

Moving to the Head of the River:  
The Early Years of the U.S. Battered Women's Movement

By  
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## **Abstract**

This dissertation chronicles the development of the battered women's movement in the U.S., which began in the early 1970s with telephone "hotlines" for women in crisis. Recognizing that woman battering was not an isolated personal problem, but a widespread social problem, activists developed shelters for battered women, state coalitions of shelter organizations, and a national organization. The movement had two primary goals: providing shelter for battered women, and ending violence against women in their homes. Using information gleaned from oral history interviews with movement activists, as well as archival and secondary source research, I illustrate how a national social movement grew out of the grassroots organizing efforts of small groups of feminist activists. I argue that the history of the battered women's movement challenges the declension narrative of the women's liberation movement, as I examine the movement's successes and failures in achieving its dual goals.

## Acknowledgements

I dedicate this dissertation to all women who have endured violence of any kind, in the hope that we will eliminate all forms of violence against women, in our homes and in our streets.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to all of the women that I interviewed for this project. Although they do not regard their work as heroic, their dedication and commitment to providing services and support to battered women has improved the lives of countless women and their children. The work of these activists, along with many others, has resulted in significant social change. I learned a great deal from each of the activists that I interviewed, and I am grateful to them for taking the time to share their stories with me. Special thanks go to Joyce Grover, who provided introductions to many of the women that I interviewed.

I would also like to thank the archivists and other staff members at the University of Kansas Spencer Research Library, the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at Harvard University, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the Women's Archives at the University of Houston for their patience and assistance.

While I take full responsibility for any errors or omissions in my work, I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee for their guidance and support. My work benefitted greatly from their review and critique. What I know about the methodology of oral history I learned from Professor Sherrie Tucker, whose classes gave me the tools and confidence I needed to conduct oral history interviews, and whose critique prompted me to analyze the interview data more critically. A great deal of what I know about feminist theory was learned from Professor Joey Sprague, who gave me the tools to analyze different forms of feminist theory. Professor Kim Warren's classes inspired me to learn more about women's history in general, and second wave feminism in particular. Professor Kathleen McCluskey-Fawcett has been a mentor since we served on the WTCS board together, and she has supported and encouraged my return to graduate school from the very beginning. My dissertation advisor, Professor Ann Schofield, is the primary reason that I entered the graduate program in American Studies at the University of Kansas. She taught me how to do women's history, served as my MA thesis advisor, and chaired my dissertation committee. I thank her for her patient reading of multiple versions of every chapter, for all her feedback and support, and for her guidance and friendship.

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## **Chapter One: An Epidemic of Violence**

*“Even the solution of refuges for battered women can only be seen as a bandaid solution unless the work that goes on in the refuges is accompanied by widespread social change, to prevent the beatings in the first place.”*

*--Lisa Leghorn, 1976<sup>1</sup>*

*“Violence against women is epidemic, both in our homes and in our streets.”*

*--Kim Gandy, 2009<sup>2</sup>*

### ***Introduction***

The American women’s liberation movement of the 1970s and 1980s (also known as “second wave” feminism) occupies an important place in gender history. The battered women’s movement was a significant component of feminist efforts to achieve women’s liberation. It has been argued that the development of a battered women’s movement was one of the most important contributions of the women’s rights struggle.<sup>3</sup> The history of the battered women’s movement challenges the declension narrative<sup>4</sup> of the women’s liberation movement, because the organizations

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<sup>1</sup> Lisa Leghorn, "Social Responses to Battered Women " in *A speech given at the Wisconsin Conference on Battered Women* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: 1976), p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> Kim Gandy, President of the National Organization of Women, “The Equity Imperative: Why Speaking About Women Matters,” in a speech given at the Dole Institute of Politics on the campus of the University of Kansas (Lawrence, Kansas: April 15, 2009). Ms. Gandy was the inaugural speaker for The First Annual Jana Mackey Distinguished Lecture Series. The Lecture Series was established in honor and memory of Jana Lynne Mackey, a law student at the University of Kansas who was a social activist and a feminist. Ms. Mackey was a volunteer advocate for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. She was also a victim of domestic violence. Ms. Mackey was found dead in her ex-boyfriend’s home on July 3, 2008 in Lawrence.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth M. Schneider, *Battered Women & Feminist Lawmaking* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 5. Schneider is a legal scholar.

<sup>4</sup> Historian Michael Heale cites examples of the “declension hypothesis” in narratives of 1960s social and protest movements, such as Todd Gitlin’s *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York, Bantam Books, 1987). Michael J. Heale, "The Sixties as History: A Review of the Political Historiography," *Reviews in American History* 2005, no. 33 (2005): p. 139. The declension narrative of second wave feminism follows a similar path. Historians such as Alice Echols (*Daring to be Bad:*

that form the structure of the movement—battered women’s shelters, statewide coalitions, and national organizations like the National Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (NCADV)—are not only still in existence today, but are woven into the fabric of American culture and society.

Wife beating, or woman battering, was not considered a social problem in the U.S. until it was defined as such by second wave feminists. Sociologist Mildred Pagelow traces the beginning of the American battered women’s movement to a “small study conducted in an affluent county in Maryland and reported to the National Organization for Women (NOW), showing that the prevalence and severity of wife abuse was far greater than expected.”<sup>5</sup> As a result of the study, NOW established a National Taskforce on Battered Women/Household Violence in 1973. In the 1970s, small groups of feminist activists joined together to form support groups for battered women in various communities across the U.S. These groups often

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*Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975*(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989)) argue that the radical feminist movement began in 1968 and ended five years later. Other historians, including Sara M. Evans, have disputed the declension narrative, arguing that feminism “reached its heyday in the middle 1970s and continued as a powerful force in U.S. society to the end of the century and beyond.” Sara M. Evans, "Beyond Declension: Feminist Radicalism in the 1970s and 1980s," in *The World the 60s Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America*, ed. Van Gosse and Richard Moser (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), p. 52. Carrie N. Baker’s work on the women’s movement against sexual harassment also challenges the declension narrative of second wave feminism. Baker argues that the “diverse grassroots activism, including activism against sexual harassment,” of the second wave was just beginning in the mid-1970s. Carrie N. Baker, *The Women's Movement against Sexual Harassment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 6. The story of the battered women’s movement, which began as grassroots activism in the mid-1970s, likewise challenges the declension narrative of second wave feminism. Evans notes that, while radical feminism may have appeared to self-destruct in the mid-1970s, that was also the time at which feminist theorists were raising important issues such as rape, battering, and sexual harassment. The movements against rape, sexual harassment, and woman battering illustrate the long-term impact that the feminist movement had (and is still having today) on American society and culture.

<sup>5</sup> Mildred Daley Pagelow, *Family Violence* (New York: Praeger Special Studies, 1984), p. 263.

began with a telephone hotline for women in crisis, and developed an informal network of sheltering battered women in individual homes before they marshaled the resources to open shelters which could safely house battered women. The movement grew quickly—by 1982, over 300 battered women’s shelters existed, along with 48 state coalitions of organizations providing direct service, and the NCADV.<sup>6</sup> Although the first American shelter was established over thirty years ago, the need for battered women’s shelters has not abated. Today, there are over 2,000 shelter organizations in the U.S.

One of the first issues that feminist activists concerned about domestic violence faced was a lack of statistics on the incidence and prevalence of wife abuse.<sup>7</sup> In the early 1970s, police reports, hospital records, and court records did not include wife abuse as an official category. Although feminists had begun to talk about domestic abuse in consciousness raising groups, it was largely invisible in American society. However, anecdotal evidence provides some indication of the scope of the problem. For example, a study of the Kansas City, Missouri police department indicates that the 46,137 domestic disturbance calls received by the police in 1972 represented 82 percent of all disturbance calls received. The Detroit police reported that 4,900 wife assault complaints were received in the same year.<sup>8</sup> By the early 1980s, researchers had developed better estimates. Activist and historian Susan

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<sup>6</sup> Susan Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1982), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> This issue has not been fully resolved, since many incidents of woman battering are not reported to the police today.

<sup>8</sup> Del Martin, *Battered Wives: Revised, Updated* (Volcano, CA: Volcano Press, 1981), p. 11.



