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# Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Domestic Violence Course: Change in Knowledge and Civic Attitudes

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## Abstract

The effectiveness of a domestic violence course was evaluated to investigate whether changes occurred in general knowledge about domestic violence and in civic attitudes as a result of participation in the college course. Knowledge on support needed for survivors of intimate partner violence, and about the role of the advocate when working with intimate partner survivors were subscales investigated from the general knowledge about domestic violence. This study is significant because we cannot assume that the course is effective in teaching students about domestic violence unless we empirically evaluate whether change in knowledge occurred over the semester. A total of twenty-two participants completed the pre and post surveys. The findings indicated that students gained knowledge regarding general understanding of domestic violence and knowledge regarding the role of the advocate when working with intimate partner survivors. There were no changes in knowledge about the support needed for survivors of intimate partner violence and in civic attitudes. This evaluation of the effectiveness of the course contributed to the literature about educational programs focused on intimate partner violence for adolescents as programs exist that are focused on educating students in middle school and high school, but not in college. Many programs have been offered outside of educational environments; this study indicated that a course provided at a university was effective in educating college students about domestic violence. Increase in knowledge might lead to fewer IPV incidents which have demonstrated to cause health consequences. Future research may provide ways of how to teach college students about domestic violence and possibly reduce future involvement in violent relationships. Recommendations include to replicate the study with larger number of participants and include a service learning component would be critical to measure for changes in civic attitudes.

*Keywords:* domestic violence, dating violence, intimate partner violence, civic attitudes

## Problem Statement

Intimate partner violence (IPV) affects women of all ages, ethnicities, socioeconomic, religious, and personality groups (Ganley, 1995). Intimate partner violence or domestic violence is defined as “a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners” (Ganley, 1998, p. 16). Tjaden and Thoennes found that college women are at higher risk for being in abusive relationships compared to the broader population (as cited in Nabors, Dietz, & Jasinski, 2006). Female victims suffer more consequences than males (Afifi et al., 2008). The consequences include depression, suicidality, post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol abuse, and drug abuse (Golding, 1999). Given the negative consequences associated with intimate partner violence and the high incidence of this type of violence in dating relationships, interventions are needed to educate college women about domestic violence. Furthermore, programs that serve victims of intimate partner violence are often understaffed and in desperate need for volunteers (Brown & O'Brien, 1998). College students represent an untapped resource that could be used to assist in providing needed services to victims of domestic violence should they begin to endorse attitudes regarding the importance of volunteering within their communities.

## Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to evaluate the effectiveness of one college course that focuses on teaching university students about domestic violence, and (2) to assess change in civic attitudes among students enrolled in a class on domestic violence. While evaluating the effectiveness of the course the following questions were addressed:

1. To what degree did college students learn about domestic violence, from the beginning to the end of the semester when enrolled in a domestic violence course?
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2. To what degree did the college students' attitudes about the importance of volunteering to help others (civic attitudes) change as a result of learning more about domestic violence?

### **Significance**

The study was important for three reasons. First, by enrolling in the domestic violence course offered at the University of Maryland, college students may become educated about domestic violence. Educating more college students about domestic violence may decrease the risk of women being in abusive relationships in the future. Second, we cannot assume that the course is effective in teaching students about domestic violence unless we empirically evaluate whether change in knowledge occurred over the semester. Third, studying civic attitudes may demonstrate an increase of civic attitudes from the students. If there is a change in the students' attitudes about the importance of volunteering to help others, it may lead to more students taking civic action which benefits society. This investigation examined data collected at the beginning and end of the domestic violence course to determine if students gained knowledge about intimate partner violence and increased their civic attitudes.

### **Definitions related to research**

The U.S. Department of Justice (2009) reported that the majority of victims of intimate partner violence are women, thus the focus of this research was on female victims of domestic violence. Intimate partner violence or domestic violence, for the purposes of this study, has been defined as a pattern of assaultive and coercive acts, including economic coercion, by adults or adolescents towards their intimate partner, which includes physical, sexual, and psychological aggression (Ganley, 1998). Civic attitudes were defined as "attitudes toward the responsibility to help others and solve societal problems" (Bringle, Phillips, & Hudson, 2004, p.197). The definition of dating violence as "the use or threat of physical force or restraint carried out with the intent of causing pain or injury to another within a dating relationship," by Sugarman and Hotaling, 1989, (as cited by Lewis & Fremouw, 2000, p. 106) was used for this research.

