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Domestic violence counseling techniques: Indicators of a change in the philosophy of the movement against domestic violence

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNSELING TECHNIQUES:
INDICATORS OF A CHANGE IN THE PHILOSOPHY
OF THE MOVEMENT AGAINST
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

**Master of Arts Degree in Sociology
Department of Sociology
College of Liberal Arts**

**Graduate College
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ABSTRACT

Domestic Violence Counseling Techniques: Indicators of a Change in the Philosophy of the Movement Against Domestic Violence

by

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The movement against domestic violence began as a grassroots effort to eliminate and to prevent the abuse of women. In the beginning, workers in the movement placed great emphasis on societal causes and solutions to the problem and great strides have been taken toward this end. However, over the last twenty years, the movement has placed greater and greater emphasis on individual counseling techniques based on a humanistic approach of individual accountability and responsibility, resulting in the placement of blame for the abuse on the victim.

In group counseling sessions there is very little discussion of societal conditions, and no discussion of political alternatives for eliminating the abuse of women. Governmental agencies over the last thirty years that have contributed funding to these agencies, perhaps seeking to undermine societal solutions to the problem. The emphasis on counseling continues, however, even though there is no concrete evidence that it is effective.

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PROLOGUE

Growing up in a working class neighborhood of Philadelphia exposed me to innumerable experiences that were both positive and negative, sometimes at the very same moment. One of these experiences was the sense of neighborhood. The closeness of the row housing that brought easy interaction and communication with neighbors also brought experiential knowledge of what was occurring within neighbors' homes.

Such close proximity of the houses allowed neighbors to hear any loud conversations of those living next door, and there was no barrier to listening to arguments and fights that occurred when voices got extremely loud and angry. A particularly volatile time was summer, when the heat and humidity not only seemed to exacerbate any already tense familial situations, but also caused people to open their windows in an attempt to allow outside breezes to cool their houses. Air conditioning was not a luxury afforded by many of my neighbors. Opening the windows to cool the houses also allowed the sounds of fighting and screaming and hitting and the breaking of household articles to escape unfettered into the neighborhood.

I witnessed several physical domestic disputes severe enough for someone on the street to have called the police. In not one of these cases did the police arrest anyone. More often, though, the fight was contained within the home, with no police involvement, but with the sounds and the after effects of the fights being readily audible and visible to

the neighbors.

The fact that many of my neighbors fought on a regular basis was a part of life for me. We all ignored it as though it had never happened and we avoided any conversations regarding the fighting, especially with those directly involved. Residual bruises or destroyed property were the only testimony to the fighting and abuse. We did not engage in physical violence in my nuclear family, including any extensive use of physical discipline. Although there were several instances of physical violence by a member of my extended family, we explained that away with the fact that she had a diagnosed mental illness. So, I never really understood the physical, emotional and psychological devastation that domestic violence causes to both the victim and to any other family members, such as the children. The first exposure I had to these horrific effects occurred when I began working at a domestic violence shelter as part of a social work practicum. Just a few weeks of working with these victims brought back scenes from my childhood and adolescence of neighbors fighting that I had buried for years. What I had taken as a part of my neighborhood as a child growing up had suddenly re-appeared to me as an adult in the form of victims, battered physically, emotionally and psychologically.

I witnessed repeatedly the same attitudes from these victims that I had had growing up in Philadelphia: family violence is just a way of life, a way of the neighborhood, something to be tolerated, the way things are between men and women, something that doesn't concern me. Things had not really changed much over the years and miles since my neighborhood days and I came to the unexpected realization that I was not much different from the women in the shelter regarding my mindset about the violence. I had just been fortunate not to have become involved in any such relationships that might have

resulted in violence. Because of my interaction with these women I began to change and to realize the societal implications of domestic violence, especially that perpetrated against women.

The questions that contact with these women raised for me involved current techniques and practices shelter programs utilize to aid female victims in attaining both immediate and long - term safety from abusive partners. Most certainly shelter programs do provide immediate safety by offering a safe place as part of crisis intervention, but just as important is the counseling portion that most shelter programs offer to help women avoid future abusive situations as a long – term goal. All of the counseling I witnessed in my early days at the shelter, both individually with the crisis counselors and in support groups, contained only individual responsibility and accountability approaches. Co-dependency and learned helplessness were ubiquitous themes that ran through the sessions. Never did I witness any discussion of societal implications regarding abuse of women such as: socialization of males and females, gender role expectations, male privilege or backlash suffered by women as a result of the women’s movement.

I concluded that individual humanistic approaches did not seem to be working, especially when I realized that my own mindset was not far removed from the women I was coming in contact with at the shelter. There didn’t seem to have been any educational process put in place within the shelter programs, or anywhere for that matter, that might offer women information about the social implications of abuse or about any political recourse.

Based on these observations, I theorized that a research project investigating current counseling techniques for the victims of domestic violence might offer some insight into

why and how individualistic approaches are so often the only forms of counseling that victims receive from shelter programs. Historical background on not only domestic violence counseling, but also on the feminist movement would have to be an integral part of the research. The history of these two areas places into perspective the current climate by describing the progression of the movement and it helps raise the question of why today's counseling approach falls so far short of the original motives of the movement.

The counseling research would include interviews with the group facilitators and the clinical directors of the facility to determine to what extent, if any, they utilized macro subjects, such as gender role socialization and male privilege, in the sessions. Observation of the groups, to see what topics are discussed, and the types of discussion that revolve around the topics would also be an integral part of the research. Putting this information together seemed to be an avenue that would allow me to understand the underlying mechanisms of domestic violence counseling. It was extremely clear and reasonable to me why macro level subjects would not be discussed in the beginning stages of crisis, but I could not understand why counselors would not offer these types of subjects once the woman was past the initial crisis stage. I hoped this research would help me understand this.

Combining the micro psychological results of abuse with the macro level societal implications seems the most effective way to combat the horrors of domestic violence. Educating the public about both the sociological aspects and the psychological ramifications of domestic violence are extremely important if the intent is to prevent domestic violence, not just to react to it.

C. Wright Mills (1959, pg. 5) wrote in *The Sociological Imagination*:

The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. Within that welter, the framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated. By such means the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused on explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues.

Utilizing a sociological imagination in the arena of domestic violence, however, could result in a profound redefining of gender roles and expectations, to a degree much larger, deeper and more intense than has already occurred. Shelter programs, funded to aid women in crisis, are in the perfect position to accomplish this, but they must be willing to recognize the sociological implications and to act as true watchdogs of the legislative, judicial and enforcement processes involved with crimes of domestic violence. They must be willing and ready to be facilitators of an educational process as well as being facilities of crisis intervention. Combining social change with psychological counseling is the only way that young girls today will not continue to see levels of domestic violence increase as they get older, as I did.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Incidents of domestic violence are so common that they outnumber all other types of violent incidents combined (Tauchen & White, 1995). According to the latest statistics published by Safe Nest, a domestic violence shelter in Las Vegas, the five year period beginning in 1996 and ending in 2001 saw an increase in all categories of services that the agency offers, some have doubled. (Safe Nest Statistics for 2001). The most notable increases occurred in hotline calls, temporary protective orders, counseling for clients and counseling sessions. In 1996, the number of calls that came through for hotline counseling was 10,387; the number recorded for this category in 2001 is 27,372, more than two and one half times greater than the 1996 number. Temporary protective orders have doubled, and counseling sessions and the number of clients who accessed them have almost doubled as well. The total number of unduplicated clients who accessed services through Safe Nest in 2001 was 71,560. Of course, the increase could be attributed to reasons other than an increase in actual domestic violence incidents. These statistics are raw numbers, and as the Las Vegas population has increased it would be logical to expect the number of incidents of domestic violence to also rise, but proportionately. The public has become more aware of the issue of domestic violence and its consequences from news reports and educational programs, leading them to more readily report such incidents. In addition,

more types of services have been added offering victims more opportunity to solve particular issues by accessing the system, thus increasing usage. Nevertheless, the dramatic increase in the utilization of services raises the question of how there can be so many services in place to prevent a problem, while at the same time services to resolve the problem are increasing so dramatically. If the current preventative measures were working, one would expect to see a decline in the usage of services that address and seek to resolve the issues.

If current practices and techniques utilized by domestic violence shelters and counseling programs are not effective as indicated by the above numbers, the question of why must be asked. One area of interest is the counseling that both shelters and counseling facilities offer and the topics of discussion introduced during the sessions. Although individual issues that result from domestic violence are extremely important to address, issues such as post traumatic stress, depression, anxiety and lack of self esteem and self-confidence, the reason for the violence, its continuation and the societal implications would seem to be as equally as important. This would especially seem to be the case since the movement against domestic violence grew out of the feminist movement, which attacked sexism on a societal level. In addition, macro solutions to the violence perpetrated within a domestic relationship, especially that committed against women, are also extremely important. It would seem that these solutions would be an integral part of the counseling session, offered in conjunction with the cognitive and behavioral techniques that are currently the basis of counseling for victims of domestic violence.

By studying the topics introduced and by observing the interaction between the women and the facilitators, and the reaction of the women to the topics, a pattern of dis-

cussion might become discernible that could aid anyone working in the field to better understand the process within the group sessions. A better understanding of this process might offer some insight into the content of discussion, what it is and how it might be improved to result in lowering the numbers of services accessed by preventing the violence in the first place through understanding socialization and the political process. Domestic violence is not an individual problem, but it is treated as one, and this approach does not seem to be effective.

Literature Review

The statement cited above by Tauchen and White (1995) is a profound statistic regarding the violence that occurs within the family. However, it neither sheds much light on the dynamics of that violence, nor does it differentiate between family members who are most likely to be the primary perpetrators and the victims. Neither does it address the difference between aggressive violence and the violence that is inflicted in self-defense. These are important distinctions, because as the issue of domestic violence has evolved as a women's issue, serious questions have been raised about the statistical validity and reliability of studies that indicate women to be the main victims. These questions have affected the types of counseling modalities utilized, legislation, and law enforcement.

Allegations by some authors that this arena has been politicized by the press and by the women's movement charge that feminists groups have skewed the numbers deliberately to show that men are the primary perpetrators of domestic violence (Dunn, 1994). Calling into question the methods of data collection and interpretations of published statistics, critics have attempted to reassign the topic of domestic violence to the arena of

relationship or family violence, targeting the women as co- perpetrators, not solely as victims. This approach, which incorporates the idea of mutual violence, also places responsibility on the victim.

One of the seminal studies addressing this issue is *Beyond Closed Doors*, written in 1980 by Murray Strauss, Richard Gelles, and Susan Steinmetz. In their study they discovered that women are as likely to be violent with their husbands as husbands are likely to be violent with their wives. Based on their sample they concluded that 1.8 million wives, one out of twenty-six, are beaten by their husbands annually. However, they also projected from their statistics that 2 million wives, one out of twenty-two, are violent towards their husbands. As a result of their findings, Strauss, Gelles and Steinmetz called for a reevaluation of the role of the female in violent encounters within the family.

Although this study constituted the stepping stone for many of the critics who question the movement against domestic violence, the critics of current domestic violence policy never address that part of the study that discusses the dynamics of the violence.

Strauss, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980, pg. 43) state:

The study shows a high rate of violence by wives as well as husbands. But it would be a great mistake if that fact distracted us from giving first attention to wives as victims as the focus of social policy.

They go on to iterate the reasons for their making this statement. Included in these reasons are:

- 1 husbands inflict more serious injury and engage in more dangerous violence
- 2 husbands engage in violent acts more frequently
- 3 the statistics do not indicate how much of the violence inflicted by wives against husbands is in self-defense
- 4 women are bound into the marriage relationship more than men

are, especially economically, creating increased tension and frustration based on the perception that there are no alternatives, but striking back.

These points are important to remember because they speak to social policy formation, a topic that Strauss, Gelles and Steinmetz discuss at length later in *Behind Closed Doors*. Domestic violence is not a series of isolated incidents unique to any individual or particular group of individuals. It is not a form of abuse that is caused by its victims, but it is a form of abuse that has been and to some degree is still sanctioned by social values. As fighting against it on a societal level is frightening to those who would stand to lose power and control, they respond by attacking the ideologies that encourage social change as an answer. As a result, the only strategy to take the focus away from social change is to blame the victim and to make her individually responsible for her own well being, even when that well being is not totally under her control.

Although the feminist movement of the 1970's fought for the public recognition of domestic violence as a social problem based on gender role expectations and gender inequality, many counselors have continued to treat the problem as an individual one (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Gender and gender relations are important to note and understand because these topics determine socially constructed theories regarding the abuse and thus influences counseling modalities (Gondolf, 1988; Lamb & Keon, 1995; Loseke, 1992).

Legal interventions, educational programs and psychotherapy have had limited success in halting the incidence of domestic violence, and even when the physical violence is halted, very often the emotional and the psychological abuse continues (Hampton, 1993). Contemporary psychiatry has used a medical model to address domestic violence,

both with victims and with perpetrators. Very often, the perpetrator is described as unstable in some fashion, either because of substance abuse or some sort of mental instability (Gondolf, 1990). It is much easier to explain violent behavior as an individual problem than to recognize that men and women are socialized into very different gender roles, and that such differences can be conducive to violent behaviors against women.

