



National Coalition For Men San Diego Chapter (NCFM-SD) California Men's Centers

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March 25, 2009

Bonnie Dumanis, Esq.
Office of the District Attorney
County of San Diego
330 West Broadway
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Ms. Dumanis,

The new training video Domestic Violence: You Make the Difference that your office funded is seriously flawed.

Much information in the new video is not scientifically derived or evidence-based, and cannot be construed as a best practice.¹ The new video:

1. Minimizes female abuse and stigmatizes males.
2. Uses false and misleading information.
3. Creates the wrongful appearance that domestic violence usually involves a male perpetrator and female victim. (Domestic violence, regardless of definition, has been shown through many scientific examinations, in aggregate, to be neither gender specific or primarily perpetrated by males.)
4. Creates by inference and omission the appearance that only female, or primarily female, deaths result from domestic violence. Recent research indicates males may suffer substantially more domestic violence related deaths than IPV related female homicides and suicides combined.
5. Abuses children.

Consequently, this video must not be used until corrections are made, scientifically based information is incorporated, and a true and balanced explanation is presented about the roles of males and females in the "domestic violence" dynamic.

To do otherwise will instill false and misleading beliefs that cause inappropriate determinations when responding to domestic violence incidents. The resulting consequences will be detrimental to our community at large and perhaps life threatening to those directly involved, including police officers. In particular, children may be left with an abuser rather than a protector, irrespective of gender.

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President Barack Obama recently said, "The public must be able to trust the science and scientific process informing public policy decisions. Political officials should not suppress or alter scientific or technological findings and conclusions... If developed and used by the... [g]overnment it should ordinarily be made available to the public. To the extent permitted by law, there should be transparency in the preparation, identification, and use of scientific and technological information in policy making." See President Barack Obama, [MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, March 9, 2009.](#)

We ask that you uphold the credibility of San Diego's county officials and protect our community by embracing the above policy of President Obama. The video must incorporate best practices grounded in evidence-based science, rather than politically correct influences, misinformation, and hyperbole.

Regardless of ideologically, it is important that the production of this police training video be fair, balanced, accurate, and gender inclusive. It is important that this police training video not treat male victims like passing afterthoughts, and not treat female perpetrators as if they were nonexistent; or, hapless victims.

The ANALYSIS IN SUPPORT OF PREVENTING THE DISSEMINATION OR USE OF THE NEW SAN DIEGO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRAINING VIDEO, [Domestic Violence: You Make the Difference](#) is attached and available on-line at www.californiamenscenters.org. The on-line version contains links to evidence-based information and scientific studies, which clearly substantiate that the new video is not evidence-based and contains false and misleading information.

Respectfully,



Founder/Director, California Men's Centers
President, NCFM-SD

Cc: County Board of Supervisors
City of San Diego Mayor
San Diego County Police Chiefs and Sheriff
Presiding Judge San Diego Superior Courts
Supervising Judges San Diego Family Division and Juvenile Division
County of San Diego Office of Violence Prevention
The Children's Initiative
Chadwick Center for Children and Families of Rady Children's Hospital
Center for Community Solutions
San Diego Domestic Violence Council President and Past-President

**NATIONAL COALITION FOR MEN ([NCFM](#)) SAN DIEGO CHAPTER
ANALYSIS IN SUPPORT OF PREVENTING THE DISSEMINATION OR USE OF THE NEW
SAN DIEGO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRAINING VIDEO**

March 26, 2009, by Harry Crouch

[Domestic Violence: You Make the Difference](#)

*"A bad statistic is harder to kill than a vampire"-
Joel Best--[Stat-Spotting: a Field Guide to Spotting Dubious Data](#)*

"I will restore the basic principle that government decisions should be based on the best-available, scientifically-valid evidence and not on the ideological predispositions of agency officials or political appointees. Policies must be determined using a process that builds on the long tradition of open debate that has characterized progress in science, including review by individuals who might bring new information or contrasting views."

