

2015

# Inclusive Branding Strategies for Domestic Violence Agencies: Embracing Opportunities to Reach and Better Serve Male-Identified Survivors

Morgan D. Dewey  
[mddewey@uvm.edu](mailto:mddewey@uvm.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.uvm.edu/hcoltheses>

---

## Recommended Citation

Dewey, Morgan D., "Inclusive Branding Strategies for Domestic Violence Agencies: Embracing Opportunities to Reach and Better Serve Male-Identified Survivors" (2015). *UVM Honors College Senior Theses*. Paper 50.

This Honors College Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Theses at ScholarWorks @ UVM. It has been accepted for inclusion in UVM Honors College Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UVM. For more information, please contact [donna.omalley@uvm.edu](mailto:donna.omalley@uvm.edu).

Inclusive Branding Strategies for Domestic Violence Agencies:  
Embracing Opportunities to Reach and Better Serve Male-Identified Survivors

Morgan Dewey

University of Vermont

Author Note

Morgan Dewey, Department of Community Development and Applied Economics,  
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Vermont Honors College.

This research was supported in part by the Simon Family Public Research Fellowship. I would like to thank Sarah Heiss, my advisor, the staff at Women Helping Battered Women, and Allie Brimlow for their steadfast support in making this research possible.

Inclusive Branding Strategies for Domestic Violence Agencies:  
Embracing Opportunities to Reach and Better Serve Male-Identified Survivors

Abstract

Successful strategies for branding that are inclusive to male-identified survivors were identified in this qualitative study through semi-structured interviews with leaders from six domestic violence agencies across the United States: four represented traditional domestic violence agencies and two represented specialized agencies with expertise in providing services to non-traditional survivors. The strategic implementation of 1) inclusive language, 2) visual diversity, 3) community outreach, and 4) communication channels emerged as successful strategies in branding in an inclusive way for male-identified survivors. The implementation of these successful strategies provides the opportunity for domestic violence agencies to create an inclusive environment for male-identified survivors, and would contribute to a paradigm shift in how domestic violence is viewed.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, Branding, Masculinity

Inclusive Branding Strategies for Domestic Violence Agencies:  
Embracing Opportunities to Reach and Better Serve Male-Identified Survivors

**Introduction**

Domestic violence (DV) is a prevalent issue in the United States. It affects individuals of all races, ages, genders, socioeconomic statuses, education levels, religions, sexual orientations, and gender identities. While women between the ages of 18-24 are the most at risk population for DV (Black, Basile, Breidling, Smith, Walters, Merrick, Chen, & Stevens, 2010), male-identified survivors (MIS) represent one of the largest underserved populations (Cheung, Leung, & Tsui, 2009). One in four men have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, and one in seven men have experienced *severe* physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, resulting in an estimated 835,000 men assaulted annually in the United States (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

Many people, including MIS, are unaware that many DV agencies offer services to men (Stop Abusive and Violent Environments, 2010). It is important to rectify this misperception so that survivors, regardless of gender identity, feel comfortable accessing services. One opportunity for agencies to communicate that services are available to MIS is to employ inclusive branding. While there is limited research on branding and DV agencies (Helfrich & Simpson, 2006; Macy, Giattina, Parish, & Crosby, 2010), branding strategies specifically including MIS are especially understudied.

This study seeks to rectify this gap in the research. It uses semi-structured interviews to answer the research question:

RQ 1. What are successful strategies in branding inclusive services for MIS in DV agencies?

To begin, we situate this research within literature related to DV and the role of branding DV services. We then address the sampling and interview methods before discussing the analysis, results, and their implications.

### **Domestic Violence in the United States**

DV is 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 one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, threats, and emotional abuse” (NCADV, 2015, 1). DV accounts for 21% of all violent crime in the United States (Truman & Morgan, 2014). Although DV is typically framed as a heteronormative exchange that is between a woman (the survivor) and a man (the perpetrator), Ristock (2011) discusses the “need to move beyond heteronormative constructions of violence” (p. 5). It is important to remember that abuse comes in many forms and can affect anyone regardless of race, age, gender, socioeconomic status, education status, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity (Violence Prevention and Response, 2014). Often, the framing of DV is as a crime against a woman perpetrated by a man. However there are extremely underrepresented populations, such as MIS, that do not fit this mold and also need access to services provided by DV agencies.

According to Helfrich and Simpson (2006), “not all survivors receive the same services with the same consistency... or the same empathy and respect from agencies [or] their staff members” (p. 352). One in four men have reported experiencing some form of physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, and one in seven men have reported experiencing *severe* physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Many cases go unreported (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). There is a clear need for inclusivity for both women *and* men.

There are many reasons why MIS are not receiving services. First, they may be ashamed to seek services. Men are less likely to report abuse due to fear of retribution, the desire to appear self-reliant, and concerns of loss of independence post-disclosure (Felson, Messner, Hoskin, & Deane, 2002; Holmes & Slap, 1998). The fear and stigma against men reporting cases of DV is perpetuated through dominant discourses surrounding DV.

The services DV agencies do, and importantly do not, provide also contribute to why MIS are not currently receiving services. For instance, many DV agencies describe their work with men in DV situations, but their “main focus is ‘men as perpetrators’” (Cheung et al., 2009). Men are less likely to be considered potential clients for an agency’s services (Stop Abusive and Violent Environments, 2010). According to Bent-Goodley (2005), the exclusion of MIS may be rooted in the fact that the movement establishing DV services began during second-wave feminism. This movement was dominated primarily by white, middle-class women, and historical exclusion of certain populations perpetuates underrepresentation (Ashcraft, Muhr, Rennstam, & Sullivan, 2012). While Ashcraft uses this theory in examining women historically excluded in the workplace, the same exclusion of men from DV agencies has perpetuated underrepresentation, and led to a lack of support for MIS. A lack of supportive environments for MIS creates a systematic, insinuated exclusion of men from DV services.