Schechter noted in 1982 that “current estimates suggest that approximately two million women in the United States are battered annually.”<sup>9</sup>

Feminists argued that wife abuse was a widespread social problem which deserved public attention. Feminist consciousness-raising groups brought battered women together, made them aware that they were not alone, provided them with a forum to discuss their feelings, and empowered them to change their lives. Radical feminist ideology identified patriarchy as the source of women’s oppression, and linked wife abuse with male power and control. Activists in some shelters employed a radical lesbian feminist ideology, forming “strong bonds” with each other, and finding strength in an all female organization to rebel against “the patriarchy” and provide services and support for battered women. Many battered women’s advocates argued that woman battering is rooted in sexual inequality. Feminists in the battered women’s movement also drew on liberal feminist ideology, which locates the source of gender inequality in beliefs that biological differences between men and women mandate differential treatment based on gender. By deploying both radical and liberal feminist ideologies to empower battered women, feminist activists blurred the lines between radical and liberal feminism.

Another issue that feminist activists grappled with was the definition of wife abuse. Activist Del Martin cites a British survey of battered wives, which defined a battered wife as “a woman who had received deliberate, severe, and repeated beatings at the hands of her husband or lover and had suffered severe physical injury as a

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<sup>9</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, p. 16.

result.”<sup>10</sup> Although early definitions like this one focused on severe physical abuse, the definition of wife abuse was quickly expanded by the battered women’s movement to include emotional abuse, isolation, intimidation, coercion and threats, economic abuse, and other forms of physical and emotional control.<sup>11</sup> My research shows that the terms and definitions used by activists, legal scholars, social scientists, and others are discursive sites in which feminist activists have employed political power. By publicly naming the violence, feminists made woman battering visible in American society.

### ***Historical Links to Other Social Movements***

Evidence of a link between the women’s liberation movement and the battered women’s movement can be found in the fact that some of the women who were involved in the women’s liberation movement became activists in the battered women’s movement. Cambridge feminist Betsy Warrior, for example, was one of the original members of Cell 16, a radical feminist group. A survivor of domestic abuse, Warrior also became involved with Transition House, a shelter for battered women located in Cambridge. Warrior has been running a support group for battered women at the Cambridge Women’s Center for over thirty years.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Martin, *Battered Wives: Revised, Updated*, p. 72.

<sup>11</sup> The “Power and Control Wheel,” which was developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota, includes physical and sexual violence in the definition of abuse, as well as intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, minimizing, denying, and blaming, using children, economic abuse, male privilege, and coercion and threats. Found online at <http://www.ncdsv.org> on November 17, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Oral history interview with Betsy Warrior, conducted by Liz Miller, July 17, 2008, transcript, p. 4.

The origins of the battered women's movement can be found in the American social movements of the 1960s and 1970s (the so-called "long decade of the sixties"). While most of the shelters for battered women in the U.S. were actually founded in the 1970s (or later), their ideological roots lie in the social movements of the 1960s. Victories in the modern American civil rights movement demonstrated that social and political change was possible, and its successes and failures provided lessons for future social movements—including the student New Left, the antiwar movement, the counterculture, the women's liberation movement, the gay and lesbian liberation movements, and the environmental movement. The battered women's movement was a component of the women's liberation movement, and shared its commitment to participatory democracy, consciousness-raising, and making the personal political. These ideologies were developed through activists' previous participation in the civil rights and the New Left movements. The civil rights movement, the women's liberation movement, and the battered women's movement all shared a philosophical belief in a set of "rights" which should be equally applied to all people. Activists in the battered women's movement believe that women should have the right to live a life free from violence by an intimate partner.

By the middle of the 1960s, women in the New Left movement had begun to question the limited role available to women in the movement. In the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) organization, for example, women were underrepresented in national offices. Former SDS President Todd Gitlin argues that women weren't dissatisfied just because they were underrepresented in national leadership roles.

Rather, according to Gitlin, “there was a disgruntlement that ran deeper than statistics.”<sup>13</sup> Women who tried to play a leadership role in New Left organizations were met with the classic double bind—they were perceived as aggressive and bitchy if they spoke out, and were perceived as timid and were not taken seriously by the men in the organization if they did not.

Discouraged by the expectations of the male leadership that women would occupy only subordinate, support positions in the movement, these young, middle class, well-educated and primarily white women began forming separate consciousness-raising groups to share their experiences as women in the movement. These consciousness-raising groups became the backbone of the emerging “women’s liberation movement.” According to historian Sara Evans, for these women, “a particular set of experiences in the southern civil rights movement and parts of the student new left catalyzed a new feminist consciousness.”<sup>14</sup> Evans describes the feminist consciousness of the 1960s as “analogous to that of Marx’s ‘class for itself’ in that it included an awareness of group oppression, an analysis of the sources of that oppression, and a willingness to take collective action.”<sup>15</sup> This new feminist consciousness served as the link between women’s activism in the New Left movement and their activism in the women’s liberation movement. Feminist groups sponsored a variety of activities, ranging from “consciousness-raising discussion groups to women’s health clinics, bookstores, coffeehouses, newspapers, battered

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<sup>13</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), p. 367.

<sup>14</sup> Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

women's shelters, and more."<sup>16</sup> The battered women's movement was one strand of the women's liberation movement. According to Schechter, the battered women's movement, which grew very quickly during the 1970s, had the effect of "transforming public consciousness and women's lives."<sup>17</sup>

Like the formation of community-based battered women's shelter and service organizations, the creation of state and national coalitions of domestic violence service providers also began in the 1970s. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, for example, was formed in January, 1978, "when over 100 battered women's advocates from all parts of the nation attended the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights hearing on battered women in Washington, DC, hoping to address common problems these programs usually faced in isolation."<sup>18</sup> According to the NCADV website, there are over 2,000 battered women's shelter and service programs in existence in the U.S. today, "forming a national movement based on the belief that women and their children are entitled to a safe environment free from violence and the threat of violence."<sup>19</sup>

### ***Making the Personal Political***

The goal of this project is to explain how a diverse, grassroots social movement was able to transform domestic abuse from a private issue to a public concern in the 1970s and 1980s. I will argue that the battered women's movement

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<sup>16</sup> Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 188.

<sup>17</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> "About NCADV," found online at <http://www.ncadv.org> on March 23, 2008. More detail about the history of NCADV can be found in Chapter Four.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

evolved from a series of discrete, community-based battered women's shelters to a cohesive national movement with statewide coalitions and national organizations. I will also show how the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality affected the participants in the battered women's movement. I will demonstrate how the movement evolved from a feminist-based, grassroots movement to assist battered women and reduce violence against women to a national network of nonprofit social service institutions staffed by professionals, receiving state and federal government funding. The strategies used by activists to develop and implement the legislation that criminalized acts of domestic abuse are an important part of the analysis. Although I believe that it is difficult to answer, an important analytical question is how effective the movement has been in achieving its dual goals of providing services and support to battered women, and effecting social change by reducing or eliminating violence against women. A related research question is how discourse has structured the movement, and the effects that social and legal discourse have had on the effectiveness of the movement. I examine the extent to which the movement's "radical critique" of violence against women has been effectively marginalized or silenced by the changes in the movement, changes in public policy, backlash, or other factors. Finally, the history of the battered women's movement illustrates the long-term impact of grassroots feminism, blurs the lines of distinction between radical and liberal feminism, and challenges the declension narrative of second wave feminism.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Recent scholarship which focuses on the grassroots nature of 1970s feminist activism, such as Anne Enke's *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) and Carrie N. Baker's *The Movement Against Sexual Harassment*

### *What We Know About the Movement*

There is a large body of scholarly work that deals with the subject of domestic abuse. Literature on domestic violence which was published in the 1970s and 1980s (the time period on which this project is focused) can be sorted into three primary categories, including: (1) histories of the social movement to reduce or end violence against women; (2) psychological (or sociological) studies of wife battering or domestic abuse; and (3) feminist research and self help handbooks on domestic abuse.

