

2020

## Female Domestic Violence Victims' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Protective Orders

Alisa Fant Hayes  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Alisa Fant Hayes

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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

Female Domestic Violence Victims' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Protective  
Orders

by

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Ed.S, Freed Hardeman University, 2009

M.S.Ed, Southern University, 1994

BS, University of Tennessee at Martin, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

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## Abstract

Domestic violence (DV) is a serious problem that has negatively affected millions of women in the United States and other countries physically, emotionally, and economically. However, little is known about the victims' perceptions of the protective order (PO), and the results of their contact with or physical harm caused by the abuser. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the effectiveness of the PO from real-life experiences of women who are victims of DV. The survivor theory provided the framework for the study. Semistructured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted by phone with 10 African American women who had experiences with DV and had been granted an order of protection. Data from the transcripts were hand coded to develop themes to answer the research questions. Findings indicated that the victims who experienced positive effects of the restraining order had experiences that were associated with stern judges, advocating for self, and abusers who responded in a positive way to arrest and jail time. Victims who experienced negative effects of the PO had experiences that were associated with delays in pursuing the order and abusers who were drug users and had no respect for law enforcement. Findings may be used by judges, legislators, and police officers to improve the experience of POs for victims of DV resulting in positive social change. Findings may also assist victims of DV in becoming active participants in their own safety, learning about the judicial system, and elevating their self-esteem.

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## Dedication

I want to thank Jesus Christ for giving me the strength, endurance, and perseverance to complete this dissertation. I dedicate this dissertation to my family. To my mother, Dr. Vera Hale Downey, my mentor who has kept me encouraged and focused every step of the way. Throughout this journey she continued to state, “Keep your eye on the mark; don’t be concerned about age or time.” To my husband, Edward Franklin Hayes III, you have been my foundation, my rock, and my security to pursue this doctorate. Thank you for being patient throughout all of my raw emotions throughout this journey. To Edward Franklin Hayes IV, my oldest son, thank you for helping me drive from Memphis to Tampa Florida for one of the residencies. The trip was rough, and I know you went to help me. Throughout the journey you often stated, “Mom, you got this.” To Evan Fant Hayes, my youngest son, thank you for asking throughout this process, “Do you need any help?” I juggled having a job, daily stressors, and traveling. Your being concerned made the difference. My husband and sons have helped me with technology challenges as I have navigated an online program. Your expertise always helped me in the 9<sup>th</sup> hour. There were many times I wanted to give up, but each of you encouraged me in small and big ways! You all are and were “My Ride or Die Crew”! Thank you and I love you!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Domestic violence (DV) is a global health problem that affects individuals regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, religion, gender, socioeconomic background, or educational levels (United States Department of Justice [USDJ], 2016). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2017) reported that intimate partner violence causes numerous health issues with social and economic costs. Little is known on the victims' perceptions of being abused and seeking help to prevent future harm. The current study may influence judges, legislators, and law enforcement officials to become more sensitive to the needs of abused women. Also, the perceptions of abused women may assist in future research with quantitative studies.

Chapter 1 provides the study's background, problem statement, purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, significance, and summary. The study's design was a phenomenological because it addressed meaning for people from their real-life experiences of a particular phenomenon (see Creswell, 1998). A guide for designing and supporting the study was the survivor theory, which was established to explain relationships and the phenomenon (see Grant & Osanloo, 2014). According to survivor theory, victims seek assistance from formal or informal agencies by acquiring a protective order PO against the abuser. The victims' perceptions of DV and the PO assisted in answering the research questions for the study.

## **Background**

According to the WHO (2017), “violence against women, especially intimate partner violence (IPV) is a major health problem and a violation of the rights of women” (p. 1). The WHO (2017) defined IPV “as a behavior by an intimate partner, or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behavior” (p. 1). The WHO (2016) reported the global and regional estimates of violence against women: “from a global perspective, as many as 38% of murdered women are committed by an intimate partner” (p. 1). A regional estimate indicated that “almost 1/3 of all females who have been in a relationship have experienced physical, and or sexual violence by their partner” (WHO, 2016, p. 1). The WHO (2016) also reported “in high income countries, the range of IPV is from 23.2%, 24.6% in the Western Pacific region, to 37% in the Eastern Mediterranean region., and 37.7% in the South East Asian region” (p. 1).

The WHO (2016) explored the effect of IPV on women’s physical, mental, and economic well-being, which often leads to alcohol or substance abuse. Coronel and Silva (2018) gave an indication of IPV’s effect on the gastrointestinal system. Ma and Pun (2016) attributed urinary problems to mental abuse. According to Sanders (2015), victims of abuse are vulnerable to more abuse when they are without resources. Soper (2014) determined that a connection existed between physical abuse and substance abuse.

Researchers also did studies on securing the PO and the interventions for DV by the court and law enforcement. Messing, Vega, and Durfee (2017) brought attention to undocumented and documented Latino women who were attempting to secure a PO.

Some women were unfamiliar with the process and received a negative reaction from law enforcement (Messing et al., 2017). As a result, attention was brought to the need for police officers to get proper training (Messing et al., 2017). Broidy, Albright, and Denman (2016) explored the effectiveness of the court and law enforcement interventions for violators of DV by using the comparison of the two. Findings indicated offenders of abuse responded to civil and criminal interventions in a similar manner, but there was a difference in the kind of offender who was subject to either of the interventions (Broidy et al., 2016). There was a wealth of research on the dangers of DV against women and the use of the PO. However, there was a gap in the literature on victims of DV expressing their experiences with an abuser and the PO's ability to prevent future harm. The current study was needed because little was known about the victims' perceptions of DV and their experiences with the PO.

### **Problem Statement**

Domestic violence is a serious problem that has a negative effect on millions of women in the United States and other countries. The USDJ (2016) defined DV as “a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner” (p. 1). The vastness of the problem generated numerous studies concerning IPV. The phenomenon of IPV affects women physically, mentally, and economically (WHO, 2016). The seriousness of IPV has pushed the U.S. Congress to pass legislation for the use of POs (Benitez, McNeil, & Binder, 2010). Benitez et al. (2010) defined PO as “an intervention used to decrease the risk of harm by an individual who poses a threat to another person” (p. 1). According to

Fritsche (2014), the PO exists in every state and gives the option of granting permanent, temporary, or emergency orders. The procedures and requirements for granting of the order also vary by state (Benitez et al., 2010).

When an intimate partner engages in abuse, it rarely occurs in a single event; instead, the perpetrator continues to engage in future violent controlling acts (Stoever, 2014). If there is an escalation of violence, the abuser may use a weapon against the victim, which increases the chances for death (Stoever, 2014). In the court system, judges often believe that the victim is out of danger when she leaves the abusive environment (Stoever, 2014). Research shows that the victim's separation from the abuser results in the highest level of subsequent violence (Stoever, 2014). The current qualitative study contributed to the existing literature by addressing the victims' perspective of their experiences with DV and the PO. There were few studies that addressed the victim's perceptions of POs and the results of their contact with or physical harm caused by the abuser.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore the effectiveness of the PO from real-life experiences of women who are victims of DV. Protective orders are being used with the intention to reduce future harm to victims of DV, but still there are incidents of IPV. "Global estimates indicated that about 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual IPV or non-partner violence in a life-time" (WHO, 2017, p. 1). Researchers have not addressed the victims' perceptions of the abuse and

their experiences with the PO. The current study may provide helpful information to those who are responsible for legislating, granting, and enforcing the PO.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions (RQs) were addressed in the study:

RQ1: How does the effectiveness of protection orders impact the experiences of victims of domestic violence?

RQ2: How does the ineffectiveness of protection orders exacerbate the negative experiences of victims of domestic violence?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for the qualitative study was the survivor theory. Gondolf and Fischer (1988) proposed the survivor theory to view women not as helpless and passive victims, instead they are viewed as survivors and help seekers. Battered women suffer from learned helplessness “when they give up in the course of the abusive situation” (Gondolf & Fischer, 1988, p.11). As a result, they become psychologically paralyzed and need to be treated by specialized therapy (Gondolf and Fischer). “There is a theoretical basic for two contrasting characteristics of abused women: the assumptions of learned helplessness and the survivor hypotheses” (Gondolf & Fischer, 1988, p.11). Chapter 2 provides explanation of the assumptions associated with the hypotheses. In the current study, the research questions addressing the victims’ experiences with DV and the PO were answered using the survivor theory as a lens.



### **Nature of the Study**

Phenomenology was the most appropriate choice because the current study addressed meaning for people from their real-life experiences of a particular phenomenon (see Creswell, 1998). The phenomenon for this study was victims of DV sharing their experiences of PO and seeking help to prevent future harm. A second reason for choosing phenomenology was Creswell's (1998) procedure for conducting research that correlated with the study's methodology. The procedure includes a problem that a group of people shares, followed by an identification of a phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 1998). Next, if biases appear, blocking occurs (Creswell, 1998). Then data collection begins with open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews. Finally, transcripts of interviews are coded, and themes are identified to answer the research questions (Creswell, 1998).

### **Definitions**

The following key terms were used throughout this study:

*Abuse*: A corrupt practice or custom. 2. an improper, or excessive use of treatment. 3. a language that condemns, or vilifies usually unjustly, intemperately, and angrily 4. physical maltreatment (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, n.d.).

*Abused*: To use improperly, or excessively. 2. to hurt or injure by maltreatment 3. to force sexual activity on 4. To assail with hurtful, or insulting words (Free online Dictionary, n.d.).