Feminist theory addresses the problem of domestic violence by focusing on the power differentials, the social and political inequalities between men and women, and by empowering women through pointing out choices and emphasizing their strengths and worth. It is not a specific technique but a perspective with which to address the problem (Pressman, Cameron, & Rother, 1989). It encourages and emphasizes viewing the problem in a social, political and economic context, rather than as an individual one. In such an approach, the therapist attempts to educate the client about the social, political and economic issues that are the root causes of domestic violence, encourages the elimination of an authoritarian attitude within the therapy sessions. It also mandates that the therapist should not act as an all-knowing authority but as a partner to the client, educating, investigating and encouraging her to take more control over her life and to realize her options. Focusing on the client's empowerment by pointing out strengths instead of weaknesses, and educating the client about the socialization process of females in our society which defines the woman's role as being a caregiver, nurturer and responsible for all happiness and unhappiness around her are two extremely important aspects of feminist therapy. Once the client's strengths are defined and once she understands the part that socialization has played in her life, she can begin to use this knowledge as a base from which to develop other strengths and ultimately to achieve independence.

Feminist therapy is used in conjunction with other therapies to address problems that result from domestic violence. Cognitive therapy, one of the many individual approaches therapists use, with its many different types of interventions, assumes that the patient's interpretations, thoughts and assumptions trigger certain behaviors. More precisely, cognitive therapy focuses on the victim's cognition of herself and how that cognition keeps the victim a victim (Bedrosian, 1982). With cognitive therapy interventions, the client, working with the therapist, learns how to identify dysfunctional cognitions and how to replace them with more functional ones (Bolton & Bolton, 1987).

From a feminist perspective, cognitive therapy addresses a battered woman's low self-esteem by demonstrating to the client that her feelings of inadequacy result from the abuse exacerbated by women's second class status. The client hopefully will come to realize that her feelings of low self-esteem do not result from her lack of personal qualities, but that they emanate from the societal interpretation of gender roles and definitions which are intensified by the domestic violence she faces on a daily basis.

Behavioral modification techniques are used along with cognitive therapy to aid the client in changing behaviors that keep her dependent and vulnerable. Clients learn to be more assertive without becoming themselves more aggressive. They also learn that they can express themselves to let others know what they need and want. They are encouraged by their counselors and other members of their support groups to reach out to other people and to attempt to break through the isolation imposed upon them by their abusive partners. These are behaviors which abused women do not typically tend to participate in, because of the fear instilled in them by their abusive partner.

Even though a feminist approach to domestic violence counseling emphasizes gen-

der inequality, power differentials, consciousness raising and discrimination while addressing the macro social problems that cause violence against women, these themes are not present in current counseling. Although there is a rich literature addressing politics in therapy, and challenging notions of mental illness, early literature does not address the effects of gender issues. (Whalen, 1996). Feminist counseling theory is founded in radical therapy, which believes that oppression is the cause of alienation, and that alienation is the very foundation of psychological problems (Agel, 1971; Whalen, 1996). From this radical perspective, therapy is a part of the oppressive social and political system and thus warrants change, just as other social institutions do (Agel, 1971). Social change, however, is not a theme that runs through the psychological counseling literature, which mainly focuses on humanism and individual change. It did, however, become a part of the social work literature beginning as early as the 1970's. Some of this literature generated criticism for being too radical, and for advocating that social policy and activism should become a part, of counseling technique (Whalen, 1996). Nevertheless this attempted union between social policy change and individual counseling has not been successful. The counseling field has not even attempted to unite the two, and it is noticeably absent from the social work field, which has the reputation and history of recognizing and advocating for social policy initiatives and change with the intention of aiding individuals to improve their lives. The humanistic approach in counseling uses the directly opposite approach to social change and expects the individual to change his/her life, holding her or him individually accountable, and insisting that individual actions will change the larger system.

The term feminist therapy first emerged in the counseling literature and as a counsel-

ing technique in the early 1970's, at about the same time that the feminist movement began to develop. Feminist psychologists recognized the fact that by eliminating and avoiding discussion of social context, psychology, primarily a male profession, had virtually excluded women from accessing the full benefits of psychological counseling (Whalen, 1996). Feminist psychologists attempted to introduce techniques of counseling that eliminated patriarchal approaches and utilized egalitarian relationships between client and counselor. The basis of feminist counseling is to question the established order based on gender inequalities, raise the consciousness of the female client to recognize these inequalities, and allow the client to recognize her problems and establish her own goals and methods to reach those goals (Laidlaw & Malmo, 1990; Lerman, 1985). Women clients must have a combination of internal psychological healing and political awareness to truly free themselves of a patriarchal system that oppresses them on the basis of gender inequality, however, therapists, including feminist-based ones, have turned toward an individual, humanistic approach to counseling that emphasizes personal change, personal empowerment and individual growth (Whalen, 1996). Current counseling techniques guide women into aligning their thoughts and behaviors with the established order. It certainly does not suggest that a woman adjust to abuse, but guides the client to recognize potentially abusive relationships, to avoid them and to handle any resulting feelings of inadequacy, loss of self-esteem and lack of self-confidence that result from the abuse.

In the early 1950's, women who were victims of domestic violence received treatment for the disorders that resulted from domestic violence: depression and anxiety.

These were symptoms, not causes, and treating the symptoms of depression and anxiety

was analogous to treating someone suffering from measles with medication intended for a skin rash. Today the situation is much the same; women receive treatment for depression, anxiety, and most recently, post traumatic stress disorder, which, without question results from a traumatic, life changing event.

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), formed in 1978, had as its very first project the passage of federal legislation allotting federal funds for services to women who were victims of domestic violence (Whalen, 1996). This legislation initiated a stream of money into domestic violence programs that continues until today. Many have questioned the huge amount of funds that governmental agencies and other private sources have poured into the movement (Schillinger, 1988). This money is earmarked for services such as emergency shelter, advocacy, and outreach to other agencies and the community at large for educational purposes. On the local level, domestic violence agencies generate large sums of money by offering counseling services to both victims and abusers through court ordered counseling sessions. There is no provision made with this money for child-care, housing nor for transportation, three of the most frequently requested services by the victims of domestic violence, and the three services which could truly aid victims in becoming independent. The acceptance of government funding by the movement generated much criticism, because it was perceived by some to be from a source that was at the very heart of the institutions against which the movement was fighting (Schillinger, 1988).

Therapy, one of the domestic violence areas funded by governmental sources through court ordered counseling sessions, is a very popular and effective revenue-producing endeavor. There are numerous programs within the Las Vegas area that are certi-

fied by the State of Nevada to offer domestic violence counseling and these facilities have steadily increased since 1978 when the first program began serving the area. By asserting that individuals are ultimately responsible for their own actions, and for any remedies for those actions, it supports the American values of individual responsibility and accountability (Epstein,1995). Therapy addresses individual problems, without ever bringing into discussion societal conditions that might cause the problems. Conditions such as poverty, crime, unemployment, abuse, substance abuse, poor housing, and lack of educational opportunity are all stressors that are quite capable of causing many and diverse mental health issues (Epstein, 1995). There is very little empirical evidence that suggests that counseling is effective, and the research which attempts to demonstrate this claim is highly questionable (Epstein, 1995).

Cultural, religious, economic, and political constraints have always significantly influenced mental disorders, their diagnosis, care and treatment. While it is certainly true that the fields of psychiatry and psychology have made great advances in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness, the influence of outside interests is also evident. Many different entities within the social system have used mental illness to explain occurrences that perhaps had other explanations, but across the centuries mental disorder has kept its individual perspective, an attempt by social systems to avoid any responsibility or accountability in the cause or labeling of these disorders. Currently new medications to treat such disorders as depression and anxiety are in widespread use. The amount of money these medications generates for pharmaceutical companies and the practitioners who prescribe them is enormous, and the medications act almost as asylums once did, allowing the individual to feel safe, accepted and capable of acting within socially ac-

cepted parameters. At the same time such widespread use also allows society to feel safe, effective, efficient and relieved of any additional responsibility or accountability for conditions which may initiate or maintain mental instability.

There has been a virtual explosion in the field of mental health: new medication, new occupations within the field, more intricately defined diagnosis, new epidemiological findings about depression and anxiety disorder. Much of this increase in activity has occurred since the early 1980's, and it would be foolish to believe it has not affected the phenomenon of domestic violence. During the 1960's, John Kennedy attempted to change the face of mental health care by supporting the use of community health centers. This was not a totally new approach; in the early part of the twentieth century, mental health professionals began to realize the importance of environment on recovery, and began initiating services for those discharged from asylums for continuation of care. Although Kennedy's policy recognized the importance of environmental effects on mental health and recovery, his policies never reached their full capacity. In the early eighties, stringent federal budget cuts virtually eliminated funding for community based programs, and since the total institutions had already been greatly reduced in numbers, many patients were discharged from programs with little hope or access to care (Trattner, 1994). This trend occurred shortly before great sums of money, mostly from governmental entities began pouring into the domestic violence movement, and the feminist movement itself began to change. Closing community mental health centers not only cut off avenues of treatment for individuals suffering from mental disorders, but it also limited and discouraged the opportunity for more investigative thought into the effects society has had on the origins of mental disorders.

There is a long history of political interests using mental illness as an excuse for an individual's behavior or as a tool against an individual to explain some behavior. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Catholic Church used the medical community to explain certain movements that were occurring within the Church and within the surrounding society as resulting from the actions of people who suffered from mental illness (Foucault, 1954).

In present day Brazil, workers in the sugar fields of Bom Jesus, suffer from physical conditions that actually emanate from hunger. These conditions affect everyone, resulting in illness, early death of children, premature birth, and parasitic infection. The residents report being weak, nervous, experiencing palpitations and difficulty breathing, chest pain, nausea, chills and difficulty eating (Scheper-Hughes, 1992). These symptoms are very similar to a host of disorders that are listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the classification code book for mental disorders. The medical professionals in Bom Jesus, who for the most part work for the plantation families who own the sugar cane fields where the residents labor, treat the residents, not for physical conditions emanating from malnutrition, but instead for a condition called *nervoso*, a mental disorder (Scheper-Hughes, 1992). They never mention hunger to the residents, but give them prescription medication including tranquilizers, vitamins, antibiotics and sometimes anti-psychotic drugs. The residents spend their last bit of money on buying these medications instead of buying food, hoping to alleviate their suffering. Even little children receive tranquilizers, leaving them listless and unable to eat, even when food is available, and no one ever questions why and how little children and infants could be so nervous as to waste away and die. The horror of this disorder, caused

by a very physical condition, hunger, is blamed on the victims themselves. The victims even blame themselves for having "bad blood."

How much like the victims of Bom Jesus are the victims of domestic violence, who receive counseling and medication from mental health and medical providers who profit from the huge amount of business generated from the counseling business. Women die from domestic violence and their children witness the abuse and suffer incredibly, most notably, in the continuation of the cycle of abuse. Yet, women continue to hear they are weak for not leaving the situation, co-dependent, helpless and needing to change. They never hear in their counseling sessions, nor in their support groups that they suffer simply because they are women, and that the society in which they live devalues them because they are women, and that this might be the root cause of the abuse.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIOLOGY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Abuse Toward Women

It is important to know and understand the long and cruel history of abuse against women to fully understand the current climate. Abuse of women has come disguised in many different manners. Whether it is foot binding or beating matters little, because ultimately the abuse involves physical, mental, and psychological cruelty. It also involves the sense of ownership of another human being, along with the control of the social system that allows the sanction of such actions. Many different peoples have been enslaved over the centuries, but this changes based on the power structure. Women's enslavement has been consistent, however.

The amount of publicity regarding domestic violence within the past thirty years might lead one to conclude that this social problem is a new issue. The O. J. Simpson trial, in particular, pushed the issue to the forefront of what was considered to be newsworthy stories. For months, the entire country saw and heard every detail of the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and her companion, Ron Goldman. This single, incredibly horrible incident catapulted the issue of violence against women into the national media limelight. Regardless of one's opinions as to the guilt or innocence of O. J., the racial connotations, or the mishandling of the case, it cannot be denied that the publicity of this

case has been beneficial for the education of the public regarding domestic violence. The question it raises is why did it take the murder of a media personality to bring the issue to public consciousness to the degree that it did, when thousands of women have been battered and killed, for decades?

Abuse within the family unit has been a societal occurrence for centuries, and its victims have usually been the most vulnerable members of the family unit: the elderly, children and women. Throughout the centuries, abuse has actually been sanctioned by society in the worst cases, and ignored or treated as an issue occurring within the privacy of family life and not to be interfered with by any outside agency, in the best ones. Over the years, legislators have implemented laws against the abuse of children, but it is only within the past twenty years that they have initiated and implemented laws protecting the elderly and women. Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century and stretching into the early twentieth century broad child welfare reform took place, changing the face of American society (Trattner, 1994). Society began viewing children as vulnerable and not responsible for their situation, innocent victims of a society that used them as cheap labor and then discarded them in institutions when they became ill or were no longer willing to adhere to the rules.

In August of 1935, Congress passed into law the Social Security Act, which gave pension benefits to people sixty-five years of age and older. The Social Security Act, in no way a perfect solution to the problem of poverty after retirement, was a result of older citizens lobbying for and acquiring benefits, both from the federal government and from private industry. Private industry had a large part in passing this legislation that benefited seniors, however, industry's motives were not altruistic. Large businesses saw pas-

sage of such legislation as a fool proof way of insuring a continuing stream of able bodied workers by giving older workers a sense of economic security, thus encouraging them to retire, opening up spaces for younger, more productive workers (Domhoff, 1996). Although the Social Security Act included provisions for women and children, seniors were the recipients of the majority of the money that was disbursed between 1935 and 1953 (Trattner, 1994).