Accounts of the problem of woman battering and the movement addressing it began to appear in the early 1970s. The earliest literature includes Erin Pizzey's 1974 book on the U.K. battered women's movement.<sup>21</sup> Pizzey's account of the humble beginnings of the battered women's movement in England, which began with the opening of Chiswick Women's Aid in 1971, and quickly grew to a national network of refuges, was available to American women interested in helping battered women.

In the late 1970s, R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash published *Violence Against Wives*, which outlines the history of the British battered women's movement, and couches that history in feminist terms, making their "case against the patriarchy."<sup>22</sup> Dobash and Dobash describe the "enormous successes" of the movement in England, including raising "public awareness about the problem of battered women," assisting battered women and providing "refuges for thousands of

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) debunks the declension narrative of second wave feminism.

<sup>21</sup> Erin Pizzey, *Scream Quietly or the Neighbors Will Hear* (New Jersey: Ridley Enslow Publishers, 1974).

<sup>22</sup> R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash, *Violence against Wives: A Case against the Patriarchy* (New York: The Free Press, 1979).

women and their children,” and engaging “the sympathetic support of the media.”<sup>23</sup>

These two written accounts of the challenges faced and the successes achieved by the British movement to end domestic abuse provided important models for the founders of battered women’s shelters in the U.S.

The earliest book written about the American shelter movement was Terry Davidson’s *Conjugal Crime*, which was published in 1978.<sup>24</sup> Grounded by her childhood experience of watching her father beat her mother, Davidson chronicles the early development of the American social movement to reduce violence against women. The text is wide ranging, including discussions of why men beat their wives, why women become battered, and how children are affected by domestic abuse, among other topics. Davidson devotes one chapter to a description of her experience spending a week at Women’s Advocates shelter house in St. Paul. At the end of the book, Davidson concludes that the movement has made progress, noting that “today it seems that most educated, concerned persons are at least aware of the problem, although there is some resistance to believing it happens in the best of families.”<sup>25</sup> The appendix includes a directory of over fifty shelters for American battered women.

By the early 1980s, American historians and activists had written a great deal about the battered women’s movement in the U.S. Activist Del Martin participated in

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>24</sup> Terry Davidson, *Conjugal Crime: Understanding and Changing the Wifebeating Pattern* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc. , 1978).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 208.



the opening of La Casa de las Madres in San Francisco in the late 1970s.<sup>26</sup> Martin's book, *Battered Wives*, describes the social problem of domestic abuse, including its causes and effects, and outlines the current status of the laws pertaining to woman battering, as well as the current state of social services for battered women. Martin also prescribes survival tactics for victims, proposes legislative remedies, and advocates for "the creation of shelters designed specifically for battered women" as the "only direct, immediate, and satisfactory solution to the problem of wife abuse."<sup>27</sup> Martin's goal in writing the book was to "help to make the problem [wife abuse] a public issue."<sup>28</sup> She was aware of the progress that the women's movement had made in making rape "a major issue," which was "bringing about some changes in the law and the attitude of the criminal justice system," but she was concerned that "the issue of battered wives, conservatively speaking, affects three times as many women" as did rape, yet was not publicly recognized as a social problem.<sup>29</sup>

Fellow activist Susan Schechter's history of the new and growing battered women's movement in the U.S. was published in 1982. *Women and Male Violence* was based on interviews with seventy people, including the staff and residents of three shelters for battered women, as well as the staff and members of a state coalition

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<sup>26</sup> Letter from Del Martin to Sharon Vaughan at Women's Advocates in St. Paul, Minnesota dated February 18, 1976, found in Women's Advocates, Inc. Records 1973-1984 at the Minnesota Historical Society, Box 4, folder marked "Battered—Del Martin."

<sup>27</sup> Martin, *Battered Wives: Revised, Updated*, p. 196.

<sup>28</sup> Letter from Del Martin to Sharon Vaughan at Women's Advocates in St. Paul, Minnesota dated August 28, 1975, found in Women's Advocates, Inc. Records 1973-1984 at the Minnesota Historical Society, Box 4, folder marked "Battered—Del Martin."

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

of battered women's shelters.<sup>30</sup> Schechter's stated goal in writing this history was "to capture the radical feminist, grassroots, and democratic spirit underlying most of the earliest movement efforts."<sup>31</sup> Acknowledging her perspective as a socialist feminist, Schechter wanted to document the roots of the battered women's movement "partly so that women new to the struggle could understand their histories."<sup>32</sup> Schechter also recognized the importance of the battered women's movement in legitimizing feminism, as the following comment indicates: "Just as shelters helped battered women in grave danger, they also allowed feminists to start their own institutions, put forth their views, and gain legitimacy and respect from a much wider community."<sup>33</sup>

Sociologist Mildred Daley Pagelow published a work on family violence in 1984.<sup>34</sup> Although Pagelow includes information on child abuse and sex crimes, as well as wife abuse, she does provide a history of the early years of the British and American battered women's movement, as well as an assessment of the state of the movement in the mid-1980s. Pagelow's assessment was that "the first and greatest effort of the battered women's movement was to establish and maintain shelters for victims and their children, but money has always been too short, and the scarce resources there had been have even been withdrawn in recent years."<sup>35</sup> She also recognized that, although the movement had failed to successfully introduce federal

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<sup>30</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Pagelow, *Family Violence*.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 336.

legislation, some assistance had been provided to battered women by new laws in most states that gave them a degree of legal protection.

Writing in the late 1980s, historians Elizabeth Pleck and Linda Gordon take different approaches in their efforts to address the history of violence in American families. Pleck explores the history of social policy pertaining to family violence, while Gordon examines specific case histories of Boston-area families. Pleck's analysis traces efforts in Puritan colonial Massachusetts in the mid-1600s to enact laws against wife beating, chronicles the development of societies for the prevention of cruelty to children in the late 1800s, and documents the development of the contemporary social movement to support battered women and work to reduce domestic violence, which began in the 1960s.<sup>36</sup> Pleck argues that "the battered women's cause had been considerably tamed by the coalitions and compromises it made in order to receive state and federal funding."<sup>37</sup> (This theme emerges from the literature and from several of the oral history interviews that I have conducted. Some activists view the movement as being "tamed" in the way that it moved away from a radical critique of the gendered structure of American society in order to become "less radical" and therefore more appealing to potential grantors.<sup>38</sup>)

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<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of Social Policy against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>38</sup> Merle H. Weiner argues that battered women's shelters should reject government funding because it "causes dependency, autonomy loss, a low level of government commitment, co-optation, hierarchy, professionalization, homophobia, and bureaucracy," and that the "long-term gain for the movement and for women outweighs any disadvantages" from giving up government funding. Merle H. Weiner, "From Dollars to Sense: A Critique of Government Funding for the Battered Women's Shelter Movement," *Law & Inequality* 9 (1990): p. 186.

Historian Linda Gordon's book, *Heroes of their Own Lives*, is based on a case study of how three "Boston-area social work-agencies approached family-violence problems, from 1880 to 1960."<sup>39</sup> Gordon uses the case histories of three Boston-based child welfare agencies to analyze the development of family violence over this eighty-year time period and to make the argument that "family violence has been historically and politically constructed."<sup>40</sup> Gordon concludes that family violence is a political issue, that it is affected by historical change, and that participants in family violence, including both victims and perpetrators, "struggled actively to get help they considered useful from charity and social-work agencies as well as kin and neighbors."<sup>41</sup> Gordon recognizes the centrality of feminism "in the legitimization of charitable and professional intervention into domestic problems"<sup>42</sup>—in making the personal political. Both Schechter and Gordon acknowledge the differential impact of race and class on the domestic problems faced by women and children. As Gordon notes, "Not only have poor, working-class, immigrant, and black people been discriminated against, but so too have women, despite the feminist influence in stimulating anti-family-violence intervention."<sup>43</sup>

Sociologist Donileen Loseke's work in the late 1980s and early 1990s built upon Gordon's notion of family violence as constructed. Loseke examines what she termed "the social construction of wife abuse." Initially published in article form,

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<sup>39</sup> Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 296.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

and subsequently as a book, Loseke's analysis was based on magazine articles published from 1974 to 1986 which used the term "wife abuse."<sup>44</sup> In the book, Loseke expands her analysis to include how battered women were treated and represented in one shelter, arguing that "wife abuse and the battered woman are socially constructed" meaning that "Not all violence is that of wife abuse, not all victimized women are instances of the battered woman. Only some forms of violence, only some victimized women have been socially constituted as objects for public attention."<sup>45</sup> Loseke goes on to argue that it was the extremity and severity of the violence which defined it as wife abuse. The corollary to this argument is that American society is willing to tolerate a certain level of violence against women, as long as it is not too severe or too extreme.