### **Summary**

Increasing knowledge about intimate partner violence may help decrease the number of victims and increase attitudes towards engaging in volunteer service to assist victims of domestic violence. Studies of models and prevention programs on educating students regarding domestic violence have found that improvement in knowledge and attitudes due to prevention programs, but some of the participants in the programs were pressured to be part of the program. Not all participants in the programs voluntarily took part.

Teaching students about domestic violence has been addressed through different methods and it has been shown that educational service learning programs for students increase knowledge and change attitudes that justify domestic violence, but what seems to be missing is the evaluation of civic attitudes as a result of the increase domestic violence knowledge. In addition, not all the instructional programs have been evaluated for their effectiveness nor have been offered as a separate college course. Thus, the present study may contribute to what is missing in the literature. The contribution was determining how effective the domestic violence course was, which enables us to ascertain that college students' knowledge on domestic violence has improved as a result of the course. The findings of how effective the course was, because of the enhancement of education on intimate personal violence for college women, will hopefully increase the number of courses on domestic violence in other college institutions. Also, if the hypothesis about the increase in knowledge on domestic violence was confirmed, then students would be more aware of the high need for help for domestic violence victims. Thus, civic attitudes may increase for the students. Assessing the change in civic attitudes could demonstrate how the course has lead students to become more aware of the importance to volunteer in their communities. The increase in the awareness of helping victims of intimate personal violence could be beneficial in motivating people to solve a major societal problem.

### **Delimitations of Research**

To date, research addressing educating about intimate partner violence lacks follow up after the programs. In addition, some research included participants who were pressured into participating in the prevention program. Furthermore, the studies that seek to change civic attitudes were limited by only focusing on service learning and not taking into account other courses from different areas that may influence changes in civic attitudes. This study

evaluated the effectiveness of educating domestic violence by using pre surveys and following up with a post survey. In addition, civic attitudes were measured as the course may have an influence on changes in civic attitudes.

## **Analysis and Discussion of the Literature**

### ***Intimate Partner Violence/Domestic Violence***

In 1993, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women made intimate partner violence recognizable as a public issue (Meyer, 2000). There has been extensive literature on the hazardous effects for females as victims of domestic violence. Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) gathered data from the National Violence Against Women telephone survey, that represented the nation's population, and found women were the main victims that reported intimate perpetrated rape, physical assault, and stalking. They also experienced a plethora of life threats and fear of physical injury.

### ***Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence***

Intimate partner violence is a public health problem that presents physical and psychological problems (Cunningham, 2008). In the study by Afifi et al. (2008), the consequences of intimate partner violence for women were investigated. Positive correlations were found for women who experienced intimate partner violence and mental health disorders. Associated with domestic violence among women were externalizing disorders which included disruptive behavior disorder and substance use disorder, as well as internalizing disorders such as anxiety disorders and suicidal ideation. Another consequence, found by Ganley (1995), is that the victim becomes isolated by not having outside contact. Some victims do keep contact with friends and family, but with the intimate partner regulating the relationship. In addition, an added consequence of intimate partner violence is that some victims do not claim that they are experiencing domestic violence. The health care practitioners then prescribe inappropriate treatments for the victim's injuries or illness. If the victim does not discuss the intimate partner violence occurring then it is difficult to obtain support from others and prevent future violence. Furthermore, a meta-analysis, conducted by Golding in 1999, found that the occurrence of depression, suicidality, posttraumatic stress disorder, and alcohol abuse or dependence was common for battered women. For each consequence that battered women experienced, there were at least 10 studies that provided support for these effects of intimate partner violence.

### ***Dating Violence***

Based on the studies by Bryant and Spencer (2003), and Straus (2004), a range of 20% to 50% of college students experience dating violence at particularly high rates. The International Dating Violence Survey, by Straus (2004) indicated that even at the universities with the lowest rates of severe assault more than 4% of students had used severe forms of violence in their romantic relationships. The forms of violence include physical aggression such as using a solid object to hit their partner. Also, severe punching and kicking occurs. Violent partners choke, and consistently slam their partner against a wall. Other forms of violence include the victims being intentionally burned or scalded by their partner.