*Battered*: 1. to be injured by repeated blows. 2. to be subjected to repeated physical abuse 3. to be damaged or worn down (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, n.d.).

*Domestic abuse*: “A pattern of coercive controlling behavior that is a pervasive life-threatening crime affecting people in all communities regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, race-ethnicity, religion, social standing, and immigration status” (Center for Family Justice, n.d., p. 1).

*Domestic violence*: “The willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and /or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power, and control perpetrated by an intimate partner against another” (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCADV], 2015, p. 1).

*Economic abuse*: “The condition that results when abuse takes control of, or limits access to shared, or individual assets, or limits the current, or future earnings potential of the victim as a strategy of power, and control” (NCADV, 2015, p. 1).

*Empowerment*: “A meaningful shift in the experience of power attained through interaction in the social world” (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2014, p. 84).

*Intimate partner*: “A person with whom a person has a close personal or sexual relationship” (Office of Women’s Health, 2018, p. 1).

*Intimate partner violence*: “A pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors that may include inflicted physical injury, psychological abuse, sexual assault, progressive social isolation, stalking, deprivation, intimidation, and threats” (Soper, 2014, p. 1).

*Mental abuse*: “A condition that appears when one partner through a series of actions, or words wears away at the other’s sense of well-being, and health” (Reach Organization, 2017, p. 1).

*Perceptions*: “The way a person thinks about, or understand someone or something, or the way that a person notices or understand something using one of their senses” (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.); also, “the ability to notice and understand things that are not obvious to others” (Cambridge dictionary, n.d.).

*Perpetrator*: “A person who carries out an illegal, harmful, or immoral act” (English Oxford Dictionary, n.d.); also, “one who commits a crime, or a violent act” (Cambridge dictionary, n.d.).

*Physical abuse*: “One or more aggressive episodes of aggressive behavior, usually resulting in physical injury with possible damage to internal organs, sense organs, the central nervous system, or the musculoskeletal system of another person” (Mosby’s Medical Dictionary, 2009).

*Protective order*: “A legal intervention with intentions to reduce the risk of future harm by one person considered to be a threat to another” (Benitez et al., 2010, p. 1).

*Restraining order*: “A legal order issued against an individual to restrict or prohibit access or proximity to another specified individual” (Merriam Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.).

*Survivor*: “A person who continues to live after a dangerous event” (Cambridge dictionary, n.d.); also, “a person who continues to live after nearly dying” (Cambridge dictionary, n.d.).

*Victim*: “A person who has been attacked, injured, robbed, or killed by someone else” (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.); also, “one who is subjective to oppression, hardship, or mistreatment” (Merriam-Webster dictionary, n.d.).

### **Assumptions**

In this study, I assumed that the participants would answer the interview questions truthfully based on their actual experiences and understanding of the questions. I also assumed the participants had experienced the phenomenon addressed in the study. Next, I assumed the participants possessed a sincere interest in participating in the study. Finally, I assumed the participants' use of the protective order was for their survival (see Simon & Goes, 2013). Shenton (2004) expressed the importance of confirmability for trustworthiness in qualitative studies. Confirmability results when the researcher admits biases and assumptions (Shenton, 2004).

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope was limited to victims' perceptions of their experiences of DV after a PO was granted against the abuser. The participants were victims of DV who had received an order of protection. The objective of the study was to focus on the victims' experiences with the order of protection. According to Bitsch (2005), transferability determines the extent to which findings are applicable to other contexts (p.85). Through thick description and purposeful sampling, transferability may be accomplished (Bitsch, 2005).

### **Limitations**

Limitations of a study are characteristics of the design or methodology that influence the interpretation of the results. In qualitative research, the inability to apply data to larger populations and the appearance of biases are viewed as limitations. In the current study, purposeful sampling was used to select the participants, and the

participants were 10 females who had experienced DA from a male intimate partner and had received an order of protection. It is the researcher's responsibility to provide rich descriptions of the process and participants so that the results can assess if the findings are transferable (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). When questioning a sensitive population, respondent biases may occur. Some people may give inaccurate information on personal or sensitive topics to present themselves in the best manner. To avoid this type of bias, I phrase questions to emphasize it is acceptable to answer questions in a manner that is not socially desirable, and I was not judgmental.

Strategies of credibility were used in this study to address limitations. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is accomplished in numerous ways: "prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking" (p.1). There are close ties between credibility and dependability; to address dependability "the study's process must be detailed which enables researchers to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results" (Shenton, 2004, p. 71).

### **Significance**

The study may make an important contribution to the literature related to DV against women by clarifying the experiences of abused women regarding the use of the PO for survival. The empowerment of survivors has been an important goal of the antidomestic violence movement (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2015). Cattaneo and Goodman (2015) defined empowerment "as a meaningful shift in the experience of power attained through interaction in the social world" (p. 84). The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) and other DV organizations have embraced empowerment as a goal

for DV because “within the DV context, empowerment invokes ideals that resonate with feminist and social justice values: finding a voice, making personal choices, focusing on strength versus deficit, and transcending oppression” (Cattaneo & Goodman, p. 85).

Cattaneo and Goodman also suggested “when survivors of abuse have a feeling of control when seeking help, they experience satisfaction with the court system, the police department and victim services” (p. 85).

The findings from the study may lead to positive social change in several ways. Judges may gain insight into the importance of each case that appears before them. Legislators may alter laws with respect to the severity of sentences for perpetrators who violate the orders. Additionally, police officers may become more responsive to calls for those who have violated restraining orders. The study may also assist the victims in becoming active participants in their safety, learning about the judicial system, and elevating their self-esteem.

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 included the background, problem statement, and purpose of the study as related to DV and the PO. Researchers have done numerous studies on DV and the PO, but limited research has been done on victims’ perceptions of enduring abuse while using the PO. The survivor theory served as a foundation for the study. The study’s significance addressed the connection between empowerment and the well-being of survivors. In Chapter 2, I present a literature review of DV and the PO as a deterrence to violence against women.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Domestic violence is a serious problem that has a negative effect on millions of women in the United States and other countries. The USDJ (2016) defined DV as “a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner” (p. 1). The problem generated numerous studies concerning IPV. The phenomenon of IPV affects women physically, mentally, and economically (WHO, 2016). The seriousness of IPV has pushed the U.S. Congress to pass legislation for the use of POs (Benitez et al., 2010). Benitez et al. (2010) defined PO as “an intervention used to decrease the risk of harm by an individual who poses a threat to another person” (p. 1). According to Fritsche (2014), the PO exists in every state and includes the option of granting permanent, temporary, or emergency orders. The procedures and requirements for granting a PO vary by state (Benitez et al., 2010).

When an intimate partner engages in abuse, it rarely occurs in a single event; instead, the perpetrator continues to engage in future violent controlling acts (Stoever, 2014). If there is an escalation of violence, the abuser may use a weapon against the victim, which increases the chances for death (Stoever, 2014). In the court system, judges often believe that the victim is out of danger when she leaves the abusive environment (Stoever, 2014). Research showed that the victim’s separation from the abusers results in the highest level of subsequent violence (Stoever, 2014). The current qualitative study contributed to the existing literature by addressing the victims’ perspective of their

experiences. Few studies had addressed the victim's perceptions of POs and the results of their contact with or physical harm caused by the abuser.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the effectiveness of the restraining order according to real-life experiences of women who are victims of DV. POs are being used with the intention of reducing future harm to victims of DV, but IPV continues to occur: "global estimates indicated that about 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) or non-partner violence in a life-time" (WHO, 2017, p. 1). Limited research has been conducted on the victims' perceptions of the abuse and the encounters with the PO. The current study may provide helpful information to those who are responsible for legislating, granting, and enforcing the PO.

Domestic violence is a serious problem that continues to affect women physically, mentally, economically, and often leads to substance or alcohol abuse (Soper, 2014). Coronel and Silva (2018) evaluated the damage physical abuse does to the body. Ma and Pun (2016) and Gharachehm Azadi, Mohammadi, Montazeri, and Khalajinia (2016) also revealed how mental abuse affects major bodily systems. When abused women depend on the abuser for economic resources, they often become homeless if they leave the abusive environment (Clough, Draughon, Njie-Carr, Rollins, & Glass, 2016).

Protective orders are widely used as an intervention to end future danger to a person who is threatened by another (Benitez et al., 2010). The Global Positioning System (GPS) assistance protects abused women by alerting them of the abusers' closeness (Gilmore & Allaband, 2017). Police departments allowed researchers to use



data to investigate police cases with the PO (Melton & Nordmeyer, 2014). Wintemute, Frattaroli, Claire, Vittes, and Webster (2014) used initiatives to screen for weapon recovery for PO recipients. Additionally, Parker and Gielen (2014) and Kothari et al. (2014) provided evidence of the PO's effectiveness. Federal and state laws gave victims survival rights with the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA; USDJ, 2011).