[President Barack Obama.](#)

1. The new video minimizes female abuse of males and stigmatizes males:

- a. While the video's lexicon is gender neutral the message is gender biased. The SDDVC and affiliates clearly understood that a picture is worth a thousand words. Women and children are portrayed as abused while men are portrayed as abusers.
- b. There are three scenes with a man being handcuffed or led away in handcuffs, one short scene showing an abused woman with a black eye, several scenes with an abused and badly bruised mother and two small boys, a reference to a woman being killed by a man, a man beating a woman because she served pizza for dinner, a despondent man getting drunk in a bar, and a scene showing a broken out car window with the commentator talking about the boyfriend who broke it.
- c. There are no scenes with a women being handcuffed or led away in handcuffs, showing an abused man of any sort, a father calling the police for help to protect himself and his children, any reference to men dying at the hands of female perpetrators, no man yelling for help as a woman beats him because he brought home the wrong food, no reference to a woman getting drunk, or mention of a girlfriend destroying a man's car.
- d. There are three brief verbal references saying or implying males can be victims too, like for example "...women or men, gay or lesbian as well."

- e. Such dismissive marginalization of victimization of males and blaming by inference and omission is pervasive throughout the video; and, wrongheaded, intentional or not.

REQUESTED CORRECTIVE ACTION: Produce a video that does not minimize the perpetration of abuse by gender, or wrongfully stigmatize an entire gender.

2. The new video uses false and misleading information:

In the beginning of the video Kimberly Lagotta, Chief of Family Protection, San Diego County District Attorney’s Office **falsely claims** that “*Domestic violence is the greatest cause of injury to women in the United States*”ⁱⁱ. Over ten years ago Joe Halliman of the Newhouse News Service reported that this highly popularized myth developed after feminist advocacy groups cited a letter by former Surgeon General Antonia Novello. Printed in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* Novello’s letter gave her source as a University of Pennsylvania professor. The professor explained to Halliman that the study concentrated almost entirely on poor inner-city black women and should by no means be used to represent the entire population of women. Second no distinction was made between domestic violence-caused injuries and injuries caused by strangers.ⁱⁱⁱ The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has stated that “Domestic Violence is the leading cause of injury to women.” However, HHS gave no source for this information, and as of June 2005, has removed the statement from their website. HHS has been directly referenced by many as the source for this myth. The HHS statement has been used with or without attribution as support for the false statements about injury rates and domestic violence variously attributed to others such as the FBI’s Uniform Crime Report, which has never stated that domestic violence is the leading cause of injury, or that it is more common than car accidents, and muggings, or both combined.^{iv} **According to the United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC) the number one cause of injury to women is “falls”.**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Women’s Health USA 2008, offers the following graph from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control division, ***All of the leading causes of injury in 2006 were unintentional.**

<u>Leading Causes of Injury* Among Women Aged 18 and Older, by Age, 2006</u>					
Rate per 1,000 Women	Fall	Motor Vehicle	Overexertion	Struck by/Against Object	Cut/Pierce
18-34 Years	19.2	1837	15.3	12.7	7.6
35-44 Years	19.3	10.9	13.7	9.8	5.8
45-64 Years	22.8	7.8	9.3	7.2	4.4
65 Years and Older	59.7	4.6	5.2	5.7	2.4

Lagotta interjected that, “***One third of women going to the emergency room are there because of systematic ongoing abuse,***” **which is also false**. The U.S. Justice Department National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey shows that ALL violence is responsible for about 3% of women's INJURY-RELATED visits to emergency rooms, and domestic violence for about 1%.^v Since less than a third of women's emergency-room visits are injury-related, this means that domestic violence accounts for less than 0.3% of these visits. The Centers for Disease Control confirms that the leading causes of injury for both women and men are automobile and household accidents, even animal bites cause more injury admissions to ER's than intimate partner violence for women and men. It is a gross misrepresentation to say that one-third of women in an ER are there due to being abused, systematic or otherwise.

It seems plausible that over the years some Women Industry advocacy groups (failing to verify their assertions) misconstrued 0.3% into 30%. The latter creates the impression that domestic violence related injuries are rampant, which they are not. The 30% is erroneous shock propaganda, regardless of intent.

REQUESTED CORRECTIVE ACTION If there are data and studies more authoritative than the information above to support the assertion that domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women in the United States or one third of women going to the emergency room are there because of systematic ongoing abuse please produce them. Otherwise, please have the video modified to dispel this commonly-believed vampire of a falsehood by explicitly telling viewers:

"The frequently-repeated claim that domestic violence is the greatest cause of injury to women and one-third of women going to the emergency room are there because abuse is false, systematic or otherwise. Objective scientific research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention, and by the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey conclude that domestic violence is not the greatest cause of injury to women and only three women out of a thousand who go to an emergency room are there because of being abused."