### ***Consequences of Dating Violence***

There is a particularly high risk of domestic violence among adolescent females between the ages of 14 to 18 (Smith, White, & Holland, 2003). A study by Silverman, Raj, Mucci, and Hathaway (2001) assessed risks of young women who have experienced dating violence. The results provided information about the consequences of dating violence. The data obtained indicated that the consequences of those women include health concerns. The consequences include substance use such as heavy smoking, binge drinking, drunk driving, and cocaine use. Also, adolescent girls manage their weight in an unhealthy manner by using diet pills and laxatives. In addition, they engage in risky sexual behavior. The dangerous activities include having sex before the age of 15 years, having unprotected intercourse, and having multiple sexual partners. In addition, these severe sexual behaviors may lead to female adolescents becoming pregnant. Furthermore, suicidal thoughts and attempted suicide are additional risks associated with dating violence.

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## Education Programs for Young Women about Dating Violence

Several education programs have been developed in schools to respond to the high risk of dating violence among adolescents (Weisz & Black, 2001). What should be customized for education programs about dating violence are empirical findings on dating violence. Also, the program assessments should use psychometrically sound measures to assess change.

## Research Evaluating Education Programs about Dating Violence

Several studies have reported on interventions to teach college and high school women about dating violence. One study by Schwartz et al. (2006) introduced sorority and fraternity members to an interactive dating violence prevention program. The program focused on gender role stereotypes that contribute to relationship violence, identifying the numerous forms of relationship violence, and increasing social responsibility surround the issue. The intervention was student led by a student organization made up of 14 peer educators in the Student Speaker Bureau (SSB). The students in SSB received a stipend for their commitment to the program. The program focused on the contribution of gender role socialization to dating violence, the cycle, and healthy communication skills. The intervention included a variety of educational media, an educational lecture modeled after a talk show, and a panel discussion with participants as the audience. To evaluate the program, participants completed a pre- and posttest. Then, paired *t* tests were conducted on the 290 participants. The results demonstrated a decrease in stereotypical and misogynistic attitudes about dating violence. A limitation of the study was that every year the national offices mandate the majority of sororities and fraternities to have an educational program and thus the members were required to participate.

Another study assessed the Safe Dates program on primary and secondary prevention of dating violence that included 1,886 students throughout fourteen schools (Foshee, Bauman, Arriaga, Helms, Koch, & Linder, 1998). The intervention consisted of school activities such as theater performance by peers, a 10-session curriculum, and a poster contest. It also consisted of community activities which provided special services for adolescents in an abusive relationship and community service provider training. The goals of the intervention included improving conflict management skills, changing customs related with partner violence, and decreasing gender stereotyping. The program was evaluated with pre and post questionnaires from the beginning and then months after the program. The results indicated a decrease in dating violence norms and gender stereotyping. Therefore, Safe Dates program was an effective intervention that demonstrates prevention of adolescent dating violence. One limitation was that the study was conducted in a neighborhood that had an overrepresentation of minorities who had limited education.

Another study evaluated the Sexual Assault and Dating Violence prevention program which was presented in association with the local Rape Counseling Center (Weisz & Black, 2001). The purpose of the study was to create a program that would provide support for the findings of Foshee et al.'s 1998 study. The program was an 18 week session that was gender separated. The goal of the program was to increase knowledge, intolerance, and appropriate behavior in response of sexual assault and dating violence. The evaluation consisted of pre and post tests as well as a follow up of the pretest. The results were consistent with Foshee et al.'s 1998 study demonstrating that changes in knowledge and attitudes can be preserved. In addition, there were differences between genders' attitudes about sexual assault and dating violence. There were high attitudes by girls compared to boys for pretest and posttest. High attitudes meant an increased intolerance for dating violence. Yet, no changes were shown in knowledge between genders. Even with the positive outcomes, a limitation was that, despite the program being voluntary, several males in the program were pressured to attend sessions by their mothers.

The efficacy of the Dating Violence Prevention Program was evaluated in terms of effect on attitudes justifying dating violence (Avery-Lead, Cascardi, O'Leary, & Cano, 1997). The goals were to promote equity in dating relationships, challenge attitudes for violence as a solution to conflicts, recognize productive communication skills, and support resources for victims of aggression. The program was applied to 193 high school health classes, specifically juniors and seniors, in a Long Island, New York, school. The evaluation consisted of a pre and post assessment of the program. The findings of this study demonstrated a decrease in attitudes justifying dating violence. The program has proven to be effective in changing adolescents' beliefs and attitudes towards justifying dating violence. However, a drawback was that the program was implemented in a health class. All students were required to take the health class, so the program did not have voluntary participants.