The literature review in this chapter addresses four areas related to an assessment of the effectiveness of POs from the perspectives of female victims of DV. The historical background for DV and the PO are addressed first, followed by the effects of DV on women. The third topic is the PO, and the final topic is the legal response to DV.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

A literature search was conducted using Google Scholar and Walden library databases: Pub Med, Psych INFO, Med Linc, and ERIC. The search terms used to locate the articles were the following: *protective order PO, restraining order, IPV, battered woman syndrome, state laws on PO federal laws on PO, DA, civil PO, criminal POs, Survivor Theory, physical abuse, mental abuse, economic abuse, and GPS tracking system*. I also searched websites including the WHO, Global Health Action, *Open Criminology Journal*, CDC, *Women's Health Issues*, *Journal of International Women's Studies*, and *American Journal of Public Health and Feminist Criminology*. The website for WHO provided global information on IPV. The *Open Criminology Journal* provided a qualitative research article that was published within the 5-year period. Also, the website on Women's Health Issues reported on a recent study on domestic violence effects on mental illness.

The websites were used to review 14 peer-reviewed articles and publications that were published within the last 5 years. There were nine informational and historical articles from the last 5 years and seven older articles. The topics for the 14 current articles were the effects of domestic violence on women and the PO. Most of the studies consisted of quantitative research with a few qualitative studies. One qualitative study was related to the current study's research questions, and two other qualitative studies were related by including the phenomenological approach. An exhaustive review of the literature was conducted on DV in the United States and other countries. Informational articles on the PO were also plentiful, but empirical research on the PO was limited. The limited qualitative research indicated a need for more study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework serves as a guide for supporting and designing a study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The theoretical framework for the current study was the survivor theory. There is a theoretical basic for two contrasting characteristics of battered women: the assumptions of learned helplessness and the survivor hypotheses (Gondolf & Fischer, 1988). The learned behavior causes the victim to experience depression, guilt and low self-esteem (Gondolf & Fischer, 1988). She also experiences immobility, as a result she refuses to seek help or leave the abuser; then her vulnerability prolongs the abuse (Gondolf and Fischer, 1988).

According to the hypotheses of Gondolf and Fischer (1988) women are survivors and help seekers when they seek help from formal and informal agencies. The survivor hypotheses suggested that help seeking efforts are unmet; resources and social supports

are necessities for women to become independent and leave the abuser (Gondolf & Fischer). Also, victims of abuse need long-term intervention (Gondolf & Fischer). When women endure emotional and physical consequences of abuse with psychological degradation by abusers and still seek help, it is evident that women are help seekers. The survivor theory has been used to assist victims of DV in exploring safety strategies to prevent further harm. Seven safety strategies can reduce the risk of revictimization: seek help from a mental or physical provider, counsel with clergy, join support groups, confer with medical personnel, enter a shelter for DV, notify police, and ask for assistance from criminal justice resources (Parker & Gielen, 2014). In the current study, the research questions addressing the victims' experiences with DV and the PO were based on the survivor theory. Also, the interview questions addressed the effectiveness of the PO after it was granted.

### **Historical Background for Domestic Violence and the Protective Order**

Sultana (2011) described patriarchy as the dominant obstacle to women's advancement because a patriarchal society allows men to have priority, as a result, human rights for women are limited (p.1). Patriarchy comprises power, hierarchy, and men's domination, oppression, and exploitation of females (Sultana). The power of control is evident in western society's treatment of women from Shakespeare, Greek philosophy, and legal codes (Fox, 2002). In the *Taming of the Shrew*, Kate expressed a wife's role when she stated, "Thy husband is thy Lord, thy life, thy keeper" (Fox, 2002, p. 17). According to Fox (2002), the Greek view of women was a subordinate role. The Greeks viewed men as being the most perfect of all animals; their reproductive organs made

them more perfect than women because conception could only take place with their assistance (Fox, 2002). Also, England's system of law during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century was a mixture of science and theology with the enforcement of patriarchy, which allowed husbands to use power to exert economic control in the marriage (Fox, 2002). The husband controlled all of the wife's personal belongings and made all decisions even for chastisement (Fox, 2002). A wife's arguing or disagreeing had no place in the English home and only led to punishment (Fox, 2002).

Wife battering came into existence during the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> century (Fox, 2002). The argument was, if the man had the power to rule in his home, he had the authority to chastise (Fox, 2002). Biblical teaching shared the thought of women obeying the husband, which was shared by other European nations (Fox, 2002). During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, society was uniform in wife chastisement except for the Puritans of Massachusetts (Fox, 2002). The group passed the first laws against wife battering in 1641, which gained support from others who had similar cultural values (Fox, 2002).

Most historical records do not acknowledge marital rape because the marriage contract gave consent from the wife, and marital rape was not banned in the United States until 1978 when New York took the initiative to discuss the act (Fox, 2002). In the late 1800s, the women's movement fought for women's equality by denouncing marital rape and recommending a lenient law for divorce (Fox, 2002). The Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence of 1973 gave credit to women by establishing a mission to encourage people in other states to become committed to ending domestic violence and sexual assault (Jane Doe Inc, n.d.).

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the public was aware of women's sexual subjugation, and Pickford (2006) documented laws and events of the 1900s concerning DV. In 1966, New York recognized wife battering as an act of inhuman treatment, and New York passed a law in 1977 that allowed wives of DA to file criminal charges against a mate (Pickford, 2006). In 1984, *People vs Liberta* of New York made it possible to end the exemption on marital rape (Pickford, 2006). Three years later, The Department of Social Services received funding for emergency shelters through the Domestic Violence Prevention Act of 1987 (Pickford, 2006). In 1994, the VAWA allocated funding for POs and other services for DV (Pickford, 2006).

Police departments' continuous efforts to respond to DA and the court system's unwillingness to recognize DV as a criminal act forced the criminal justice system to act (Stoever, 2014). As a result, states created their own laws for violence against women such as mandatory arrest, new prosecution policies, and the PO (Stoever, 2014). The PO came into existence in 1987 and then in 1994, but the original order was passed in 1970 (Stoever, 2014). By 1993, all state laws included statutes for POs, which are different for each state, but federal laws require states to recognize the other states' laws (Stoever, 2014). The duration for the PO in most states is three months to a year, but some PO periods are 18 months, two-three, or three-five (Stoever, 2014). The judge has discretion regarding the duration of the PO (Stoever, 2014).

## **Effects of Domestic Violence on Women**

### **Physical Effects**

According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (2010), IPV often begins with slapping, pushing, and shoving, but research has provided evidence on the serious effects of IPV on the body systems. Coronel and Silva (2017) evaluated abused women from a coloproctology clinic who suffered from constipation. The three-month quantitative study provided data from a questionnaire (Coronel & Silva, 2017). Responses from the questionnaire included demographics, DV and personal information (Coronel & Silva, 2017). Evidence from the statistical test conveyed evidence that 42 of the 146 women suffered from functional constipation, and 26 of those women had a history of abuse (Coronel & Silva, 2017). The study was meaningful because it brought awareness of the dysfunction to the “Network of Attention to Violence” (Coronel & Silva, 2017). Researchers suggested further studying on the interrelation of functional constipation to DV (Coronel & Silva, 2017).

The figures for abuse in China were different from other worldwide countries, but Ma and Pun (2016) had concerns about risk factors for urinary symptoms. The setting for their 17-month study was a urogynecology and general gynecology clinic, with 225 female participants who had urinary ailments (Ma & Pun, 2016). Data was collected from the Modified Abuse Assessment Screen (MAAS) with demographics provided by participants and their mates (Ma & Pun, 2016). Results revealed the highest abuse was verbal with 19.5% having bladder excessiveness, 4.2% incontinence, and 5.5% had mixed urinary symptoms (Ma & Pun, 2016). A conclusion from the study indicated that

when the autonomic nervous system has a dysfunction, the bladder becomes overactive (Ma & Pun, 2016). A strength for the study is being known as the first study on the association of DV with urinary symptoms. The study's weakness was incomplete demographic information.

Previous Iranian studies have provided evidence that 60.6 % of females endured several types of abuse during pregnancy and a recent study assessed the relationship between (IPV) during pregnancy and females' health-related quality of life (HRQoL) (Gharacheh, Azadi, Mohammadi, Montazeri, & Khalajinia, 2016). A total of 341 postnatal women from a health care center participated in the study, and a modified version of the Abuse Assessment Screen (AAS) supplied data (Gharacheh et al., 2016). Results indicated 44.5% experienced battery syndrome, 88.4% disclosed mental abuse, 34.9% admitted being sexually violated, and 26% reported physical abuse (Gharacheh et al., 2016). Over half of the abused females had experiences of at least one kind of abuse during pregnancy and the victims who experienced three abusive encounters were prone to poor (HRQoL) (Gharacheh et al., 2016). The previous study of Ma and Pun (2016) also attributed mental abuse as the highest type of violence. In conclusion evidence indicates abuse during pregnancy is related to women's HRQoL in a negative manner and it should be a priority to public health (Gharacheh et al., 2016). The strength of the study is the ability of researchers to recruit abused Iranian women because they usually prefer isolation and refusal to seek help due to future harm. According to research studies, domestic abuse caused harmful effects to female's gastrointestinal, urinary, and gynecological systems.

## **Mental Effects**

According to Lagdon, Armour, and Stringer, (2014) psychological violence is a type of IPV that affects abused women's mental health. Lagdon's et al. (2014) focused on IPV's correlation with anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. Literature reviews from 2004 to 2014 were sources for the data (Lagdon et al., 2014). The literature reviews included factors that had a high impact on mental well-being such as "gender issues, types of violence, outcomes of mental health, and intergenerational transmission of violence as they related to experiences of violence" (Lagdon et al., 2014, p. 8). The most significant outcomes that were associated with IPV were PTSD, anxiety, and depression (Lagdon et al., 2014). A strength for the study is the omission of literature reviews over 10 years. A weakness was the difficulty in separating psychological violence from physical and sexual violence because psychological symptoms appear in physical and sexual violence (Lagdon et al., 2014).