Other authors studied the psychological dynamics of domestic abuse and drew implications for the battered women's movement. Maria Roy's psychosociological study of woman abuse was one of the first psychological studies when it was published in 1977.<sup>46</sup> Roy studied 150 American women who were victims of domestic abuse. However, in 1979, a clinical psychologist named Lenore Walker published an analysis of domestic abuse which was considered groundbreaking at the time. In *The Battered Woman*, Walker describes "the battered woman syndrome" in which battered women experience a cycle of violence in "three distinct phases"—"the

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<sup>44</sup> Donileen R. Loseke, "'Violence' Is 'Violence' . . . Or Is It? The Social Construction Of 'Wife Abuse' And Public Policy," in *Images of Issues: Typifying Contemporary Social Problems*, ed. Joel Best (New York: Adine De Gruyter, 1989), ———, *The Battered Woman and Shelters: The Social Construction of Wife Abuse* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992).

<sup>45</sup> Loseke, *The Battered Woman and Shelters: The Social Construction of Wife Abuse*, p. 39.

<sup>46</sup> Maria Roy, *Battered Women: A Psychosociological Study of Domestic Violence* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1977).

tension-building phase; the explosion or acute battering incident; and the calm, loving respite.”<sup>47</sup> This new psychological framework, which was based on three years of case studies, provided a deeper understanding of the experiences of battered women, and the framework for a possible legal defense for battered women who killed their abusers. Walker’s psychological model of domestic abuse was used by advocates, attorneys, social workers, members of law enforcement, and many others working with battered women for several decades.

Psychologist Lewis Okun published a book in 1986 that was a combination of a history of the movement and a psychological analysis of woman battering.<sup>48</sup> Okun counseled batterers at SAFE House, the battered women’s shelter in Washtenaw County, Michigan, beginning in 1979. *Woman Abuse: Facts Replacing Myths* contained a history of the battered women’s movement, a review/critique of the existing literature on woman abuse, and the results of Okun’s study of 300 battered women in shelter and 119 men who were batterers and had taken part in a shelter-based counseling program for batterers.<sup>49</sup> Okun’s goal in writing the book was twofold: “to summarize and to advance the current state of knowledge about woman abuse in particular and conjugal battering in general;” and to make public the results of his study, which reported on what Okun understood as the “unusually large numbers of battered women seeking refuge at a shelter,” and the batterers who were

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<sup>47</sup> Lenore E. Walker, *The Battered Woman* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), p. 231.

<sup>48</sup> Lewis Okun, *Woman Abuse: Facts Replacing Myths* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv.

seeking “the specialized services of a batterers’ counseling program.”<sup>50</sup> Okun’s study compared the reports of violence which were given by battered women with the reports of violence given by the men who had battered them.

Psychologist Donald Dutton, who worked with the Canadian police providing training on how to deal with domestic disputes, published *The Domestic Assault of Women*, in 1988.<sup>51</sup> Dutton’s book provides a social psychological theory of the wife abuser, based on the research he conducted, and chronicles the effects of abuse on the battered spouse. He also examines the criminal justice system’s response to domestic abuse, and proposes treatments for abusers and their victims.

Although not a psychological study, Evan Stark and Anne Flitcraft’s *Women at Risk: Domestic Violence and Women’s Health* examines the medical dimensions and health consequences of domestic abuse.<sup>52</sup> A social worker and a medical doctor, Stark and Flitcraft were friends of Sharon Rice Vaughan, one of the founders of Women’s Advocates. They made a trip to Europe to visit battered women’s shelters in 1976, and met Erin Pizzey at Chiswick Women’s Aid. The basis for the book was their research on the clinical histories of 4,500 women who used a variety of services at Yale-New Haven Hospital. The book began as a project to document the extensiveness of domestic abuse, and its importance for women’s health. Eventually, the authors decided to “evaluate the appropriateness of the clinical response [to

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Donald G. Dutton, *The Domestic Assault of Women: Psychological and Criminal Justice Perspectives* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1988), p. 336.

<sup>52</sup> Evan Stark and Anne Flitcraft, *Women at Risk: Domestic Violence and Women's Health* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996).

domestic abuse] and suggest ways to improve it.”<sup>53</sup> Stark and Flitcraft found that more women sought medical treatment for injuries caused by domestic abuse than for any other reason. This finding was used to support important public policy initiatives, including the legislation that eventually became the Violence Against Women Act in 1994.<sup>54</sup> The research results also revealed that domestic abuse is a major cause of other social problems, including child abuse, female suicide attempts, homicide, and rape, female alcoholism, drug use, and depression. Stark and Flitcraft conclude that the medical response to domestic abuse is a major contributor to the “isolation and entrapment” that are symptoms of what they characterize as a “battering syndrome” for battered women.<sup>55</sup>

By the early 1980s, the movement had begun to produce handbooks designed to empower women to combat domestic abuse. Frederique Delacoste and Felice Newman’s edited volume, *Fight Back! Feminist Resistance to Male Violence*, is an example of this genre of literature.<sup>56</sup> This book includes many pieces written by feminist activists in the battered women’s movement, including an article written by one of the early leaders at Women’s Transitional Care Services, Inc. (WTCS) in Lawrence, Kansas, one of the shelters examined in this study.<sup>57</sup> The stated goal of the book was to provide feminist activists with “a tool for active resistance to patriarchal

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. xv.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. xvii.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. xviii.

<sup>56</sup> Frederique Delacoste and Felice Newman, *Fight Back! Feminist Resistance to Male Violence* (Minneapolis: Cleis Press, 1981).

<sup>57</sup> Elizabeth B. A. Miller, "Women Helping Women: The Battered Women's Movement in Lawrence, Kansas: A Case Study" (Master's University of Kansas, 2006).



violence.”<sup>58</sup> Articles outline tactics and strategies that feminists had used successfully in their efforts to reduce violence against women. Ginny NiCarthy, also a feminist activist, wrote a self-help manual titled *Getting Free: A Handbook for Women in Abusive Relationships*, based on her experiences with battered women’s shelters on the West Coast.<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Stanko’s book, *Intimate Intrusions*, chronicles the effects of male violence against women in both Great Britain and the U.S.<sup>60</sup> All three of these works were designed to share information learned from women’s experiences of domestic abuse, and to empower them to act, either as individual survivors of abuse, or as advocates for battered women.<sup>61</sup>

Movement participants were diverse in many ways, including their political philosophy and sexual orientation. Merle H. Weiner argues that “Lesbian women have always been active in the battered women’s shelter movement.”<sup>62</sup> In response to a survey from Weiner, WTCS activist Joyce Grover wrote that “[Lesbians] were a vital part of [the] beginnings [of the movement] and our presence should not, must not be erased from that written history.”<sup>63</sup> However, woman on woman abuse was

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<sup>58</sup> Delacoste and Newman, *Fight Back! Feminist Resistance to Male Violence*, back cover.

<sup>59</sup> Ginny NiCarthy, *Getting Free: A Handbook for Women in Abusive Relationships* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1982).

<sup>60</sup> Elizabeth A. Stanko, *Intimate Intrusions: Women's Experience of Male Violence* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

<sup>61</sup> There are two primary forms of advocacy in the battered women’s movement: (1) individual advocacy, which consists of sheltering women and helping them find the resources they need; and (2) institutional advocacy (also known as “systems work”) in which advocates try to change the systems and practices that “produce unfair outcomes for battered women as a group. Ellen Pence, “Advocacy on Behalf of Battered Women,” in *Sourcebook on Violence against Women* (Sage Publications, Inc., 2001), p. 239. Chapter Five addresses different forms of institutional advocacy employed by activists in the battered women’s movement.