The lobbying efforts by both senior citizen groups and child advocates resulted in legislation that protected both groups by creating funding for economic support and by making the way easier for legislation that offered protection from abuse and neglect. No matter what the original motives, these earlier movements set an enduring tone that emphasizes the vulnerability of the victim and favors a victim who is perceived as not accountable in any way for the abusive situation. This approach generates societal support, through legislation, law enforcement and entitlement programs. In addition, it places value on the victim. Today, across the country, there are governmental agencies on both the state and local level that address the issues of children and the elderly. For example, in the State of Nevada, the physical abuse of anyone sixty or over is considered to be a class B felony (Nevada Revised Statutes). Child welfare laws offer protection to minor children from physical and sexual abuse, and from neglect. In the State of Nevada the abuse of a child is considered at the least to be a gross misdemeanor (Nevada Revised Statutes). Even though there have been many instances where these laws have fallen short by not protecting these victims, and even though there have been many times when law enforcement agencies have not implemented the laws sufficiently to protect these victims, the laws are still in place. This has not been the case for women who are vic-

tims of abuse within their own homes at the hands of a partner or another family member. In the State of Nevada, the first and second charges of domestic battery are still misdemeanors (Nevada Revised Statutes). The third charge within a seven - year period is a class C felony charge, but this is a fairly new law, initiated in 1996. It became evident, through working at the shelter, that in many cases, the first two charges are plea bargained or reduced in some other fashion, so that the third conviction is slow in coming, reducing the incidences of felony charges being levied even when there is a third offense. Often, the injuries that result from a first attack are so severe that they would, if perpetrated against a stranger, warrant a felony charge.

Cultural values and norms which are inspired by the notions that women are a form of private property, have not only allowed societies to accept spousal abuse, but have actually granted it as a right for the man of the house (Loseke, 1992). Before the 1970's, women who were victims of domestic violence received minimal individual counseling and some financial assistance for their children and themselves, but there was never any discussion of the societal implications regarding the abuse (Davis et al., 1994). Workers in the field first diagnosed and labeled the victims as depressive or anxious, treated them according to the accepted practice of the day and placed the responsibility of recovery, along with the label of having a mental disorder, on the victim. They treated the symptoms, but never attempted to address the real issue of socially accepted violence against women (Gelles, 1993). It is very difficult for anyone who lives in a threatening situation on an almost daily basis to see outside his or her own small world, and the connection between societal events and an individual's personal situation is very often ignored or mis-interpreted (Mills, 1959). This has been especially true for the victims of domestic

violence who struggle to survive, and who do not understand their suffering in broader terms and outside their own individual situation.

Theoretical Perspectives

Most of the early theories were grounded in psychological explanations, and very little, if any thought was given to the sociological dimensions involved with the problem (Gelles, 1993). Even at the present time, those who counsel both victims and perpetrators use principles of psychology that focus on individual change.

Some psychological approaches to domestic violence center on misogyny. These are mostly Freudian which offer complex explanations of the early childhood relationships between mother, father and child. They focus on the seeming desire of everyone in the family to enable the son to break the bond with the mother, the primary caregiver, and to identify with the father. In the process, the son learns to hate everything feminine, a lesson that carries over into his adult life and often times leads to hatred for women, and violence toward them (Chodorow, 1974). Dorothy Dinnerstein (1977) addresses this issue of separation of mother and child in a slightly different light. She sees the failure of the female child to be able to totally separate from the mother figure as cause for the woman's inability to be truly independent as an adult. This suggests that women facilitate the process of their own abuse by remaining dependent on men as a replacement for the mother connection as children. Another version of the Freudian perspective addresses the power and control women have over their sons in the early childhood years, which reappears in adult relationships in the form of emotional control (Pleck, 1974).

A psychological approach that has had enormous impact on the field of domestic vi-

olence is the theory of learned helplessness. Rather than attempting to explain the original causal factors for the abuse, it addresses the reasons why a woman stays in such situations, and suggests that as women have learned to become helpless by the constant abuse, they have to be re-taught how to be self-sufficient (Walker, 1979). In her discussion of the theory of learned helplessness, Walker describes an identifiable and predictable cycle of violence that occurs within a relationship and which is perpetuated by the victim (Whalen, 1996). Strongly influenced by feminist psychological theory, Walker's work has, without question, advanced the understanding of the dynamics of abuse within a relationship, however, it places responsibility on the victim for the continuing violence without ever addressing male domination (Whalen, 1996). Research on animals indicates that this condition of learned helplessness appears after the animal is subjected to some sort of stressor that it is not able to control or to avoid (Sapolsky, 1998). In response to Walker's theory, a sociologist, Edmund Gondolf, developed a theory of survival to explain the seemingly irrational behavior of domestic violence victims who stay within the relationship, and at times even instigate the violence. Approaching such patterns from the perspective of the glass being half full, he suggests that women do what they have to do in these relationships to survive. They don't learn to be helpless, they learn to be survivors (Gondolf, 1988). This puts a positive spin on a victim's behavior and as a result, portrays her as pro-active and capable of re-adjusting her behavior according to the environment in which she is living. Such an approach mandates that the accountability and responsibility for any behavior on the victim's part that appears to be encouraging further abuse must lie ultimately with the perpetrator. No one would have to learn to survive if the environment in which he or she were living was friendly and

non-threatening. The word "survival" connotes a battle against adverse conditions, and, according to Gondolf, this is exactly what victims of domestic violence must do, battle against adverse conditions within their homes. Gondolf's work is not often used as a basis for counseling, because he questions the individualistic approach of counseling victims that emphasizes their own responsibility for the continuation of the abuse.

A more recent psychological theoretical perspective, suggested by Brown (1994), suggests women in abusive situations actually resist the abuse and fight against it through their actions (Brown, 1994; Burstow, 1992; Jones, 1994). Such actions might consist of: actual physical violence against the abuser, undermining his role with the children, hiding money, making contacts outside the abuser's network of influence, and taking advantage of any and all services available to victims of domestic violence, including law enforcement and the judicial system. All of the above actions would be occurring while the woman is still living within the relationship and same household with her abusive partner. This theoretical approach might even explain Walker's (1979) cycle of violence theory that suggests domestic violence moves through three stages, one of which is a tension building stage that occurs immediately before the actual physical abuse. This is a stage in which the emotional and psychological tensions build until they erupt in the physical violence. Walker suggests that a woman will actually provoke the physical outbreak, because the emotional and psychological tension is so intense. Anticipating that this tension will eventually lead to physical abuse, she provokes the attack to get it over with, leaving them free to move on to the next stage and to begin the cycle again. According to Brown, a woman actually battles against the abuse through her actions, as provoking the attack might accomplish more than just getting past it. It might

be a direct attack against the abusive partner to challenge him, or it might be a way to gain attention from outside sources. The problem is that the cycle continues, but since the woman cannot see the way out, she continues to be physically, emotionally and psychologically abused and, according to this theory, battling against the abuse. By using both sociological and psychological approaches, this theory of resistance, joined with Gondolf's theory of survival, explains a victim's behavior and continues to place a positive pro-active spin on the victim's actions.

There are also several sociological theories that define and explain abuse against women. Engels explains man's dominance over and abuse of woman from a Marxist perspective, and addresses the issue on a systemic basis (Engels, 1884). Engels theorizes that men seized power and control of the home situation, and changed lines of descent and inheritance from matrilineal to patrilinear when wealth became more plentiful. Marriages became monogamous instead of the communal marriages of the earlier societies, taking the marital relationship out of the public realm and enclosing it within the walls of the home, a truly private affair where the outside world had no right to interfere. The reasons for the continuation of the inequality are grounded in materialistic factors and issues of power (Gelles, 1993).

A second sociological approach is a general systems explanation that uses an interactionist perspective to explain male abuse of women. Interaction with society reinforces a man's perception of himself, thus encouraging him to act in ways that maximize positive reinforcement (Kimmel & Messner, 1989). Images of masculinity that emphasize physical strength that leads to violence and aggressive behavior, presented in many different ways, including in the mass media, may encourage men to act in these ways or to pro-

duce a positive self image that corresponds to the portrayed image of masculinity.

A third sociological explanation explaining violence against women is social exchange theory. Men abuse women because they know that they can be abusive and will suffer little punishment (Gelles, 1993). Reciprocity of services and rewards is a major component of this perspective, implying that all concerned in the interaction need to experience a give and take, creating a balance of power. If this balance is not achieved, the interaction will cease. In a family setting, however, it is difficult to discontinue the interaction, and if an interaction that is based on inequality continues, conflict and abuse can and often does occur. Until recently there were no costs to the person creating the conflict and inflicting the abuse within a family interaction, and even now, one can argue that those costs are minimal.

The sociological approaches explain the abuse of women at the hands of men as a systemic issue where power and control are used as tools of domination. The reasons for this domination depend on the approach: the Marxist approach is economic and materialistic, the interactionist approach discussed above revolves around self- image, and the exchange approach points at the rewards inherent in feeling powerful by engaging in behavior that has little or no negative consequences. Unlike the psychological approach these three sociological ones take into account and discuss the macro social dimension. None of them places accountability on the victim, or for that matter, on the individual perpetrator.

All three approaches can be useful to study a relationship such as domestic violence. The struggle for and capturing of power and control within a relationship is almost totally one sided when one partner, either implicitly or explicitly, has neither base nor sup-

port from which to negotiate a balance of power. Image is also involved, because power, control, and aggressiveness are characteristics considered worthwhile for men in our society. If a man cannot have control at work, he can have it at home. If a man is frustrated and cannot express this frustration by aggression in a public arena, he can express it in a private one, his home, with minimal interference from the outside world.

This reaction can be partly explained by materialistic and economic factors, so central to the Marxist approach. Men and women who work for others, especially those in lower paid positions, have very little power and control. Additionally their work may be routine, boring and alienating, allowing for neither creativity nor identification with the finished product, whether the product is a tangible item or a rendered service. Engels stated that men took power and control from women when wealth began to accumulate, and they ensured the continuation of this control of resources by changing society from matrilineal and matriarchal to patrilinear and patriarchal. In addition, after having instituted laws supported by customs and values that gave them certain rights and privileges, men took from women any power to change this male established order. The marriage relationship changed from one that was open and communal, always questioning the paternity of the children, to a relationship that was closed and more private, thereby assuring men of the paternity of the children. The paternity of the children was so important because it kept control of the wealth in the hands of men through the inheritance process. The privatization of the marriage relationship, in addition to assuring the paternity of the children, made women susceptible to many forms of domination, abuse and exploitation. Women's labor, childbearing, was the foundation of the fear and desire for power that men felt, because women's labor ensured the survival of the species. This is

not to say that childbearing was the only labor of women, but for the survival of the species it was the most important.

Today, men who have very little in the way of material possessions still have the sanctity of their homes, their castles, where until recently they could do just about anything short of murder, and sometimes they got away with that also. The sanctity of the man's home and the acquisition of the desired masculine characteristics take the sting out of the lack of material possessions, lack of power and lack of ability to control their own lives. Marx would assert that such a situation benefits capitalist owners of the businesses in which these men work, and the capitalistic society in which they live by taking their minds off what they don't have, and giving them a sense of power at home so that they can labor more productively at their jobs.

Although feminists agree with Marx that the inequality women suffer (including abuse) is based on gender; they disagree with the Marxist perspective on other important points. Most specifically, they question Marx's focus on class struggle, and his failure to address struggles based in race, gender or ethnicity. This neglect has been a major point of contention for some feminist thinkers attempting to assess Marx's relevance to women's issues. Socialist feminists have criticized Marxism for being blind to women's issues and for ignoring gender based inequalities because of the focus on class (Tong, 1998). Gender, racial, and ethnic based inequalities, however, are an integral part of the capitalistic class system because they are necessary for capitalism's continued existence and its needs for an able and ready supply of additional workers on hand. This reserve army, always waiting to take the place of current workers, enables capitalist owners to keep wages low by threatening replacement. The workers waiting in the wings are a nec-

essary part of a system that readily uses them as a means of control and then encourages their marginalization, thus depriving them of any sense of group identity/solidarity and the ability to acquire power (Young, 1990). Traditionally these workers have been minority groups, including women. Though not specifically addressed in his writings, it is a logical conclusion that women's inequality is an essential part of the Marxist class based theory of society, as is the inequality of other minority groups. The marginalization and exploitation of women reaches a tragic height when, after being physically, emotionally and mentally abused within what is supposed to be a loving relationship, they are told that the problem is theirs to solve through counseling techniques focused on individual accountability and change. It is particularly disturbing when this counseling is offered by other women, who are professionals in the field. Women whose positions are funded by agencies that control and profit from the current established order, are therefore keeping other women marginalized, devoid of any knowledge of the systemic causes of abuse and ignorant of the potential power that is at their fingertips.

Social Movements

Social movements are collective behaviors that operate on a personal level, while at the same time focusing on an institutional change (Jenkins, 1983; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). They attempt to address a conflicting situation within the society at large (Useem, 1975). There must be a joining between the personal, micro level awareness of a connection with a social issue that is in opposition to existing institutions and the macro level of group identification or collective identity with a large and widely distributed number of others having the same experiences. Collective identity is the recog-

dition by individuals that they share with others certain common interests and that by joining in a group effort, they can share their experiences, alleviate concerns regarding their experiences, and perhaps change the institutional structure that creates and maintains a negative environment for them.