In addition to systematically making it more difficult for men to access services as survivors, DV agency branding may also contribute to males not seeking services. Macy, Giattina, Parish, and Crosby (2010) argued that there is a “need for welcoming services for all survivors” (p. 3). Many DV discourses suggest a heteronormative view of DV. While it is apparent that men are victims of DV, intimate partner violence against men is primarily committed in same-sex relationships rather than heterosexual relationships (“Domestic Violence

Facts,” 2014). With branding that suggests heteronormativity, male-identified victims in same-sex relationships may be even less likely to reach out for help. This is also applicable to lesbian survivors. In their article “Improving Services for Lesbian Clients: What Do Domestic Violence Agencies Need to Do?” Helfrich and Simpson (2006) found that lesbian survivors of DV who are seeking services also face systematic, institutional, and individual barriers.

One way to rectify the barriers that non-traditional service users face, specifically MIS, is for DV agencies to employ inclusive branding strategies. There is a gap in literature surrounding how agencies can incorporate more inclusive branding into their marketing mix. The next section describes the importance behind branding and current branding practices used by DV agencies to explore how branding can be a valuable tool in creating an inclusive environment for MIS.

### **Inclusive Branding & Domestic Violence Agencies**

The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a brand as a "name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers" (“AMA Dictionary,” 2014, p. 404). While the AMA’s primary focus in their definition is for-profit companies, the same approach can be taken for social service agencies. Branding shapes the image of an entity by communicating the look, feel, and sound of an organization. It should be unified and consistent in its portrayal of an organization to the target population.

Branding can initiate inclusion and increase value to an organization (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Inclusive branding is accomplished by representing all stakeholders in the organization’s external communication. Poorly managed branding efforts in which crucial stakeholders or clients are not included result in a less holistic approach (Pike, 2011). Helfrich and Simpson (2006) recommended a shift in the branding of DV agencies. Inclusion should be

communicated on “marketing and advertising materials” (Helfrich & Simpson, 2006, p. 354). In order to increase brand inclusivity in DV agencies, non-traditional service users, such as same-sex couples and MIS, need to be represented.

Inclusive branding can aid in establishing a clear brand identity. Branding can facilitate collective identity and foster common goals to bring value to organizations (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Ashcraft, Muhr, Rennstam, and Sullivan (2012) claim that there is an emphasis on improving quality of service especially in non-profits when there is a clear brand identity. For example, using language and images, which are components of branding, to reflect inclusion may improve the experiences of lesbian survivors, which in turn brings value to the organization (Helfrich and Simpson, 2006). The emphasis of inclusion creates a clear brand identity, which improves the quality of service for lesbian survivors. They suggest that organizations can create an inclusive environment by “posting Pride pamphlets, pink triangles, rainbow flags, and other symbols of the LGBT communities” (Helfrich & Simpson, 2006, p. 354). Implementing such changes can facilitate a clear brand identity and foster common, inclusive goals.

Branding that relies on the input of all stakeholders can also lead to institutional reform and in this study, may help create a paradigm shift in the way survivors are viewed to be more inclusive. Inclusive branding is a valuable practice that entwines people, institutions, objects, and practices, which results in a more innovative and productive environment (Ashcraft et al., 2012). The inclusive culture that results from asking all stakeholders to participate in the development of an organization’s brand suggests a strong link between the process and outcome of branding (Pike, 2011). Through the creation of inclusive branding strategies, organizational members commit to the values attached to inclusivity. These values combat views that DV only happens when heterosexual men abuse heterosexual women. Creating institutional awareness instated by



including all stakeholders in the branding process is a mediating factor in implementing systemic, institutional change (Helfrich & Simpson, 2006)

While there is limited research on branding and DV agencies, branding strategies aimed at including MIS are especially understudied. This study seeks to address this gap in research surrounding inclusive branding and MIS. Specifically, this study seeks to identify and describe branding strategies DV agencies can implement to create a more inclusive environment for MIS.

Upon selecting pertinent agencies, the following qualitative research question will be addressed in order to obtain information regarding successful strategies for inclusive branding:

RQ 1. What are successful strategies in branding inclusive services for MIS in DV agencies?

It is worthwhile to identify a set of successful inclusive branding strategies. If DV agencies apply these principles, they will be more supportive of underrepresented survivors of DV.

### **Methods**

The goal of this study was to identify successful branding strategies that are inclusive to MIS. Six DV agencies across the country were selected and semi-structured interviews were conducted to answer the qualitative research question.

#### **Purposeful Sampling**

We conducted a purposeful sampling of six DV agencies. See Figure 1 for selection process and sample population. The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) was formed in 1990, and is “dedicated to creating a social, political and economic environment in which violence against women no longer exists.” Their work is inclusive of MIS of violence (“About NNEDV,” 2015). Every year, the NNEDV conducts a one-day unduplicated count of adults and children seeking DV services within all 50 states (including Washington, D.C.). To

identify states that provide the most services to survivors proportional to the respective state population, we used the 2013 NNEDV census data, which is the most recent census available.

Statistical analysis of the 2013 NNEDV census demonstrated that states provided, at the least, services to 0.099 survivors per day per thousand people in South Carolina to, at the most, 0.855 survivors per day per thousand people in Washington, D.C. On average, states provided services to 0.267 survivors per day per thousand people. Analysis of the census identified the four states that, proportional to the state's population, serve the most survivors: Washington, D.C. ( $n=0.855$ ), Alaska ( $n=0.841$ ), New Mexico ( $n=0.456$ ), and Wyoming ( $n=0.453$ ). Agencies in these four states were selected for interviewing. Washington, D.C. and Alaska proportionally serve a far greater amount of survivors than any other states. These proportions represent how many survivors each state serves within one day per one thousand people compared to the respective state population. Alaska and Washington, D.C. are extreme outliers, meaning their proportions lie over three times the interquartile range (See Figure 2). While these numbers may seem low, it is important to remember that this proportion is based on how many survivors DV agencies serve in only one day compared to the total state population. See Table 1 for an ordered list of each state with its respective proportion. This analysis also showed spatial-relational patterns in the proportion of survivors served by states (See Figure 3).