<sup>62</sup> Weiner, “From Dollars to Sense: A Critique of Government Funding for the Battered Women's Shelter Movement,” p. 239.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 240.

not acknowledged as an issue in the early years of the movement. The NCADV's Lesbian Task Force published a handbook about lesbian battering in 1986. The book grew out of a meeting of the Task Force in September 1983, which editor Kerry Lobel calls "the first opportunity for many of us to discuss lesbian battering outside of the context of our local communities."<sup>64</sup> The book was also an effort to empower battered women—specifically, battered lesbian women—to name the violence and work toward breaking the existing silence in their communities, so that services and solutions could be provided to those being battered.

A decade later, editors Claire M. Renzetti and Charles Harvey Miley published a collection of articles that addressed a wide range of issues relating to same-sex domestic violence for both gays and lesbians.<sup>65</sup> The articles explore the prevalence of domestic violence among same-sex couples, offer theoretical perspectives for consideration, analyze the intersections of sexuality and race in gay and lesbian domestic abuse, and offer solutions for providing services to gay men and lesbians who have been battered by intimate partners.

In 1988, Kersti Yllo and Michele Bograd published a collection of articles that they characterize as "a growing collaboration between feminist researchers and feminist activists."<sup>66</sup> Interestingly, Yllo and Bograd express hope that their book will be "one step in the effort to create a united feminist response to violence against

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<sup>64</sup> Kerry Editor for the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Lesbian Task Force Lobel, *Naming the Violence: Speaking out About Lesbian Battering* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1986), p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> Claire M. Renzetti and Charles Harvey Miley, *Violence in Gay and Lesbian Domestic Partnerships* (New York: The Haworth Press, Inc., 1996).

<sup>66</sup> Kersti Yllo and Michele Bograd, eds., *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1988), p. 10.

women.”<sup>67</sup> Contributions address a range of issues relating to the battered women’s movement, focusing on the tension between research and activism, and espousing feminist approaches to both.

Despite the amount of literature written by scholars and activists, we do not know much about the history of the shelter movement. Early histories of the movement, including those written by Martin and Schechter, include some information about the shelters that existed at the time they were writing, but a comprehensive history of the shelter movement does not exist. Current feminist literature contains some histories of individual community-based shelters for battered women, but they are found in larger works, of which they are only one thread. For example, Diane Kravetz’s book, *Tales from the Trenches: Politics and Practice in Feminist Service Organizations*, chronicles the histories and activities of five feminist service organizations which were established by women in the 1970s in Madison, Wisconsin.<sup>68</sup> One of the feminist organizations that Kravetz studied was Advocates for Battered Women (ABW), which was founded in 1971, and provided shelter and services for battered women. Kravetz’s book is based on interviews with 57 people who were either founders, staff, volunteers and/or board members of the five feminist organizations.<sup>69</sup> As Kravetz notes, her study “was designed to provide new insights and information about the realities and complexities of feminist practice in feminist

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. A united feminist response to violence against women was never developed.

<sup>68</sup> Diane Kravetz, *Tales from the Trenches: Politics and Practice in Feminist Service Organizations* (Dallas: University Press of America, Inc., 2004).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. vii.

service organizations.”<sup>70</sup> However, Kravetz does not focus exclusively on battered women’s shelters, but includes a variety of different women’s organizations in her study.

Historian Nancy Janovicek has recently published a book which examines what she characterizes as the “local histories of the battered women’s shelter movement” in four rural Canadian communities.<sup>71</sup> Janovicek emphasizes that the book is “about women’s campaigns to organize transition houses and services for battered women in smaller cities and towns in the 1970s and 1980s.”<sup>72</sup> An interesting aspect of Janovicek’s study is the fact that many of the women seeking services in the smaller communities of northwestern Ontario were Aboriginal. The author argues that “Aboriginal activists also developed theories of violence that conceptualized it as a social rather than an individual problem [consistent with the battered women’s movement], but the programs that Aboriginal women developed sought to strengthen the family and provide services for all members of violent families, including the abusers.”<sup>73</sup> Janovicek’s work incorporates an intersectional analysis of the battered women’s movement as it operated in small, rural Canadian communities—she examines the effects of race, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, and colonization on women’s experience of domestic abuse. Janovicek argues that “the feminist investment in the violence-against-women framework entrenched a common experience for abused women that was based on white women’s experiences and

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>71</sup> Nancy Janovicek, *No Place to Go: Local Histories of the Battered Women's Shelter Movement* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

assumed that woman abuse happened only in heterosexual relationships.”<sup>74</sup> By examining the approach of Aboriginal women who were activists in the battered women’s movement in Canada, Janovicek refutes the conception of second wave feminism as primarily composed of the efforts of white, middle-class women. Her historical study demonstrates that working class women “also contributed to the development of feminist services.”<sup>75</sup> Janovicek’s research methods include oral history interviews with activists and archival research in the records of battered women’s shelters (which were sometimes very limited in nature). *No Place to Go* provides a model for a history of the battered women’s movement which focuses on the micro history of individual shelters.

As this brief literature review indicates, a comprehensive history of the battered women’s movement from its inception through the early twenty-first century has not yet been written. My research will help to fill that void by contributing a history of the early decades of the shelter movement. Historian Van Gosse argues that “the least-told story of U.S. history in the late twentieth century is how the social movements of the Sixties institutionalized themselves.”<sup>76</sup> This project tells the story of how one social movement which originated in the sixties institutionalized itself and became part of the fabric of American culture.

A recent work which documents the history of another, similar social movement originating in the sixties is Carrie Baker’s *The Women’s Movement*

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>76</sup> Van Gosse and Richard Moser, *The World the Sixties Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), p. 25.

*Against Sexual Harassment*.<sup>77</sup> Baker has written a history of how a private concern—sexual harassment—evolved into a public issue as a result of the efforts of activists in the women’s liberation movement. Baker examines how the “political and social context shaped the movement’s collective identity, its forms of collective action, and the meanings and structures it created to effect social change.”<sup>78</sup> Baker successfully challenges “the standard conceptualization of the feminist movement as primarily white and middle-class,”<sup>79</sup> arguing that the movement against sexual harassment “arose from multiple locations, from diverse political communities, and [that] structural and political intersectionality shaped women’s experiences of sexual harassment and their responses to it.”<sup>80</sup>

Baker’s history of the movement against sexual harassment is part of a new stream of scholarship in gender history which focuses on the grassroots of the women’s liberation movement in American in the late twentieth century. Baker argues that this literature illuminates the grassroots nature of second wave feminism, and “the ways that women found common cause across difference to create feminist change.”<sup>81</sup> Importantly, she also argues that this new scholarship “challenges the declension narrative of the second wave,” since much of this diverse grassroots activism was just beginning in the middle of the 1970s.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Baker, *The Women's Movement against Sexual Harassment*.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 5-6.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

### *Explaining the Movement*

The relationship between gender and power has been a focus of feminist thought since Mary Wollstonecraft first wrote to vindicate the rights of women. R.W. Connell argues that Wollstonecraft wrote primarily about questions of ideology, including “morals, manners, education and religion.”<sup>83</sup> Connell writes about feminist political practice, including collective projects such as social movements. Connell notes that “the constitution of an interest as a collective project requires awareness of inequalities and the social oppositions they define.”<sup>84</sup> Activists in the battered women’s movement were acutely aware that gender inequality was manifest in domestic abuse, and believed that women had the right to live their lives free from the fear of violence by their intimate partner.

In order to sustain a social movement, intellectual work is required by the participants. Ellen Messer-Davidow observes that, while some feminists were injecting feminist studies into the academy, other feminists were setting up what she terms “parallel organizations,” including “rape-crisis centers, battered women shelters, healthcare services, bookstores, music festivals, policy institutes, and law centers.”<sup>85</sup> As second wave feminism emerged in the academy, it also emerged in various forms outside the academy. The battered women’s movement was one of the forms that feminist activism outside the academy took in the early to mid-1970s, emerging within the context of the larger women’s liberation movement.

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<sup>83</sup> R. W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 241.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>85</sup> Ellen Messer-Davidow, *Disciplining Feminism: From Social Activism to Academic Discourse* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 162-3.