While personal and group identification are extremely important for social movements, resource availability and the political environment are also significant. For a social movement to be successful members must rationally recognize, evaluate and utilize available resources and political advantages that are available (Jenkins, 1983). The timing of the movement must be exact and the power structure within the movement must recognize the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to mobilization. This power structure should also be a centralized base from which the momentum and strategy of the movement filters down to the local organizations (Jenkins, 1983). Movements that successfully combine all these elements, and that recognize the correct timing have the potential to change the societal system. They are powerful instruments of change that can become extremely threatening to the existing power structure, throwing into question the cultural values and norms of the society as a whole. Because of this power, social movements, often, elicit visceral reactions from people, supporters and antagonists, and often result in conflicts that are both political and physical.

The process involved in a social movement should be one of ongoing dialogue. However, most often this dialogue leads to conflict in the form of counter-movements, which could be understood to be part of the dialectical process that helps the movement synthesize into a form tolerant for all (Taylor, 1989). Groups that fight against the movement, most often established institutions within the social system, perceive the move-

ment as questioning the basic values, norms and culture of the social system, undermining their interests. These groups work to undercut the movement, not to converse with it. This type of activity results in violent confrontation, political and personal attacks, and legislative backlash. All three of these have occurred to the largest movements of the last fifty years: the civil rights movement and the feminist movement.

The Social Movement against Domestic Violence

The movement against domestic violence fits the above description of current scholarship regarding successful social movements. Although movements against domestic violence are not new, they did not begin to be even slightly successful until the late 1970's. Feminist action against the battering of women dates back to the 1850's, when, in both the United States and Britain, movements to combat this type of violence began and then fizzled (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983). In the professional arena, the only recognition of the problem was limited to a psychological level. Abused women received psychological treatment and counseling that did not address the woman as victim, but as a compliant participant with the abuser. Even sociologists did not begin to approach the problem as a serious social issue until the early 1970's when the first studies began to be published (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983). Since that time, however, sociologists have contributed to the main body of research which addresses the problem as a systemic one.

Feminist action began on a grassroots level within the field in the late 1960's and early 1970's (Schillinger, 1998; Davis, Hagen, and Early, 1994). During this period social activists began to identify domestic violence not as isolated incidents of abuse, but as a part of a structural problem within a society that systematically oppressed women in

all areas of life (Schillinger, 1988). Shelters began to spring up around the country offering safety to women who were in danger of physical violence. By 1978 there were three hundred shelters around the country, the very first one in the United States, located in Minnesota, opened in 1972 (Whalen, 1996). The organizers, feminists, abused women and other interested citizens, not only offered support and safety to abused women, but also began a major campaign to publicize this very private issue, with the intention of creating change in the social structure by empowering women.

Empowerment was at the very foundation of the movement. Counseling for the mental and emotional ramifications of abuse, financial and community support, along with safe houses, were all part of the services that the early organizations offered, and these are still integral parts of shelter programs today. The early programs put great emphasis on the fact that the problem was a societal one.

When the movement began, the political climate and the availability of resources were at optimal levels. Many of the women who joined the feminist movement in the late 1960's and early 1970's had participated in the civil rights movement of the early and mid 1960's. This movement paved the way for many successful political changes during this time period for a number of reasons. The first is that the successful organization and accomplishments of the civil rights movement allowed other oppressed groups and social activists to realize that they too could take successful political action against the social structure. Another reason is that the civil rights movement allowed people to begin to think in terms of collective identity and to do so on a national basis. People from all areas of the country united to develop and form a movement that identified them with a common cause. The third reason is that the organization and implementa-

tion of the civil rights movement was a centralized effort that was highly developed, and in the beginning, structured. The founding members knew how to recognize political advantage and how to use it to further their cause. This movement offered an organizational, political and resource utilization learning experience to all who were involved. The civil rights movement was not the first nor was it unique in its accomplishments. Labor unions had successfully mobilized great portions of the population in the early part of the century, but the civil rights movement was attempting to organize portions of the population who had been systematically marginalized for centuries based on the color of their skin. The labor movement, comprised mostly of white workers, addressed issues that threatened the very core of the economic system of the country, so the possibility of a successful dialogue was much greater than with a movement that questioned issues of race. This was especially so since the capitalist system used these people of color as threats against workers, who attempted to change the labor system, placing them in direct conflict with each other. Those activists who left the movement and went to work on other causes, such as the feminist movement and the anti-war movement, took with them incredible resources learned during their association with the civil rights movement, which included motivation, organizational techniques, and tactical methods (McAdam, 1988).

The women who entered the domestic violence field were well equipped to battle the violence that had been committed against women for centuries. Their main purpose was not only to provide safe shelter, but also to truly empower the victims to change the structure of a society that allowed, even encouraged, abuse against women. However, giving women safe houses in which to live, offering them access to counseling to deal

with the psychological and emotional results of abuse, and providing economic support did not solve the problem.

Abused women who entered the shelter programs could usually only benefit from the shelter for a limited amount of time. Within this allotted time period, they had to resolve psychological and emotional issues, acquire housing, possibly develop much needed job skills and acquire jobs to support themselves, and secure child care, if needed. Women who are attempting to escape from violent relationships are still facing the same conditions. Because of the issues that battered women faced, federal, state, county and city welfare agencies became involved with the effort in the early 1980's (Schillenger, 1983). This involvement occurred on two levels: welfare payments, housing subsidies and food stamps to women who may have never had to access these systems before, and the direct involvement of welfare bureaucracies with the shelter programs through funding subsidies. As Elizabeth Schillenger (1983, pg. 469) suggests both of these have had uncounted ramifications for shelter programs and for the movement:

The goals of the battered women's movement and those of the welfare bureaucracy are in fundamental conflict. Because the primary function of the welfare bureaucracy system is to strengthen the prevailing social norms of the laissez-faire capitalist system, it is understood that movements and individuals who question or discredit the sanctity of such basic paternalistic values as individualism, subordination of women in the nuclear family, and work ethic pose a threat to society.

The feminists who first organized, planned and built the shelter movement believed that women experienced such violence in their lives because they were considered to be their husband's property and had little protection under the law. The movement viewed

these conditions as caused by a patriarchal structure, which had international dimensions. (Davis, 1988; Miller & Barberet, 1995; Schillinger, 1988). These views were diametrically opposed to those held by the funding agencies that began channeling money into the movement in the 1980's. Feminists saw women as being deprived of rights and privileges, such as basic protection against physical violence that men were enjoying as a matter of course. Because of their lack of rights, privileges and access to opportunity, women depended completely on men for their economic survival. With the introduction of governmental support for domestic violence programs offering federal housing, welfare, and child care programs, victims found themselves dependent on yet another patriarchal institution, only this time, a governmental one.

The movement grew perhaps far beyond its founders, expectations, and such growth was undoubtedly beneficial for victims of domestic violence, since it resulted in increased availability of many different types of services for victims, the education of the public at large, and a more focused objective of preventing the continued abuse of women. As it grew, however, the challenge to the structure that supported and encouraged the domination of women also grew. In the early 1980's, as governmental agencies became intricately involved in funding the movement against domestic violence, the mass consciousness of the feminist movement began to decline (Taylor & Whittier, 1992). As conflicts within the feminist movement resulted in a more radical outlook, the movement gained an image of being comprised of mostly lesbian man hating women. The radical lesbian label so readily accepted by conservative members of government and other influential sectors of the social system, alienated less radical, more moderate women who could not reconcile this radical image with their own values and lives. The

collective identity of women, so necessary for a successful social movement, dissipated, and Schillinger suggests this was not a random occurrence, but one that may have been orchestrated by groups threatened by this radicalization. Whatever the cause, the resulting changes to both the feminist movement and to the movement against domestic violence have been profound. What began as a grass roots effort to organize women to protect themselves from violence, an effort that was designed for them and by them, has now become a social service field that is purported to be for them, but in no way by them.

With this funding, the movement has become more professional. The staff in many shelter programs is comprised of trained professionals, many of whom have no personal experience of violence themselves. Of course, personal experience with a social issue neither guarantees full understanding of that problem, nor an empathetic approach on the part of the worker, however, many current workers look at their work in the shelter environment as a job only (Schellinger, 1988). They neither emotionally identify with their clients, nor associate themselves with any political action against the system. They see no need for it as the issue is not affecting them outside the work world. Transformed by the implementation of the myriad of social welfare programs and private grants that fund it, the movement against domestic violence has taken a completely different path than the one that guided it at its inception. While the original path emphasized independence, modern day programs promote economic and psychological dependence on the programs themselves.

Just as the social movements of the sixties were declining the women's movement began to grow strong. The decline of activism in the anti-war movement and in other ar-

issues can be attributed to the collapse of such national organizations as the Students for a Democratic Society, the New Left and the Resistance (McAdam, 1988). Activism in these areas, however, did not disappear totally. It moved from a national level to more community based endeavors involving diverse groups of individuals, encouraging more people to participate, but at the same time, losing the momentum so necessary for a social movement. This same situation occurred to the women's movement in the eighties, when internal dissent and huge amounts of money from the government were poured into areas of interest and benefit to women, especially to those who were victims of domestic violence. It was not so much that the rhetoric of the national movement changed, but that it became ineffective in securing the fully needed amount and type of aid required to truly allow women to become independent.

Eliminating challenges to a capitalistic system that would require a re-thinking and a redistribution of wealth is a response that is necessary to keep the capitalistic system functioning. Women are a part of this economic structure that is class based and exploits others based on any one of several distinctions such as: economic status, gender or race. Women have been and continue to be an integral part in keeping this system alive through the work they do by bearing and rearing children. The system survives this way and it has been to the advantage of the current economic arrangement that the movement has been de-centralized.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH

Domestic Violence Shelter Programs in Las Vegas

Knowing the history and the background of the local program in Las Vegas is an integral part in understanding the progress the program has made and the current status of the program, especially since the program today, is so much larger and more comprehensive than the original program. This chapter will detail the program's history and describe the current facilities and services before explaining the research methodology.

The domestic violence shelter program began in 1977 as a joint effort of concerned citizens: battered women, law enforcement specialists, attorneys, and social workers, along with other interested professionals. The original shelter facility, opened in June of 1978, was able to house only twelve women and children, and the staff consisted of only one paid member, with many volunteers. The volunteers would frequently be the only staff on the property, fully responsible for every aspect of the job. One volunteer in particular, Sherrie Smith, who is a full-time staff member today, would routinely work twenty-four hours straight, because there was no one to relieve her. Today, there are two shelter locations, the main one in Las Vegas capable of housing forty-two women and children, and a second, smaller facility in North Las Vegas with room for twenty-one. Staff members now number well over fifty, not including volunteers and interns. The

shelter in Las Vegas is currently under construction with the addition of another housing unit that will add thirty spaces, a recreational room for the residents and more office space for the staff.

There are numerous programs in place such as: volunteer programs, community education and outreach programs, and police liaison programs. The agency was instrumental in establishing the Temporary Protective Order Office in conjunction with Clark County, with the intention of making available to victims easy access to the legal system that issues Temporary Protective Orders against domestic violence. Since its inception, the agency has been effective in lobbying state governmental agencies to initiate new legislation and to enforce it. It has been able to accomplish this successfully in the past by acting as a watch-dog over law enforcement, the court system and the state legislature.

In its program description, the agency states that its primary purpose is to provide a safe place for abused women and their children. The safety and security afforded by a confidential location allows the women to have time to think about what they need to do to avoid ever having to return to an abusive relationship again. The shelter assists by pointing out options to these women, assisting them with referrals to other social service agencies, and advocating on their behalf with legal issues. Not mentioned in the literature, but discussed by staff members, who have been with the agency for a number of years, are the past activities that involved political action. Speaking to several staff, it has become apparent that staff members used to be much more involved in political activity than they are now. In discussions with these staff members, I have learned that many times when a woman was to go to court, several staff members would appear in court with her. Since these staff members were known by court personnel, the judge

hearing the case was well aware that an outside agency was witnessing the proceedings, and would publicize and openly discuss actions that were in direct opposition to its philosophy. I have heard stories of staff members actually picketing outside the court building to protest actions of particular judges in domestic violence cases. Although there are a few funded advocate positions that perform these same duties today, no political activities are undertaken. The advocates go to court as a base of support and empowerment for the women. Staff members also tell stories about the support, both emotional and political, they would give to women who were jailed for defending themselves against abusive partners. This activity has also ceased. One executive staff member said, "These activities are no longer part of what the shelter does within the movement, because the constant need to secure new funding and maintain the already existing funding does not allow time to pursue more political activities."

The funding needed to keep all the current services operating increases every year. With the amount of money that is now available, the competition for these funds has also increased, and this competition places stress on the shelter not to offend the existing system that provides much of the money that keeps the shelter operating. At its inception, the original funding for the shelter originated from community donations and from Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. Later funding originated from various other sources such as: Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, United Way, and State Domestic Violence Funds which provided funding through fees from marriage licenses, along with private donations and fundraisers.

Although the shelter still receives funding from these sources, other entities also contribute. There are federal monies from a number of different sources such as the Vio-

lence Against Women Act and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) which provides specialized funding to states for welfare mothers who are victims of domestic abuse. There is also grant money that provides funding for additional staff and facilities, and federal money that has been coordinated and disbursed through a local foundation to implement coordination of services between the shelter and other agencies, such as Child Protective Services and Clark County who funds construction and maintenance of shelter buildings.

Even though there is only one other domestic violence shelter in the Las Vegas area, there are many other social service agencies that also compete for funding directed toward domestic violence programs. These other agencies lay claim to portions of this funding, and perhaps rightly so, by asserting that either directly or indirectly, the people they serve have been victims of domestic violence. Examples of these agencies are Shade Tree, the shelter for homeless women and their children, which claims domestic violence funding because, according to their numbers, forty percent of the women who access their facility are on the streets because they have been victims of domestic violence. The Metropolitan police force also receives funding for a domestic violence unit and the Las Vegas City Attorney's office has a special domestic violence office that aids women in pursuing the successful prosecution of their abusive partners.