In some school-based prevention programs for high school students, the programs of study include increasing awareness and deteriorating myths related to relationship violence. Evaluations of six school-based prevention programs

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accounted for enhanced understanding about dating violence issues, changes in attitudes about dating violence, and a decrease in committing dating violence (Wolfe & Jaffe, 1999). Another school-based prevention program was for middle school students from an urban area. After evaluations with pre and post tests the conclusions were that the program increased knowledge and improved attitudes towards different ages, except college students (Wolfe & Jaffe, 1999).

Educational programs that increased civic attitudes have been focused on service-learning. In one study, 144 undergraduate students taking service learning courses participated. The goal of the study was to investigate the specific factors such as amount of time spent volunteering, contact with service beneficiaries, and the level of reflect in service, that affect the outcomes among service-learners. The study was evaluated with pre and post questionnaires. The results indicated that time, contact, reflections, and talking about service experiences affects students' civic and academic outcome. Service learning programs that were evaluated demonstrated increase in civic attitudes. What this study did not take into consideration was that courses in different disciplines that also address service-learning may have had an influence as well.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

Several studies on evaluating domestic violence educational programs have been shown to increase knowledge in domestic violence and influence attitudes. There have been some studies that have had voluntary participants, but many participants were pressured to enroll in these programs. In addition, no studies have been found on educational programs focused on domestic violence that measure civic attitudes.

### **Analytic Framework**

Based on Ausubel's Meaningful Reception Learning theory (1973), for students to have learned effectively in the domestic violence course, all readings had to possess relevance to each other (Ivie, 1998). The coursework throughout the semester focused on domestic violence as a whole and each reading had some relation to the previous one. Ausubel's Meaningful Reception Learning Theory is concentrated on learning in school settings and how people learn critical information from verbal and textual presentations. The theory partially explains the approach of adding applicable information to previously learned concepts just as was done in the domestic violence course. The class presented concepts on domestic violence and for the next time the class met applicable information was discussed that related to the previous lesson taught earlier in the week.

For the "Meaningful" component of the theory, acquiring concepts at the beginning will lead to learning new notions that are connected in the existing cognitive structure, if learned soon after. In relation to the domestic violence course, students obtained information at the beginning of the course and throughout the semester learned new relevant ideas. As long as the information obtained at the beginning of the course connected to the new concepts then what should have resulted is meaningful learning from the students.

In terms of the "Reception" part of the theory, verbal learning is considered effective. Verbal learning is when content is discussed by the students so that the content may be integrated. In the domestic violence course, students engaged in class discussion on the readings and engaged in role play practice sessions. By verbally discussing the concepts, students are integrating the information into their cognitive structures rather than just memorizing. The Meaningful Reception Learning Theory focuses on how the information is approached for students to meaningfully learn information. The domestic violence course assigned readings each week, implemented discussions, and role play sessions. All of the strategies used in the course, according to Ausubel's Meaningful Reception Learning Theory, should effectively change student learning about domestic violence.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

#### ***Purpose of Study and Research Questions***

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to evaluate the effectiveness of one college course that focuses on teaching university students about domestic violence, and (2) to assess change in civic attitudes among students enrolled in a class on domestic violence. A college course that taught university students about domestic violence was assessed for this study. Our research addressed the following questions:

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### **Research Question 1**

To what degree did the college students learn about domestic violence when enrolled in a course focused on intimate partner violence as assessed at the beginning and end of the semester?

#### **Hypothesis 1**

Students will increase in knowledge about domestic violence as a result of enrollment in the course.

- a. Students' scores on the General Knowledge of Domestic Violence Subscale will increase from pretest to posttest.
- b. Students' scores on the Support Needed for Survivors Subscale will increase from pretest to posttest.
- c. Students' scores on the Knowledge about the Role of the Advocate when Working with IPV Survivors Subscale will increase from pretest to posttest.

### **Research Question 2**

To what degree did the students' civic attitudes change as a result of enrollment in a domestic violence?

#### **Hypothesis 2**

Students will increase in civic attitudes at the end of a college domestic violence course.

- a. Students' scores on the Civic Attitudes Scale will increase from pretest to posttest.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study consisted of 22 undergraduate students ( $N = 22$ ), enrolled in a semester course in psychology that focused on educating the students about theory and research relevant to domestic violence. There were 34 participants who completed the pre-test survey but only 22 of the 34 completed both pre and post surveys. The participants were predominantly women. To ensure confidentiality, participants' demographic characteristics were not collected.

