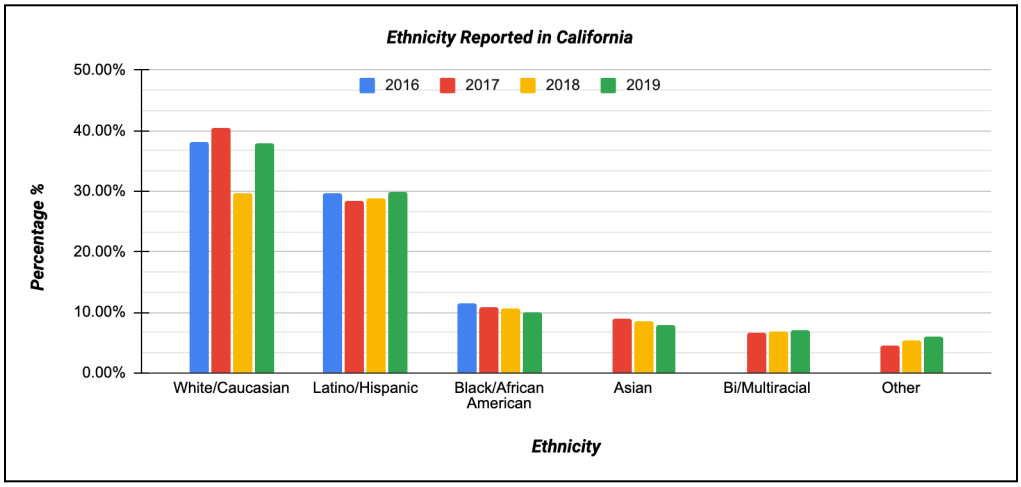
State Report	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Contacts	29,020	28,431	29,321	31,105	26,659
Total Population	38.9 million	39.15 million	39.34 million	39.44 million	39.44 million

Source: National Domestic Violence Hotline, *The Hotline State Reports (California)*; 2015-2019

Between the years 2015 and 2019, it is noted that calls stayed consistent around the same numbers. There was a slight increase in 2018, but not too big, which became worrisome. Then, in 2019, it dropped by 4,000 calls. However, total contacts do not mean that all calls, texts, and emails were responded to. The ratio is unknown but should be taken into consideration. Comparing the total contacts with the total population, it is relatively small. I feel as though the numbers do not represent 100% of victims in the state because they are either afraid for their safety or do not have the resources to look for support.

It shares data regarding ethnicity similar to the national report, but there are some small differences. *Figure 3.3* dives into the ethnicity and race most impacted.

Figure 3.3: Ethnicity Reported in California



Source: National Domestic Violence Hotline, *The Hotline State Reports (California)*; 2015-2019

It is important to note that in 2016, the hotline began listing the ethnicities and races. White/caucasian race comprise around 40% of callers, followed by Latinx/Hispanic (30%) and Black/African American (12%). The other races are equally the same, ranging in the 5%. The second-highest percentage is the only difference between this data and the national one. California is known to have a more significant Latinx population, so it is the second highest because of the population. The same assumption can be made as before. Since the White and Caucasian communities better understand their resources and knowledge, they will be provided with the best support system. POC communities struggle because the same resources are not dispersed equally or are not shown.

Moving on to Texas. The state is ranked second in terms of the high volume of contacts. When ranking both states, it is understandable due to their total population. Initially, I assumed that Texas would have a larger population because of its geographical size. Instead, California has the largest population of at least 10 million people.

Table 3.3: Total Contacts and Population in Texas

State Report	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Contacts	17,251	17,394	19,386	19,168
Total Population	27.91 million	28.29 million	28.62 million	28.99 million

Source: National Domestic Violence Hotline, *The Hotline State Reports (Texas)*; 2015-2019