Over the past six years there have been drastic changes in policies and procedures. Some of the policies have been explicitly changed in order to keep the number of residents at a total number that ensures continued funding on a certain level. Two policies in particular have become very relaxed in the last three years. The first is the assessment process that women must go through before coming into shelter. This involves a rather

in depth phone interview whose purpose is to assess the situation and the immediacy of the danger the woman is facing. The shelter opened as a secure place for women who were in life threatening situations due to domestic violence. Because of the constant concern for the safety of the women and the staff, keeping the location of the shelter secret was extremely important, and to a certain extent still is today. The screening phone interview not only aimed at insuring that the shelter was the appropriate facility for the applicant, but also at preventing the risk of the shelter location being revealed unnecessarily to someone who would not be best served by the shelter services. This last point is of extreme importance, because there is no security at all on any of the shelter properties. Even today, most police officers do not know where the shelter is located; they become aware of the actual location on a need to know basis.

The assessment procedure includes screening for physical danger, for the use of drugs and for mental and physical health issues that would not make shelter living an option for the applicant. This process has become much less stringent in a number of ways. Up until a few years ago, new staff could not bring a woman into shelter without consulting with a more experienced staff member. In fact most staff, new and old, thought it a necessary part of the interview process to consult with co-workers, when possible, before accepting a woman into the shelter. This is no longer the case. Crisis counselors no longer receive the same level of training, nor are they required to consult with more experienced staff before accepting an applicant into shelter. This has resulted in several dangerous situations for both the staff and the residents.

Some of these serious consequences can be traced to the less stringent screening policy used today for detecting drug use and mental health issues. Women, who in the past,

would have been deemed beyond the scope of shelter services are regularly admitted. It must be noted that in a number of these cases the lack of staff members' training and experience also resulted in dangerous situations. Until a few years ago, any woman who had used hard drugs such as cocaine, speed or crack could not come into shelter unless she first went into a treatment program. In contrast, the current policy allows these women to come into shelter, as long as they are not under the influence at the time they make the call. Currently, if an applicant does admit to using drugs or alcohol during her phone interview, she might be required to sign a contract with the shelter agreeing to attend the appropriate twelve - step meeting for her addiction.

Neither are mental health issues such a deterrent to coming into shelter. In the past, staff could deny a woman access to the shelter if she indicated in the interview that she had serious mental health issues. It was not unusual to require a woman requesting shelter to have a mental health assessment completed before actually being admitted. As this is no longer a requirement incidents where women with mental health issues have become hostile and threatening to other residents and to staff have increased.

The other major policy change has been the length of stay. Originally, the length of stay ranged from five to eight weeks, with five weeks being the most common amount of time a woman stayed. If she needed to stay beyond that time, she had to ask for an extension, thereby initiating a process that determined whether she could indeed stay. It was a rare occasion when a woman received an extension to stay the additional three weeks, and it was an even rarer occasion when a woman could stay longer than that, although such permissions were granted on a few occasions. Today, the average length of stay is eight weeks with extensions granted following a similar process as before. The

difference is that most women are staying much longer than eight weeks, and it is not uncommon now for a woman to stay three months or more.

The opportunity to stay in a safe place in order to think about and plan strategies that will help a woman not to return to a violent relationship is, most definitely, an important part of her ability to remain independent. On one hand, a relaxed entry policy and a lengthened stay doubtlessly benefits women who might not otherwise benefit from these programs to the fullest extent. On the other hand, the policies have raised several important issues, because their implementation was guided by the need to keep the number of residents at a certain level, and because the policies were not thought completely through before being implemented. The relaxed admission policy was not accompanied by any training of the staff to help them better recognize and handle drug or mental health crises. Additionally, with the current plans for increasing the potential occupancy rate to almost one hundred women, there are no plans to increase the size of the shelter staff. While the policy changes in extending the length of stay could be beneficial for the women, the difficulties a woman might face in trying to live on her own when she has been dependent on someone else for so long are also considerable. The lengthened periods of time in the shelter entail the continued necessity to adhere to the shelter rules and regulations, which can become extremely burdensome to the women. Shelter living is extremely difficult for any length of time, but it can become even more trying and difficult as the stay is extended. Extended stays have frequently resulted in tension and arguments between newer residents who are attempting to find their spot in shelter life and the older ones who become very territorial. The shelter, which was meant as a temporary safe place, has recently become a semi-permanent home for several women. Women

who have stayed for months were no longer in any danger from their abusive partners, and most of them either had begun working or had begun receiving benefits. Accordingly, what they needed most was a transitional housing situation where they could be in their own homes and in their own space.

Yet, transitional housing is not a part of the shelter policy, because there is currently no funding for it. Women who leave the shelter and move into low-income housing do so through other housing programs such as Women's Development Center, Clark County Housing Authority, or Project Home, a program of the Economic Opportunity Board. However, these programs have limited resources and very often long waiting lists. The results of this lack are twofold. First, women who are not able to get housing either stay at the shelter, if at all possible, for as long as possible. Second, they move into dwellings they really can't afford, thereby increasing their likelihood of another abusive relationship, or returning to the abusive partner they fled. Staying in the shelter, on the other hand, results in the problems discussed above, problems which are often exacerbated when space becomes unavailable for someone who is in a truly dangerous situation.

Methodology

Critical researchers conduct their research projects with the intent to offer some sort of information or insight into their particular area that will shed light on an injustice or inequality, and opening a dialogue, rather than just describing or attempting to explain existing conditions (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). They accept certain assumptions as fundamental and conduct their research with these ever in mind. For the purpose of this research two of these essential assumptions seemed extremely important: (1) all thought

is based on the relations of power and (2) some groups in a society are privileged over other groups, helping to create a power dynamic through the privilege. The basis of this privilege might change; at one time it is gender and at another it might be race, but there is always some criterion that the group in power can use as a form of oppression over other groups (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994).

Ideology is not independent of the social institution. In fact it is very much a part of the social institution and a means for that institution to perpetuate itself (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Critical researchers attempt to question ideology by non-adherence to the accepted scientific methods of research: experimentation, use of variables as means to explain and describe conditions, and statistical evaluation. Qualitative critical research methods such as ethnography and observation attempt to generate more questions, discussion and criticism of prevailing social conditions, and not just explain and describe them. There is also an interaction between the researcher and the subjects of the observation that enhances the process and allows the subjects a clear voice (Scheper-Hughes, 1992). This approach challenges the status quo and the ideologies that fuel it, with the intent and purpose of changing inequalities and injustice. The status quo in the field of domestic violence is sustained by positive claims about the efficacy of counseling for both victim and abuser, and these claims are in turn informed by the ideology of individual accountability and responsibility, which are core values of American society. The status quo in the field of domestic violence is also perpetuated by a reluctance to question too intensely the political organizations that exert power on agencies whose purpose is to manage the consequences and problems associated with domestic violence. Questioning the status quo, however, was at the very heart of the movement that initi-

ated the emergence of those agencies some thirty years ago.

The qualitative method of research was chosen for this project based on several factors. First, recalling the increase in domestic violence incidents cited above, it would seem that current measures are not effective. This might lead to an investigation of current methods, including counseling techniques and the topics discussed in sessions. If both perpetrators and victims leave counseling sessions and return to former behavioral patterns in connection with violent relationships, then one would almost have to conclude the session was not successful. Second, conversations with the clinical co-directors of the shelter's counseling office made it clear that there was absolutely no follow up studies conducted with either the men who were court ordered to attend anger management sessions or with the women who attended victims' groups. As a result of this lack of follow-up on the part of the agency, they had no statistical evidence that indicated that their programs were successful. Their only reason for providing the services was the numbers of people accessing the service, which often times was determined by the court system due to mandated counseling. Because of my work at the shelter, I was aware that neither did the shelter perform any sort of follow up with ex-residents. As with the counseling office, the only way the shelter staff knew the outcome of a resident's stay was if the resident returned to the shelter, either because she needed to access the services again or because she returned for a visit, which does not occur very often.

A third reason for using qualitative methods is the belief that the efficacy of counseling cannot be measured appropriately by relying on quantitative methods. Currently, the counseling office uses a post and pre-test evaluation for both men and women in an attempt to note improvement after attending classes. The posttest is given immediately af-

ter the last class, at the height of any influence that the class might have had on the client. With no further follow up at specified intervals, it is very difficult to make any claims regarding the continued effectiveness of the sessions. In addition, when the classes are attended as part of a court ordered sentencing it is to the client's best interests to answer these evaluations as positively as possible, without necessarily being as truthful as possible. Client self-reporting of improvement as a direct result of counseling is highly suspicious, as is the reporting of client improvement by the therapist. These types of reporting call into question the validity and reliability of the results because of the bias involved with reporting by people who have a vested interest in the outcome (Epstein, 1995). It seems fairly obvious that a client who has just completed court ordered sessions would want to present him/herself in the best light possible to the counselor so as not to provoke any negative reporting to the court. Just as obviously, the counselor would want to evaluate the counseling sessions as positively as possible since such an evaluation would naturally strengthen the claim that counseling is indeed the answer. It seemed that attending sessions, recording comments and topics and studying distributed materials could offer a base from which a dialogue could begin regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of such programs.

Questions and answers administered in either an interview format or on a survey can cloud, distort or limit the feelings and beliefs of the respondent. However, the very presence of an observer in a group setting would also affect the interaction. While this observer's effect did occur for a short time in the men's groups it did not seem to occur as much in the women's group, which is the major focus of this discussion. Objectivity and accuracy were additional concerns. Because credibility and adequacy are very important

aspects of qualitative research which correspond to the validity criterion in quantitative research, they were qualities I conscientiously adhered to throughout the time I attended the group sessions (Olesen, 1994). I accomplished this by listening intently to the topics of discussion and to the comments of both the facilitators and women. I took notes at the beginning of each session recording the number of women, their races, ages and reasons for attending the group. I recorded comments through note taking and when I could not do this during the session, I recorded my observations within not more than three hours of leaving the session to ensure the most accuracy. I reviewed all notes after the session to ensure that I was able to understand the progress within the session and to fill in anything I may have omitted. While reviewing the notes after the session, I looked at the topic introduced, any material that was distributed and then the recorded comments.

Qualitative data is reported through the researcher's perception, experience and knowledge and this could present a danger that the information gathered will fall short of being credible. I paid great attention to any bias that I harbored going into the groups that might have affected the credibility of the research. The most salient and important bias I must acknowledge was that I worked for the agency in a capacity that was really opposite in many ways to the work that the counselors at the outreach office performed on a daily basis. In fact the philosophy of the two entities is much different. The shelter staff, in general, does not believe that counseling is effective for changing the behavior of an abusive partner. The counseling staff does wholeheartedly believe that abusive people can change through the counseling sessions. This difference in opinion results from a number of factors such as the type and duration of contact with the client. Additionally however, there is a notable difference in the staff who work at each entity and

their perception of themselves and of each other. Counseling staff is required to be on the master's level, at least, and often times they are licensed by the state in some form of counseling. This is not a requirement of the shelter staff and there are no shelter staff members, except for the supervisor, who has a master's degree in any field. In fact shelter staff have degrees in fields as diverse and varied as political science, criminal justice, social work, sociology, women's studies, human services and psychology. Shelter staff believe that their work is not appreciated nor respected by the counseling staff and this fuels the ongoing antagonism that often erupts during staff meetings. I personally did not feel any tension in being at the counseling office observing groups. One of the clinical co-directors, however, did make mention of the different philosophies of the two factions, but this was more a recognition of the difference than any sort of value statement regarding it.

There is one final bias I must acknowledge. I started this research believing that counseling does not really offer much hope in the way of a solution to the problem of domestic violence. Sitting through the many sessions I attended, with both men and women, I gained a respect for what occurs in the groups and a keen sense that the groups could offer so much more in the way of political thought. I also began to understand that people who are suffering from physical and emotional abuse often gain strength from coming to realize that others share their same predicament. One of the greatest abuses that is perpetrated against women in domestic violence situations is isolation. The support group allows the victim to associate with others, opening the opportunity, perhaps for the first time, to communicate with others and to gain information and insight into the suffering that results from domestic violence.

The research consisted of interviews with the co-clinical directors of the counseling facility and with the facilitators of the two groups I attended, as well as observing group sessions with both men and women. Even though this discussion revolves around the women's groups, observation of the men's groups offered additional information into the process of the groups in general.

The interviews were very informal and were conducted both before and during the sessions. I tried to make them as conversational as possible, so I could learn the thoughts of the counselors regarding their philosophical approach to counseling and learn the process they were following within the groups. I will discuss the interviews first and then describe and discuss the sessions.

There were three sets of interviews, none of which were tape - recorded. I documented all of my research, for both the interviews and the group sessions, by handwritten notes. The first set was with the clinical co-directors, the second was with the co-facilitators of the men's groups and the third was with the co-facilitators of the women's group.

The clinical co-directors are a male and a female. The male director is approximately forty years old and the female director is in her late twenties or early thirties. Both are Caucasian. The male has a masters' in social work and the female a masters' in counseling. At my request they agreed to meet with me before I began attending the sessions and we spoke for about thirty minutes about my approach and my thoughts of a more macro approach to the social problem of domestic violence.

The men's group co-facilitators, as mandated by the state law, consist of a man and a woman. The male co-facilitator for the men's group, who is approximately fifty years old

and Caucasian, has a masters' in counseling and has been a contracted counselor with the agency for many years. He works at another counseling agency during the day and conducts contracted sessions at night for the agency. As the primary facilitator for this men's groups, he took a leadership role during the sessions I attended. I found it very interesting that during two of the sessions I attended, he referred to himself as a previous abuser.