3. **The new video creates the misleading impression that domestic violence usually involves a male perpetrator and female victim, which is highly questionable, if not false.**
 - a. On May 19, 2006, a [University of New Hampshire Family Research Laboratory 32-nation study](#) of violence against dating partners found that about a third had been violent, and most incidents of partner violence involve violence by both the man and woman. “The second largest category was couples where the female partner was the only one to carry out physical attacks, **not the male partner.**” The research also found that dominance by the female partner is even more closely related to violence by

women than is male dominance. **“These results call into question the widely held belief that partner violence is primarily a male crime and that when women are violent it is self defense.”**^{vi}

- b. In March 2007, it was reported in the [American Journal of Public Health](#) that an analysis of 18,761 heterosexual relationships that showed, (1) almost 24% had some violence (2) half (49.7%) of the 24% were reciprocally violent (3) in **nonreciprocal** violent relationships, **women were the perpetrators in more than 70% of the time** (4) reciprocity was associated with more frequent violence among women... but not men (5) men were more likely to inflict injury than were women and (6) reciprocal intimate partner violence was associated with greater injury than was nonreciprocal intimate partner violence **regardless of the gender of the perpetrator.**^{vii}
- c. Also in 2007, [according to research presented at the American Public Health Association’s 135th Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.](#) which used data from the 2005 National Youth Risk Behavior Study (NYRBS), researchers found that contrary to common perception, **young males and females equally report being victims of dating violence.** “The researchers found that in their study population of 6,951 male and 6,807 female students in grades 9 through 12, 9 percent of boys and 9.2 percent of girls responded yes to the question, ‘During the past 12 months, did your boyfriend or girlfriend ever hit, slap, or physically hurt you on purpose.’”^{viii}
- d. [An analysis of the data collected by the National Violence Against Women \(NVAW\) Survey](#) found that more women than men engage in controlling behavior in their current marriages, but **there was no statistically significant difference between men's and women's use of controlling behaviors** in former marriages. Controlling husbands were not particularly likely to engage in frequent, injurious, or unprovoked violence. Husbands and wives did not differ in their motivation to control.^{ix}
- e. There are over 230 scholarly papers and scientifically based studies that show that women are about equally, or more, aggressive than men, [REFERENCES EXAMINING ASSAULTS BY WOMEN ON THEIR SPOUSES OR MALE PARTNERS: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.](#)^x

REQUESTED CORRECTIVE ACTION: Regardless of which gender abuses the other more, the video must be redone to create a fair and balanced representation of the domestic violence dynamic. For example, perhaps a woman can be portrayed being led off in handcuffs and a man shown in the process of calling the police for protection from abuse.

- 4. **The new video subtly creates the impression that only female, or primarily female, deaths result from domestic violence. Recent research indicates that**

males may suffer substantially more domestic violence related deaths than domestic violence related female homicides and suicides combined.

Richard L. Davis is a retired police Lieutenant, professor of criminology, domestic violence researcher, author of two textbooks about domestic violence, and columnist www.PoliceOne.com. His newest article, *Domestic Violence-Related Deaths*^{xi}, tends to indicate that the commonly held belief that more women in the United States die from domestic violence than men appears to be resoundingly incorrect.

Consider the following abstract:

“The November 2003 National Institute of Justice Journal (N. 250) article [Reviewing Domestic Violence Deaths](#), notes that domestic violence can provoke suicide. The [2003 Massachusetts Domestic Violence Homicide Report](#) notes that suicide can be attributed to domestic violence deaths. The [Utah Domestic Violence Council](#) notes that the majority of domestic violence related suicides are not covered in their yearly domestic violence-related deaths report. The [2005 Utah Department of Health](#) notes that there were 44 suicide and 21 homicide domestic violence-related deaths. Using data from the [Surveillance for Violent Deaths -- National Violent Death Reporting System, 16 States, 2005](#) it is possible that as many as 7,832 male and 1,958 female domestic violence-related suicide deaths occur annually. When combined with domestic violence homicides, the total number of domestic violence-related deaths would be higher for males than females. This article recommends that to truly understand the broad scope and tragic impact of domestic violence, further research is needed concerning domestic violence-related suicide deaths.”^{xii}

In summary, there are scientifically discernable reasons to believe that domestic violence related male suicides are greater than domestic violence related female suicides and homicides combined in the United States.

Regardless, domestic violence suicides are rarely discussed in the context of domestic violence deaths. Conveniently, victims cannot be interviewed; they can only speak from the grave through those of us who care.