Materialist forms of feminist theory, especially radical feminism and standpoint feminism, which seek to use women's perspectives to reshape the gendered social order, are perhaps most useful in developing an understanding of the battered women's movement. As Kathleen Ferraro notes, "the 1970s radical feminist agenda for social change portrayed woman battering as one outcome of pathological gender relations."<sup>86</sup> In her genealogy of domestic violence discourse, Ferraro argues that domestic violence discourse "exemplifies both resistance to and replication of hierarchies of power."<sup>87</sup> This is consistent with Michel Foucault's conceptualization of power as productive in nature. Rather than viewing power as being solely top-down in nature, Foucault conceptualized power working in both directions. Activists in the shelter movement employed a specific discourse, using terms including "woman battering" and "woman abuse," to name violence against women by their intimate partners, and to construct it as a social problem. This project demonstrates that feminist activists resisted the use of terms like "domestic violence," and "family violence," which are gender neutral, include child abuse, and obscure the fact that the majority of intimate violence is violence committed by men against women. This is one way in which activists used discourse to exert power against the patriarchy.

Radical feminist theory relies on the concept of patriarchy as a central construct. For radical feminists, the sex/gender system—the set of social arrangements which transform biological sexuality into human activity—is the source

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<sup>86</sup> Kathleen J. Ferraro, "The Dance of Dependency: A Genealogy of Domestic Violence Discourse," *Hypatia* 11, no. 4 (1996): p. 80.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 77.



of women's oppression. Gender inequality is manifest in the unequal power relationships between men and women. Ferraro argues that the term "domestic violence" is in fact code for physical and emotional abuse which occurs within (usually heterosexual) intimate relationships. As a code, the term glosses over the "intricate, layered connections of power relationships built on race, class, and gender hierarchies, each tied in unique fashion to requirements of female dependency."<sup>88</sup> In postmodern fashion, Ferraro views the term as a discourse which perpetuates certain cultural assumptions and "establishes the parameters of acceptable male dominance within relationships," and as a set of legal and social definitions.<sup>89</sup> In the radical feminist understanding of domestic abuse, battering is seen as the product of a patriarchal social system that empowers men and disempowers women, that condones violence against women, and makes it very difficult for women to marshal the power and resources necessary to escape their abuser. Battering is used by men to control women's bodies and their access to resources, and to maintain dominance over women.

Liberal feminists locate the source of gender inequality in beliefs that biological differences between men and women mandate differential treatment based on gender. Their arguments that housework should be paid labor, that women's work should be equally valued with men's work, that women should have equal access to managerial and leadership positions in paid employment, and that women should enjoy unfettered access to reproductive choices all underpin the notion that women's

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.: p. 78.

economic empowerment would lead to their ability to leave their abuser and support themselves economically in an independent life. Economic independence for battered women is a key element of the philosophy of the battered women's movement. This project demonstrates that activists in the battered women's movement used strategies and tactics that blurred the lines between radical and liberal forms of feminism, deploying both ideologies at times to empower battered women.

Although family violence researchers have argued that certain aspects of the structural environment (i.e., age, employment status, socioeconomic status, etc.) influence the prevalence of domestic violence, feminist scholars (including radical feminists) have argued that "domestic violence is rooted in gender and power and represents men's active attempts to maintain dominance and control over women."<sup>90</sup> Sociologist Kristin Anderson argues that both of these explanations are actually valid. She asserts that "gender interacts with structures of race, marital status, and socioeconomic status to influence power within relationships and propensities for domestic violence."<sup>91</sup>

Feminist standpoint theory is useful to understand domestic abuse and the battered women's movement.<sup>92</sup> Standpoint theorists use the "naturally occurring" relations of class, gender, race, or imperialism in the world around us to observe how

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<sup>90</sup> Kristin L. Anderson, "Gender, Status, and Domestic Violence: An Integration of Feminist and Family Violence Approaches," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 59, no. 3 (1997): p. 667.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> A detailed discussion of feminist standpoint theory can be found in Chapter Six. Feminist standpoint theorists include Sandra Harding, Nancy Hartsock, Donna Haraway, Dorothy E. Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, and bell hooks. A discussion of the history and meaning of feminist standpoint theory can be found in Susan Hekman, "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited," *Signs* 22, no. 2 (1997): which also includes responses from Nancy Hartsock, Patricia Hill Collins, Sandra Harding, and Dorothy E. Smith.

different ‘locations’ in such relations tend to generate distinctive accounts of nature and social relations.”<sup>93</sup> Standpoint theorists are concerned with the relationship between social power and the production of knowledge. For example, standpoint theorists Patricia Hill Collins uses an intersectional approach to understand African-American women’s experiences with violence. She argues that, “because violence permeates all segments of American society, it routinely supports hierarchies of race, gender, class, age, ethnicity, nation and sexuality.”<sup>94</sup> Collins’ analysis includes an exploration of the ways that violence is socially constructed, and the ways that violence works to link the power relations of both race and gender. Collins argues that “violent acts become legitimated or censured not exclusively in reference to some external moral, ethical code, but in relationship to power relations of race, gender, class, age and sexual orientation mediated through the legal system, government agencies and other social institutions.”<sup>95</sup> Collins advocates a “transversal politics” in anti-violence work, which emphasizes “coalition building that takes into account the specific positions of ‘political actors.’”<sup>96</sup> This form of transversal politics must recognize that the effects of systemic violence vary from group to group, and that one group’s experience is linked to the experience of other groups through the power relations of race, gender, class, age, and sexual orientation.

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<sup>93</sup> Sandra Harding, "Comment on Hekman's "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited": Whose Standpoint Needs the Regimes of Truth and Reality?," *Signs* 22, no. 2 (1997): p. 384.

<sup>94</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, "The Tie That Binds: Race, Gender and Us Violence," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 5 (1998): p. 917.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 922.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 930.

Ferraro also argues that the relationships of women to both the men who batter them and to law enforcement are “transverse by racial, class, and sexual locations.”<sup>97</sup> For example, women of color may view the police as a repressive force in their community, and may be understandably hesitant to consider calling the police as a solution to being battered by an intimate partner. Kimberle Crenshaw also uses an intersectional approach to the analysis of violence against women. Crenshaw argues that, “where systems of race, gender, and class domination converge, as they do in the experiences of battered women of color, intervention strategies based solely on the experiences of women who do not share the same class or race backgrounds will be of limited help to women who because of race and class face different obstacles.”<sup>98</sup> This project demonstrates that the work of the battered women’s movement is complicated by issues of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

Ellen Scott’s research on racially diverse feminist organizations, including a battered women’s shelter, reveals that, even in a battered women’s shelter which was founded by approximately equal numbers of Latina and white women, issues of race and class impeded the organization’s ability to accomplish its goals, “because white women and Latinas had such different experiences of culture, community, and oppression.”<sup>99</sup> This confirms Crenshaw’s observation that “women working in the field of domestic violence have sometimes reproduced the subordination and marginalization of women of color by adopting policies, priorities, or strategies of

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<sup>97</sup> Ferraro, "The Dance of Dependency: A Genealogy of Domestic Violence Discourse," p. 85.

<sup>98</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): p. 1246.

<sup>99</sup> Ellen K. Scott, "Beyond Tokenism: The Making of Racially Diverse Feminist Organizations," *Social Problems* 52, no. 2 (2005): p. 238.

empowerment that either elide or wholly disregard the particular intersectional needs of women of color.”<sup>100</sup>

### *Listening to Activists*

In order to develop a more complete history of the battered women’s movement, I have chosen to do oral history interviews with activists. My goal is to write a history of the movement which is grounded in the experiences of movement participants. Writing the history of the movement from the standpoint of movement activists requires understanding their social location, their interests with respect to that location, their access to the social discourses that they use to describe and interpret their experiences, and their positions relative to the ways that the production of knowledge is organized.<sup>101</sup>

I have chosen this method because I wanted to use a feminist approach in order to understand the standpoint of the activists who started the movement. A feminist analysis of domestic abuse begins from the standpoint of women. Because the movement began with small groups of women opening crisis lines for women, sheltering battered women in their own homes, and then opening shelters for battered women, it is important to understand the history of the movement from the standpoint of the activists who initiated it.