The female co-facilitator has a masters in social work and was working on her Licensed Clinical Social Worker certification. She is in her late thirties and Caucasian. She never took the primary position in leading the sessions I attended, but did provide material for session exercises and for home assignments. Through questioning these facilitators and others who work in the field, I came to understand that the reason both a man and a woman are present in the men's groups is to give the men a sense that men and women can work together in cooperation. The fact that the female facilitator did not take as active a role as the male was certainly not lost on me; however, I did not research the arrangement further. As with the co-directors, I spent some time with these two co-facilitators explaining my plans for observing the groups and my concerns about more macro level approaches.

The third set of co-facilitators, the one I will focus on for the rest of this discussion, were both women who conducted the women's group. These two women seemed truly to be co-facilitators. Neither took a primary role leaving the other with a secondary role. Contrary to the men's group facilitator arrangement, both women introduced discussion material and, in my perception, both took an equal share in guiding the discussion and in answering any questions that arose within the group. These two women both had mas-

ters' degrees. One of the women had been working at the counseling office for more than ten years and was also a counselor in the school district. The other woman had been at the agency for approximately four years, had a masters in social work and was working on her Licensed Clinical Social Worker certification. Both were in their late fifties and Caucasian. Both women talked about their personal lives within the context of the group and both indicated that their marriages had dissolved. The facilitator who had been working at the agency for ten years raised six children and had acquired much of her education after her divorce and while raising her children; she had two masters. The other facilitator had more recently been divorced and she mentioned on numerous occasions that her career in counseling was a new starting point for her to begin a new life. I again spent about thirty minutes with them before I began attending sessions to discuss what I was hoping to accomplish.

I began attending the groups on May 31, 2000 and continued attending on a weekly basis, the last group session I attended was October 11, 2000. I attended two sessions per week, one a women's group and one a men's group. The purpose of attending the sessions was to observe the content of topics and the interaction between the facilitators and group participants.

When I first inquired about attending the sessions, the program director informed me that I would be welcome to attend any sessions I chose according to my schedule. The co-directors of the counseling program reiterated this and did not place any limitations on which sessions I would be allowed to attend except for one, and that was that there was one evening session that already had an observer. They did not want two in the same session. The sessions I chose were based solely on my availability. In total, I at-

tended sixteen group sessions.

The group sessions are held in large rooms, some have long tables, some have just chairs. All of the women's groups were held in rooms with just chairs, which were always arranged in a semi-circle. The session began at six o' clock in the evening and a large number of women would arrive early. If the room was open, which was most of the time, they would sit and socialize with each other until the session began. When the room wasn't open, they would sit in the waiting room. Having to sit in the waiting room seemed to decrease the amount of pre-session conversation among them, because people outside the group were also waiting there. Some of these were men waiting for their groups, so the camaraderie of the group disappeared in that setting. The women seemed afraid to talk in this environment. I never addressed this situation with them, but it was not a reaction that surprised me, since many expressed fear and mistrust of relationships in the group sessions.

The co-facilitators always sat at the opening of the semi-circle and in the beginning I sat near them. As the group and I progressed, I tried to sit within the group so I did not appear to be apart from it. Sometimes this was not possible depending on how many women were attending the session and when I arrived. I did not want to give the women the impression I was watching them, although I know that in the beginning this might have been the case. I also attempted to take minimal notes during the sessions in an attempt to avoid any action on my part that would make them feel uncomfortable.

I never attempted to tape record the sessions because of the confidentiality of the sessions and the desire to allow the women to feel as comfortable as possible with my being in the group. Often times it is very difficult for these victims to speak of the vio-

lence because of shame, guilt, fear and embarrassment and I did not want to add another burden on them with a tape recorder. I recorded everything by handwritten notes and this I did as inconspicuously as possible, again, to not infringe upon their sense of confidentiality and sense of security.

The demographics of the group changed somewhat from session to session because women would not come to a session or new members would join the group. The group, consistently, was comprised of Caucasian women between the ages of twenty and fifty-five. However, there were only two women who were at the upper edge of the age range. There were five who attended regularly who were in their twenties, and the rest of the participants were in their thirties and forties. In two of the earlier sessions I attended, two black women were participants, however, they both completed their session within the first six weeks I attended and for the remainder of the time I spent with the group all the participants were white. In the very first group I attended, one of the participants was Hispanic, but she was only present at that first group and never returned. One Native American woman attended three of the sessions, but she left the state and told the group she was going to be transferring to a group in the new state. There were no Asian participants during the sixteen weeks. The number of participants varied from nine to fifteen, however the number attending was usually between eleven and fourteen.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Interviews

There were two questions I asked the co-directors, one of these I asked all three sets of counselors. The first question was: "Is there any follow up with the men and/or the women who attend the groups?" The male director responded: "No, there is no follow up conducted and the only way we really gain any information regarding the progress of a victim or an offender is if that person returns for further counseling." The female co-director elaborated on this question by explaining, "Both victims and offenders are given pre and post-tests in an attempt to monitor the progress, but we have no concrete way of showing effectiveness of counseling in any other fashion. The instrument we use for the men, most of whom are court ordered, is called the Domestic Violence Inventory. This is an instrument that measures the men's attitudes both before and after the sessions to show their progress." She made no mention of what is accomplished by administering this test and what exactly is done with the results.

My second question, which I asked of all three groups, regarded the subject matter of the sessions. I asked, "Are there any macro level issues discussed in either the men's groups or the women's groups? Are topics such as male privilege, socialization, gender roles, political action or educational processes ever introduced into the groups?" The fe-

male director answered, "There is a certain syllabus that is mandated by the state for the program to be certified by the state. The syllabus includes anger recognition tools, anger management tools, and weekly assignments that must be returned the following week. Also mandated are no more than two absences by attendees, periodic reporting to the sentencing judge by the facilitator and a pre-test and post-test evaluation." The anger management tools include recognition of physical signs of anger, such as: tensing of muscles, changes in breathing, and increased heart rate. Also the men receive ways to deal with the anger right at the beginning that include: leaving the situation, engaging in physical activity such as jogging, advice not to drink, nor to drive to avoid exacerbation of the emotion or to further endangerment of others. Assignments consist of written exercises on concepts introduced during the session. These include journaling about feelings of anger and how the men address them, and what actions they took to avoid any violence. The agency's program is certified by the state, which means that when a person is sentenced by the court to mandatory domestic violence counseling the agency can be accessed to fulfill the court's sentence. An important point to be noted is that the court actually distributes to the defendant a list of agencies that are certified. Being on the list can be very lucrative for the agency. Judging by their response and my further research, I concluded that more macro level subjects were really not considered to be important or necessary to either the abuser's program or to the victim's programs.

The next interview was with the co-facilitators of the men's groups and I asked one question, which was the same I asked the co-clinical directors regarding content material. The male facilitator stated: "If any such subject matter was presented to the men, it would just make it harder for the men to accept any suggestions that they should change

their behavior." He continued, "Topics such as male privilege, socialization of male and female or gender roles would turn the men away from the other topics presented in the class." In fact, the male co-facilitator commented in one of the sessions, "Women have been successful in affecting changes in legislation and law enforcement regarding their rights because they took an active role in doing so. Men could and should do the same in an attempt to get back rights that they might think they have lost because of the women's efforts."

The third interview was with the co-facilitators of the women's groups. When I asked if they ever addressed issues of gender role, socialization of male and females, or political issues surrounding gender issues, they seemed perplexed. My interpretation of their reaction was that they had never contemplated macro level involvement. One of them stated, "These issues are important causes of domestic violence, but we don't really discuss them in any great degree in the sessions. Our focus is to change the way the women deal with the abuse, so they don't return to the same situation."

Group Sessions

Except for two sessions, the group always began with an introduction of each woman and her reason for attending the session. These always included information about whether she was there voluntarily, and if not, what agency had ordered her to attend. I will discuss this voluntary/involuntary issue at length below. At the close of many of the sessions one of the facilitators would ask what each woman had learned during the session.

Attendance at the meetings ranged from nine women to fifteen women, with an aver-

age number of participants being twelve. For fourteen of the sixteen classes the facilitators asked the women to specify if they were court ordered or voluntary. The two classes in which this question was not asked had special situations occurring that did not allow the facilitators the opportunity to ask the question. In one of the two a man, who was a counselor from another agency trying to get hours to fulfill a continuing education requirement (CEU), attempted to sit in on the class without permission from either the facilitators or the women. This man just entered the room and took a seat. One of the facilitators asked, "Can I ask what you are doing?" The man answered, "I am attending this session because I need to fulfill a continuing education requirement." The facilitator stated, "We were not notified that you would be sitting in on this class and we cannot allow you to do so without further discussion and the approval of the women." The man seemed unmoved and stated, "I have to sit in on this class because there is no other available one that will allow me to fulfill the CEU requirement." The facilitator got out of her seat and asked the man to come with her to speak with the office staff. She took quite a bit of time with an administrative staff member and the result was that the man was not allowed to attend. When she came back into the room she asked the women, "Would you feel comfortable with this man attending a session next week?" As a group the women indicated they would not, and one of them stated, "I don't want him in here. I wouldn't be able to speak freely and I didn't like the way he just came in and sat down. It was like he was forcing his way in."

The second class just began with a continuation of the discussion from the week before, which required each woman to answer a question pertaining to her childhood and how the circumstances of their upbringing affected her own child raising techniques.

The facilitator began this class where the one before had ended, and did not go around the room asking the women to introduce themselves.

Of the fourteen sessions where the women were asked to specify if they were court ordered or voluntary, never once were there more voluntary attendees than court ordered attendees. The court ordered participants outnumbered the voluntary participants by at least one person, and at the most, nine persons. The court ordered participants were there either for domestic violence charges or because child protective services (CPS) mandated attendance for the women either to regain custody of their children or to avoid losing custody of their children. I did not keep a count in every session of the women who were ordered for domestic violence and those ordered by CPS. All the women ordered by CPS, however, had some domestic violence issues which brought the family to the attention of CPS. These issues were all actual attacks either by the woman or against the woman which involved an arrest of one or both parties. In one of the cases, a very young Hispanic woman who had been attacked by her boyfriend, lost custody of her children to her mother because a report was submitted to CPS by the police about the condition of the living arrangements. In order to regain custody, the woman had to attend these sessions, with the intention that she would learn about the conditions leading to domestic violence and how it affects the children. Another example was a woman who had been abused by her husband for a good portion of their twenty- year marriage. The physical abuse had not occurred for quite a while, although the woman admitted that there were still many problems within the relationship. She had three children with him, the oldest was a teenage daughter. The husband had been sexually abusing this daughter and this is what involved CPS. Marital abuse began again, and the woman was ordered to domestic

violence counseling, with the intent that she would learn from the group and gain the support she needed not to allow the husband to return home. The husband had been arrested, but was about to be released and planning on returning home with the woman's consent. The children had been allowed to stay in the home while the husband was absent, and this woman saw no problem with his returning and living in the same house with the daughter he had sexually molested. In fact, in one of the last sessions I attended this woman spoke about the arrangements she had made for her husband and herself to spend a few nights in a hotel suite celebrating his release from jail.

The women's group served two purposes. It was a support group for victims but it also fulfilled any court ordered domestic violence counseling. For the court ordered counseling, these groups did not have to meet the same criteria as the men's groups. The court ordered women's groups are not, nor do they need to be, certified by the state. This means that the facilitators neither have to follow a syllabus, nor have to assign homework. They do, however, have to report to the court any excessive absences. This arrangement has now changed and women who are court ordered to batterers' counseling go into a totally separate group. What explained the original difference between the two groups is that when women are charged with domestic violence it is typically for one of two reasons. The first is that the offense was committed in self-defense, although there was no way for the police to make the determination that the primary perpetrator was the male partner. The second reason is that the woman involved did not actually commit any offense at all, but since the police could not make a determination they arrested either just the woman, or, as often happens, both partners. I have even heard women with children discuss situations where the police could not determine who the primary perpetrator

was so they threaten the couple with arresting both of them and placing the children in protective custody. In many of these cases, women have told me they admit to being the primary perpetrator so the children would not have to be uprooted and placed in Child Haven, the children's protective custody facility. The facilitators informed me that the relaxation of these mandates in the women's groups lessened the incidence of further victimization of the women by the system.

Subject Matter

Each session presented a topic to be discussed, and some of these were repeated over the sixteen weeks that I attended the group sessions. In nine of the sixteen classes, hand-outs were utilized, all addressing individual behavior and thought patterns. Handed-out topics included time outs, unhealthy boundaries, the difference between assertiveness and aggression, assertive responses, why women don't leave and the cycle of power and control. The topic discussed in the group session followed very closely the hand out material, unless a group member had some other topic to discuss. This occurred only two times, and both cases by women who had just joined the group and who needed to talk about their particular situations. The members seemed to be able to fit whatever they were feeling into the discussion topic. Discussion topics included: fear, effects of positive and negative self talk, individual behavior and reaction to abuse and anger, co-dependent behavior, personal power, individual responsibility, boundaries, assertiveness and passive/aggressive behavior.