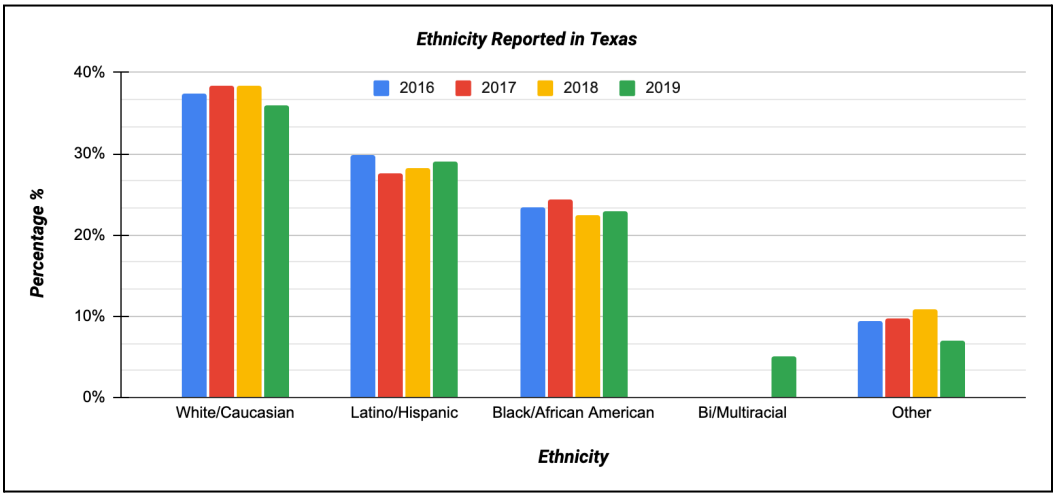
Table 3.3 represents the total number of contacts made toward the hotline. I added the total population because it makes a difference when finding the percentage between contacts and

the total population. While it is relatively tiny, numbers do matter in this project. As mentioned before, these numbers may not represent 100% of DV victims for the same reasons.

Figure 3.4 visually represents the ethnicity in the state of Texas. I am not surprised by the ordering because of their Latinx population. However, I noticed that Black/African American individuals are at least 10% higher, catching me by surprise. Bi/Multiracial was not included until the 2019 reports, and Asians were not listed.

This may be due to their political views, which state that most ethnicities are not listed in their reports. Yes, Texas does have a larger Latinx population, but it always has the same patterns when allocating resources. White and Caucasian communities have more opportunities to know their surroundings and resources. POC communities need guidance and assistance just to find those resources.

Figure 3.4: Ethnicity Reported in Texas



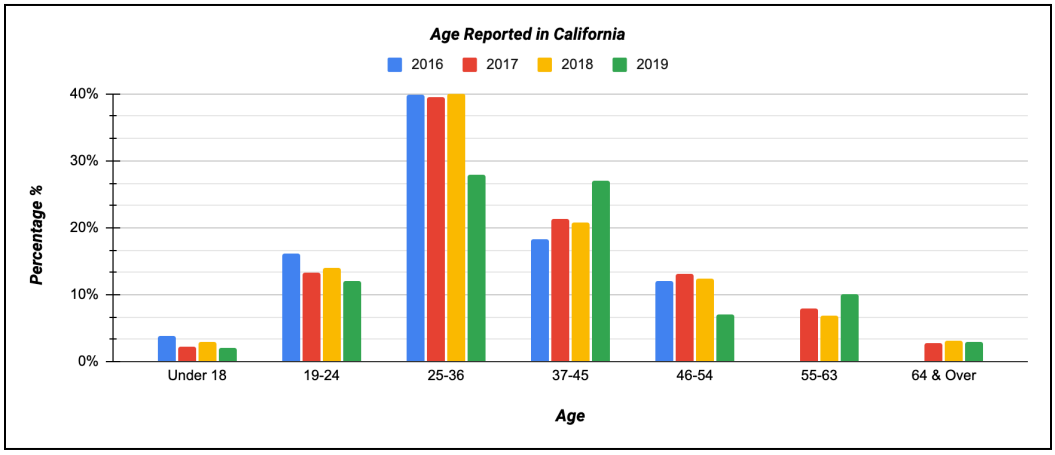
Source: National Domestic Violence Hotline, *The Hotline State Reports (Texas)*; 2015-2019

Lastly, I will compare the ages of the two states. *Figures 3.5 and 3.6* show the differences. California has the highest number of callers in the 25 to 33-year-old range. The same

goes for Texas. Millennials and Generation Z have the most reports. The reasons can be the online world and today's societal norms.