### **Procedure**

At the beginning of the semester, the students who were enrolled in the domestic violence course were invited to participate in a study on the effectiveness of the course. The professor teaching the course left the room while the teaching assistant described the study to the students. The students were told that participation was optional. Also, to protect the students in class, they were told that the survey was anonymous, confidential, and the professor would not know who volunteered. The teaching assistant distributed consent forms for students to read. The students who agreed to participate signed the consent form and then received the survey. Students were asked to write down a random four digit number, instead of their names, when filling out the survey because the researchers needed to link pre-and post-test scores. After the students completed the surveys, the teaching assistant gave the surveys to the administrative assistant to hold until the semester grades were submitted.

Post-test data were collected on the last day of class. The professor left the room and the teaching assistant invited participation from the students for the survey. The same protocol as the beginning of the semester was carried out, except there were no consent forms to fill out because this was completed at the beginning of the semester. Of the 35 students who enrolled in the domestic violence course, 34 participants filled out the pre-test survey. Twenty-two participants completed the post survey, resulting in a 65% return rate. The pre and post surveys measured knowledge on domestic violence, support, advocacy, and civic attitudes. In this study, only the knowledge of domestic violence and civic attitudes data were examined.

### **Measure**

The constructs of interest for this study were assessed using the Knowledge of Intimate Partner Violence Scale (KIPVS) and the Civic Attitudes Scale (Mabry, 1998). The three hypothesized subscales of KIPVS measure for domestic violence included General Knowledge of Intimate Partner Violence Subscale, Support Needed for Survivors Subscale, and Knowledge about the Role of the Advocate when Working with IPV Survivors Subscale.

**Knowledge.** General understanding regarding domestic violence was assessed using the General Knowledge of Intimate Partner Violence Subscale of the Knowledge of Intimate Partner Violence Scale (O'Brien & Goodman, 2009). This subscale consisted of six items assessing knowledge of domestic violence, e.g., "A key factor contributing

to a woman's decision about whether to leave an abusive relationship is her ability to support herself and her children economically." Response options ranged from 1 to 7, where 1 indicated "strongly disagree" and 7 represented "strongly agree." To score the measure, two questions were reverse coded and the items were summed. High scores indicated substantive knowledge regarding domestic violence.

**Support.** Knowledge regarding how much support survivors need was assessed using the two item Support Needed for Survivors Subscale of the Knowledge of Intimate Partner Violence Scale (O'Brien & Goodman, 2009). One item was reversed, e.g., "Almost all violence survivors need formal support (e.g., help with housing, food, legal advice) more than they need informal support (i.e., support from family and friends)." Response option varied from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree." High scores signified substantive knowledge regarding the support needed for survivors.

**Advocate.** Understanding regarding the role of the advocate was assessed using Knowledge about the Role of the Advocate when Working with IPV Survivors Subscale of the Knowledge of Intimate Partner Violence Scale (O'Brien & Goodman, 2009). This subscale included six items, e.g., "It is much more important for advocates to offer a relationship than to offer advice" with five of those items reversed. Response options ranged from 1 to 7, where 1 indicated "strongly disagree" and 7 represented "strongly agree." For each item, the participants indicated the degree to which they strongly disagreed (1) to strongly agreed (7). High scores indicated superior knowledge in the role of advocates who work with IPV survivors.

**Civic Attitudes.** Civic attitudes were assessed using the Civic Attitudes scale (Mabry, 1998). There were five items assessing civic attitudes, e.g., "It is important to help others even if you don't get paid for it." The choices for answering ranged from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated "strongly disagree" and 5 represented "strongly agree." High scores meant that the student believed in the importance of volunteering by giving back to the community.

### **Data Analysis Strategies**

First, descriptive statistics for each scale were computed (see Table 1). The descriptive statistics included minimum and maximum scores from a scale, mean of the scores, and standard deviation. The standard deviation represents the variation from the average data set (Pigott & Wu, 2008). The higher standard deviation signifies greater dispersion across the data. Second, to evaluate changes from the pre (time 1) and post (time 2) surveys, four paired T-tests were used by utilizing the results of the paired samples statistics (see Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). According to Sosulski and Weiss (2003), paired *t* tests compare the average mean of two observations. In this study, we compared scores at time 1 and time 2 for two scales and three subscales of importance to the domestic violence course. The computer program SPSS, which is a resource for statistical analysis, was used to conduct the paired *t* tests.