In addition to constructing a sample of four active DV agencies, we also selected two agencies that specifically serve MIS. Selection was based on agency history of demonstrated innovation for this underserved population, regardless of location. By selecting two agencies specializing in services for MIS and four agencies in the states proportionally serving the most survivors, the study was enhanced through expert opinions on branding.

This purposeful sampling was guided by a statistical analysis that calculated the proportion of survivors each state serves in a day compared to the respective state population. Based on this statistical analysis, agencies from Washington, D.C., Alaska, New Mexico, and Wyoming were selected to participate along with two specialized agencies.

### **Participants and Data Collection**

Requests for participation were sent to individuals in leadership positions at each of the six DV agencies. As a follow-up, potential participants were contacted through email and by phone one week later. Of the six people in leadership positions that were contacted, all six agreed to participate in a semi-structured interview.

Of the six participants, four identified as female, one as genderqueer, and one as male. Participants were between the ages of 25 and 66, and each held a leadership position. Experience related to working with MIS ranged from occasionally providing service to continuous work specifically dedicated to including underserved populations. Each participant acknowledged the need to provide inclusive services to MIS.

Those willing to participate scheduled a time for a semi-structured interview. Interviews were conducted over the phone in a quiet, confidential space. Before the interview, the purpose, goals, and methods of the study were explained. Any questions participants had were answered, and they were asked for their consent to participate. Verbal consent from participants was given before any questions were asked. Interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes.

Semi-structured interviews are “guided, concentrated, focused, and open-ended communication,” that offer both the participant and the interviewer the opportunity to sufficiently explore the research content (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 19). Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they offer “sufficient flexibility to approach different responses

differently while still covering the same areas of data collection,” (Noor, 2008, p. 1604).

Participants were guided through questions about inclusive branding strategies employed by the agency. Through this interview process, we identified branding strategies agencies employ that make services and organizations inclusive and accessible for MIS. Interviews were audio recorded for transcription purposes and the results were kept in a secure location.

### **Constant Comparative Analysis**

This study used constant comparative analysis to examine interview data and identify successful inclusive branding strategies. Constant comparative analysis is “designed to aid analysts with... abilities in generating a theory which is integrated, consistent, plausible, close to the data, and in a form which is clear enough to be readily, if only partially, operationalized for testing” (Glaser, 1965, p. 437). Constant comparative analysis was also used in Helfrich and Simpson’s (2004) study to examine service barriers for lesbians. Using constant comparative analysis, forceful and reoccurring themes in branding were identified. Pervasive themes were analyzed and compiled, discussed in results, and examined as practical implications.

Pseudonyms are used to keep the names of participants and organizations confidential.

### **Analysis**

Constant comparative analysis of the interviews provided a set of successful inclusive branding strategies for DV agencies. These four themes were the use of inclusive language, incorporation of visual diversity, implementation of strategic community outreach, and utilization of communication channels (See Figure 4).

#### **Successful Strategy 1: Use Inclusive Language**

Inclusive language avoids words or expressions that exclude individuals with particular identities, in order to better represent all members of a community. In this study participants

suggested the use of gender-neutral language, which eliminates or neutralizes reference to gender when describing individuals. Using gender-neutral language creates inclusivity because all survivors, regardless of gender identity, feel welcome.

Susan from Agency 2 noted that agencies “have a tendency to say ‘she,’” when discussing survivors, and this calls for a shift in “how we portray ourselves to the community.” Peg shared that Agency 1 “generally steers away from any pronouns such as him and her” in order to “keep it as inclusive as possible,” as did Natalie from Agency 3. The most important suggestion from Paul of Non-Traditional Agency (NTA) 1 was to “use gender-neutral language.” Becky from Agency 4 shared that “even male, female, and transgender really is not going to cut it,” noting that gender identities do not fit a specific mold. Paul clarified that agencies should “use words like partner, abuser, and survivor, as opposed to defaulting to the [gender] binary,” and that looking for gender-neutral language is “a great way to tell right off the bat the likelihood that an organization will respond well to a man calling.” Agencies can use gender-neutral terminology, such as “partner,” instead of using gender-specific labels, such as “girlfriend.”

When gendered labels are assigned to individuals it creates barriers. They may feel excluded if they feel they are not the “typical survivor.” The use of gender-neutral language is inclusive because neither the survivor nor the perpetrator is pigeonholed as a specific gender. The gender binary of male or female excludes identities such as male to female, female to male, agender, genderqueer, and many others. Using gender-neutral, inclusive language in community outreach, both in presentations as well as literature and materials, is a crucial step in branding inclusively for MIS.

**Outreach presentations and materials.** Inclusive language was used in community outreach, both in presentations and literature. For example, Natalie, who conducts trainings in the

community, said that she is especially conscientious about the language she uses in high school presentations. When speaking with young people, Natalie focuses a “certain amount of time not talking about female victims,” and instead she focuses on “statistics on transgender and male victims.” By dedicating a large part of a presentation to survivors who do not identify as female, she helps spread the message that survivors are not always female-identifying. With this knowledge, MIS grasp the message that they are not alone, and it is okay to reach out for services.

Becky shared that all of their public outreach materials, “have nondiscrimination language, [and] are not gendered at all.” It is important to be inclusive with content as well. In a 2014 quarterly update, Agency 4 highlighted a man’s story of abuse. By featuring a non-traditional survivor, they showed audiences that men are not immune to DV. Paul echoed similar sentiments when he shared that all of NTA 1’s brochures are “aimed at heterosexual men, gay men, lesbians, and the transgender community, as there are a number of brochures already available for heterosexual women.” These brochures included reasons why individuals with non-traditional identities may stay in abusive relationships, where they can get help, and signs of DV. Inclusive language and content of outreach materials, from presentations to brochures, is a successful branding strategy.