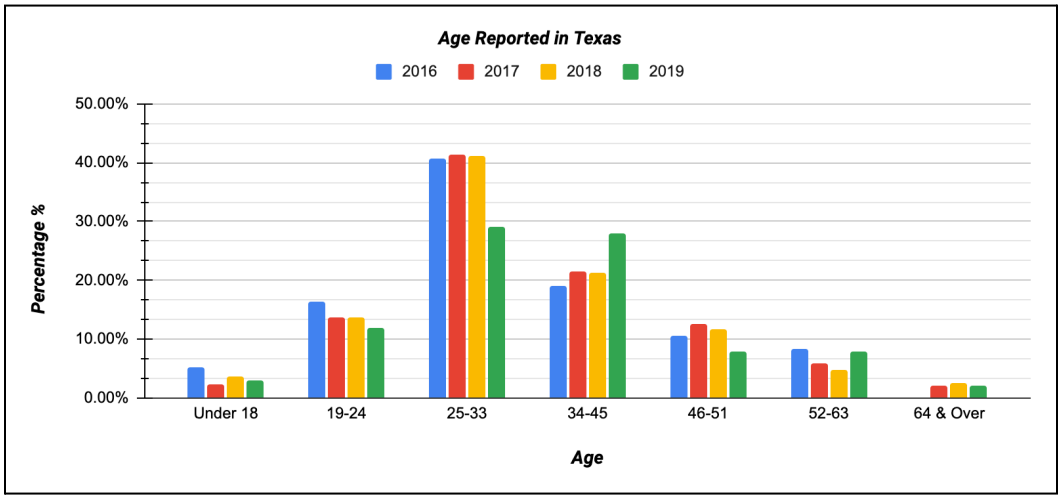
It is essential to note which age group reports the most and to find reasons why. Next is the age group between 37 and 45, which makes up around 20% of the callers. Especially in 2019, when callers started to increase significantly, looking for reasons why it increased in one year.

Figure 3.5: Age Reported in California



Source: National Domestic Violence Hotline, *The Hotline State Reports (California)*; 2015-2019

Figure 3.6: Age Reported in Texas



Source: National Domestic Violence Hotline, *The Hotline State Reports (Texas)*; 2015-2019

Looking at both graphs simultaneously, they are almost identical. Each age group is ranked similarly. Sharing resources, primarily through community partners and social media, is vital to spreading awareness. Many families may not know where to begin. Individuals under 25 may struggle to find the right person to confide in. Another reason why older generations may not report is marriage. Most individuals are married or in a domesticated relationship with children, making it harder to separate from their partners.

Socio-demographic factors and the number of callers are essential in recognizing who contacts the hotline and determining whether there is a lack of resource dispersion.

Social Media

Now, looking deeper into the technological world, I would love to focus on social media platforms, specifically Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. These three platforms are currently the biggest and trendiest applications that are generally used daily. According to *The Social Shepher*d, there are 3.049 billion monthly active users on Facebook, almost half of the world's population (Shepherd, 2024). TikTok is estimated to have over 1 billion monthly active users (Dean, 2024), and Instagram has over 2 billion (Bagadiya, 2024). Since much of the population uses these social media platforms, knowing the safety policies implemented in these applications is important.

Looking into Instagram's terms and conditions, I found a section that mentions respect for the Instagram community. It is stated that it wants to "foster a positive, diverse community. We remove content that contains credible threats or hate speech, content that targets private individuals to degrade or shame them, personal information meant to blackmail or harass someone, and repeated unwanted messages" (Instagram). While this is mentioned, how many

posts and videos are monitored daily? Are there specific keywords or certain images that AI captures to flag the post?

Researching their Help Center, I noticed a section on “Abuse and Spam.” While reading it carefully, I noticed frequently asked questions (FAQs) are posted, especially regarding threats of personal information and images. One of the first lines is the ConnectSafely.org website for anyone who needs information on this topic. Then, it goes to a user's three options if they feel threatened: contact local law enforcement, report the user, or block the user. For those who are under 18, they are given website links to the suicide prevention hotline and an option to talk to a victim advocate.