Researchers from the United Kingdom, Ferrari et al. (2016) had an interest in women who were receiving DA services. As a result, Ferrari et al. (2016) did an investigation of abuse and the measurements of mental health with 260 abused women who were recruited from Psychological Advocacy Towards Healing (PATH), and who were seeking help (Ferrari et al., 2016). Before the main assessment, a questionnaire determined abuse during etc. A questionnaire determined abuse during childhood, substance use, demographics, and socioeconomic status (Ferrari et al., 2016). The mental health tests administered were as follows: "Patient Health Questionnaire, Generalized Anxiety Disorder Assessment, Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation-Outcome



Measure (CORE-OM), Post Traumatic Diagnostic Scale, and the Composite Abuse Scale (CAS)” Ferrari et al., 2016, p. 1). Results indicated “CAS mean of 56, CORE-OM mean of 18, with a clinical threshold above 76%, elevated threshold levels, for anxiety and depression and three-quarters of participants had symptoms of PTSD with an elevated threshold” (Ferrari et al., p. 1). The study is important for researching information on the mental health of abused victims who visited centers for DA services. According to studies by Lagdon et al. (2014) and Ferrari et al. (2016), psychological violence of women contributes to PTSD, depression and anxiety.

### **Alcohol and Substance Abuse**

Women traumatized by abuse are high risk for substance abuse (Edwards et al., 2017). Soper (2014) predicted females battered by mates are identified as future drug users because perpetrators often coerce their mates to use drugs. When both partners indulge in substance abuse, there is a chance for violence (Soper, 2014). Edwards et al. (2017) had an interest in the connections between substance abuse, and sexual or physical abuse; The second interest was the role of a sober living facility for recovery. As a result, a qualitative study was done with 28 women who were present or past residents of a recovery facility (Edwards et al., 2017). The source of data collection was interviews with probing questions which assisted in developing four themes: unstable childhood, denial of drug use or environment of DV, multiple traumatic experiences, and real resilience (Edwards et al., 2017). Results of the study placed most emphasis on victimization in childhood, and occurrences of domestic or sexual abuse during developmental stages as risk factors for substance abuse (Edwards et al., 2017). The

qualitative study had similarities to the current study with probing questions for the interview, using the phenomenological approach for interpreting victims' experiences, and validating themes from the transcript to answer research questions. Both studies' research questions were related to perceptions of victims' experiences with DV. The study is meaningful because the qualitative data used victims' perceptions to give a voice to their experiences. Soper (2014) and Edwards et al. (2017) identified battered women syndrome as a catalyst for substance and alcohol abuse.

### **Economy**

Two of the most pressing concerns for abused women who have intentions on leaving the abuser is the desire for safe housing and economic resources (Clough, Draughon, Njie-Carr, Rollins, & Glass, 2016). The research from 2016 indicated emergency shelters received 31,500 families who escaped DA. In a second study, Sanders (2015) examined the economic situation of abused females with a two-year qualitative study using 30 participants who had assets to an economic program with financial counseling. The goal of the study was to explore the problems of battered women (Sanders, 2015). Results from the interviews produced eight themes: lack of access to finances, inability to leave because of money, finance disputes leading to abuse, inability to work or attend school, credit problems with debt, theft from the abuser, hopelessness, and surviving strategies (Sanders, 2015). According to (Sanders), victims of violence are more vulnerable to abuse when they are without resources, as a result, the abuser is in control. The study is meaningful because it received attention from several agencies: Social Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, and the

United States Department of the Treasury with promising financial assistance for DV (Sanders, 2015)). Current research studies reveal women are more prone to be abused when they are without resources.

## **Protective Order**

### **Types of Protective Order**

Victims of DV use the POs to reduce the risk of continuous harm from a threatening person. Benitez, McNeil, & Binder, 2010). The two POs are criminal and civil; their differences depend on the manner the order was received (Dimeas, 2017). When an individual seeks protection from another person the choice is the civil PO (Dimeas, 2017). When there is a criminal case with an investigation a criminal PO is granted (Dimeas, 2017). There is limited existing research on the effectiveness of the PO, but available literature supports the important issues pertaining to the PO: “time since filing of the order, potential for increase in violence, victims and abusers’ characteristics with their relationship, and related matters to the criminal justice system”; “all get attention for consideration of an order of protection” (Benitez et al., 2010, p. 7). A variety of consequences often follow granting of a PO: such as stalking, future violence attacks, property damage, and psychological abuse (Benitez et al., 2010).

### **GPS Tracking**

Gilmore and Allaband (2017) recognized electronic monitoring as a helpful device in protecting battered women since police department’s response to violations of POs are not always available. The Global Positioning System (GPS) alerts the survivor and the police if the perpetrator enters an off-limit area; the area can be the victim’s

school, home, job, or relatives home (Gilmore & Allaband, 2017). Since judges make the decisions for police to use the system, the perpetrator has a right for due process before placement on the alert system (Gilmore & Allaband, 2017). The conviction of DA causes the abuser to be liable for the tracking system, but there are still guidelines the court must follow for due process (Gilmore & Allaband, 2017). The guidelines weigh the risk factors involved such as: “ownership and use of guns, stalking, substance abuse, threats and frequency with severeness of abuse” (Gilmore & Allaband, 2017, p. 4). During the pretrial period, the courts make decisions for the abuser to pay for the system with the use of a fee, waiver, or reduction in pay (Gilmore & Allaband, 2017). The VAWA provides support for abused women by providing funding to investigate and prosecute for DA of females (Gilmore & Allaband, 2017). The states must allocate funding or request money from the federal government to pay for the electronic system (Gilmore & Allaband, 2017).

### **Recovery of Weapons with Protective Order Recipients**

According to NCADV (2015) 1 in 5 women in the United States are killed by an intimate partner. Wintemute, Frattaroli, Claire, Vittes, & Webster (2014) did a study to evaluate the initiatives of law enforcement to screen individuals with restraining orders on gun ownership and recovering the weapon. Two counties in California participated in the study from May 2007-June 2010 (Wintemute et al., 2014). The population for one county consisted of 718,451 with a predominate non-Hispanic White race (Wintemute et al., 2014). The median household income of the population for 2007-2011 was \$87,633, with a report of 2,766 calls for DA in 2010 (Wintemute et al., 2014). The second county’s

population was 220,000 with predominate non-Hispanic White, and the median income for 2007-2011 was \$42,971 with 1,098 DA calls for 2010 (Wintemute et al., 2014).

Data for the descriptive study came from personal firearm transactions, county records of restraining orders, and interviews from petitioners (Wintemute et al., 2014). From both counties, there was a recovery of 665 weapons without problems, but no information was available on retrieval of weapons after order expiration (Wintemute et al., 2014). Reasons for nonrecovered weapons were a denial of owning a gun or unserved POs (Wintemute et al., 2014). The strength of the study is the progress of recovering weapons to protect abused women. The researchers' lack of collecting data for analysis was a weakness because knowledge from the study may have been informative to the criminal justice system; the weakness suggested a need for further study.

### **Police Officers and the Protective Order**

Melton and Nordmeyer (2014) used the police to explore cases with and without PO violations. The interest was to see if the two cases had differences and to have an understanding of what factors caused arrests (Melton & Nordmeyer, 2014). Data included police reports and recorded narratives by researchers who had training (Melton & Nordmeyer, 2014). Those without POs totaled 1,187, and those with POs totaled 252 cases (Melton & Nordmeyer 2014). Results of the study indicated cases involving POs had greater chances for the victim and the perpetrator to be nonintimate friends, but the victim usually experienced stalking with threats, as a result, an arrest was evident (Melton & Nordmeyer, 2014). The cases without POs involved individuals who were in a current relationship, abused drugs and were physically or verbally abusive; also, when

police arrived at the scene, the abuser was present (Melton & Nordmeyer, 2014). Results from the study provided proof of importance because the research questions were answered and knowledge of PO calls were valuable information to police when responding (Melton & Nordmeyer, 2014). Examining variables that predict the arrest of abusers may contribute information to future studies.

### **Effectiveness of the Protective Order**

Latino females of DV who seek orders of protection find a difference when compared to attempting to get other types of legal aid (Messing, Vega, & Durfee, 2017). The study's purpose was to see if immigration status affected how abused Latino women received a PO (Messing et al. 2017). The nationalities for the women in the study were Puerto Rican, Dominican, Hispanic, Mexican or Cuban, but are grouped as Latino (Messing et al., 2017). In the United States, all Spanish speakers and their descendants received treatment, and identification in antidesendant legislation (Messing et al., 2017).

A demographic survey provided information on knowledge, behavior, and attitudes about the PO; interviews supplied data for the analysis (Messing et al., 2017). Results revealed, when citizens tried to secure a PO, they were familiar with the order but had no confidence in receiving the order (Messing et al., 2017). Undocumented victims were unfamiliar with the process of getting an order, and experienced a negative attitude from law enforcement, but believed the abuser would follow orders (Messing et al., 2017). The study has importance because it brings attention to police officers "to get proper training on treatment of all victims and be familiar with homicide risk, and

coercive control” (Messing et al., 2017, p. 218). Future research should expand on other immigrant groups with DV and the PO (Messing et al., 2017).