In the oral history interviews that I have conducted with activists in the battered women’s movement, I have used a semi-structured interview format. I have

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<sup>100</sup> Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," p. 1262.

<sup>101</sup> Joey Sprague, *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences*, The Gender Lens Series (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2005), pp. 68-71. I am indebted to Joey Sprague for her explanation of Sandra Harding's four elements of a standpoint.

started each interview with an open-ended question, and let the narrator take control of the interview by structuring her own narrative. While I have asked follow up questions to obtain particular information that I was seeking, I have also tried to engage in what sociologists Marjorie DeVault and Glenda Gross call “active listening.”<sup>102</sup> In my interviews with the founders of WTCS, one of the “unexpected detours”<sup>103</sup> I encountered was the extent to which the narrators talked about the fluidity in their sexual identities during the time period under discussion, and the degree to which sexual relationships between the founding women, volunteers, and their clients affected their working relationships, as well as relationships between WTCS and other community organizations.

Listening to the silences—to what women don’t say, as well as to how they say what they do explicitly articulate—is another facet of active listening. None of the women that I interviewed for my research on WTCS talked about being a victim of domestic abuse themselves. I don’t know if that is because none of them were formerly battered women or, if they were, because that identity was no longer important to them at the time of our interview, or if there was some other reason they chose not to reveal that particular aspect of their identity to me. However, the founders of Transition House in Boston identified themselves as formerly battered women very early in the interviews. Their personal experiences of being beaten and

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<sup>102</sup> Marjorie L. DeVault and Glenda Gross, "Feminist Interviewing: Experience, Talk, and Knowledge," in *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*, ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007), p. 182.

<sup>103</sup> This is DeVault and Gross’s term.

having “no place to go” were a primary factor in their decision to open a shelter for battered women.

DeVault and Gross argue that the narrative turn of poststructuralism gave authority to the idea that “narratives are fundamental to identity and to the ways that people makes sense of their worlds.”<sup>104</sup> They also note that the narrative turn brought “a new consciousness . . . to the practice of oral history and life history interviewing.”<sup>105</sup> As a result, it has become an accepted practice for oral historians to write in a reflexive manner about the interview process, including how power is negotiated between interviewer and interviewee, and how the researcher represents the interview process in her work.

I think that it is important for feminist qualitative researchers to write about their own subject position, and how it may affect the research that they are doing. I also agree with DeVault and Gross that feminist researchers need to set high ethical standards for themselves. The primary reason that I decided early in my research not to attempt to interview survivors of domestic abuse (clients of battered women’s shelters) is that I did not want to violate the confidentiality that protects survivors from their batterers and empowers battered women to regain control of their own lives. Not only are shelter locations highly confidential, so are client records, which are typically destroyed after a period of a few years. Although I could have advertised to locate abuse survivors, I did not want to intrude on their healing and recovery process. I did not believe that the information that I would have gained

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<sup>104</sup> DeVault and Gross, "Feminist Interviewing: Experience, Talk, and Knowledge," p. 184.  
<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

from interviewing survivors of domestic abuse would have been valuable enough to offset the potential harm. In addition, I agree with DeVault and Gross that feminist researchers should avoid using the interviews “as a way to learn things that could be gleaned from available sources” especially when dealing with women in “vulnerable or marginalized social locations”—which is the position of survivors of domestic abuse.<sup>106</sup> Since I can find the data I needed from other sources—interviews with women who worked in the battered women’s movements, archival research, and secondary sources—I have decided not to interview domestic abuse survivors.<sup>107</sup>

I have shared the results of my first research project (on WTCS) with some of the women that I interviewed (when they expressed an interest in reading it) and with other women who were not founders of WTCS, but who were active in the same social community as the founders, in order to obtain their feedback on my research. Although I may not be able to conduct multiple interviews over a period of time, as suggested by Sprague and others, in order to build confidence and trust with the interviewees, I do share with interviewees my experience of serving on the Board of WTCS during a time period when the organization experienced a financial and personnel crisis, nearly failed, and was reconfigured from a coordinating collective to a more traditional nonprofit agency with an executive director and a board of directors. I have found that the knowledge that I have worked closely with a shelter

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> It is important to note that the two are not mutually exclusive. Many women who have worked in the battered women’s movement are survivors of domestic abuse. When one of my interviewees is a survivor, I wait for her to disclose that fact before asking her how it informed her activism.



organization in the role of a Board member does help to establish a level of credibility and trust with interviewees.

It has been my practice to send a copy of the written transcription of the interview to the interviewee, along with a letter that requests her review of the transcript, and solicits any changes, corrections, or additions that she may wish to make to the interview transcript. This is one method of working to produce “more truly collaborative encounters,” as DeVault and Gross suggest,<sup>108</sup> and to reduce the power imbalance between researcher and researched.

I have also found that interviewees are often pleased to have an audience—to have an opportunity to “tell their stories.” In general, my interviewees have been pleased to learn that a researcher was interested in writing the history of the battered women’s movement. They are proud of their part in the movement and they feel that it is a story that needs to be written, with the goal of drawing attention to the ongoing need for services for battered women and in order to further desired social change—to reduce the prevalence of violence against women in American society.

I have struggled with Valerie Yow’s question, “Do I like them too much?” when working with interviewees. It is hard not to see the founders of shelters for battered women as heroes. As I have interviewed women who have been active in the shelter movement, I have taken Yow’s advice, and have written about my own motives for doing this research, how I feel about the narrator, and the intrusion of my

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<sup>108</sup> DeVault and Gross, "Feminist Interviewing: Experience, Talk, and Knowledge," p. 180.

assumptions and my own self concept into the interview and interpretation process.<sup>109</sup> I have tried to be critical of my tendency to see these women as heroes, and to focus on the critiques of the movement that emerge from their stories. I also agree with Kamala Visweswaran that there will always be an element of “betrayal” in the relationship between the academic researcher and the interviewee, because ultimately I, the academic researcher, “write for an audience narrowly constituted by the academy.”<sup>110</sup> However, I do hope that this project will also be relevant and interesting for activists in the battered women’s movement, who are, for the most part, situated outside the academy.

In summary, I have chosen semi-structured oral history interviews as a research method because it is, as sociologist Kathy Charmaz notes, “a flexible, emergent technique” in which “ideas and issues emerge during the interview” which interviewers can follow up and explore with the narrators.<sup>111</sup> Interviews can be used as a feminist methodology when we follow Sprague’s advice and ask questions because people really do need the answers to them in order to advance a cause of social justice, like eliminating violence against women; when we analyze interview data in a critical way that makes our research relevant; and when we write about our research in a way that will engage not only other academics but also (in this case)

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<sup>109</sup> Valerie Yow, “Do I Like Them Too Much?": Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa," *The Oral History Review* 24, no. 1 (1997): pp. 5-6.

<sup>110</sup> Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 49.

<sup>111</sup> Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2006), p. 29.

activists in the battered women's movement.<sup>112</sup> Perhaps following this methodology can mitigate some of the negative aspects of what Visweswaran characterizes as my "betrayal" of my interviewees.

### ***An Overview of the Project***

In the next chapter, I employ oral history theory to analyze the interviews that I have conducted with activists in the shelter movement. Using a grounded theory approach, I highlight the themes that emerge from the narratives, analyze the differences in the interviews, and interrogate the context of the social discourse in which the narratives are formed. I analyze the interviews as social interactions, and demonstrate how the interviews were used by the narrators to understand and explain their experiences in the battered women's movement, as well as to reconstruct their past lives. I also examine how the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation affected these participants in this social movement. In their narratives, my interviewees revealed that they were participants in the radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and that they were motivated to work in the movement because of their personal experiences with violence, or because they were outraged at the treatment of battered women. Activists engaged in a critique of certain elements of the movement, including the use of consensus decision-making, and the increasing institutionalization and professionalization of the field.

Most of the activists that I have interviewed are connected in some way with the organizations whose history I examine in Chapters Three and Four. Chapter

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<sup>112</sup> Sprague, *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences*, pp. 199-200.