These are helpful resources to have, especially for minors. By including the suicide prevention hotline and advocates, it allows users to look into their resources and find the best plan for them. While blocking a user is not always efficient, Instagram recently implemented a change where a user is blocked. Accounts affiliated with the same email and phone number will also be automatically blocked. It helps facilitate a safer platform and reports threats (Instagram, 2024).

TikTok has a similar policy, “Community Guidelines,” which all users can accept once an account is created. Their guidelines label it in different sections, including “Violence and hateful behavior,” “Harassment and bullying,” and “Minor Safety.” Those three sections summarize that users should feel empowered to express themselves and that videos that provoke violence are not welcomed in the app and could lead to an account being suspended and banned. Those who risk the safety of minors will be subjected to intervention from law enforcement and authorities (TikTok, 2024).

My question is similar to the above. How is every video monitored, and how often are videos flagged or blocked from viewing? The article does not go into detail about the procedures that are followed or how users are prohibited from using the app again.

Lastly, Facebook, now part of the Metaverse, includes a recent policy updated in September 2023. Within their community standards is a small section for Violence and Incitement. Within the policy, it is written that it "aims to prevent potential offline violence that may be related to content on our platforms. While we understand that people commonly express disdain or disagreement by threatening or calling for violence in non-serious and casual ways, we remove language that incites or facilitates violence and credible threats to public or personal safety" (Meta, 2023).

Below, one of the last lines of the same paragraph states that it does not condone inappropriate content, will deactivate accounts, and will take appropriate action against those users who harm and send direct threats. It feels fitting that Meta will take charge of those who abuse the guidelines and any hate speech posted. It also includes steps that users can verify to confirm their threats and eventually report them to local law enforcement.

All three apps have unique language in the terms and conditions, but it is important to note how the platform takes charge if a user experiences threats. I loved how Instagram included different hotlines and advocates for their users. With TikTok and Facebook, it took a lot more work to locate.

While the policies are important before agreeing to use the platforms, the accessibility to locate the resources is significant. If a survivor/victim struggles to find it because it requires too many clicks, it may lead to a loss of confidence. However, with the advancement of search optimization, any search that mentions any type of abuse will include the hotline's phone number

and website as the first link to click. Social media platforms may not have direct service, but they can be improved.

Governmental Policies

The following policies were mentioned during the historical background chapter. I am mentioning them again because I want to see how they can correlate with and contribute to the social media platform policies to improve the safety of victims and survivors.

Policies are essential, especially when being an advocate. Three government policies help victims and survivors identify their safety. The National Domestic Violence Hotline summarizes these policies on its website for anyone who wants to educate themselves: the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), and the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) seeks to "improve criminal legal and community-based responses to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking in the United States" (The National Domestic Violence Hotline). With the introduction of the legislation in 1994, it was initially envisioned for the country to engage a criminal legal system and coordinate responses to victims. Moving forward to 2022, President Biden reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act, which includes strengthening the existing law in authorized funding and restoration of tribal jurisdiction (The National Domestic Violence Hotline, 2024).

The Family Violence Prevent and Services Act (FVPSA) was first passed in 1984, as it was utilized to provide federal funding and related assistance for survivors of domestic violence and their children. With VAWA, it is one of the key pillars of the federal response to domestic violence in the United States. The program provides shelter and supportive services, increases

public awareness, and coordinates statewide improvements. Not only does it provide services, but it also allows supporting local and community-based domestic violence programs and provides grants to states, territories, tribes, and coalitions (The National Domestic Violence Hotline, 2024).

Lastly, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), passed in 1984, established the Crime Victims Find. Every year, the fund is financed by federal criminal fines, fees, penalties, and special assessments not included in the tax dollars. It is the primary funding source for victim services throughout the country. The specific programs supported are state victim assistance program formula grants, compensation programs, discretionary grants, etc. Many other funding programs focus on survivors and their children, especially helping those who need housing assistance (The National Domestic Violence Hotline, 2024).

These three pieces of legislation are important in establishing safe and secure programs for all survivors and victims. However, it is not updated to protect those who experience digital violence. Most of the funding goes towards physical and emotional abuse. While it can correlate with technology, it is important to recognize its significance. Improvement can always be made, and more legislation can be added.