Descriptive statistics indicated that the participants scored in the high range for time 1 and time 2 for the general knowledge of intimate partner violence Subscale measure. A high range means that the participants had a great amount of knowledge at the beginning and at the end of the course regarding general knowledge of intimate partner violence. For time 1 the minimum score was 3.67, the maximum score was 6.50, mean of scores was 5.14, and standard deviation was .70. For time 2 the lowest score was 4.17, the highest score was 7, mean of scores was 6.08, and standard deviation was .65.

With regard to the Support Needed for Survivors Subscale measure, the participants scored in the high range for time 1 and time 2. What scoring high range means is that the participants, when taking the survey both times, had an elevated level of knowledge on support needed for survivors. For time 1 the lowest score was 3.5, highest was 7, the mean of these scores was 5.44, and the standard deviation was 1.13. Time 2 had similar results with a minimum score of 3.5, maximum score of 7, mean score of 5.88, and standard deviation of 1.05.

The Knowledge about the Role of the Advocate when Working with IPV Survivors Subscale measure for time 1 demonstrated a moderate range score by the participants. A moderate range indicated that the participants had some knowledge about the role of an advocate when working with IPV survivors. For time 2 participants scored in the high range. The high range means that the participants had robust amounts of knowledge. Results for time 1 are as follows. The lowest score was 3.33, the highest score was 6.17, mean of scores was 4.42, and standard deviation was .60. For time 2 the lowest score was 3, the highest score was 6.67, mean of the scores was 5.55, and standard deviation was .89.

For time 1 and time 2, participants scored in the high range of the Civic Attitudes Scale which signifies that participants had a high level of civic attitudes at pre and post testing. For time 1 the lowest score was 3, highest was 5, the mean of these scores was 4.40, and the standard deviation was .52. Time 2 had similar results with a minimum score of 3.2, maximum score of 5, mean score of 4.55, and standard deviation of .48.

The *t* test results for the subscales were determined to be statistically significant if the probability of success, *p*, was less than 0.01. The results of the paired *t* test analyses indicated the following. Participants’ knowledge changed significantly from the first day of class to the last day of class with regard to General Knowledge of Intimate Partner Violence Subscale ( $t = -5.38, df = 21, p = .00$ ). My hypothesis that students scores on the general Knowledge would increase from pretest to posttest was supported taking into account General Knowledge of Intimate Partner Violence Subscale.

The knowledge regarding the support needed for survivors indicated no statistical change from pre to post test ( $t = -1.48, df = 21, p = .15$ ). My hypothesis with regards to Support Needed for Survivors Subscale was not supported because from pre to post test there was no significant increase. From time 1 to time 2 there was a significant change in participants’ knowledge pertaining to Knowledge about the Role of the Advocate when Working with IPV Survivors Subscale ( $t = -5.66, df = 21, p = .00$ ). Thus, my hypothesis about students’ scores increasing from pretest to posttest was supported regarding Knowledge on Role of the Advocate when Working with IPV Survivors Subscale. A summary of the results from time 1 to time 2 is graphed in Figure 1.

Based on the paired sample *t* test considering the Civic Attitudes scale, there was no significant change in participants’ beliefs in the value of helping others in their society ( $t = -.73, df = 21, p = .47$ ). My hypothesis regarding Civic Attitudes Subscale was not supported. No statistically significant results led me to conclude that increased in civic attitudes did not occur as a result of this college domestic violence course.

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics on Knowledge of Intimate Partner Violence and Civic Attitudes Scales**

Scale	N	Time 1				Time 2				
		Min	Max	Mean	SD	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
General Knowledge of IPV Subscale	34	3.67	6.50	5.14	.70	22	4.17	7.00	6.08	.65
Support Needed for Survivors Subscale	34	3.50	7.00	5.44	1.13	22	3.50	7.00	5.88	1.05
Knowledge About the Role Of the Advocate When Working With IPV Survivors	34	3.33	6.17	4.42	.60	22	3.00	6.67	5.55	.89
Civic Attitudes Scale	34	3.00	5.00	4.40	.52	22	3.20	5.00	4.55	.48

**Table 2 Paired Samples Statistics on General Knowledge of IPV Subscale**

Pair 1	Mean	N	SD	SEM
T1 General Knowledge of IPV Subscale	5.02	22	.75	.16
T2 General Knowledge of IPV Subscale	6.08	22	.65	.14