In only four of the sixteen sessions I attended was there any mention by the co-facilitators of more macro level processes at work in domestic violence. The first time

occurred in the very beginning of my attending the session when one of the co-facilitators mentioned that men and women are socialized differently. She stated: "Women are socialized to allow themselves to come last in any relationship, and to always do for others. Men, on the other hand, are socialized to behave in macho ways with no or very little communication regarding their feelings." The co-facilitator went on to elaborate, "Women allow themselves to be picked, but men do the picking. All these behaviors are reinforced by the portrayal of men and women in the media." The solution offered by the co-facilitators was based on individual responsibility. They suggested that women should build their self-esteem, set boundaries, develop survival techniques and get to know themselves as remedies for this type of socialization. The second and third discussions of this topic occurred at the mid-point of my attending the sessions, and the co-facilitator stated during the third time the issue was approached, "Women are raised to be co-dependent and men have belief systems that support abuse and certain negative thoughts about women. It is also important to remember that men who are products of abusive homes continue the pattern."

The fourth time this topic was brought up occurred at the very end of my attending the sessions. The co-facilitator discussed female socialization and told the women, "The female role of primary caregiver insures that co-dependency will result." According to her, the solution was to use language to change thoughts, feelings and behavior. In all four of these occurrences, it was the same co-facilitator that discussed these more macro level issues.

In two of the sessions the women themselves brought up questions regarding empowerment and/or cultural gender roles. The first time empowerment was discussed was

actually before the co-facilitators' mention of gender roles. The topic was fear and how it affects and drives people. The co-facilitators stated that fear gives people a self-awareness of what is going on around them which then affords them the opportunity to change. One of the women became very angry over this statement and said, "I want knowledge and input that can help me become empowered. I need some advice other than what you are giving me in the session. All I am learning is how to change my behavior so I can respond to the abuse. I want to learn how to be proactive, not glossed over suggestions on how to change my behavior. I need the truth."

In one of the sessions, about midway through my attending the groups, several women brought up cultural causes of abuse, socialization of men and the effect the media's portrayal of gender roles has on gender relations. This discussion resulted from remarks that were made by a young woman attending the group by court order for a domestic violence charge. This woman was particularly interesting to me, because of her behavior throughout the classes. She always dressed in black, and her clothing covered her entire body, long sleeves on her shirts and long pants or a long skirt. She dressed this way even though the classes ran through the summer and there were times when the air conditioning did not function properly. Another part of her behavior that caught my attention was that she rocked constantly, with her head bowed down.

Although she was attending the sessions because she had been charged and convicted of domestic violence, against her mother's boyfriend, she had quite a history of being a victim of abuse herself. She had been sexually and physically abused as a child, and, at the time she was attending the sessions, was involved with a man who had been arrested for abusing her. Although this attack had been brutal and life threatening, she

was intent on continuing the relationship with her attacker upon his release from jail. As she talked about this in the session, she asked, " Don't women bring this sort of abuse on themselves? Maybe we do things that are just as abusive in other ways, not physical, and we cause the men to react this way." The other women listened and one, in particular, became very upset over the thought that the young woman would go back with this man. This woman told the young woman, "I am very worried about you. I suffered through an abusive relationship for twenty years and I am very concerned that you will get seriously injured. You just don't know what you are saying." After making her statements she became very quiet and withdrawn, and after the session she turned to me, visibly shaken, and stated, " I just couldn't listen to any more of that." The woman described above whose husband had sexually abused their teenage daughter also commented, but in agreement with the young woman who was planning on going back with her abusive boyfriend. She stated, "I think women do things that cause and bring on the abuse." The discussion of culturally defined gender roles emanated from this young woman's taking on the blame for the abuse. She actually excused her partner for attacking her, placing the blame on herself and other women who suffer abuse. During the discussion the young woman could not be convinced that she was playing a very dangerous game. Her behavior seemed almost destructive.

Of the topics introduced and discussed over the sixteen weeks, individual change was the most frequent. Individual responsibility for actions and for change was emphasized in discussions about behavioral modification, cognitive modification, importance of positive self-talk, setting boundaries and recognizing co-dependency. Together these topics were introduced and discussed twenty-six times. Cultural and social implications

of domestic violence were introduced and discussed only five times, and as mentioned above, it is the participants who actually introduced the topic one of the five times. Of the four other times the topic was introduced by the co-facilitator, the discussion did not progress into any deep explanation. The co-facilitator mentioned it fleetingly as though the different socialization patterns men and women experience and their different gender role expectations were to be dealt with but not necessarily changed. The only time the co-facilitators introduced macro issues the discussion actually touched upon co-dependency and the ways women can deal with this on an individual basis.

Out of a total of thirty-three topics, which seemed to be most applicable to this discussion, cultural and societal issues were discussed five times, individual responsibility topics twenty-six times, and the miscellaneous topics about fear and recognizing abuse were discussed two times. There were other issues discussed in the sessions, such as child hood experiences and other varied topics the women introduced because they pertained to their own situation but are not included in the count

Discussion

My analysis of the interviews with the co-directors and both sets of co-facilitators suggests that only one of the six had really given any thought at all to the macro level aspect of domestic violence. Paradoxically, perhaps, this staff member was the male co-facilitator of the men's group who responded to my questions by saying that any mention of gender role socialization or male privilege would work against the men to accept any suggestions to change their behavior. His self-identification as a former abuser might have explained his position. As a former abusive person, he might have had first-hand

knowledge about how the men in the group felt and would respond to such a level of analysis. Relying on my observations and interviews, I believe the other five staff members, did not really give much thought to the macro level implications and origins of domestic violence, even though they did acknowledge that such a level existed. They did not seem to acknowledge the original ideology of the grassroots movement against domestic violence, which was driven by the need to protect women against violence by not only offering them safe haven access, but also by transforming thinking patterns so to prevent violence against women in the future. As they are all counselors who are committed to individual counseling and change, they are not paid to change social policy and thought, but to uphold the basic values of American society that support and encourage individual responsibility and accountability. They all indicated to me, either in the interview process or by their actions in the sessions, that the extent of their mission was limited to individual change. Except in the men's groups, there was no discussion of political action, and that particular instance expressed, in my view, a backlash statement by the male co-facilitator. Women never discussed, or even suggested, that they had political power. Legislative actions regarding the domestic violence laws, legislators' voting records pertaining to domestic violence, child custody, or enforcement, judges' decisions or the police departments' actions were never introduced as topics of discussion. I was also rather puzzled when, on several occasions during a discussion, the co-facilitators gave legal information regarding court hearings and protective orders that was erroneous. The co-facilitators were offering information that was no longer current and were obviously not up to date on the change. The misinformation could have adversely affected a woman's attempt at extending the length of a protective order, resulting in a

possibly dangerous situation.

Every discussion in the women's group sessions supported individual change to avoid abuse, not individual change that could or should ultimately be used to eliminate abuse. That twenty-six out of thirty-three topics addressed individual responsibility, accountability and action regarding domestic violence indicates that the main focus of the counseling sessions is on individual change, not on social change. There is no reliable statistical evidence that shows that this type of approach has a positive result for the victims. It is my opinion that one might be able to conclude that the individual approach is not working based on the mere fact that in 1996, the Nevada legislature passed legislation making a third charge of domestic violence a felony charge, if the first two were domestic violence convictions. If counseling with victims and perpetrators had been successful throughout the years this legislation would not have been necessary, because men who attended sessions would have been cured of their abusive habits and women would have been successfully educated about setting boundaries, being assertive, recognizing red flags, and increasing their self esteem.

Table 5 - 1

Group Attendance and Reasons for Attendance

Date	Number	Voluntary	Court Ordered
05/21/00	9	4	5
06/07/00	10	Not Specified	Not Specified
06/14/00	11	2	9
06/21/00	11	3	8
06/28/00	12	4	8
07/05/00	12	Not Specified	Not Specified
07/12/00	14	Not Specified	Not Specified
07/19/00	14	5	9
08/02/00	14	3	11
08/09/00	14	3	11
08/25/00	15	3	12
09/14/00	12	2	10
09/21/00	11	1	10
09/28/00	11	4	7
10/04/00	10	2	8
10/11/00	9	4	5

Table 5 - 2
Handout Material

Date	Handout Topic
06/14/00	Unhealthy Boundaries
06/28/00	Same as above
07/05/00	Aggression versus Assertive Behavior
07/12/00	Assertive Responses
07/19/00	Same as above
08/02/00	Use of Time Outs
08/09/00	Why Women Don't Leave
09/13/00	Time Outs
10/11/00	Power and Control Wheel

Table 5-3

Group Topics

	Fear	Self Talk	Behavioral Modification	Cognitive Modification	Boundaries/Co-dependency	Cultural/Social	Recognizing Abuse	Individual Accountability
07-Jun	X							
14-Jun		X	X					
21-Jun					X			
28-Jun			X	X	X	X		X
05-Jul			X	X				
12-Jul			X					
19-Jul						X		
02-Aug				X				
09-Aug						X		X
16-Aug		X		X				
25-Aug						X		
14-Sep		X		X				
21-Sep		X		X				
28-Sep			X				X	X
04-Oct			X	X	X	X		X
11-Oct				X	X			
	1	4	6	8	4	5	1	4

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

American values of individuality and responsibility underlie the counseling that both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence receive. No one discusses with either the men or the women the role of gender socialization and how it affects their relationships with each other. Counselors should be listening to what the women tell them, because the women, in a great number of cases, do indeed have a visceral understanding that many men act in this way, not just their men. The women very often are confused, understanding and recognizing that they are victims, but at the same time thinking that they are somehow guilty. There are two sources behind this burden of individual responsibility; the abusive male partner, who wants to blame the woman in order to avoid taking the responsibility on himself, and makes her the scapegoat for his bad actions, and the counseling system that insists that a victim must take individual responsibility for her own actions to change the situation, leading her to conclude that she is to blame and responsible for her own abuse.

These failures are not simply symptomatic of a lack of fit between the counselor's ideology and that of the original movement against domestic violence. Counseling has become a huge business, generating large revenue that serves two purposes. First, it places the responsibility on the individual, both victim and abuser, reinforcing the pur-

ported American values of individual responsibility and accountability, values which are selectively applied. Second, while it seems to provide a quick fix to a social problem, in actuality it doesn't fix anything at all. When the quick fix doesn't work, the reason is typically placed directly back on the client. All blame and responsibility for this gender-based violence is conveniently removed from the system that created and maintains it, and placed back on both the victim and the perpetrator of the violence, who are actually also victims of the system.

It would take a re-structuring of the system and a reallocation of wealth and resources to truly address these problems. These would not be quick or very popular fixes. It is much more acceptable for the power holders to convince victims they are responsible for fixing the problems themselves while attempting at the same time to function in a system that victimizes them in the first place. Women are an integral part of the capitalistic system. Even if they work outside the home, they are the ones who are fully responsible for maintaining the home: cooking, cleaning, laundry, child bearing and raising, supporting the man, the family and the social system by their work. As Engels suggested, the very work that women perform to reproduce the system explains mechanisms whereby women became enslaved within their own homes. As keeping control of wealth depended on keeping control of the paternity of children, women were confined within the walls of the family home, virtually isolated from outside contact. As in former historical periods, the isolation contemporary women suffer from also contributes significantly to their psychological and emotional abuse.

Education on socialization, gender roles and political options could lead to a sense of empowerment but agencies and the counselors they employ also would have to take a

political stand on the issues of legislation and enforcement, partnering with the women. The agencies have a perfect place from which to show women how to access the areas necessary to affect change. They must recognize the inadequacy inherent in the emphasis on individual responsibility and accountability. They must be willing and courageous enough to speak out on it, setting an example for the women they were created to serve, thus educating and empowering them to utilize every legal and moral means possible to change the system that now discourages them from affecting such change.

In my own experience of counseling women through the crisis of domestic violence situations, I have used sociological knowledge and information. Although this is not a source normally accessed by counselors, I have found it profoundly useful. As mentioned previously, women feel that the abuse is not unique to them, however, when someone rationally tells them this, they then know it is not unique to them. Knowing is where the change will take place. The research I conducted in this project, both in the literature review and in attending the groups validated my own approach. I came to know that there are others in the field who believe that a combination of psychological counseling and sociological influence can affect a change. More importantly, I heard women who attended the group sessions ask for more information, for more resources. I heard them bring up the issues that surround societal issues before and more often than the facilitators. This spoke volumes to me about what women ask for in their sessions regarding solutions to domestic violence and to gender inequalities. It aided me in moving from feeling that I was doing the correct thing in addressing sociological issues with them to knowing I was doing the correct thing. Listening to these women, discussing with them, and pointing out the existing options while developing ways to achieve new

options is what the feminist perspective should be addressing in the sessions. This has to include a perspective in political education and action that points out discrepancies in legislation and enforcement. Such a perspective would have to include the importance of being aware of judicial proceedings, the actions of elected officials and the education of the public at large regarding domestic violence and gender inequalities.

The best evidence that political education and action has been productive in this area is the fact that the movement began and progressed as far as it has in the past thirty years. The move from keeping abuse of women a matter of the privacy of the home to where it is presently, out there in the public eye, with legislation and the means for enforcement of that legislation has been a phenomenal accomplishment. Women did not accomplish this by taking on the responsibility of the abuse they have suffered at the hands of their partners. Women accomplished these achievements through political action. Certainly there are concerns that each woman who has suffered abuse must address, on an individual basis. To treat just these symptoms will not solve the problem. They are just symptoms of larger societal problems.