Looking into the individual states, I decided to do a simple Google search on legislation surrounding domestic violence in both states. Starting with California, the first link that was provided was Penal Code 243(e)(1), which states that it is a misdemeanor to inflict force or physical violence on an intimate partner. It requires no visible injury and can lead to up to one year in jail. If domestic battery causes a severe injury, then it becomes a felony (Shouse Law Group, 2024).

It took more work with Texas to locate, as multiple websites needed to be viewed to find the answers. I was able to see the Penal Code, which is Title 5, Chapter 22, Section 22.01, where penalties range from a "Class C" misdemeanor, which carries a penalty of one year in jail, to a first-degree felony (*Overview of Texas Domestic Violence Laws*, 2018).

Both of these laws are similar, as they explain more about how domestic violence is identified. It is a relief to read that emotional abuse is recognized as a type of abuse since it is usually ignored or put to the side. Taking the time to review legislation and penal codes helps to establish where one can get information and how actions can be taken. I am joyful that more actions are being taken within the states.

Median Income

I decided to add median income to include business concepts in my project. To determine if domestic violence is prone to lower socioeconomic classes, I separated the income level by gender. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics provided these data for individuals 15 and older who have entered the workforce.

First, I will analyze California's median income. *Table 3.4* provides a chart detailing the gender pay gap and analyzing patterns. The table below has been adjusted to the 2022 inflation-adjusted dollar.

Table 3.4: California Median Income by Gender

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022

Male Total Income	$41,424	$43,351	$44,126	$45,850	$47,576	$47,321	$47,314
Female Total Income	$20,698	$29,224	$30,461	$31,049	$33,087	$33,570	$33,450

Source: *California Income By Gender* (Neilsberg Research)

As seen above, it is evident that men do earn more than women. While it may not be enough to support an entire household, it is good to point out what exactly causes violence towards women. From 2015 to 2022, excluding 2020 because of the pandemic, income stays consistent for men. There is a $2,000 difference between years, but it does not make a big difference. However, it is completely different for women. 2015 started with a median income of $20,698. As each year comes to an end, income keeps increasing. By 2022, it has reached the $30,000 tier but cannot bypass men. Based on the literature reviewed, we can assume that women are prone to violence because they do not reach the satisfaction of having a stable household. It is more prominent when their spouse has some violent connection or intention.

When comparing the gender pay gap, it is obvious that one gender is favored more. However, does this relate to patterns in DV? Not necessarily. When it comes to households, I believe it depends on the person. It becomes riskier when women are stuck in a household earning less than their partners. One needs to be careful about the partner's behavior and past behaviors. If women feel at risk because they are not earning enough to support a household, it is better to stay attentive and locate resources when they are available.

Now, looking into Texas, *Table 3.5* provides the numbers to analyze the gender pay gap and why women may earn less than men.

Table 3.5: Texas Median Income by Gender

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022

Male Total Income	$41,901	$41,992	$42,823	$42,919	$45,030	$44,672	$44,973
Female Total Income	$26,817	$27,157	$28,011	$27,931	$28,862	$29,663	$29,984

Source: *Texas Income By Gender* (Neilsberg Research)

Like California's numbers, Texas also ranges within the same bracket for men. It stays consistent in the $40,000 bracket. However, women's median income does not pass $30,000 in any of the years. It confirms that not only do women suffer a big pay gap, but they are at risk of potentially being situated in an abusive household.

California has the biggest pay gap between the two states. In 2015, the gap was around $20,000, compared to around $15,000 in Texas. Then 2022, Texas had the biggest pay gap, by $1000. With my observations, it is important to note how big the gap was. There was a bigger difference around nine years ago, but as the years passed, the gap was decreasing. While it was a slow process, it still shows that each employer needs to find methods to decrease the pay gaps. When it comes to DV, as mentioned before, it is essential to know more about who they are living with. Income can play a big factor, but their spouse's behavior is also critical to know.

By simply looking at the median income for gender and the states, it demonstrates that the gender pay gap will always exist. What needs more focus is how the gap can affect women in violent and/or abusive households. For instance, if the female earns more than their male spouse, then they have less of a chance to react violently or experience an abusive reaction from their spouse. However, if it was turned around, women face more danger, especially if their spouse has had a violent interaction or violent tendencies.

