

# Religion and Domestic Violence: Exploring Men's Perpetration

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A conversation...  
why this matters

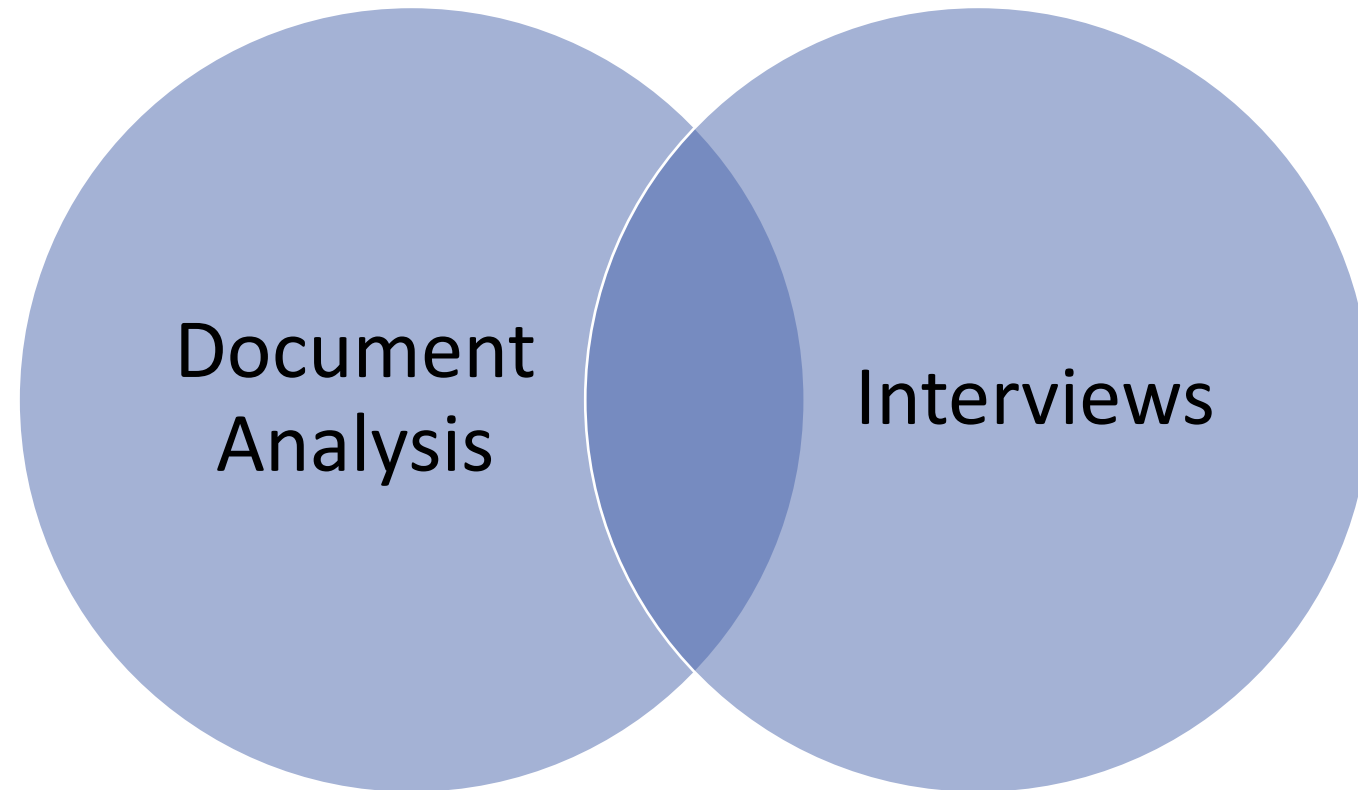
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# Aims of the Project

- describe how Christian beliefs and practices can contribute to and perpetuate domestic violence;
- understand how a Christian denomination (Lutheran) responds to domestic violence;
- determine how men understand their use of violence in intimate and family relationships within the contexts of their Christian beliefs and practices;
- identify and analyse the perpetration of spiritual abuse as a form of domestic violence;
- explore men's help-seeking experiences inside their church settings; and
- identify strategies that will enable church settings to engage with men to enable attitudinal and behavioural change to stop the use of violence.

# Methodology



# Document analysis

## **WHY a document analysis?**

- Important to understand the Lutheran theological context to gender relations, gendered subjectivities, family life and the organisation of the Lutheran church.

## **HOW did we guide the document analysis?**

- “What is the problem represented to be?” (Bacchi 2009)



# Document analysis method

How are the documents describing and representing domestic and family violence?

How do narratives about and representations of domestic and family violence change over time?

How are the documents representing family life, intimacy and gender relations?

How do the documents represent gendered subjects – including but not limited to femininity and masculinity?

How are the documents representing who is impacted by domestic and family violence e.g. women, women and men, children, congregation?

Are differences of opinion within the LCA described and/ or critiqued?

# Document analysis method

How is safety, duty of care and responsibility articulated?

How are supports, services and help-seeking strategies being discussed?

Is gender equality discussed?

How does the LCA articulate its role and strategy in addressing the problem of domestic and family violence?

In all these points, what specific Christian Lutheran beliefs, scripture references and practices are being referred to, directed at whom and for what use and outcome?