**Contexts for inclusive language.** Participants mentioned an effective branding strategy is to incorporate inclusive language within specific contexts. Participants said that inclusive language was critical when describing services. Chelsea from NTA 2 expressed that it is important to market services that agencies offer with inclusive language. Chelsea specified that, “support groups and other services the agency offers should be labeled and described in a way that’s inclusive and inviting.” NTA 2 does this by addressing service descriptions to the survivor.

For example, service descriptions read, “We will help support you through...” and “You can access services through...” therefore abstaining from the use of gender-specific language and creating a welcoming environment.

In addition to marketing services, Agency 4 believes it is important for advocates to “use non-gendered language in the way you ask questions” when communicating with survivors. This would include avoiding assuming the gender of a survivor’s partner. For example, if an advocate was inquiring about the batterer of a man, and asked “Was she physically abusive?” the survivor may not feel comfortable disclosing that his partner was a man, therefore creating a barrier for accessing services. This barrier hinders inclusion. Instead, advocates could frame this question as “Do you mind sharing if your partner was physically abusive?”

In sum, inclusive language is paramount to inclusive branding. There was recurring feedback that inclusive language is necessary to create an environment where MIS, as well as all non-traditional survivors, feel comfortable accessing services. As a successful strategy agencies should critically examine the language they use in 1) outreach, 2) marketing services and 3) in interaction with survivors. Agencies should avoid using gender-specific pronouns, such as he and she, and instead refer to individuals using titles such as, partner, survivor, and perpetrator.

### **Successful Strategy 2: Incorporate Visual Diversity**

Incorporating visual diversity is another successful inclusive branding strategy. Pictures and logos are often the first images survivors see when accessing information about DV agencies. In order to brand inclusively, these visuals need to be diverse and inclusive to MIS. Images should be welcoming and communicate inclusion regardless of gender identity.

**Pictures.** Incorporating diversity in pictures is a successful branding strategy. Paul explained that DV agencies have to “target men through not only words, but also through

photos.” NTA 1 accomplished this by “including pictures of men in outreach materials.”

Likewise, NTA 2 “made sure all brochures and flyers had men on them.” By visually portraying men as survivors, DV agencies express that underrepresented survivors are valued. This starts a paradigm shift in traditional, inaccurate views that survivors cannot be male-identified.

While participants focused on gender-neutral language, they sought to have equal, not neutral, gender representation in pictures. While having photographs of men and women is not gender-neutral, seeing photographs of real people humanizes the experience of DV. Survivors can identify with faces in photographs, which creates a more welcoming environment than using images that are completely gender-neutral such as hands, ribbons, or other objects.

**Logos.** Agencies should use diverse, gender-neutral logos. Agency 3 recently went through a rebranding. Natalie shared that their old logo “used to be feminine,” including images such as hearts, flowers, and the color pink. They now have a new logo that incorporates natural features associated with their state, which is “much more gender-neutral than it used to be.” Some examples of inclusive logos include using natural features, geometric shapes, and colors like grey and green, as these images are not associated with a specific gender or group of people.

NTA 2 and Agency 1 have inclusive logos. Peg suggested ensuring that logos do not have symbols that appeal to a specific population such as “flowing hair, hands, and children,” as this may have the potential to “drive some populations away.” Agency 1 uses neutral colors in their materials relying heavily on white and grey. Their logo incorporates their name in a simple font with a small, simple image. The logo used by NTA 2 is a green geometric shape.

In sum, diversifying logos and pictures is a successful inclusive branding strategy for MIS. Interviews repeatedly showed that agencies should incorporate visual diversity in their use of pictures by including images of men, and create logos using gender-neutral images and colors.



**Successful Strategy 3: Implement Strategic Community Outreach**

DV agencies should strategically reach out to community partners that may connect with non-traditional survivors, who may not have otherwise heard about services. Participants collaborate with community partners and select strategic outreach locations to reach MIS and communicate that their agency is inclusive.

**Community partners.** Fostering relationships with community partners is advantageous for inclusive branding. Raising awareness and engaging partners in conversation is a marketing tactic, as it spreads the word of inclusivity to MIS. Partnerships include providing trainings and presentations, collaborating on events, and other communication. There are a variety of ways in which agencies can initiate and maintain these partnerships. Susan shared that community dialogues and meetings such as “help fairs,” where community members gather in a common space to share information about resources, are great places to reach out. Agency 2 fosters relationships with community partners during their weekly meetings.

Through these partnerships, community organizations are educated about DV, issues related to survivorship, and services. With this awareness, community partners are educated on how to provide referrals to survivors that may not otherwise reach out to DV agencies. Referrals from partner agencies let survivors know from a trusted source that they are welcome at DV agencies. When asked how MIS initially learn about services, Peg shared that “most of the time... it’s referral agencies sharing that [MIS] will be welcomed at our agency.”

To increase the likelihood of a referral, agencies need to ensure that partners know about inclusive services. Agency 3 “works really well with a lot of community member in getting the word out there.” Becky said that Agency 4 will often “reach out to different groups in our community to ensure that they are aware that [Agency 4] is a resource to anyone who might need

[them].” Community partners making referrals to Agency 2 must understand that they are inclusive of “men, women, and any other survivor.” They “bring in community agencies, and they tell us about their agency, we tell them about our agency, and make sure that they get the information as to who we serve and what services we provide.”

Referrals come from many places. Agency 1’s “biggest referral agencies are the police and hospitals.” In addition to working with “middle schools and high schools,” Agency 2 has “been working very closely with a local LGBTQA advocacy organization,” and as a result “has been getting more referrals through them.” Peg shared that one of Agency 1’s most important partnerships was with a similar LGBTQA organization. Referrals from these organizations allow agencies to collaborate and holistically address the needs of MIS. It is crucial to foster positive and informative relationships with community partners, as they are valuable resources in informing MIS that services are available to them.

**Location matters.** Strategically selecting locations for outreach programming is a successful strategy for inclusive branding. In an effort to engage MIS, NTA 1 “particularly concentrated on hospitals.” Peg and Susan also shared that hospitals were a crucial location for outreach, as hospital staff are often the first responders to DV situations. Agencies ensure that outreach materials are accessible and train hospital staff to better serve underrepresented populations. For example, Agency 1 has implemented trainings called predominant aggressor analysis, which identifies the primary aggressor in a DV situation. Using these trainings to educate medical staff is a valuable tool in reaching MIS.