Conclusion

As the different data and terms and conditions are analyzed, more work still needs to be done. There is a need for a better system within the hotline to improve the calls answered. More social-economic data can be revealed within the same reports. The available years can use improvement as well. Certain details may not be shared, but updating the report yearly helps determine a constant pattern. Social media platforms easily summarized their terms and conditions into different sectors. However, TikTok and Facebook have improved, including advocates, hotline numbers, and other useful resources.

The U.S. legislation and federal laws can be adjusted to have a consistent charge nationally. Providing safety and assurance to victims is the number one priority; it has succeeded in the legislation acts. Going into detail about local shelters, programs, non-profits, and organizations helps provide the grants and the necessary resources to support all victims in recovery. The Federal Laws can be adjusted to show how offenders are charged consistently. I acknowledge that there are different types of offenses, and they are case-by-case situations. The charges should not be taken lightly so that victims feel free and receive justice.

Lastly, median income was added to play a part in the socioeconomic status of the project. It demonstrated that men are paid more than women, which is no shock. In order to identify patterns, the pay gap and the history of spouses are accounted for. While we can count on every single individual who had violent tendencies or a violent past, noting that women are earning less, to possibly unemployment, needs to be taken into consideration. Women are at risk of being in an abusive household, especially if the income is not up to the standards of their spouse.

Overall, the ethnicity graphs were against my thesis because I believed that POC communities would reach out more. Instead, White and Caucasian communities have a more extensive outreach network because they can access resources and support. I was surprised by some of the social media platforms. I expected a more detailed explanation from a particular platform and to include more detailed definitions for users to know and have. With Google, it is easier to search for what exactly one is looking for, but the platform's content needs improvement. My recommendation is to be as detailed as possible. It helps to establish safety and reliability. Without it, the platforms do not consider the user’s safety.

CHAPTER IV: Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the previous three, restating my hypothesis, the research questions, and the methodology I used throughout the project. Then, I will highlight key points from the literature review chapter, identifying gaps and specific research articles supporting my hypothesis. Finally, I will briefly explain the empirical analysis chapter and conclude if the data and case studies found answered the research questions and if my hypothesis was correct.

The fight against domestic violence is not one for survivors alone to bear. My interest in this topic is because I want to spread awareness and show how to improve lives for victims and survivors. Focusing on technological devices helps to determine where exactly it puts individuals at risk, from social media advancing to include GPS locations on recent posts and stories and actively sharing up-to-date user locations in the maps section. Additionally, GPS has evolved to include a tracking system on automobiles, cell phones, and small hidden objects. With socio-demographic factors, there are specific factors that help determine patterns where domestic violence is prevalent. Factors include age, ethnicity, educational level, and income level.

In the introduction chapter, I explained why I decided to write on domestic violence and the importance of identifying patterns and safety for all survivors. By identifying and including socio-demographic factors, it aided in determining patterns in DV. Some of the leading platforms that were looked at were Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. With these variables, I set a few questions to guide me in reaching my hypothesis. Do the current U.S. legislations and federal laws help give full support to domestic violence victims? Have social media platforms become more of a danger to victims than considered as a safety outlet? Why are low socioeconomic individuals more prone to domestic violence than those who are higher class?

These questions helped set up a path for me to discover if socioeconomic status affects how victims reach out for help. Regarding social media platforms, I introduced the analysis of the terms and conditions for three social media platforms. I evaluated whether it is detailed enough to be considered a user resource. Lastly, the case study analysis of U.S. legislation and Federal Laws, specifically towards DV victims and two specific states.

The hypothesis that I identified is that domestic violence is more prevalent in lower socio-economic classes. Additionally, technological advancement and social media aid in increasing domestic violence reports since features are frequently added. Whether it be through their cellular devices, from here, I analyzed how safe it was for victims who were classified into specific groups or joined an online platform. Researching governmental policies and examining their origins will help to determine if it is committed to providing resources to protect or support victims of domestic violence.