Millions of people experienced physical abuse by an intimate partner annually in America, and numerous victims refused to report the violence (Broidy, Albright, & Denman, 2016). Research studies explored the effectiveness of court and law enforcement interventions for domestic violators by using the comparison of the two (Broidy et al., 2016). Secondary data sources were police arrest for IPV and judicial district’s court records for orders of protection (Broidy et al., 2016). Since merging of data gave no indication of relationships, researchers tried restricting samples to one petitioner, and one arrestee with a criminal record before the history of DV (Broidy et al., 2016). Findings indicated offenders of abuse responded to interventions for civil and criminal in a similar manner, but there was a difference in the kind of offender who was subject to either of the interventions, PO, arrests, or both (Broidy et al., 2016) . The strength of the study is the availability of sufficient samples with trackable criminal records; a weakness was offenders are trackable, but they enter the system at different times in their lives (Broidy et al., 2016).

Kothari et al. (2014) used a comparison group to measure the effectiveness of the PO. The comparison group for the four-year longitudinal study consisted of abused victims from cohort groups with and without a PO (Kothari et al., 2014). A focus of the research questions was if victims with POs receive assistance from the criminal justice system (Kothari et al., 2014). Another question of interest was if the PO reduced future injury (Kothari et al., 2014). Source of data for the quantitative study were reports from

the emergency room, police, and courts (Kothari et al., 2014). Results indicated that POs reduced visits to the emergency room and calls to the police during and after granting of the order (Kothari et al., 2014). Since there is a limitation in research on effectiveness of the PO, the study increased knowledge in the positive effects of the PO.

According to Parker and Gielen (2014) women make efforts to protect themselves from DV by using safety strategies. Parker and Gielen (2014) examined the effectiveness of decreasing the risk of future abuse by reviewing nine studies confirming techniques women use to protect themselves. Two of the studies determined if the safety strategies reduced future risks for violence, and seven of the studies made decisions on the strategies for helpfulness (Parker & Gielen 2014). After searching for safety strategies through various search engines, nine strategies were the focus for the study; surveys were used for measurement (Parker & Gielen 2014). The nine strategies consisted of the use of clergymen, medical professions, support groups, mental or physical health providers, police officers, friends or family, counselors, community agencies, and the criminal justice system (Parker & Gielen 2014). Results revealed the best choices for safety were contacting an agency for DV or living in a shelter; females who had experiences of severe violence rated the PO as the most effective strategy (Parker & Gielen 2014). The strength of the study is the positive response from the PO.

### **Legal Response to Domestic Violence**

Congress passed the (VAWA) in 1994 with an addition to the act in 1996. “Both acts defined DV as a national crime, and federal laws assisted state and local criminal justice systems” (USDJ, 2011). The Gun Control Act defined federal crime as follows:



“to own a gun or ammunition while subject to qualifying for a PO, and to own a gun and ammunition after conviction of a qualifying misdemeanor for DV” (USDJ, 2011). The Gun Control Act and the VAWA are both federal laws, but local and state agencies have the ability to handle cases (USDJ, 2011).

The Federal Government gave the following victims of DV rights under 42 U.S.C. Section 10606(b):

- The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim’s dignity and privacy;
- The right to be reasonably protected from the accused offender;
- The right to be notified of court proceedings;
- The right to be present at all public court proceedings related to the offense, unless the court determines that testimony by the victim would be materially affected if the victim heard other testimony at the trial;
- The right to confer with an attorney for the government in the case;
- The right to restitution;
- The right to information about the conviction sentencing, imprisonment, and release of the offender;

The state domestic violence laws, (Findlaw, 2018) reported that laws for DV are different for each state: one distinct difference is the policies for arrest, second, majority of states require a police officer to make an arrest or write a report at the scene, third, mandatory reporting is different, fourth, some states require medical professionals to report DV injuries, but federal laws require the medical personnel to inform the patient of

the report, and fifth, the ability to terminate an early release is a choice for DV victims in some states, but the victim must document with an order of protection or a police report.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The WHO (2017) indicated that violence against women is “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or likely to result in physical, sexual, or mental harm to women which includes threats, coercion or deprivation of liberty” (p.1). An abuser’s continuous exertion of power and control over a victim causes endangerment to the victims’ welfare and without effective interventions, battery against women will continue to increase in severity and frequency (Stoeber, 2014). The POs are the legal interventions with intention to decrease future danger by one individual who is considered to be harmful to another (Benitez et al., 2010). According to Gilmore and Allaband (2017), the GPS has the potential to lower the rate of violence against victims and prevent abusers from violations of the order; survival skills are evident when victims attend court hearings to receive POs against the abuser.

The current study used the victims’ of DV perceptions on the PO to fill the gap in the literature on POs deterrence of violence. There is exhaustive literature available on DV and the PO, but limited studies on the POs preventing future danger to women. In Chapter 3, I will present the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, participant selection, recruitment procedures, data collection, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. The chapter is summarized at the end.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the effectiveness of the restraining order according to real-life experiences of women who are victims of DV. Protective orders are being used with the intention of reducing future harm to victims of DV, but reports of IPV persist: “global estimates indicated that about 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) or non-partner violence in a life-time” (WHO, 2017, p. 1). Researchers have not addressed the victim’s perceptions of the abuse and the encounters with the PO. The current study may contribute helpful information to those who are responsible for legislating, granting, and enforcing the PO. Chapter 3 provides information about the methods and procedures used in the study, including the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, participant selection, recruitment procedures, data collection, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. The chapter is summarized at the end.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The research questions that were answered in this study were the following:

RQ1: How does the effectiveness of protection orders impact the experiences of victims of domestic violence?

RQ2: How does the ineffectiveness of protection orders exacerbate the negative experiences of victims of domestic violence?

The central phenomenon of the study was DV against women, which is also referred to as IPV. Domestic violence is defined “as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over

another intimate partner” (USDJ, 2016, p. 1). According to the NCADV (2015), “DV is common in every community and affects all individuals regardless of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, nationality or socio-economic status” (p. 1). Physical violence can result in physical harm, psychological trauma, and even death (NCADV, 2015).

The research tradition for qualitative studies includes case study, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative, and phenomenology (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 2009). After careful study, phenomenology was the most appropriate choice for the current study. According to Sloan and Bowe (2014), “phenomenology is an approach, philosophy, or methodology to a research study” (p. 5). “Over decades of studies, researchers moved phenomenology from philosophy to a method for scientific study, and the use of human experiences assisted in the move to scientific study” (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 10). Phenomenological studies have two perspectives from German philosophy, Husserlian and Hermeneutic (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The approach allows the researcher to listen to participants’ experiences and to understand and interpret meanings from the experiences (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Hermeneutic phenomenology provides for reflexivity to assist in understanding the participants’ experiences by examining the situations; as a result, personal interviewing is the technique for data collection for Hermeneutics (Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

Padilla-Diaz (2015) contended phenomenological research requires competency in interviewing and data collection. “Skilled interviewers are familiar with empathic listening, summarization, clarification, paraphrasing, self-revelation, and reflection of

feelings” (Padilla-Diaz, 2015, p. 105). Hancock et al. (2009) suggested that open ended questions give the interviewer and the interviewee a chance to cover the important topics for investigation. If the participant has difficulty in answering questions, the interviewer has the opportunity to use prompts or cues (Hancock et al., 2009). Also, an interview guide with topics for discussion enables the researcher to elicit vital information (Hancock et al., 2009). According to Padilla-Diaz, the use of an audio recording for the interview allows for adequate time during viewing of transcripts and assists in developing them to interpret the phenomenon.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Merriam (2009) supported the notion that the researcher’s role is to be competent in understanding the perceptions of participants. In the current study, my role was to recruit and interview women who had experience with the PO and to understand the meaning of their experience. The researcher acts as a human instrument in the study who collects and analyzes data (Merriam, 2009). When this occurs, many roles are assumed. First, the researcher must use “verbal and non-verbal communication for understanding, process data quickly, summarize information, check with participants for accuracy, and explore responses” (Merriam 2009, p. 5). Next, the researcher must “identify biases and monitor the effect on collecting and interpreting data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Finally, as a researcher, “trust, confidentiality, and rapport were established for the study with the use of Confidentiality Agreements for research colleagues and consent forms for participants” (Walden’s IRB 2015, p. X). Due to unrelated job duties, there was no

conflict of interest with participants in the study. A \$20 gift card was given to each participant to compensate for their participation.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

Purposeful sampling was used for the current study, which allowed me to identify and select rich cases of information that were related to the phenomenon (see Palinkas et al., 2015). The participants for the study consisted of 10 women 20 years of age and older who were victims of DA and had been granted a PO against their abuser. Since the sample size is affected by saturation, data saturation must precede the identification of themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015). After being approved by IRB with a number of 0430200630285, I wrote a screening process flyer and posted it on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn to recruit participants for an interview by phone. The Division of Administration for the Police Department, Tennessee offers two types of POs for victims of DA, sexual assault and stalking. They are temporary protection orders (TPOs) and extended protection orders (EPOs). The TPOs are referred to as ex parte orders with a short-term nature and are used to protect a victim until an EPO has been granted. The TPO can be issued without the abuser's knowledge, but the authorities will give him a notification of it. Women are able to ask for a TPO and an EPO at the same time; the TPO will last until the entire hearing for the EPO, or for 15 days. When a full court hearing has been completed, the EPO is issued and can be extended to 1 year.