The video contains questionable statements like “Of females killed with a firearm, almost two-thirds of them were killed by their intimate partner” or “Nearly one-third of all women murdered in the United States were murdered by a current or former intimate partner” (obviously implying being murdered by men), yet there is not one mention of domestic violence related suicides or men otherwise being driven to the grave by abuse.

The number of domestic violence related homicides, male or female, is relatively small. Even in San Diego the [County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team](#) (DVFRT) has determined

that domestic violence related deaths from 1997 to 2006 ranged from 7 to 25 per year, a number which even includes a few domestic violence suicide related deaths. Higher annual rates typically involve one or more murder/suicides where more than one person died. Yet, according to a [Community Health Improvement Project \(CHIP\) report](#) “Suicide in San Diego County,” there were 3,331 suicides from 1995 to 2004 in San Diego, roughly one suicide per day. The DVFRT report reveals 136 intimate partner fatalities between 1997 and 2005. The authors sensibly note that “...it is impossible to know the exact number of domestic violence-related deaths that occur each year”. During the period of 1976-2002, [intimate partner homicides accounted for 11% of all homicides](#) nationwide.^{xiii} The CHIP report shows 1,416 homicides from 1995 to 2004. Eleven percent of 1,416 is 156 which represents 20 more domestic violence related homicides than domestic violence deaths documented by the San Diego DVFRT— even if there were 25 determinations of domestic violence related deaths in San Diego every year, which there is not, such tragedy is far less than what can relatively be called an epidemic of suicides in San Diego County, about one a day.

Shockingly, the CHIP report shows that **the number one cause of non-natural death in San Diego County is suicide** followed by motor vehicle accidents, drug and alcohol related deaths, homicides, and falls.

Given all of the above it would be extraordinarily difficult to conclude that references in the video concerning female domestic violence related deaths are proper if not discussed in the richer and more serious context of suicides, particularly since astronomically more suicides than homicides seem to be related to domestic violence, and men accomplish suicide at a rate four times greater than women. And, especially since police officers have one of the highest suicide rates and this is a police training video.

The argument to include the gender biased references still fails if the primary intent was to educate about the high rate of firearm use in domestic violence murders. That could easily have been accomplished in gender neutral terms merely by saying, “Firearms are used in as high as 49% of domestic violence related murders or suicides” (various reports).

REQUESTED CORRECTIVE ACTION: If there are scientific data and studies more authoritative than the data and studies above to support the generally accepted belief that overall more female deaths are related to domestic violence than male deaths please produce them, particularly with regard to suicide. Please do not include crime statistics since they are notoriously flawed. References in the video to related female deaths should be balanced with references to related male deaths or the references should be deleted.

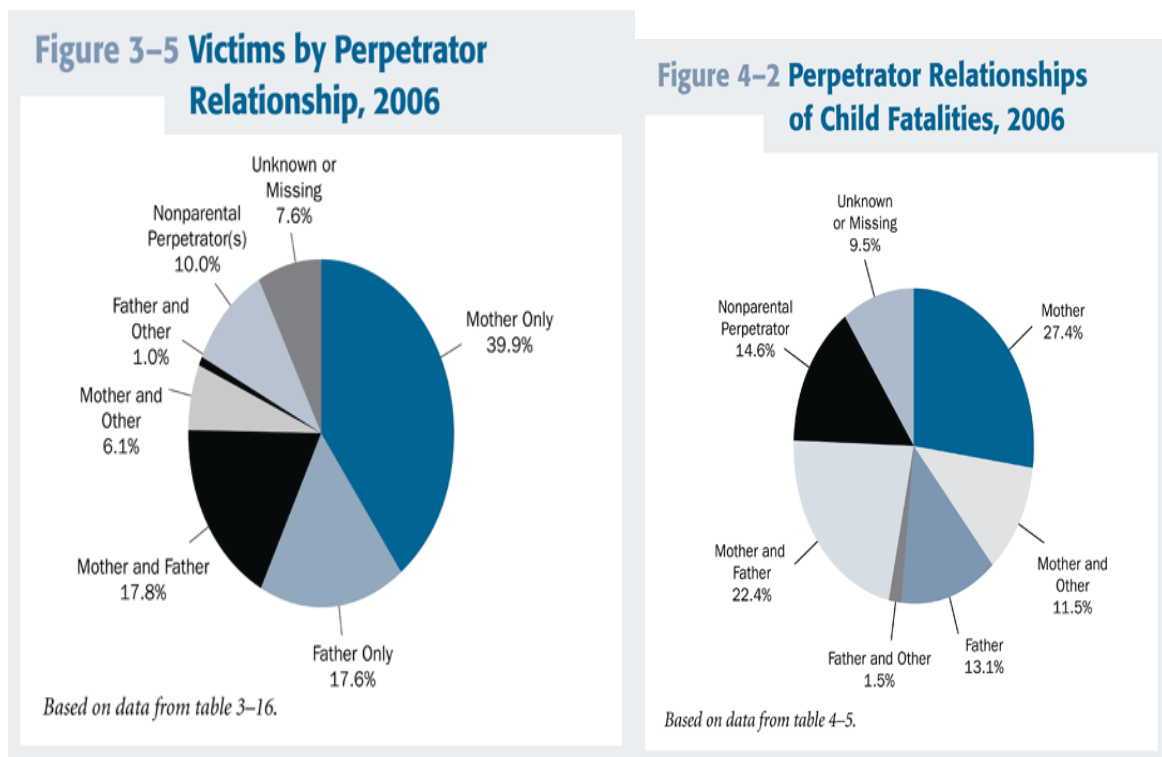
5. The new SDDVC police training video abuses children:

