

# Men Ignored in Corrupt Family Violence Research

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By Mark Rosenthal

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For thirty years now, researchers have known that wives kick, punch, stab, or shoot their husbands about as often as husbands kick, punch, stab, or shoot their wives. But federal law ignores the facts and instead uses the power of the purse to get states to impose Kafkaesque policies that punish victimized men and reward violent women.

Back in 1975, the First National Family Violence Survey turned up results that surprised even the sociologists conducting the survey. Wives attack husbands about as often as husbands attack wives. And wives attack first about as often as husbands attack first, which is strong evidence that women's assaults on men can't be explained away simply as self-defense.[1] But battered women's advocates were intent on portraying domestic violence as something only men do and only women suffer from. So they'd conveniently leave out the part about women's assaults on men whenever they cited the study's results.[2]

Susan R. Paisner is a criminologist and longtime advocate for abused women and men. She recalls being stunned by the hostile attitudes toward male victims that she encountered at one of the nation's first conferences on domestic violence. She naively thought that "we were all there to do good -- for all who needed it." Yet when she mentioned having read a brief newspaper article about male victims, many of the other women at the conference turned on her, saying, "This is OUR issue, OUR cause. If men are battered, then let other MEN do something for them." [3]

The Second National Family Violence Survey was conducted ten years after the first. Contrary to advocates' claims of an epidemic of wife abuse, violence toward women had declined. But violence toward men by women had not changed since the first survey.[4]

When battered women's advocates lobbied Congress, they quoted only the part of the results that suited their agenda. And so, in spite of longstanding knowledge among researchers about the existence of

significant numbers of abusive women and victimized men, Congress enacted legislation in 1994 that addressed only part of the problem. Rather than passing an inclusive Family Violence Act, they enacted a Violence Against Women Act.

#### VAWA

provided billions of dollars for organizations whose primary purpose is helping abused women, but nothing whatsoever for organizations to help abused men. The Violence Against Women Office, which administers VAWA, states that the law prohibits funding of programs that focus on male victims.[5]

At least one state agency that distributes VAWA funds explicitly lists "Programs that focus on children and/or men" under "Ineligible Activities" on their application form.[6]

#### Even after

receiving \$5.1 billion under the past two VAWA bills, battered women's advocates still argue that there's too little money, and therefore the government should allocate no funding whatsoever for organizations whose primary purpose is to help the 835,000 men the U.S. Dept. of Justice estimates are assaulted by their partner annually.[7]

Yet somehow there's enough money in the current \$4.2 billion VAWA reauthorization bill to make special provisions for an estimated 32,600 Native Americans,[8] but of course, only if those Native Americans are female. No males need apply.

#### RADAR

(Respecting Accuracy in Domestic Abuse Reporting) has reviewed the VAWA reauthorization bill and identified the numerous serious problems listed below.[9] The bill:

1 Misrepresents domestic violence as almost always man-on-woman violence.

2 Violates men's Fourteenth Amendment right to equal protection.

3 Lacks safeguards against false allegations of domestic violence, thus encouraging the unscrupulous to use false allegations during divorce proceedings to separate children and fathers.

4 Lurs the distinction between violent crime and a verbal argument.

5 Allows restraining orders based on a woman's word; no proof required.

6 Encourages mandatory reporting, mandatory arrest, and "no-drop" prosecutions, policies which even the Feminist Majority Foundation says often end up harming families.[10]

7 Pre-empts state partner assault laws and the federal Victims of Crime Act. Spends \$1 billion a year duplicating existing programs.

8 Funds trainings that teach judges to violate the Constitution. In one such training, judges were instructed: "Your job is not to become concerned about all the constitutional rights of the man that you're violating as you grant a restraining order. Throw him out on the street, give him the clothes on his back and tell him, 'See ya' around." [11]

9 Funds treatment programs based on ideology, not science.

10 Represents an overreaching of federal power.

11 Corrupts family violence research. VAWA-funded researchers often seek to bias the outcome of their research by interviewing only women, slanting the wording of questions, asking only questions that will produce the desired answer, or by selectively reporting research findings.[12]

12 Funds educational programs that consistently depict men as perpetrators and women as victims of domestic violence.

VAWA should have treated all people equally when it was first enacted. Instead, VAWA tramples on persons' basic human rights while ignoring what

scientific researchers have known for three decades. Our elected officials have a responsibility to make sure VAWA helps all victims of domestic violence.