## **Instrumentation**

The data collection instrument was a semistructured interview protocol including open-ended and demographic questions. The semistructured interview contains a mixture of structured and unstructured questions (Merriam, 2009). A list of questions to be asked guides the interview, and the wording is not predetermined (Merriam, 2009). Walden's Interview Guide was used as a guide for the semistructured interview, and an audio recorder device was used for recording each interview. The readings from the audio recordings assisted me in analyzing, interpreting, and reporting the words of the participants. Data saturation occurred "when there was enough information to replicate the study and when new information had been obtained, also further coding was not feasible" (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1). Developed themes were used to answer research questions, and demographic data were collected on the phone interview. Exploring the victims' perceptions of the phenomenon under investigation enabled me to answer the research questions.

## **Researcher-Developed Instruments**

A screening process flyer was posted on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn for participant recruitment and selection. The research questions and interview questions addressed the victims' perceptions of the phenomenon under investigation. Shenton (2004) reported that content validity may be established by "using peers for scrutiny of the study, member checking for accuracy of data during collection or at the end, and examining congruency of previous study's results" (p. 64-69). A pilot study was not used to test the interview questions.

### **Procedure for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

A screening process flyer was posted on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn to recruit participants for the phone interview. When interested participants contacted me by phone to confirm their participation, a consent form was read and participants said “I consent” for agreement to participate in the study. An interview time was discussed, and at the end of the phone call, the participant was given a confidential code. Phone interviews were held for 20 to 30 minutes. Because no additional participants were needed, screening flyers were removed from Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The audio recording device and the data storage device were stored in a locked cabinet. At the end of each phone interview, debriefing was done. During the debriefing, I exchanged contact information with the participant in the event of the necessity for a follow-up interview. Participants were also able to contact me to receive the results of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) recommended four major steps for data analysis: The researcher must first be familiar with data by reading transcripts until there is an understanding and write notes of first impressions; second, data should be organized in a manageable form, even by research question; third, the use of coding assists in identifying themes that correspond to the research questions; and fourth, for interpretation, several readings assist in identifying all of the key themes. Xu and Storr (2012) gave suggestions for coding: At the beginning, notations are written in the transcripts’ margins; then brackets are added following the codes to describe events, reasons for happenings or impacts on individuals, and to assist in organizations. The



codes are placed into three columns: descriptions, quotations, and relationships between codes. As a result of the organization of codes, broad categories form with no codes omitted which allows themes to develop (Xu & Storr, 2012). In the event of discrepant cases, Hardy and Bryman (2009) reported “deviant or discrepant cases can be identified with analytic generalizations that are being advanced, broken down, and need revising” (p. 618). No discrepant cases were noted in the current study.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Shenton (2004) presented four strategies for researchers to use for pursuing trustworthiness in qualitative studies, which correspond to the positivist researchers’ paradigm: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. According to Shenton (2004) there is a close tie between credibility and dependability (p. 71); dependability is the criteria to address reliability, and to facilitate dependability, the study’s process must convey a clear report (Shenton, 2004). As a result, future researchers may model the study (Shenton, 2004). Transferability is the criteria concerning external validity and the concern is the findings from the current study being applicable to other situations (Shenton, 2004). Identifying the boundaries of the study at the beginning assist in transferability (Shenton, 2004). The boundaries to be conveyed are the following: “the number of participants and their site, any restrictions on the participants, number of involved organizations, method and length of data collection, and number of sessions for data collection (Shenton, 2004, p. 70) Shenton (2004) acknowledged the concept of confirmability as a concern for objectivity. To ensure objectivity, the study’s findings must be the result of the participants experiences

(Shenton). Researchers must also “acknowledge the reason for favoring one method as opposed to another in a study, admit predispositions, admit weaknesses in techniques, and use ongoing reflexivity” (Shenton, 2004, p. 72).

### **Ethical Procedures**

Walden’s (IRB) is representative of procedural ethics. The mandates for procedural ethics concerns “avoiding deception, negotiating informed consent, and ensuring confidentiality and privacy” (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). IRB requested approval to conduct research with the standard application for research. “The purpose of the IRB application is to collect enough specific information to document that the study’s benefits outweigh the costs and that the procedures are in compliance with federal regulations, and university policies” (IRB application, 2015, p. 3). Before the IRB application can be approved, applicants must uphold the following specific ethical principles: “beneficence, justice, and respect when recruiting and collecting data of participants” (IRB application, 2015, p. 3). “The IRB will separately weigh potential risks and benefits for each vulnerable group” (IRB application, 2015, p. 17).

After the approval of IRB, I posted screening flyers on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn to recruit participants for the study. They were informed on the nature of the study, the study’s purpose, options to be informed of findings, confidentiality of their names, and allowed to give oral consent with their permission to record. Participants for the study had the option to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time from the study. Researchers of procedural ethics will be aware of securing all personal information with secret passwords in locked cabinets, or offices (Tracy, 2010). IRB recommends keeping

data for a minimum of five years. A \$20 gift card was offered as an incentive for participation in the study.

### **Summary**

The basic qualitative inquiry with phenomenological roots was the choice for the study and the research questions because it attempts to make sense of the phenomenon by using the victims' perceptions of their experiences. The focus of phenomenology is the essence of victims' experiences. As a result, the phenomenological approach allowed me to use the semi-structured interview for assistance in answering the research questions to discover if the PO prevented further harm to victims of DA. The researchers are more than a collector and analyzer of data, but also one who identified biases, and established rapport, trust and confidentiality. The inquiry may develop new theories relating to the PO and DV. Chapter 4 gives an overview of the study's results, including the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and summary.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the effectiveness of POs according to the real-life experiences of women who are past victims of DV. A phenomenological design was used for the study. The following research questions were asked to determine whether the PO had any impact on the experiences of the victims:

RQ1: How does the effectiveness of protection orders impact the experiences of victims of domestic violence?

RQ2: How does the ineffectiveness of protection orders exacerbate the negative experiences of victims of domestic violence?

Chapter 4 includes a discussion of the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and a summary.

### **Setting**

The participants for the study were interviewed by phone and an audio recording device was used to capture their responses for accuracy. Respondents were recruited by posting a flyer on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. From those who responded to the flyer, the final selection was made based on who met the selection criteria. To my knowledge, there were no known personal or organizational conditions that influenced the participants' willingness to respond to the flyer or their willingness to respond to the interview questions when selected. To my knowledge, there were no known personal or organizational conditions that impacted the interpretation of the study results. To avoid trauma to this sensitive population, the interview questions were shortened with minimal probing. Respondents were allowed to share only what they desired. Also, questions were

directed toward the effectiveness of the restraining order, and all participants were victims of DA.

### **Demographics**

Each participant for the study was a female age 20 or older who had experienced DV by a male intimate partner and had been granted a temporary or extended PO. All 10 participants were African American women residing in an urban community.

### **Data Collection**

The study sample consisted of 10 women who were victims of DV and who had received a PO. From May 1<sup>st</sup> to June 17, 2020, 20-30 minutes phone interviews were conducted at the participants' convenience. An audio recording device was used to ensure accuracy of data capture. There were no unusual circumstances encountered during data collection.

### **Data Analysis**

After collecting all of the data, the information was reviewed for accuracy. With the use of inductive coding, the transcripts were read and reread line by line. Descriptive codes were placed to the left of each sentence, and a matching code to the descriptive code was color coded in the same sentence. Sometimes the matching code would be an in vivo code. Similar codes became dominant codes and were placed into categories. As different categories emerged, major categories were formed, compared, and consolidated. As a result, the reality of the data emerged, which led to the development of themes. The themes that emerged from RQ1 were Attitude of Judge, Victims Advocating for Themselves, and Police Response to Calls. In coding, categorizing, and developing the

theme, the descriptive code assigned was End of Relationship. The in vivo code was “I put my foot down and stopped all communication.” The category was strength, and the developed theme was Victims Advocating for Themselves. Themes for RQ2 were Impact of Drug Abuse, Disrespect Toward Law Enforcement, and Delays in Pursuing the Protective Order. In coding, categorizing, and developing a theme, the descriptive code was attempting to make a decision on getting the order. The in vivo code was “I talked to counselors at the facility, but I did not want to go through the process at that time.” The category was procrastination. The chosen theme was Delays in Pursuing the Order.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Qualitative researchers assume the responsibility of trustworthiness with credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Toma, 2014).

#### **Credibility (Internal Validity)**

Internal validity is the key criteria for credibility, and the concern is seeking to measure its intent. To ensure the credibility of the study, I stated the strategies in Chapter 3. Credibility was accomplished by using tactics to ensure honesty and frankness. This was done by giving participants the option to withdraw from the interview at any time, and reminding them that there were no right or wrong answers to the interview questions. A second tactic used to ensure credibility was frequent debriefing. The rationale for debriefing was to allow collaboration with me and peers. As a result, a sounding board was provided to test my developing ideas and interpretations (see Creswell & Miller, 2000). Third, examination of previous studies promoted credibility. Using previous findings as a point of reference, I was able to use the findings of this study to confirm or

disconfirm results of the previous studies. Finally, rich detailed description of the phenomenon assisted in establishing credibility. The victims' vivid experiences may assist readers in understanding that the accounts were credible and that the findings may be applicable to other settings (see Creswell & Miller, 2000).

