



## **Discussing Relevant Research**

Written and Developed by Katrina Johnson,  
Government Affairs Coordinator, Jane Doe Inc.

**Basile, Steve (2004). Comparison of Abuse Alleged by Same-and Opposite-Gender Litigants as Cited in Requests for Abuse Prevention Orders. *Journal of Family Violence*19:59-68.**

### **Hypothesis:**

Basile hypothesizes that although women seek protection from the courts more often than men that they exhibit abusive behavior equal to their male counterparts.

### **Study Sample & Method:**

The author looked at 382 domestic violence cases as documented by Abuse Prevention Order requests filed in Gardner District Court in 1997, excluding cases impounded by the court. The four relationship types are female-male, male-female, male-male, and female-female. Information collected from Abuse Claimed Checkboxes and the accompanying affidavits was analyzed to compare level and types of violence allegedly committed.

### **Results:**

The authors found that female defendants in domestic violence cases exhibited abusive behavior equal to their male counterparts, suggesting they were likely to exhibit the same types of physical or psychological aggression toward the plaintiff. They also found, in keeping with prior research, that females seek protection from the courts in much greater numbers than male.

### **Limitations of Research:**

- Small sample size which makes it impossible to extrapolate out statewide
- Plaintiffs are not required to indicate who initiated violence on requests for protection. If available related research suggests likelihood that data would contradict the findings of equal levels of violence among men and women.
- Authors admit that many of the results they found were not statistically significant and weaken their assertion and findings.
- Affidavits are not designed as research tools. By their nature, they are without specific parameters. Therefore, there is a lack of consistency in the level and type of detail provided from one affidavit to another.

### **Relevant Related Research:**

Lundy Bancroft, *Gender Bias Study of the Supreme Judicial Court*, 1989  
Massachusetts Statewide Restraining Order Data ([www.mass.gov/courts/probations](http://www.mass.gov/courts/probations))

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q: Does this article lend validity to the argument by some groups that women are just as violent as men?**

**JDI:** No, numerous large-scale and longitudinal studies tell us that women and girls are nearly six times more likely to be victims of dating and domestic violence than men. To suggest that domestic violence is committed in equal numbers by women and men is to misrepresent the facts. To recognize that violence against women and girls is more prevalent does not conflict with the need to ensure that appropriate services are available for men. We must all work towards ensuring that services are accessible to all victims of domestic violence and sexual assault regardless of age, race, religion, sexual identity, physical or mental ability, and language as well as gender.

**Q: Does this article support the idea that more research is needed to determine why so few men file for protection in courts?**

**JDI:** Yes, the need for this research, relative to both heterosexual and same-sex relationships, is valid and objective analysis would be helpful to inform future policy and program change.

**Q: Does this article support those who would argue that the current court system is designed to protect female victims and contributes to the lack of men coming forward?**

**JDI:** No, the study suggests this may be one barrier to men seeking protection from intimate partners without elaboration as to why. Basile does support the need for more research on all forms of intimate partner violence and corresponding access to the legal system. We acknowledge there are barriers for all victims seeking services related to language, culture, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, and the need to expand research on overcoming these barriers.