The video has several staged segments portraying an abused woman and two abused children. One of the children appears to be about four-years-old and the other appears to still be wearing diapers. The most abusive scene shows the terrified woman yelling and cowering with the children while holding and consoling the youngest child. He looks uncertain, confused and fearful. The desire to shock viewers apparently out-weighed potential harm to the children. Since the video purports to be concerned with child abuse, the exploitation and abuse of these children is hypocritical and unconscionable. Child Protection Services seizes custody of children from their parents for far less, and the police assist them in doing so.

REQUESTED CORRECTIVE ACTION: Delete the scenes where children are exploited and abused.

Perhaps the following charts can be incorporated accompanied by information to help police officers better identify adult perpetrators of [child fatalities](#) and [child maltreatment](#), from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families.

Please note that the charts show mothers acting alone comprise by far the largest single group documented to be killing children by “neglect and abuse.” Not men.



*There is no reason to raise our children
just to disrespect them as adults,
like while in the line of duty,*

*when they offer life and limb,
to protect our rights to take away theirs.
They deserve much better.*

ENDNOTES

ⁱ In March 2004 the Office of Violence Prevention County of San Diego – HHSA released the comprehensive report of County domestic violence resources, including a plan for improving the delivery of services as well as reducing incidents of domestic violence. After roughly a year of political review and refinement the cleansed data and recommendations were approved into law by the Board of Supervisors. There were several recommendations for overcoming identified gaps in the domestic violence system, one of which was to use “evidence based and best practices models.”

ⁱⁱ Kimberly Lagotta, Chief of Family Protection, San Diego County District Attorney’s Office.

ⁱⁱⁱ Paraphrased from *Abused Men, The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence*, Phillip W. Cook, Praeger, 1997, p124-25.

^{iv} [Abused Men The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence Second Edition](#), Phillip W. Cook, Praeger, 2009, Second Edition, which contains the complete references to over 100 organizations and prominent individuals who have repeated the lie.

^v The Centers for Disease Control: “[National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey](#): 1992 Emergency Department Summary” shows that the leading cause of injury, to both women and men, is accidental falls, followed by motor vehicle accidents. According to the CDC, 13.6 percent of injuries to women seen in emergency rooms are from car accidents—a total of nearly 2 million or almost 10 times the number of injuries from domestic violence. Twice as many women visit emergency rooms due to being injured by an animal (459,000 a year) than by a male partner. The same or similar is true from 1992 through the most current CDC reports. There are no CDC reports that confirm statements made by Lagotta.

In addition, [U.S. Justice Department Survey \(NCJ-156921\)](#) of injury-related visits to emergency rooms found that *all* violence is responsible for 3 percent of such visits and domestic violence for 1 percent. In total this means that domestic violence accounts for less than 0.3 percent of ER visits. Despite careful charting procedures, it is true that the relationship to the assailant was unknown for one-fifth of the female patients and fully one-third of the male assault violence victims who represented 14 percent and 3 percent, respectively, of all intimate partner assault victims in the national sample (79 hospital) survey. Even if, however, the assumption is made that all of the unknown relationship assault victims were included as domestic violence, it still would not even be close to true that the numbers approach 30 percent of all hospital admissions (“We do know that 20 to 30 percent of the injuries that send women to the emergency room stem from physical abuse by their partners”—former HHS Secretary Donna Shalala, statement to American Medical Association) nor that domestic violence is the single or most significant cause of injury to women or men.