**Table 3 Paired Samples T-Test Differences on General Knowledge of IPV Subscale**

	Mean	SD	SEM	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1								
T1 General Knowledge of Intimate Partner Violence Subscale	-1.06	.92	.19	-1.47	-.65	-5.38	21	.00
T2 General Knowledge of Intimate Partner Violence Subscale								

**Table 4 Paired Samples Statistics on Support Needed for Survivors Subscale**

Pair 1	Mean	N	SD	SEM
T1 Support Needed for Survivors Subscale	5.45	22	1.18	.25
T2 Support Needed for Survivors Subscale	5.88	22	1.05	.22

**Table 5 Paired Samples T-Test Differences on Support Needed for Survivors Subscale**

	Mean	SD	SEM	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1								
T1 Support Needed for Survivors Subscale	-.43	1.36	.29	-1.03	.17	-1.48	21	.15
T2 Support Needed for Survivors Subscale								

**Table 6 Paired Samples Statistics on Knowledge on the Role of the Advocate when Working with IPV Survivors Subscale**

Pair 1	Mean	N	SD	SEM
T1 Knowledge about the Role of the Advocate when Working with IPV Survivors Subscale	4.54	22	.63	.13
T2 Knowledge about the Role of the Advocate when Working with IPV Survivors Subscale	5.55	22	.89	.19

**Table 7 Paired Samples T-Test on Knowledge on the Role of the Advocate when Working with IPV Survivors Subscale**

Pair 1	Mean	SD	SEM	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
T1 Support Needed for Survivors Subscale	-1.00	.83	.17	-1.37	-.63	-5.66	21	.00
T2 Support Needed for Survivors Subscale								

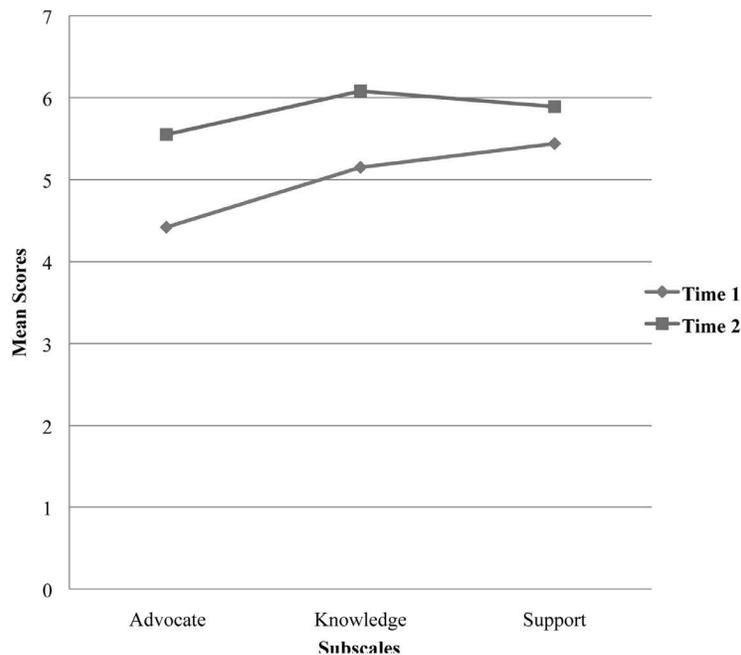
**Table 8 Paired Samples Statistics on Civic Attitudes**

Pair 1	Mean	N	SD	SEM
T1 Civic Attitudes Scale	4.49	22	.40	.08
T2 Civic Attitudes Scale	4.55	22	.48	.10

**Table 9 Paired Samples T-Test on Civic Attitudes Scale**

Pair 1	Mean	SD	SEM	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
T1 Civic Attitudes Scale T2 Civic Attitudes Scale	-.06	.40	.08	-.24	.11	-.73	21	.47

**Figure 1. KIPVS Subscale at Two Time Points**



**Strategies for Minimizing Bias and Error**

To minimize bias and error, students did not place their names on the surveys. Instead, a 4 digit code number was used to connect the pre and post tests. Also, some questions were reversed to make sure students were attentive when responding.

**Ethical Considerations**

Steps were taken to guarantee that all procedures for the research were done in an ethical manner. To conduct this research at the University of Maryland, the researchers obtained permission through the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Also, participation in the study was optional. In addition, consent forms were provided for the students to educate the students about the procedures of the study. In addition, the identity of the participants remained anonymous.