I decided to use a combination of case analysis and an analytical approach to my research project because I focused on looking for data that shows the socio-demographic information on the national domestic violence hotline. With this, I could identify three main variables: age, ethnicity, and the number of callers answered nationally and in the two specific states. With the case analysis approach, I studied the current governmental policies that have been reformed and redesigned since the 1990s and current domestic violence laws within Texas and California. Social media also plays a part in a case analysis approach, as I evaluated how well-written and well-versed it is. For instance, the most significant section any social media should include is the national hotlines and local law enforcement policies.

In the literature review chapter, I analyzed multiple cases related to the victims' socio-demographics and technological devices. Within the two sections, each shared its issues

and improvements that could be made. With the technology and social media section, most research articles mentioned harassment and behaviors in the digital world. For example, the media was used as a mechanism to monitor or harass survivors and share personal information. Today's modern world revolves around connecting to the internet and frequently updating users with activities and life stories. It is excellent and unique to share what one is doing with the public, but it is important to know the safety issues that come with it. GPS is another main issue, as it is now included in cellular devices, automobiles, small hidden objects (i.e., Airtag), and any online platforms. It is becoming difficult to escape the monitored world.

With socioeconomic levels, families and survivors classified in the lower status are prone to experience some type of abuse in their household. Unemployment also caused a violent trigger for households, but it depended on the gender. Men who face unemployment most likely keep their violent actions to themselves, but if it were reversed, they would most probably not conceal their actions. Ethnicity and age also played a factor, as People of Color (POC) communities revealed more reports, especially in the younger generations.

In terms of the gender pay gap in California and Texas, there were a few big observations. Women earned around a median of $20,000 to $20,000 in Texas. In California, it is around $20,000 to $33,000. Meanwhile, the male's median income lies around $40,000. Yes, the gender pay gap needs to be fixed. How exactly does it relate to domestic violence? It is important to note where each gender lies in the total household income. Patterns show up more if women make less than their spouses. Another factor to include is their spouse's behavior. If they are known to react angrily or violently, the female should start observing their behavior and locating resources. Every victim should find ways to receive the correct resources and have a safety plan if anything occurs.

The gaps that I saw are that findings were reported, but the authors did not share how to improve the lives of survivors and victims. At least two research articles provided options to improve the technological world or resources for the POC community. I wish more were provided in terms of suggestions and safety precautions.

Moving on to the empirical chapter, I analyzed the National Domestic Violence Hotline data and reviewed the national records of two specific states, Texas and California. I chose the two states because of the difference in political views and their geographical size. What was observed is that ethnicity plays a significant role when reporting violence. I was not surprised to see that the White/Caucasian community had the highest percentage, but I was surprised to see that two other ethnicities were close to the same percentage. Understanding that people of color struggle to access resources needs the most improvement. Every single community should have adequate support to leave their abusive partners.

Age needed more analysis because those between 25 and 33 were the biggest group reported. When looking at the graphs, it is evident that Millennials and Generation Z have the highest percentage, which brings concerns. Another reason why the older generation may not report their abuse is the likelihood of being married and having children with their spouses. Collecting the median income level for Texas and California proved my hypothesis. Recognizing the gender pay gap is the first process, but acknowledging patterns in domestic relationships is crucial. Women are more prone to abuse if they make less than their spouse or are unemployed, specifically if their partner has violent tendencies. A suggestion that I would implement is how to avoid women being at risk for violence. For women to be knowledgeable, I recommend talking to local nonprofits and organizations to recognize risks and patterns in domestic violence. A

woman can learn a lot about the risk of being unemployed and what to look for when dating by talking to a professional.

Another recommendation is to study the economic effects, including education level and ethnicity. If individuals notice that high school graduates are more at risk than bachelor's degree holders, it will empower them to receive the right education. As someone who identifies in the POC community, I acknowledge the patterns and make an effort to make a change in my neighborhood. I would love to see women empowering others and teaching the statistical view of domestic violence.

This proves that resources must be handled and allocated better in POC communities. While I am glad that survivors are sharing their stories, there needs to be more dispersal of how resources are managed.