Having outreach materials and programs in locations frequented by military personnel is also valuable for inclusive branding. Outreach efforts can include presenting at military bases, and ensuring that materials such as brochures are available in common spaces. As a result of

doing outreach with the military, Susan confirmed that Agency 2 had “more male military survivors contacting” them to access services.

Finally, bars were reported to be important locations for agencies’ inclusive branding. Chelsea specifically said that “some specific outreach efforts targeted at MIS have been in bars,” and Becky suggested reaching out to MIS “if you know that there’s a bar in town where you can talk to diverse populations.” NTA 2 has volunteers hand out brochures and provide information to individuals in bars.

In sum, diversifying community partners and strategic outreach locations allows agencies to reach MIS and communicate inclusivity. Community partners can make referrals to DV agencies, and reach individuals that may be in need of services. Intentionally selecting locations where individuals may not be aware of DV services is a good way to reach an audience of MIS. As a successful inclusive strategy, agencies should foster relationships with community partners such as LGBTQA advocacy organizations, and select outreach locations such as hospitals, military bases, and bars where intentional outreach has not been conducted in the past.

#### **Successful Strategy 4: Utilize Communication Channels**

Websites, social media, radio, and television were communication channels used to convey inclusivity. These channels provide an accessible means to obtain information and were advantageous to branding inclusively to MIS.

Many participants said that their agency used online resources to communicate inclusion. Paul said that “the website, without a doubt” was the most successful way to relay information to survivors. Websites are often a survivor’s first point of contact with a DV agency, and if they do not relay inclusion, survivors are not likely to reach out for services. Chelsea also expressed that the NTA 2 website “has been the most successful method in reaching men survivors.” To be

effective, Becky encouraged website designers to be “as clear as possible” in what services are offered and to whom. For example, on the homepage of Agency 4’s website, there are tabs for “Women,” “Men,” “Teens,” “Children,” and “LGBTQ.” These tabs are clearly designed for each respective population and outline the services provided.

In addition to using the agency’s website to promote an inclusive brand, participants use social media outlets. Natalie actively engaged social media to post “both female-oriented as well as male-oriented articles.” She very intentionally did not post articles that framed men as perpetrators or that “man-bashed.” If any “man-bashing” occurred in comments on their social media, she did not respond. Man-bashing or posts that frame only women as survivors would easily turn men away from accessing services. Agency 1 recently posted an article on their social media outlets about their approval that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is addressing gender identity issues in temporary and emergency shelters. Using social media to promote an agency’s ideals about gender identity inclusion, especially for MIS, creates an inclusive environment. Like websites, social media is often the first interaction survivors have with a DV agency. If MIS see inclusive content on an agency’s social media, they may be more likely to reach out for help.

In addition to using websites and social media, inclusive outreach via radio and television is effective. Agency 2 has partnered with local television and radio networks to broadcast messages about the inclusive services they offer. Susan confirmed that this television and radio use “brought more men in the door.” When asked about the strategies they used to include MIS, Susan said, “it was the language we used, we think it was breaking down the services and explaining that men could access the same services that we have for women.”

In sum, using communication channels to brand inclusively to MIS is a valuable tool for DV agencies. The communication channels referenced in these interviews were websites, social media, television, and radio. These channels may be particularly successful because they are readily accessible to most populations of survivors. Nearly everyone has access to a television, radio, or computer. Portraying inclusivity through these channels reaches many individuals, including MIS. As a successful strategy, agencies interested in creating an inclusive environment for MIS, as well as other non-traditionally identified survivors, should communicate via website, social media, television, and radio that services provided are inclusive of MIS. These messages should be clear, focused on the inclusion of men, and discourage “man-bashing.”

### **Discussion**

The results of this study revealed four strategies that organizations use to brand in an inclusive way to MIS including inclusive language, visual diversity, strategic community outreach, and appropriate communication channels. The successful strategies for inclusive branding targeted at MIS reflect the conclusions of prior research. Helfrich and Simpson (2006) suggested that agencies examine their use of language and literature to improve services for lesbian clients. This suggestion included components similar to findings in this study, such as using gender-inclusive language and using visual diversity such as displaying symbols like rainbows that are associated with the LGBTQA community. Using inclusive language and visual diversity creates an inclusive environment for both lesbian and MIS.

There is a “need for welcoming services for all survivors” (Macy, Giattina, Parish, & Crosby, 2010, p. 3). This study builds on this in that it identifies strategies in which DV agencies can be more inclusive and welcoming to MIS. In implementing inclusive branding strategies, DV agencies communicate inclusion and that MIS are welcome to access services.

### **Practical Implications**

The strategic implementation of inclusive language, visual diversity, community outreach, and communication channels to inclusively brand DV agencies is useful for a variety of audiences. First and foremost, executive directors and outreach coordinators at DV agencies that are striving to create an inclusive environment for MIS should implement changes based on these findings. Similarly, board members and marketing agencies that work with DV agencies can use these strategies as guidelines to brand inclusively. The inclusion of MIS results in a more holistic branding approach because they are critical stakeholders (Pike, 2011). Including all stakeholders in the branding process is a large factor in instating institutional change toward inclusion for *all* survivors (Helfrich and Simpson, 2006)

With these results, DV agencies can implement changes to brand more inclusively. DV agencies can change gendered language on brochures, websites, training materials, and intake forms shifting to more inclusive, gender-neutral terms. For example, implementing the use of inclusive language could be advantageous on intake forms. Most intake forms ask survivors their gender, and instead of having options, a more inclusive practice would be to leave it blank so that any gender identity that doesn't fall within the binary can be expressed. In trainings and community outreach, staff should be sure to use gender-neutral language and avoid defaulting to any gender when discussing survivors and perpetrators.