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## Discussion

### *Findings*

The literature suggested that change in knowledge regarding domestic violence occurs in domestic violence educational programs. There have been evaluations to demonstrate the effectiveness of the programs; likewise this study has demonstrated the effectiveness of one domestic violence college course with regard to increases in general knowledge about domestic violence and the role of advocates in working with victims of domestic violence. However, there were no changes in knowledge on the support needed for survivors of domestic violence or civic attitudes. The evaluation of the course based on this study demonstrates the class is effective with regard to advancing knowledge concerning the domestic violence generally and the role of an advocate when working with IPV survivors more specifically.

Increased knowledge regarding the support needed for survivors of domestic violence and change in civic attitudes was not a focus based on the literature, but for this study it was measured. The hypothesis that there would be an increase of knowledge regarding support needed for survivors of domestic violence was not supported. The findings for the support subscale not demonstrating an increase in knowledge may be because there were only two questions for each survey. Having just two questions is a small number to obtain significant results when working with sample  $t$  test. An additional explanation for why I found what I did concerning the support subscale is that for time 1 the scores were already in the high range. The students in the class may have had other influences that led to a superior level of knowledge on support needed for survivors of domestic violence.

In addition, the findings did not support the hypothesis that there would be an increase in civic attitudes at the end of a college domestic violence course. Perhaps people who already had high civic attitudes may have enrolled in the class. In addition, there may not have been an increase because there may have been other influences before the students took the course that created a high level of civic attitudes for the students. Another explanation for why I did not find what I hypothesized is that the class did not focus in trying to change the students civic attitudes rather just teach them general knowledge about domestic violence. A service learning component to the class might be more likely to cause an increase in civic attitudes.

This study improves upon past studies by having participants voluntarily take the evaluated course and by educating college students. In previous literature, studies, such as Schwartz et al. (2006) and Weisz and Black (2001) programs that educated young men and women on domestic violence were evaluated. Both studies based on the literature had involuntary participants. This study had students who voluntarily signed up for the domestic violence course and took the surveys. In regards to the study by Wolfe and Jaffe (1999) there were evaluations of six school-based prevention programs for high schools and middle schools. The present study discussed, improves upon the past study because there is a focus on college students who are also at risk for domestic violence. This study is important because by educating more college students, especially college women, on domestic violence it could lessen the occurrence of dating violence. Minimizing the risk of dating violence is important in society because of the seriousness of consequences.

### *Limitations of the Study*

One limitation that constrains this research was the limited number of students in the study. With the data collected, changes in attitudes were found; however having a larger sample size would enable us to test for relationships that may not have emerged as significant because of the small sample size and inadequate power in this study. Thus, generalizations cannot be made for domestic violence courses taught in other schools.

A second limitation is that the participants were undergraduate students. High school students, as well as graduate students, who are taught at school about domestic violence could display different results, or rather, contribute to our knowledge about the effectiveness of programs designed to increase knowledge about domestic violence. Furthermore, the undergraduate students in the class were predominantly women; and studies are needed that assess changes in attitudes among young men. An additional limitation was that one of the measures was developed by the primary researchers for this study and support has not yet been demonstrated for the psychometric properties of the instrument.

### *Conclusion*

Despite the limitations, however, the results of these analyses do provide an important contribution to the literature. If evaluating the course demonstrates an increase in knowledge of IPV, then the course may continue to be taught and further evaluated to study emerging relationships not yet found.

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### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on this analysis of the effectiveness of one college domestic violence course, students evidenced changes in general knowledge about domestic violence and understanding about the role of the advocate in working with victims of domestic violence. Yet, for future research it would be recommended to replicate the study with a higher number of participants and to use instruments with tested psychometric properties. In addition, including a service learning component would be important to assess for changes in civic attitudes.

By replicating the study with the above recommendations, additional information about the effectiveness of the domestic violence course could emerge. It is important to continue research on this study as dating violence is a high risk factor for college students. If an evaluation of the domestic violence course demonstrates an increase in knowledge on intimate partner violence, it may lead to more people becoming aware of the occurrence and consequence of domestic violence. As society becomes more aware of this salient issue, additional precautions may be taken by people who could be involved in a violent relationship. The consequences of intimate partner violence relationships are severe and include depression, suicidality, posttraumatic stress disorder, and alcohol abuse. If women take a domestic violence class, their increase in knowledge might lead to fewer IPV incidents which have shown to cause health consequences. Future research may provide ways of how to teach college students about domestic violence and possibly reduce future involvement in violent relationships.

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