The terms and conditions for three social media platforms were studied in the technological world. TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook are currently the three biggest platforms with the most active users. When connecting digitally, a user needs to know what appropriate steps to take to prevent any violation of privacy. Each app showed its versatility and structure. A section did exist for invasion of privacy, but it did not go into full detail about advocates, organizations, or law enforcement that one would contact. More description is needed, as well as definitions of harassment and invasion of privacy.

Additionally, I looked into existing governmental policies and state laws to see how protected victims are and charges for perpetrators. Laws exist, and the situation is evaluated case by case, but the felony level differs.

Nevertheless, the findings confirm some of the author's hypotheses. While it can not be officially confirmed that POC communities are the most affected by domestic violence, how

resources are dispersed is important. Noticing how the younger generations deal with a whole new issue can be harder since everything stays online. With GPS tracking, an individual should start considering who they share that information with and what device it is on. Even on social media, whether or not it is an obligation to share information, one must be more careful with whom they share it.

More data will need to be acquired to test my hypothesis fully. Not only does it require contacting different organizations, but it also requires willingness and confidentiality to share those reports. The laws and data were interesting to find. While it did not surprise me, it brought a realization that these reports do not account for all the survivors. It takes bravery and courage to share one's story. Additionally, social media platforms can look for improvements in their policy, especially when every state is different.

The U.S. legislation has a straightforward recommendation. When researching existing bills, I did not expect a detailed history of each bill and its current purpose. Each bill needs recognition for its existence and the potential to help survivors. The federal laws in California and Texas were not challenging to locate, but they needed more explanation of the charges offenders must serve.

Additionally, since jury trials are case-by-case, there must be a clear explanation for each penal code and law. I would love to know what exactly classifies as stalking, harassment, and abuse.

Gender-centered policies are significant, as males experience abuse. Women are statistically proven to have higher rates of abuse, but males need to be recognized as well. Most of the federal laws and codes are focused on women. A suggestion is to reword it to a gender-neutral term. Inclusivity matters, and it should be added to politics.

My recommendation for future projects is to focus on the economic side. I could gather data, but not enough to fully support my hypothesis. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics helps to specify households and gender. Another recommendation is researching future legislation pieces and if changes need to be made to support victims. Positioning oneself to fight against domestic violence helps to not only bring advocacy but also education to the public. Every person deserves to know who they are with and where to locate assistance. Knowing one's position in the socioeconomic class helps one be aware of any risk.

In order to improve women's economic conditions, there can be multiple ranges of policies aimed at addressing domestic violence, especially in a lower socio-economic status. Policies that can be added are the following:

- *Equal Pay Legislation:* The gender pay gap must be closed to implement and enforce safety in all households. This can significantly increase women's earnings and economic security, reducing their financial distress, dependency, and vulnerability to their spouses.
- *Access to Financial Services*: Expanding access to financial services, including credit, savings, and insurance, will empower people to be economically safe during a crisis. Financial literacy programs also aid in making informed financial decisions to avoid exploitation.
- *Legal Protections and Support Services:* Including and strengthening legal protections for survivors also includes restraining orders and housing assistance. By ensuring the availability of support services, it allows women to escape their abusive situations and rebuild their lives.
- *Intersectional Approach:* Recognizing the intersectionality of women's experiences and addressing the unique challenges faced by women of color, immigrant women, LGBQ+,

and women with disabilities. Tailoring policies address the specific barriers these women encounter in accessing economic opportunities and escaping their abusive partners.

Bringing awareness to the patterns and finding ways to share those resources is beneficial. Everyone should notice what is around them and know how to utilize them well. The most important thing is to help those in need and provide them with the right solutions. It is a difficult topic to discuss, but one should know where to locate resources and how to support others.

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About the Author

Alexa Isaguirre Portillo is a Business major with a double minor in Spanish and French. Born and raised in San Francisco, CA, she was a member of the Allegheny Bonner Program, where she served four years as a scholar. During her junior and senior years, she decided to take on a leadership role and became a Bonner Intern. Coming into her freshmen year, she wanted to continue her advocacy for domestic violence. So, she applied to become Allegheny's One Love Ambassador, serving four years on the board. Alexa was an executive board member for the Allegheny Gator Activities Programming, where she served a year as a Director of Marketing. After graduating, she hopes to obtain her MBA and have a career in management and education.