Results suggest that there should be visual representation of men on pamphlets and websites, and logos should appear gender-neutral. Seeing diverse faces on marketing materials creates a more welcoming environment than using photographs that are gender-neutral because survivors can identify with the individuals pictured. Photographs of people humanize the experience of DV. DV agencies can consider avoiding colors like pink and symbols like hearts in

logos, as that may appear as exclusive to MIS. DV agencies can implement these changes on the suggested communication channels of social media, websites, television, and radio.

DV agencies can also be strategic in where community outreach takes place, ensuring that outreach locations are diversified to reach individuals who may not be aware of services that are offered. Community partners serving individuals who may not be aware of services should be identified in communities, and selected as community partners. These may include agencies serving LGBTQA-identified individuals, groups that are predominantly comprised of men, or, as suggested in the interviews, military locations or bars.

These results may be transferable to other social service agencies that strive to serve all populations regardless of identity, but may have a history rooted in serving a specific population. These organizations may include sexual violence agencies, civil rights organizations, organizations serving immigrants, government aid programs, and other social service agencies such as the Visiting Nurse Association. These agencies would benefit from implementing these changes as it would facilitate a clear brand identity, which is advantageous to the value of non-profits (Ashcraft et al., 2012). While their implementation may be different, the themes of strategically implementing inclusive language, visual diversity, community outreach, and communication channels are advantageous to inclusive branding.

### **Limitations**

Despite the success in identifying four strategies used to brand DV agencies in a way that's inclusive to MIS, there were some limitations to this study. In addition to a larger sample, a strategic sampling could include all agencies specifically serving non-traditional survivors, which may include more insight aligning with NTA 1 and NTA 2. A statistical analysis

determining how many MIS versus female-identified survivors agencies serve may be another way to strategically sample.

The sample also only included the opinion of individuals in leadership positions at DV agencies. The opinion of MIS was not considered when compiling results. The inclusion of the opinions of MIS would provide tangible insight as to branding strategies that appeal to MIS and create inclusivity. Future research should include interviews with MIS.

As interviews took place, we realized that many of the branding strategies for MIS were discussed as strategies used to target a broad spectrum of underrepresented populations such as the LGBTQA community. Because our interview questions were focused specifically on MIS, we cannot confirm that these results are transferable to other underserved populations. Future research should include interviews with both agencies specializing in LGBTQA services, as well as LGBTQA-identified individuals.

### **Future Research**

This study created the opportunity for future research for exploration in inclusivity for underserved survivors in DV agencies. Future research opportunities include the determination of the most effective strategy, researching the construction of inclusive *services* for underserved survivors, interviewing service users that identify with an underrepresented identity, and determining what other types of organizations might find the results of this study helpful.

While the strategic implementation of inclusive language, visual diversity, community outreach, and communication channels are identified as successful inclusive branding strategies, this study did not address which of these strategies is the most effective. DV agencies often have limited resources, and determining which of these strategies is most effective to save agencies



essential resources would be helpful. Future research should implement the discussed strategies, and conduct a survey with MIS that identifies which strategy attracted them to the agency.

This study explored how DV agencies can brand in a way that is inclusive, but did not address how services can be altered to meet the needs of MIS. Further research is necessary to determine how DV agencies can tailor services for MIS keeping in mind the varied experiences and distinct needs of MIS. As discussed in limitations, interviewing service users whose identity aligns with an underserved population would provide first hand information as to how to be inclusive of MIS. The inclusion of these individuals should be taken into account when identifying successful strategies in creating inclusive services for underserved populations.

### **Conclusion**

All survivors of DV deserve the right to live joyous and autonomous lives. DV agencies were established to provide empowering services to survivors and ensure that survivors had the resources to overcome the detrimental impacts of DV. MIS who are already struggling with the detrimental effects of violence should not feel as if they do not fit the mold of a survivor, and therefore, cannot access services. MIS need to feel comfortable in reaching out to DV agencies for support. Inclusive branding is the way to start. Using the successful strategies explored in this study to brand in an inclusive way to MIS is a necessary step in empowering all survivors of DV, and creating a paradigm shift to a world void of DV.

### References

- National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV). (2015). *About NNEDV*. Retrieved October 31, 2014, from <http://nnedv.org/about.html>
- American Marketing Association (AMA). (2014). AMA Dictionary. Retrieved October 25, 2014, from <https://www.ama.org/resources/Pages/Dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B>
- Ashcraft, K. L., Muhr, S. L., Rennstam, J., & Sullivan, K. (2012). Professionalization as a Branding Activity: Occupational Identity and the Dialectic of Inclusivity-Exclusivity. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 19(5), 467–488. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2012.00600.x>
- Black, M., Basile, K., Breiding, M., Smith, S., Walters, M., Merrick, M., & Stevens, M. (2010). *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*. Atlanta, Georgia: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs\\_report2010-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf)
- Cheung, M., Leung, P., & Tsui, V. (2009). Asian Male Domestic Violence Victims: Services Exclusive for Men. *Journal of Family Violence*, 24(7), 447–462. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-009-9240-9>
- Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. L. (1999). *Doing Qualitative Research*. SAGE.
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Public Policy Office. (2014). *Domestic Violence Facts*. Retrieved on November 1, 2014 from [http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet\(National\).pdf](http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet(National).pdf)
- Felson, R. B., Messner, S. F., Hoskin, A. W., & Deane, G. (2002). Reasons for Reporting and Not Reporting Domestic Violence to the Police. *Criminology*, 40(3), 617–648. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2002.tb00968.x>