^{vi} Men are More Likely Than Women to Be Victims in Dating Violence, UNH Expert Says, UNH Media Relations, May 19, 2006.

^{vii} Differences in Frequency of Violence and Reported Injury Between Relationships With Reciprocal and Nonreciprocal Intimate Partner Violence, Daniel J. Whitaker and Linda S. Saltzman, Division of Violence Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, March 2007, Vol. 97, No. 5 | [American Journal of Public Health](#) 941-947).

^{viii} American Public Health Association (2007, November 12). Male And Female Adolescents Equally Victims Of Physical Dating Violence.

^{ix} Sociology Professors Richard B. Felson (Penn State) and Maureen C. Outlaw (Providence College) "The Control Motive and Marital Violence," *Violence and Victims*, 2007, Vol. 22, Issue 4.

^x Martin S. Fiebert, Department of Psychology, California State University, Long Beach).

^{xi} Pending publication, preview copy available on-line at the homepage of www.californiamenscenters.org underneath the link to this letter and analysis.

^{xii} Consider the following excerpts, which are either intact or paraphrased with permission from the March 19, 2009 article, by Richard L. Davis (retired police Lieutenant, professor of Criminology, domestic violence researcher, and author of two text books about domestic violence) who explains that:

- a. "[Homicide Trends in the United States](#) and other data clearly document that men commit more lethal violence than women. However, NVDRS [[National Violent Death Reporting System](#)] data documents that the vast majority of lethality, both inside and outside the home, is directed at other men or themselves. Given the OVV [[Office of Violence Against Women](#)] definition of domestic *violence*^{xiii}, it becomes impossible to responsibly claim that females do not commit at least an equal amount of that type of *violence*. What has not been recognized until now, as the NVDRS data demonstrates, is that **it appears the majority of domestic violence-related deaths are suffered by males not females**. The question that now must be explored is how much of the female *violence* is responsible or at least a factor for the high rate of domestic *violence*-related deaths suffered by males.
- b. Davis continues, "It is a fact, if one reviews the literature, that the nationally recognized domestic violence organizations, similar to the NCADV [[National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)], have for decades now, been presenting only data that favors their perspective and their concerns. And when an organization similar to the NCADV does so, while it may not be an honest presentation, it is understandable why the NCADV does so. The NCADV is only concerned, as its website clearly documents, with women and children. **It is far less understandable when our public policy makers do the same. I think that most people believe that our public policy makers should be equally concerned about males and females.**" [Emphasis mine].
- c. It is important to remember that the OVV acknowledges the *violence* in contemporary domestic *violence* can include "constant criticism, diminishing one's abilities, name-calling, or damaging one's relationships with *his* or *her* children." There is general agreement that females and males are equally capable of exhibiting [this form of violence](#).
- d. The NVDRS data appears to reveal that the "conflict" and "discord" found in the "forced leaving" of intimate relationships **may be far more lethally dangerous for men than women**.
- e. An April 2008 report by the CDC "[Surveillance for Violent Deaths — National Violent Death Reporting System, 16 States, 2005](#)" (SVD) provides revealing data collected by the NVDRS. The SVD documents that approximately **30%** of suicides are precipitated by *intimate partner problems*.
- f. While approximately twice as many females as males attempt suicide, the rate of completed suicide in the SVD report is nearly **4 times greater for males than females**.
- g. Table 9, of the SVD reports intimate partner problems (IPProb) precipitated **2,031** of the male and **439** of the female suicides. An [IPProb](#) is defined as a problem with a current or former intimate partner that appears to have contributed to the suicide. Some of the IPProb's are a divorce, break-up, argument [verbal abuse], jealousy, conflict [perhaps physical and verbal] or discord [perhaps psychological or emotional].
- h. [In 2005, 32,637 suicides were reported](#). The SVD reports **30%** of the suicides reported were IPProb related. Hence, it is possible that approximately **7,832** male and **1,958** female suicides were precipitated by intimate partner problems. These intimate partner suicides far exceed the number of intimate partner homicides.
- i. **Hence, it appears that there may be far more male IPV related deaths than female IPV related homicides and suicides combined.**

^{xiii} (Fox, JA, & Zawitz, MW. (2004). Homicide trends in the United States. Washington (DC): Department of Justice (US). NOTE: this reference was found in the [County of San Diego DVFR 2006 report](#).

^{xiv} [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children & Families, Child Maltreatment 2006](#)