### **Transferability (External Validity)**

Transferability is the strategy used to assess external validity, which refers to whether the findings from the study may be applied to other situations. Researchers have different notions of transferability. According to Korstjens and Moser (2017), it is the researcher's responsibility to provide rich descriptions of the process and the participants so that the readers can assess if the findings are transferable. According to Norwell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) if researchers know the sites that wish to transfer the findings, transferability may be possible. In view of different researchers' opinions, the victims' experiences of abuse and the impact of restraining orders in the current study may not be transferable to other settings because there are limitations on transferability for studies with a small sample size.

### **Dependability (Reliability)**

Dependability is the strategy that addresses the issue of reliability, which "employs techniques to show that if the work is repeated within the same method, context, and participants, the results would be similar" (Shenton, 2004). Dependability was ensured in the study by an audit trail. The inquiry was documented through journaling, including a research log of all activities; conducting data collection consistently; and recording procedures for data analysis (see Creswell & Miller, 2000).

**Confirmability (Objectivity)**

The focus of confirmability is a concern for researchers to derive data from interpretations and findings (Norwell, Norris, White & Moules (2017). Confirmability was established in the current study by ensuring that the findings were the results of victims' experiences instead of my perspectives and personal biases.

**Results**

The first research question was the following: "How does the effectiveness of protection orders impact the experiences of victims of domestic violence?" Three themes emerged from the victims' responses: Attitude of Judge, Victims Advocating for Themselves, and Police Response to Calls.

**Attitude of Judge**

All of the women appeared before a judge in court, but five had a negative outcome with the restraining order. Three of the women made no comment concerning a judge during the entire interview. A fourth woman had experiences with two different judges. She stated, "one was too laid back" and "the other one was just plain rude." A fifth victim commented on the judge taking notes during the entire court session.

Five of the women gave credit to the judge for experiencing a positive outcome with the order of protection. One of the victims expressed that she felt safe after the PO because of the judge's stern approach to the perpetrator. In court, the judge was detailed regarding what the order meant, how the perpetrator should comply with the order, and what would happen to him if he did not comply. The judge looked at the abuser and said, "the order is a legal document and it holds weight," and the judge described how many



feet he could not be near the victim. A second victim described her encounter with a judge when she and the abuser appeared in court. The judge attempted to use embarrassment on the abuser. The victim in this case was 58, and the abuser was 64 years old. The judge asked, "Don't you think you are too old to be in jail for domestic violence?" The judge's second question was, "You weren't taught how to treat women?" The judge ordered the abuser to go to rehab. Two other women who had the same judge described him in the same manner, including his use of embarrassment and sternness with the perpetrator. A fifth abuser who had a quiet and docile demeanor suffered embarrassment. He was intimidated by being in court and going before a judge.

### **Victims Advocating for Themselves**

All of the women advocated for themselves when they applied and received the restraining order, but some were more persistent. For four victims, the abuse stopped when they took charge of their lives and became advocates for themselves. One of the victims received a PO when she experienced her first violent attack. Having a supportive family and friends made it easier for her to defend herself. When the abuse occurred, the police were notified, and they gave her all of the necessary information for getting the order of protection. While talking to the police officers, she identified the perpetrator by name, description, and address. A second victim endured four encounters with DA before she realized the perpetrator's aggressive joking and cute jealousy had reached a peak. She stated, "He's trying to hurt me." She found information on a pamphlet in the ladies' restroom at school and followed the procedure to get the order of protection. After receiving the order, she stated, "I stopped all communication with the abuser." She

insisted that following the rules for the order assisted in advocating for herself. A third victim also took control of her life when she experienced her first attack on her body. When her boyfriend choked her, the police were contacted. The police gave her information on getting a PO. When she explained to the police that she did not have a vehicle, they informed her of the availability of tokens at the facility. The next day the victim visited the facility, endured a 2-hour process, and was given a court date for the order. A fourth victim refused to stay in an abusive marriage and received a divorce. Because the perpetrator was afraid of legal action, she did not encounter any abuse after separation.

### **Police Response to Calls**

In many instances, when the order of protection is granted but not served, the abusers attack, threaten, or stalk. They do not know that they can be arrested for DV before an order is granted and served. One of the victims had not completed the process for obtaining the order of protection when she was harassed at a friend's house. The police were called, and the perpetrator was arrested for trespassing and disturbing the peace. The victim expressed, "The PO worked best when the police and the guards in jail put fear in him." The police emphasized to the perpetrator the harshness of law enforcement when they answer calls for DV.

Another victim was also in the process of getting an order granted when she was harassed. The perpetrator was an alcoholic and would visit the victim and sleep on her porch. The victim stated that he continuously visited her unannounced. When the police were called, he was arrested and spent a few days in jail for public drunkenness and

trespassing. The perpetrator had encountered a total of three arrests by police. On his third arrest, he was served the order of protection. He admitted, "The jail experience was unpleasant." The victim commented, "All of that was probably too much for him." Arrest appeared to get a response from another abuser who experienced the victim contacting the police three times for his harassment and violence. On the third call, he was arrested, and the physical and nonphysical abuse ended.

The abuser of the fourth victim was a highly respectable citizen who had an occupation as a fireman in the city for 15 years. The abuser was the victim's ex-boyfriend, who was upset with her because she discontinued the one-and-a-half-year relationship because of his cheating. He used his automobile to drive into her car. As a result, the victim notified the police. On their arrival, she gave them the perpetrator's name, description and address. The police exclaimed to the victim the process of swearing out a warrant for his arrest because he used his car for a weapon. He was arrested and bailed out quickly. The victim replied, "To my knowledge, this was his only arrest, and being locked up with prisoners hurt his ego."

### **Impact of Drug Abuse**

The second research question in the study is the following: "How does the ineffectiveness of protection orders exacerbate the negative experiences of victims of domestic violence?" Three themes emerged from the victims' responses: Impact of Drug Abuse, Disrespect Toward Law Enforcement and Delays in Pursuing the Protective Order.

Three victims identified with having drug users as their abuser. One of the victims explained, "Having the PO made it worse." After the abuser was served with the order and attended court, he continued to be aggressive. The victim described an incident when she was struck by the abuser as she was walking alone on a parking lot. As the abuser ran from the scene, she smelled marijuana, and a joint fell from his pants. She called police and a warrant was issued to him for violation of the order. A second victim was in an eight-year relationship with an abuser who sold and used drugs. She stated, "Some of the craziness is because of his smoking crack and popping pills." She also commented, "The order made it worse." When the third victim was enjoying a night at a bar, her first conversation with the perpetrator was an offer to her to pop pills. He admitted to popping a variety of pills to enhance his high. After a brief relationship with him, he struck her face and threatened her life. She pressed charges for assault and completed the process for the order of protection. She endured several episodes of physical brutality before and after the order was served.

One of the victims experienced physical abuse from an alcoholic who did not remember any of the abuse after he became sober. When he viewed her bruises, he did not believe he was the abuser. He visited her continuously and she refused to open the door, as a result he would sleep on her porch. However, the victim experienced a positive response to the restraining order because the perpetrator had an encounter with a stern judge who ordered him to rehab.

**Disrespect Toward Law Enforcement**

Five victims endured physical and nonphysical abuse after the PO was granted, and all of the abusers exhibited no respect for authority. They were arrested continuously after appearing before a judge. One of the abusers was a husband, and he admitted, “police do not have authority to tell me how to treat my wife or run my house.” A second perpetrator who sold and used drugs continuously reminded the victim of his hatred for police, his disrespect for the law, and having no fear of jail. A third victim described a brutal attack by a drug abuser after the court appearance. She stated, “the judge angered him and made the entire abusive situation worse.” This same drug abuser damaged the victim’s property by slashing her tires and spray painting her garage door. Another victim explained that the perpetrator, a drug abuser was docile and polite before the judge; three days after the court appearance, he threw a bottle and cut her leg. The same night, he broke a window at her home and cut her arm. A fifth married victim complained that the restraining order made the situation worse. After leaving her husband, his threats and harassment increased. The perpetrators appearances before judges did not deter their behavior.

**Delays in Pursuing the Order of Protection**

There are various reasons for victims to delay in pursuing an order of protection. Some are afraid, others may depend on the abuser for economic reasons, or they may be embarrassed for others to know about the abuse. Four of the women were slow in using the process to get the order. One of the women endured a brutal attack that demanded hospitalization. The police at the hospital instructed her to get a PO, but she refused. For

months, she made plans to leave the abuser by working extra hours and saving her money; her husband was the sole provider for the household. When she was able to provide for herself, she received the PO. The second victim also experienced a brutal physical attack and went to the emergency room after the police officer insisted. Over a two to three-year period, she had contacted police six to seven times for physical abuse. During this time, counselors and policemen recommended an order of protection for her. After the emergency room visit, she completed the process for the order.

The third and fourth victims were married and both of them had difficulty in making a decision to get an order. One of the victims went to the facility to apply for the order but changed her mind after she heard the details of what was involved. She was frightened of her husband's response, so she refused to sign the papers. The counselors at the facility were not persistent, but exhibited concern for her. Four months later, she returned to complete the papers for the order. The fourth victim, a social worker went to the facility to get the order of protection but became embarrassed because she knew some of the employees. She also delayed in getting a court date because she did not want her coworkers to know her business.

When the women expressed their total feelings on the experience with the order of protection, most of them mentioned the staff at the facility that processed the order. The staff was recognized in numerous ways: competent, professional, helpful, organized, empathetic, and willing to offer services such as housing, with utility assistance and bus vouchers. When the women described the best results of the restraining order, the answers varied. Two of the women expressed their positive experience with the PO

which was credited to police assistance. Three more women viewed the order as giving them courage to focus on their own safety and health. One victim stated, “My experience was not the best because I have never been abused and I was not sure if I wanted to press charges.” “I was afraid of the process and the abuser.”