- Glaser, B. G. (1965). The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis. *Social Problems*, 12(4), 436–445. <http://doi.org/10.2307/798843>
- Helfrich, C. A., & Simpson, E. K. (2006). Improving Services for Lesbian Clients: What Do Domestic Violence Agencies Need to Do? *Health Care for Women International*, 27(4), 344–361. <http://doi.org/10.1080/07399330500511725>
- Holmes W.C., & Slap G.B. (1998). Sexual abuse of boys: Definition, prevalence, correlates, sequelae, and management. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 280(21), 1855–1862. <http://doi.org/10.1001/jama.280.21.1855>
- Kavaratzis, M., & Hatch, M. J. (2013). The dynamics of place brands: An identity-based approach to place branding theory. *Marketing Theory*, 13(1), 69–86. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1470593112467268>
- Macy, R. J., Giattina, M. C., Parish, S. L., & Crosby, C. (2010). Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services Historical Concerns and Contemporary Challenges. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 25(1), 3–32. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0886260508329128>
- Noor, K. B. M. (2008). Case Study: A Strategic Research Methodology. *American Journal of Applied Sciences*, 5(11), 1602–1604. <http://doi.org/10.3844/ajassp.2008.1602.1604>
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pike, A. (2011). *Brands and Branding Geographies*. Newcastle University, UK. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Ristock, J. L. (2011). *Intimate Partner Violence in LGBTQ Lives*. New York, NY. Routledge.
- Simpson, E. K. (2004). *Lesbian Survivors of Partner Violence: Staff Perspectives on Service Needs and Barriers (Master's Thesis)*. University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, United

States.

Stop Abusive and Violent Environments. (2010). *Domestic Violence Programs Discriminate*

*Against Male Victims*. Rockville, MD. Retrieved on March 2, 2015 from

<http://www.saveservices.org/pdf/SAVE-VAWA-Discriminates-Against-Males.pdf>

Tjaden, P., & Thoennes, N. (2000, November). Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and

Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings From the National Violence

Against Women Survey. Retrieved March 1, 2015, from

<http://www.nij.gov/publications/pages/publication-detail.aspx?ncjnumber=183781>

Truman, J., & Morgan, R. (2014, April). Nonfatal Domestic Violence, 2003-2012. U.S.

Department of Justice. Retrieved from <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ndv0312.pdf>

Violence Prevention and Response: Sexual Assault, Relationship Violence, Domestic Violence,

and Stalking. (2014, May). University of Minnesota Morris. Retrieved from

<http://onestop.morris.umn.edu/safety/ViolencePreventionBrochure.pdf>

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (2015). What is Domestic Violence? Retrieved

from <http://www.ncadv.org/need-support/what-is-domestic-violence>

## Tables and Figures

Table 1

*States ordered by greatest proportion of survivors served respective to state population (2013)*

<u>State</u>	<u>Population (2013)</u>	<u>Survivors Served/Day</u>	<u>Proportion of Population Served</u>	<u>Proportion of Population Served per Thousand</u>
DC	646449	553	0.000855443	0.855442579
Alaska	735132	618	0.000840665	0.84066535
New Mexico	2085287	951	0.000456052	0.456052332
Wyoming	582658	264	0.000453096	0.453095984
Hawaii	1404054	575	0.000409528	0.409528408
Maine	1328302	499	0.000375668	0.375667582
North Dakota	723393	265	0.000366329	0.366329229
South Dakota	844877	305	0.000360999	0.360999293
Wisconsin	5742713	2072	0.000360805	0.360805076
Missouri	6044171	2163	0.000357865	0.357865454
Massachusetts	6692824	2234	0.00033379	0.33379034
Idaho	1612136	519	0.000321933	0.321933137
Oregon	3930065	1187	0.000302031	0.302030628
Washington	6971406	2082	0.000298649	0.298648508
Utah	2900872	848	0.000292326	0.292325894
Vermont	626630	183	0.000292038	0.292038364
Nebraska	1868516	532	0.000284718	0.284717926
Montana	1015165	283	0.000278772	0.278772416
Arizona	6626624	1796	0.000271028	0.271027902
Rhode Island	1051511	284	0.000270088	0.270087522
Indiana	6570902	1708	0.000259934	0.259933872
Kansas	2893957	727	0.000251213	0.251213131
Kentucky	4395295	1097	0.000249585	0.249585068
Minnesota	5420380	1296	0.000239098	0.239097628
Connecticut	3596080	855	0.000237759	0.237758893
New York	19651127	4589	0.000233524	0.233523502
West Virginia	1854304	431	0.000232432	0.232432223
Michigan	9895622	2293	0.000231719	0.231718633
Delaware	925749	214	0.000231164	0.231164171
Oklahoma	3850568	879	0.000228278	0.22827801
New Hampshire	1323459	299	0.000225923	0.22592313
Iowa	3090416	694	0.000224565	0.224565237
Texas	26448193	5923	0.000223947	0.223947247
Georgia	9992167	1975	0.000197655	0.197654823
Pennsylvania	12773801	2424	0.000189763	0.189763407
Colorado	5268367	978	0.000185636	0.18563627

Illinois	12882135	2374	0.000184286	0.184286223
Maryland	5928814	1063	0.000179294	0.179293869
Ohio	11570808	2017	0.000174318	0.174317991
Arkansas	2959373	514	0.000173685	0.173685439
Florida	19552860	3271	0.00016729	0.167290105
Louisiana	4625470	721	0.000155876	0.155876052
New Jersey	8899339	1331	0.000149562	0.14956167
Mississippi	2991207	441	0.000147432	0.147432124
Virginia	8260405	1158	0.000140187	0.140186831
California	38332521	5263	0.000137299	0.137298562
Tennessee	6495978	836	0.000128695	0.128695017
Nevada	2790136	359	0.000128668	0.128667563
Alabama	4833732	565	0.000116887	0.116886911
North Carolina	9848060	1146	0.000116368	0.116368097
South Carolina	4774839	475	9.94798E-05	0.099479794
Total U.S.	316128839	39218	0.000124057	0.124057015

1.