Utilizing and applying a sociological perspective, in conjunction with psychological counseling, could very well enhance the field in numerous ways. As C. Wright Mills emphasized, understanding the broader picture of the social system can clarify the everyday activities of an individual's life. So often individuals do not see the larger picture, because they are much too busy attempting to survive on a daily basis, and they are not able to make sense of the fact that their individual situations are actually being controlled and affected by the larger social system. This is especially so for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. The victims, particularly, battle everyday for survival for

themselves and for their children. Counselors must recognize this fact and be able and willing to offer women alternatives that include ways to achieve economic, legislative and systemic change. Women's place in society will never improve without improving women's options to be independent of any entity, economically, emotionally and psychologically. Economic independence could afford them the opportunities to truly be able to take the time of learning a trade that would diminish the likelihood of their returning to an abusive relationship for financial support. This could be accomplished through the loosening of the welfare regulations to include more and longer benefits and less pressure to return to minimum wage jobs. It would also include reliable transportation options, sufficient, affordable and quality child-care and housing.

Counseling sessions should address all the issues surrounding psychological and emotional dependence and abuse. The dependence of women on their male partners maintains the pattern of abuse. This becomes an inescapable trap for them and the dependence feeds on itself. Counseling sessions should address these issues and explore any and all options available to women. This may include the counselors, both those at the shelter and those at the counseling office, participating once again in political activities that can be used as role models for the women. It has to include education regarding gender roles and abusive situations to prevent the continuance of the incidents of domestic violence. The movement against domestic violence began this process almost thirty years ago, but it has lost its way due in a large degree to funding sources, internal conflict and increased professionalization and diversity of the workers within the field. Perhaps it is time for the movement to re-examine itself and to re-define its goals. It began as an effort that actively pursued social policy change but it has begun to lose ground

and the result could be extremely detrimental to the women it is supposed to be serving.

APPENDIX

Group Session Handouts

Exhibit 1 - June 21, 2000 & June 28, 2000

UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Telling all.

Talking at an intimate level at the first meeting.

Falling in love with a new acquaintance.

Falling in love with anyone who reaches out.

Being overwhelmed by - or preoccupied with - a person.

Acting on the first sexual impulse.

Being sexual for your partner, not yourself.

Going against personal values or rights to please others.

Not noticing when someone else displays inappropriate boundaries.

Not noticing when someone invades your boundaries.

Accepting food, gifts, touch, or sex that you don't want.

Touching a person without asking.

Taking as much as you can get for the sake of getting.

Giving as much as you can give for the sake of giving.

Allowing someone to take as much as they can from you.

Letting others direct your life.

Letting others describe your reality.

Letting others define you.

Believing others can anticipate your needs.

Expecting others to fill your needs automatically.

Falling apart so someone will take care of you.

Self-abuse.

Sexual and physical abuse.

Food and chemical abuse.

Exhibit 2 - July 5, 2000

**HOW ASSERTIVENESS DIFFERS FROM PASSIVITY AND
AGGRESSIVENESS ON BEHAVIORAL DIMENSIONS**

Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Has rights violated: is taken advantage of	Protects won rights and respects the rights of others	Violate rights: takes advantage of others
Does not achieve goals	Achieves goals without without hurting others	May achieve goals at expense of others
Feels frustrated, unhappy, hurt and anxious	Feels good about self, has appropriate confidence in self	Defensive, Belligerent; humiliates and depreciates others
Inhibited and withdrawn	Chooses for self	Intrudes on others' choices

Exhibit 3 - July 12, 2000 & July 19, 2000

SOME BASIC TYPES OF ASSERTIVE RESPONSES

1. **Assertive talk** - Do not let others take advantage of you. Insist on your rights. If you do so, you will be treated with fairness and justice. **EXAMPLES:** "I was here in line first." "I would appreciate it if you would turn down the radio." "I ordered this steak medium rare; this is well-done."
2. **Feeling talk** - Express your likes and dislikes spontaneously. Be open and frank about your feelings. Do not bottle up emotions. Answer questions honestly if you choose to answer them. **EXAMPLES:** "I think you look great today." "I'm really tired today." "I don't want to talk about that right now." "I like that new sweater of yours."
3. **Creating talk** - Be outgoing and friendly with people you would like to know better. Do not avoid people because you are not sure what to say. Smile and look pleased to see others. **EXAMPLES:** "Hi, I haven't seen you in ages." "How do you like. . .?" "How are things going?"
4. **Disagreeing actively** - Do not feign agreement with another person just for the sake of 'keeping peace'. Disagree actively when you are sure of your greed. **EXAMPLES:** "I see that differently." "I understand what you are saying, but I think. . ." "I think you are incorrect in that fact."
5. **Asking why** - When information is not clear or when you think an instruction is unreasonable, ask for clarification. You do not have to accept the word of another person, even an authority figure, without question. **EXAMPLES:** "I am not certain that I understand what you mean." "That isn't something I want to do." "What is the purpose in doing this?"
6. **Talking about oneself** - Let people know how you feel about things, what you have been doing and what interests you. Share your experiences and ideas. Do not try to monopolize a conversation but don't back off when you can say something about yourself. **EXAMPLES:** "I like doing that, too." "I'm really good at..." "I like traveling".
7. **Accepting compliments** - When paid a compliment, don't deny it, become flustered, or act embarrassed. Accept that compliment as a sincere expression of the giver's feeling. **EXAMPLES:** "Thank you, I appreciate you saying that." "I like it, too."
8. **Avoiding unnecessary explanations** - You don't have to explain your views or opinions if you choose not to. You don't have to offer reasons why you disagree with another person, nor do you have to offer excuses for saying "no" to a request. **EXAMPLES:** "I'm not interested in that right now." "It appears that we don't agree on this point." "I feel this way about it."

Exhibit 4 - August 2, 2000 & September 13, 2000

TIME OUTS

WHERE IN YOUR BODY DO YOU FEEL STRESS/TENSION? IDENTIFY THOSE AREAS SO THAT WHEN YOU BEGIN TO FEEL THE SIGNS, YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU NEED TO RELIEVE YOUR STRESS. THIS PREVENTS **BUILD-UP** THAT COULD RESULT IN A **BLOW-UP**.

STEPS TO TAKING A TIME OUT

1. DISCUSS TIME OUTS WITH YOUR PARTNER (FAMILY, ETC.)—THE PROCESS—WHAT IT IS, WHAT YOU WILL DO. DO THIS DURING A CALM TIME PRIOR TO YOUR TAKING A TIME OUT.
2. WHEN YOU FEEL YOU NEED TO TAKE A TIME OUT, SAY “I’M BEGINNING TO FEEL ANGRY, AND I’M GOING TO TAKE A TIME OUT.
3. TAKE YOUR TIME OUT. ONE HOUR—NO MORE /NO LESS. DO SOMETHING TO RELAX YOURSELF AND CALM DOWN, SUCH AS GOING FOR A WALK, RIDING A BIKE, LISTENING TO MUSIC—WHATEVER CALMS YOU. USE **POSITIVE SELF-TALK**, SUCH AS, “I AM CALMING DOWN, I CAN HANDLE THIS, I WANT TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM WITHOUT VIOLENCE”.
4. COME BACK **EXACTLY** ON TIME—THIS RE-BUILDS TRUST IN THE RELATIONSHIP.
5. ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE CALMLY TOGETHER.
6. IF THE SITUATION BEGINS TO ESCALATE AGAIN, **TAKE ANOTHER TIME OUT**.

Exhibit 5 - August 9, 2000

WHY DOESN'T SHE LEAVE?

1. She loves her partner.
2. She may think she alone can help him to quit battering, may believe he is sick, or a victim of forces outside himself.
3. The victim may believe all women are abused, so why leave?
4. She may think she is the only woman abused, so she feels embarrassed to admit being abused.
5. Her partner threatens to kill her, to kill others, and/or to kill himself if she leaves.
6. Economics: She doubts that she can make it alone financially.
She doubts she will be able to meet her children's needs.
She has developed no job or independent living skills.
Housing will be an unknown. She will have no "home".
7. She wants to protect the image of her partner and her family.
8. Even though he abuses her, he is her only support system; psychologically, he has destroyed her outside relationships.
9. She is convinced that each time is the last time he will abuse her; he will change.
10. She does not realize she has the right not to be abused.
11. The only change she wants in the relationship is not to be abused.
12. She fears living alone.
13. She came out of an abusive home, so a violent relationship is natural to her.
14. She blames herself and believes the battering will stop if she improves or stops making mistakes.
15. Religious and cultural beliefs keep her in the marriage.
16. She stays because of the children. Any father is better than no father.
17. She has low self-esteem.
18. She has no place to go. Often friends and family are not helpful.
19. She has developed deep feelings of powerlessness and immobilizing fear.

Exhibit 5 - August 9, 2000 (continued)

20. She has formulated the belief that all she has in life is her family, her home, children, and partner. They belong to her and are her responsibility. She must fix anything which goes wrong.
21. He isn't always brutal. After a violent episode the abuser often is contrite, pleads for forgiveness, promises it will never happen again and for awhile, behaves like a model partner and father.
22. She believes law enforcement and judicial officers will not take abuse seriously and her partner will never be punished or removed from the home. Her attempts to consult authorities are seen as a threat and he may beat her for her attempts.
23. She knows nothing about services which are available.
24. She may be afraid of the complexities of the legal system; that the laws are not helpful and that legal advice would be too expensive.
25. She still loves him.

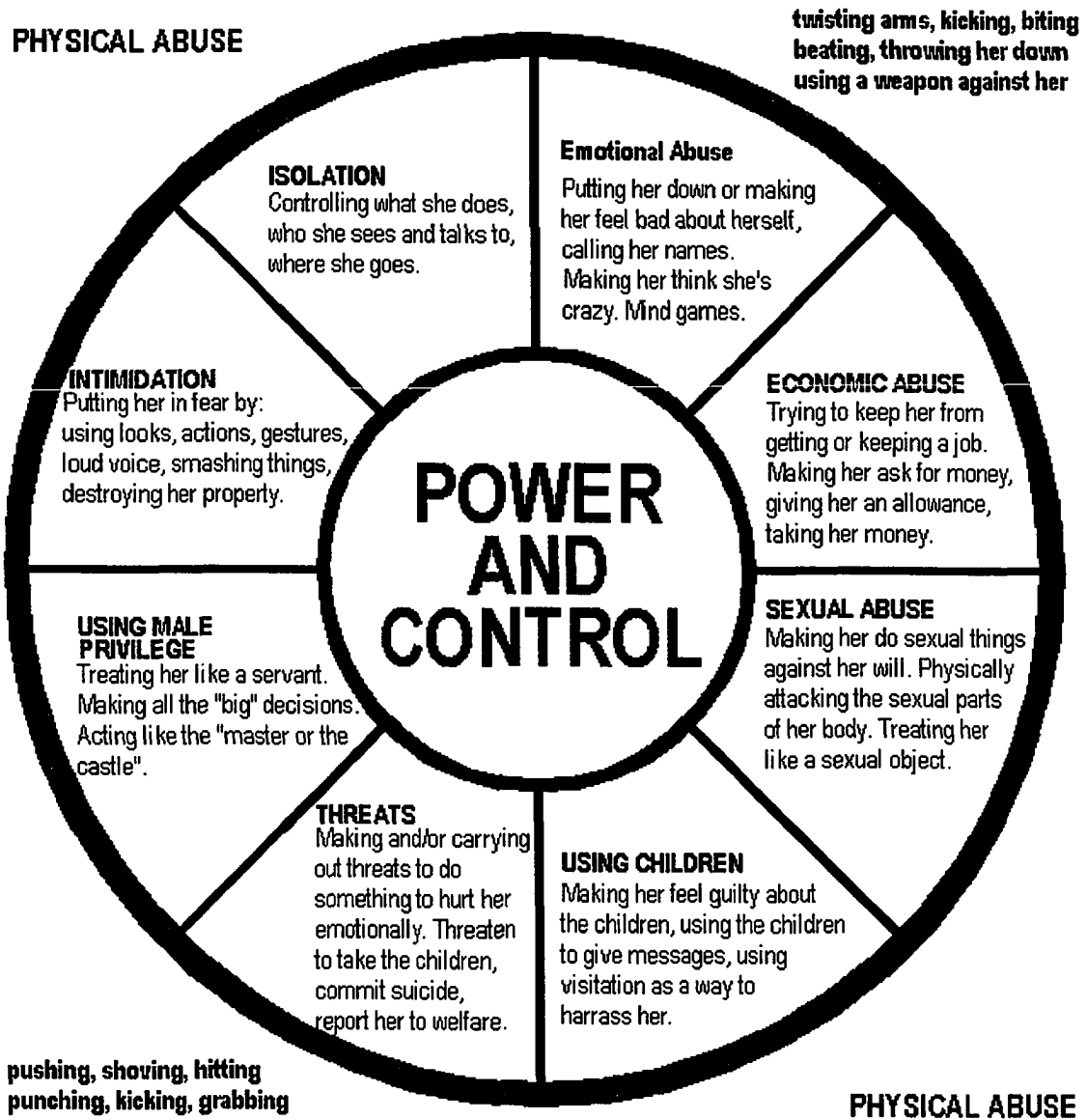
These answers can be summed up in one sentence. **FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN IS GREATER THAN THE FEAR OF THE KNOWN.**

WHY DO WOMEN LEAVE?

At some point, the victim realizes that leaving may be the only way to convince the abuser his behavior is wrong. With so many "reasons" to stay, what finally brings a victim to this decision?

1. She believes another beating episode is coming on, which may be fatal.
2. He has begun to abuse the children, either sexually or physically.
3. The children may have begun to abuse her and she realizes she must remove them from the abusive situation.
4. She has heard of available help on radio or television.
5. She hears of another woman who has left and this gives her courage to leave.
6. A friend, family member or religious worker has given her the support she needs.

Exhibit 6 - October 11, 2000



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