## What documents?

- Documents produced by the Lutheran Church of Australia
- Documents produced by the Lutheran World Federation
- Lutheran Theological Journal
- The Lutheran



# Focus on documents produced by the LCA

Type of Document	Number
LCA Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions	6
LCA Domestic Violence Campaign documents (includes website)	3
Internal documents prepared by the LCA DV Taskforce	4
Other LCA Documents	4
LCA policy documents	5

# Key Findings



## Naming the problem of domestic violence

LCA engagement has transitioned from a broad-based statement acknowledging the significance of the issue to the current LCA DV campaign involving multiple strategies to prevent and respond to domestic and family violence, support safety and manage risk.

Supporting victim and family safety is understood as a responsibility across the church in that safety is supported by individual pastoral care and response as well as by increasing congregation and faith community capacity to understand and respond to domestic violence.

# Gender relations

An emphasis on a commitment to reducing the occurrence and impacts of domestic and family violence and the need for change within the church.

The campaign acknowledges that there have been inadequate past practices by the church and interpretations of scripture supporting male power, violence and abuse.

The need for a theological underpinning to change and challenge male behaviours, and recognise the misuse of New Testament scripture, in particular Ephesians 5:21-25 which references male headship and marriage, and submission in marriage.

# Safety

It is clear that prevention and response strategies prioritise victim safety and support addressing injustices through a faith-based lens.

The Taskforce 2018 report and campaign documents identify and address:

- the risk of the use of select scripture to condone and justify violence against women
- demonstrates the significance of the key religious concepts of forgiveness, repentance, male headship and subordination as it engages in a theologically-inspired reflective process to understand the Lutheran context to the perpetration of intimate partner violence.

# Interviews

Pseudonym	Age	Married	Length of Service	Christian
Pastor Pete	55-60 years	30-35 years, adult children	Ordained for 10-15 years	Entire life
Pastor Tom	55-60 years	30-35 years, adult children	Ordained for 25-30 years	Entire life
Pastor Stephen	60-65 years	30-35 years, adult children	Ordained 30-35 years	Teenager
David He/Him	55-60 years	25-30 years, adult children	N/A	Entire life

# Interviews

Pseudonym	Age	Married	Length of Service	Christian
Pastor Andrew	32-41 years		Ordained for 6-10 years	Entire life
Pastor Jeff	32-41 years		Ordained 0-5 years	Entire life
Pastor Stephen	52-61 years		Ordained 30-35 years	Teenager
Pastor Bill	52-61 years		Ordained 31-30	Entire life
Pastor Greg	62-71 years		Ordained for 21-30 years	Entire life
Pastor Les	52-61 years		Ordained 11-20 years	Entire life
Pastor Daniel	52-61 years		Ordained 11-20 years	Entire life



# Key Findings

Theme	Subtheme
<b>Gender</b>	Expectations
	Contestations
<b>Understanding domestic violence</b>	Power & Control
	Shame & Sin
<b>Theological framings</b>	Bible texts
	Teachings
<b>Being a Pastor</b>	Learning on the job
	Gender oppression

# Gender expectations & contestations

“People are so heavily invested in male power and privilege it’s just so much to give up... So it’s asking a lot for people to consider another way of being... so when you are talking about mutuality and equality of women, some men get really anxious about the language of equality, why is he positioned differently now, he believes theologically his needs come first, but he loves her and provides for her but she has to be submissive to him because the scriptures tell him to do that. Now if we introduce some narrative that says that how he understands his wife is not adequate, he has now hurt her by not letting her be equal... he can’t bring himself to admit that he did that... Therefore, you’ll find people motivated by things that you’ll never understand... he is being taken to a place he doesn’t want to go, cannot comprehend” (Pastor).



# Understanding Domestic Violence

“Then often people in shame, will retreat from the church and they’ll get further and further away from the preaching and teaching of what God does for you, and you end up in this mire that God hates me, God hates them, which is very hard to deal with... and there is that conflict in the sexes and the desire of the man to be found without shame” (Pastor)

“I was talking to a pastor about it and saying, I’m doing the wrong thing by divorcing – thou shalt not divorce, and this guy said, now you’re putting God’s law, thou shalt not divorce, above God’s grace, right? – that was the clincher.... You go there thinking my life isn’t what it is in scripture as it should be, and I know I’m a sinner, I know I’ve failed, I know repentance, I know forgiveness, but freakin’ hell – maybe I wanted them to nail (names his wife) ... but they don’t nail us anymore...what’s the problem? Just carry on as you are, but we’re just bad, we’re sinners, we do wrong, right?” (David)

# Theological framings

“Men deny that they have done such a thing (domestic violence) because of their view of male and female roles in marriage.... I see this as the worst in some men, acting in the assumption that they are behaving in a God pleasing way. My view of the depth of sin in all of us has also increased, noting our willingness to twist God's word for our own fearful, selfish ends”.

# Key thoughts...

- Gender expectations – culturally privileges masculinity.
- Gender inequality to dynamics of abuse cannot be ignored.
- Entitlement is a concept that needs exploration.
- LCA has initiatives to recognise, prevent, and respond to DV.
- Theological drivers of church-based gender and social norms that discriminate against Lutheran women and limit equality in gender relations through discourses and practices ‘othering’ women, are at risk of normalising and condoning unequal relations between women and men in intimate relationships.
- Injustices on the basis of gender need attention if DV is to be tackled.

# Thank You



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