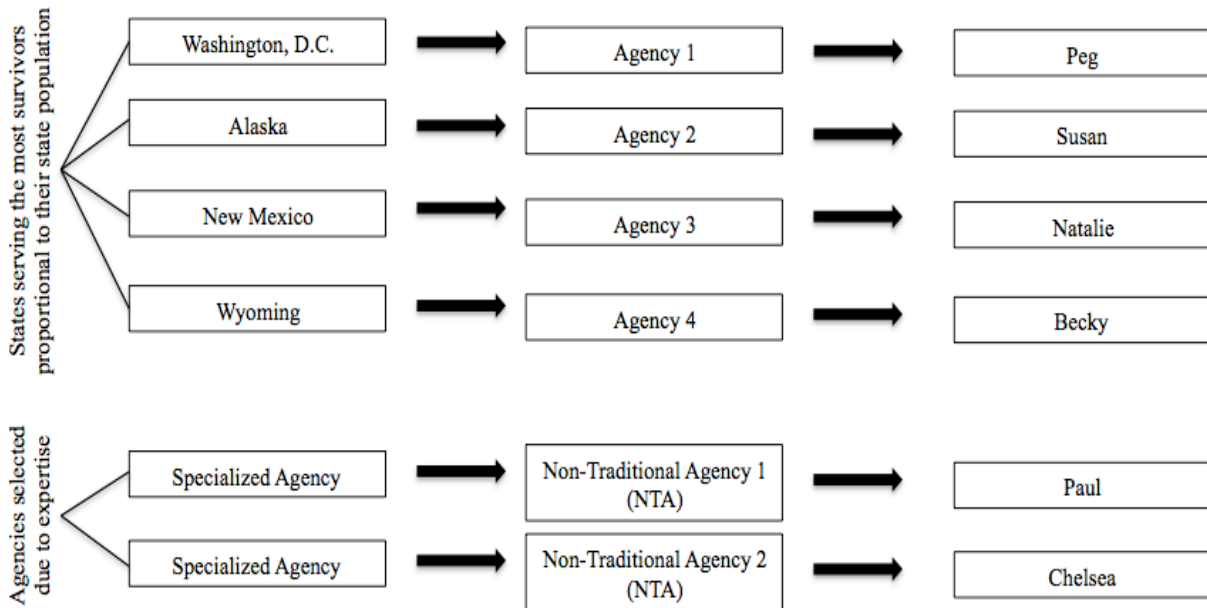


Figure 1. Figure representing the selection process and sample population.

2.

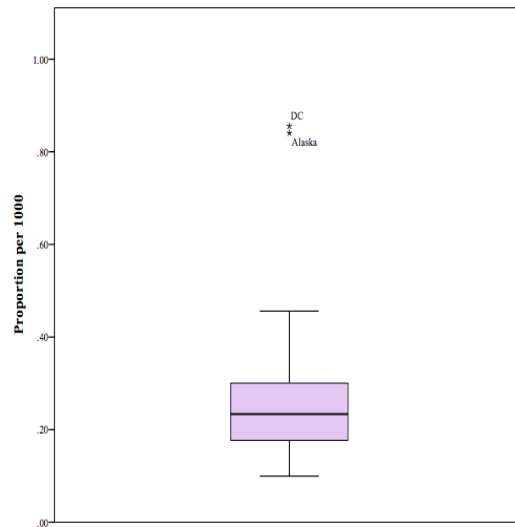


Figure 2. Box plot representing the proportion of survivors agencies in the fifty states serve in a single day compared to the respective state population per thousand. Washington, D.C. and Alaska are shown as extreme outliers.

3.

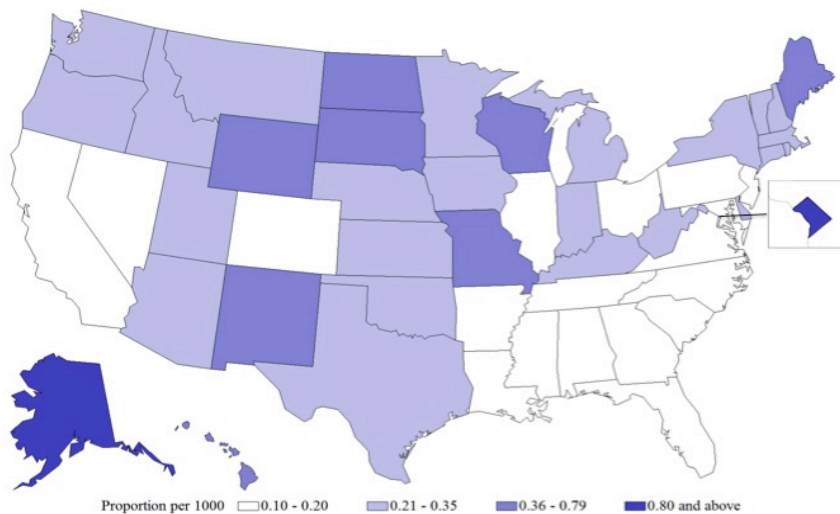


Figure 3. Map of the United States showing proportion of survivors each state serves relative to its population per thousand. The darker the state is depicted, the greater proportion of survivors that state serves. Note: Proportion categories were determined based on clear breaks in data.

4.

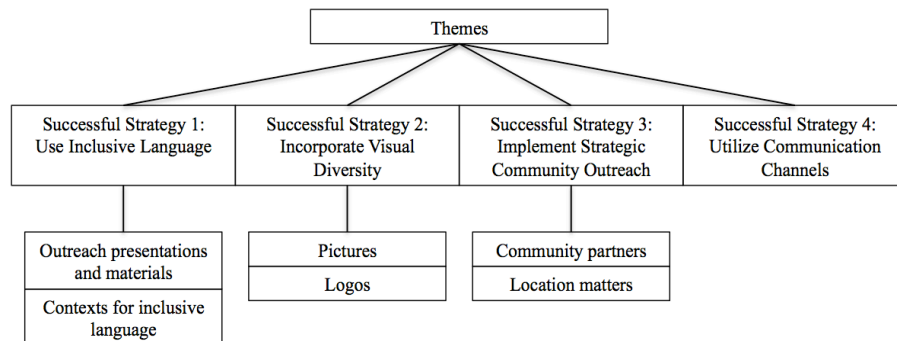


Figure 4. Figure representing the four themes and six subthemes that were identified through semi-structured interviews.