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 presented the study’s outcomes for the two research questions and the themes that emerged from the participants’ interviews which shared their experiences with the order of protection. From research question, RQ1, the themes developed were Attitude of the Judge, Victims Advocating for Themselves, and Police Response to Calls. Five of the victims identified the demeanor of the judge had a great effect on the perpetrators. Four victims admitted the abuse stopped when they took charge of their own lives after getting the order. Four more victims saw relief when the perpetrators were arrested and jailed before the order was served. From research question, RQ2, the themes developed were Impact of Drug Abuse, Disrespect Toward Law Enforcement, and Delays in Pursuing the Protective Order. Three women experienced abuse after the order from men who either sold or used drugs and five endured continuous abuse after court, arrest, and jail time. When four women delayed in completing the process for the order, they experienced difficulty in receiving relief from the abuse. All of the women had experiences with judges in court and police officers. Chapter 5 presents the study’s key findings, interpretation of findings, limitations, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the effectiveness of the PO from the real-life experiences of women who are victims of DV. The study addressed the risk factors associated with being exposed to DA. Phenomenology was the most appropriate choice for the study because the intent was to describe meaning for people from real-life experiences of a particular phenomenon (see Creswell, 2006). The phenomenon for this study was victims of DV sharing their experiences of POs and seeking help to prevent future harm. Participants were recruited through Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn and were interviewed by phone with an audio recording device to ensure data were accurately captured. All participants were residents of a midsouth U.S. city and had used the same facility to get a PO against the abuser. The participants consented to share their experiences regarding the use of POs.

### **Key Findings**

The purpose of the research questions was to address the impact of POs on the victims' real-life experiences with DV. Protective orders are used as a legal intervention to lower the risk of future danger by one person who is a threat to another (Benitez et al., 2010). RQ1 was the following: How does the effectiveness of protection orders impact the experiences of victims of domestic violence? The themes developed for this question were Attitude of Judge, Victims Advocating for Themselves, and Police Response to Calls. All of the women who had positive experiences with the PO had an encounter with a judge who used sternness with the abusers. All of the women did some advocating for themselves, but those who had a plan for becoming active participants in their safety



experienced a positive response for the PO. Most victims experienced the perpetrators being arrested and spending time in jail, but a few men abided by the court's decision without jail time. As a result, the victims did not experience further harm.

RQ2 was the following: How does the ineffectiveness of protection orders exacerbate the negative experiences of victims of DV? The themes developed for this question were Impact of Drug Abuse, Disrespect Toward Law Enforcement, and Delays in Pursuing the Protective Order. A few of the victims admitted to having abusers who sold and used drugs, and these women experienced further abuse after the order was granted. Most of the perpetrators went to jail, and exhibited respect for the law. The victims who had abusers who endured jail time but continued to abuse experienced a negative response from the order of protection. Half of the victims began the process of completing the order but stopped intermittently, and their results were persistent physical or nonphysical abuse. All of the women praised the counselors at the facility who processed the application for the restraining order.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to contribute to the existing literature by exploring the perspectives of victims of DV and their experiences with POs. Few studies had addressed the victims' experiences of the PO and their contact with or physical harm caused by the abuser. Findings from this study revealed that all of the women who had positive effects of the restraining order experienced police response to calls and their helpful advice. According to Parker & Gielen (2014), 50% of women found police assistance helpful in reducing violence to women, and 17% viewed police assistance as

making the situation worse. In the current study, all of the victims received police response, but the positive outcome depended on the abuser's use of drugs or disrespect to authority. According to Melton and Nordmeyer (2014), reported cases with a restraining order involved more perpetrators as nonintimate friends. Also, the victims usually experienced stalking with threats, and an arrest was evident. Results of this study indicated nine victims were in a relationship with an intimate partner, and eight experienced stalking, threats and arrest for the perpetrator. Kothari et al. (2014) revealed the order of protection decreased emergency room visits and calls to the police. This study revealed six victims had a reduction in bodily harm after the restraining order, and there were no hospital visits.

Gondolf and Fischer's survivor theory was the theoretical framework for this study. Gondolf and Fischer (1988) developed the assumption of giving women credit for finding new coping skills and seeking assistance from formal or informal agencies. According to Gondolf and Fischer (1988), women have the ability to exhibit behaviors of seeking help even when danger is at its highest level. Findings from the literature revealed that when the victims received the order of protection, they sought help from the courts, judges, and police officers to prevent them from experiencing future danger.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of a study are characteristics of the design or methodology that influence the interpretation of the results. A limitation of qualitative research is the inability to generalize findings to a larger population. In the current study, purposeful sampling was used to recruit 10 African American women residing in a southern U.S.

city. This small sample consisted of women who had experiences of DA at the hands of a male intimate partner, and who had received a PO. Findings are not generalizable or transferable, but the results may encourage future researchers to study other ethnic groups or other populations of abused victims.

A second limitation to the study was the appearance of bias. Because the participants were victims of abuse, they shared personal information, so it was possible for respondent bias to have had an impact on the quality and quantity of responses. Victims may have also had a tendency to be reluctant to give accurate information to avoid being seen in a negative manner. To reduce respondent bias, I phrased questions in a manner to emphasize acceptance of whatever they decided to share. Also, at the beginning of the interview, I established rapport with the interviewees to encourage them to be honest.

### **Recommendations**

Findings of this study may facilitate positive social change for victims of DV. More studies on DV and POs could include the following populations: men abused by women, people abused by nonintimate partners, women abused by other women, and people who experience abuse in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community. It may be beneficial for researchers to use different demographics such as educational level, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Additionally, researchers may study police response with and without arrest for perpetrators who are violators of POs. The interest would be what determines the arrest or nonarrest. The current study allowed victims of DV to share their experiences with the restraining order. Findings from this

study may be made available to current and future victims of DA through social media. Also, agencies and organizations that offer assistance to victims of DV should have access to the study.

### **Implications**

The social change implications for this study include increased awareness of the impact of POs on the experiences of victims of DV. Judges may gain insight into the importance of each case that appears before them. Legislators may alter laws with respect to the severity of sentences for perpetrators who violate orders. Additionally, police officers may become more responsive to calls for those who have violated restraining orders. The study may also assist the victims in becoming active participants in their safety, learning about the judicial system, and elevating their self-esteem.

I used Gondolf and Fischer's survivor theory to examine victims' experiences with a survival strategy: the PO. Data collection from recorded phone interviews captured the real-life experiences of the abused women and enabled me to identify emerging themes from the data analysis. Data analysis helped me identify themes associated with the abused women's experiences with the restraining order. Findings may be disseminated to agencies and organizations that serve victims of DV so they can be aware of victims' experiences with POs. The purpose of the order of protection is to reduce future harm by one person considered to be a threat to another (Benitez et al., 2010).

### **Conclusion**

DV is a serious problem that has negatively affected millions in the United States and other countries. The seriousness of the problem has pushed the U.S. Congress to pass

legislation for the PO. The vastness of the problem has generated numerous studies concerning IPV. However, the current study addressed abused women's experiences with the PO. The study findings may contribute to the literature by clarifying the experiences of victims of abuse regarding the restraining order.

The results from the study revealed that the victims who experienced positive effects of the restraining order had experiences that were associated with stern judges, advocating for self, and abusers who responded in a positive way to arrest and jail time. Victims who experienced negative effects of the PO had experiences that were associated with delays in pursuing the order and abusers who were drug users and had no respect for law enforcement. Because the participants were victims of DV, the findings could be beneficial to current and future victims of DV.

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### Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

I am a doctoral student at Walden University, and I am looking for individuals who are interested in participating in a research study. The study's purpose is to gain knowledge on the effectiveness of the protective order from real life experiences of women who are past victims of domestic violence. I am specifically seeking women age 20 years and older who have had past experiences of domestic violence with a male mate, and have been granted a protective order. The researcher, Alisa Fant Hayes will be the only individual to know the identity of participants in the study. For confidentiality, each participant will be identified with a secret identifying code. Monetary compensation will be given for your participation.

Thank you, Alisa F. Hayes

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

### Opening Statement:

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this interview. Your participation is instrumental for social change. For example, judges may gain insight into the importance of each case that appears in their courts. Law makers may change laws with respect to the severity of sentences for perpetrators who are repeat offenders. Also, police officers may become more responsive to domestic violence calls. I am the only one that will know your participation, and you will receive an identifying code to mask your true identity. Before the interview, I will ask you to tell me your age, and type of protective order granted. Do you have any questions before I proceed?

1. Explain how you first heard about the protective order?
2. Will you describe the experience you had for acquiring the protective order?
3. In your opinion, did the protective order stop violence? If so, in what way? If not, in what way?
4. If violence did not stop completely, was there a reduction in violence after the protective order was granted? How would you describe it?
5. Describe the circumstances when the protective order worked best.
6. Did you feel safer after receiving the protective order, if so, in what way? If not, why not?
7. Overall, express your total feelings on your experience with the protective order.

This concludes the interview. Is there anything else you would like to share with me? I will transcribe the interview within a two-day period. If follow up questions arise,

may I contact you within that time frame? Results will be available for you, at the completion of the study.

Thank you for your participation.