Three focuses on the diverse, grassroots origins of the movement by comparing the history of five battered women's shelters, including: Women's Advocates in St. Paul, Minnesota; Women's Coalition in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Transition House in Boston, Massachusetts; Women's Transitional Care Services, Inc., in Lawrence, Kansas; and the Center for Battered Women in Austin, Texas. I explain how these organizations came into existence, examine the identities (race, class, gender, and sexual orientation) of the founders and clients, the organizational forms used, and the evolution of the organizations through the 1970s and 1980s. The impact of state and federal funding on direct service providers is an important thread of the evolutionary story. I find many similarities in the stories of the shelters, including their roots in feminist consciousness raising groups, and their evolution from a women's crisis line to sheltering women in their own homes, to opening a shelter for battered women. All five groups opened shelters because they saw a pressing need for battered women to have "a place to go."

In Chapter Four, I examine the development of the state and national coalitions of the shelter movement, which began in the late 1970s. I focus on the state coalitions for the five battered women's shelters included in Chapter Three: the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women (MCBW); the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV); Jane Doe, Inc. (the Massachusetts coalition); the Kansas Coalition Against Domestic Violence (KCSDV); and the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV). I also chart the development of the National Coalition

Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) and examine the relationship between the community-based shelters, the state coalitions, and the national coalition.

This chapter demonstrates how the battered women's movement moved from grassroots, community-based efforts to statewide coalitions and national networks and organizing, and reveals coalition building as one of the key strategies that feminists used to define and institutionalize their collective political vision. Activists solidified a national battered women's movement fairly early in the history of the movement, when the first NCADV conference was held in Washington, D.C., in 1980. Statewide and national coalitions embodied the feminist commitment to self-help and self-empowerment for women, providing activists with the space to talk with one another, share information and resources, and learn from each other. Most importantly, they provided activists with the collective political power to implement the systems changes described in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five chronicles how institutional advocacy operated in the first two decades of the battered women's movement. Forms of institutional advocacy included efforts to change the police response to battering, advocacy for changes in existing laws and the implementation of new state and federal laws governing domestic abuse, and the development and implementation of a coordinated community response to domestic violence. Individual advocates, local shelter organizations, and state and national coalitions all play a role in influencing public policy regarding domestic abuse. This chapter employs discourse analysis to analyze the language used to frame the social problem of domestic abuse and its effect on the

ability of the movement to achieve its dual goals. I analyze how lawsuits filed by battered women worked together with grant-funded research to change the police response to woman battering, how mandatory arrest laws were implemented, and the impact of the federal Violence Against Women Act. I also analyze how the legal discourse has framed the “battered woman syndrome.”

The conclusion addresses the research questions that I have posed. I demonstrate how the battered women’s movement, which began as a diverse, grassroots social movement, was able to transform domestic abuse from a private issue to a public concern in the 1970 and 1980s, but was itself transformed in the process. I argue that the battered women’s movement has become disconnected from the issue of gender inequality. In this chapter, I utilize several forms of feminist theory, including liberal feminism, radical feminism, lesbian feminism, structural feminism and standpoint feminist theory to explain the history of the battered women’s movement. I also discuss poststructural feminist critiques of second wave feminism. The project concludes with a look toward the future of the battered women’s movement, which is focused on how efforts to prevent domestic violence can further the goal of reducing or eliminating the domestic abuse of women.

## **Chapter Two: Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality in the Battered Women's Movement**

*"Beginning in women's experiences told in women's words was and is a vital political moment in the women's movement."*

*--Dorothy E. Smith<sup>113</sup>*

*"And, so I got involved, essentially, by having a personal experience that led me to realize how common violence against women was in so many different forms, and then to realize how limited the responses were of systems and that things didn't really exist that needed to exist to support victims and try to stop the problem."*

*--Debby Tucker<sup>114</sup>*

*"At that time, there was really no place to go if you were battered. And this was 1975."*

*--Chris Womendez<sup>115</sup>*

### ***Introduction***

My intention, in undertaking this project, is to write a history of the American battered women's movement which is grounded in the experiences of movement participants. Writing the history of the movement from the standpoint of movement activists requires understanding their social location (i.e., as working class or middle class, white, perhaps formerly battered, women), their interests with respect to that location, their access to the social discourses that they use to describe and interpret their experiences, and their positions relative to the ways that the production of knowledge is organized. The history of the movement would look different if I were

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<sup>113</sup> Dorothy E. Smith, "Comment on Hekman's "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited", " *Signs* 22, no. 2 (1997): p. 394.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Debby Tucker, conducted by author, April 2, 2009, transcript, page 2.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Chris Womendez, conducted by author, July 9, 2009, transcript, page 1.

writing it from the standpoint of the police, or the legal system. However, my goal is to tell the story from the standpoint of the women who made the movement happen.

In this chapter I analyze the oral history interviews that I have conducted with twenty-three women who were active in the battered women's movement. Exploring the ways that activists remember their participation in the movement reveals a great deal about how these women view themselves, and how they view the movement. The way that they tell their stories is affected by issues of memory and colored by their understanding of the history of the women's liberation movement. Qualitative analysis helped me to make sense of the information that emerged from the interviews. I initially used a grounded theory approach to code the interview data for major themes.<sup>116</sup> I found that six primary themes emerged from the interviews, including: the emergence of the movement from the radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s; the use of the collective form of organization as an important aspect of the battered women's movement; a motivation which was grounded in a personal experience of violence and/or outrage at the way that battered women were treated; a conviction that state and national coalitions were formed so that shelters and activists

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<sup>116</sup> Grounded theory methods are a form of qualitative research that incorporate the use of systematic guidelines for the collection and analysis of qualitative data which allows the researcher to construct theories which are "grounded" in the data. For an explanation of grounded theory, see Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. Since I used open-ended questions for the interviews, and let each interviewee steer the conversation in the direction she desired, the transcripts proved somewhat difficult to code. However, I did read and reread the written interview transcripts, and coded them according to the themes that emerged. My coding consisted of highlighting portions of the text, and numbering those highlighted portions. The numbers corresponded to a list of themes that I made as I read the interviews. The list of themes then contained a list of interviews and page numbers where each theme appeared. For example, the theme of the interviewee's participation in radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s was theme #1, and it appeared fifteen times in eleven different interviews. I used qualitative coding to sort, distill, and analyze the interview data. I then reread the interviews looking for the differences in the narratives, trying to discern what those differences reveal about the battered women's movement.



could work in concert with one another; and a concern about the institutionalization of the battered women's movement, and the effect of that institutionalization on the movement's ability to achieve social change.

The last theme, concern about the institutionalization of the movement, contains an important critique of the direction the movement has taken. Many of the activists that I interviewed believe that the battered women's movement has become part of the system that they were seeking to change. Shelters were viewed by early movement participants as a temporary solution, only necessary until social change was achieved, and women were no longer being battered. The ongoing need for shelters (which now number over 2000 in the U.S.) supports their belief that shelter programs have become social service agencies, and have lost sight of the original social change goals of the movement.

There is a danger in writing only about the common themes that emerged from the interviews. Writing only about the common themes yields an incomplete analysis. It also conveys a sense that the interviews were consistent and unified, which they were not. There were many differences in the ways that the interviewees told their stories. We can learn as much from the ways that the stories were different as we can from the ways that they were the same. Therefore, as I discuss the common themes, I will also address the differences in the narratives, and what they might reveal about the narrators and the battered women's movement.

Before delving into a detailed analysis of the themes which emerged from the interviews, and the ways that the narratives differed, I will consider the methodology

of oral history, its relationship to women's history and grounded theory, and the impact of the perceived audience on my interviewees. Since I believe that my subject position is another important component of the oral history interviews, I will also discuss my interaction with the interviewees.

### ***Oral History, Women's History and Grounded Theory***

Oral history was initially used as a methodology so that historians could "reclaim" the history of everyday people. Social history, which peaked as an academic field in the 1960s and 1970s, focused on history as lived by common people, rather than major historical figures. Feminist historians used the actual lived experiences of women as the basis for writing and revising history.<sup>117</sup> Feminist oral historians used women's testimony to place the narrators in the historical record. Women's history had a strong tie to labor history through the feminist conviction that economic empowerment through paid employment would lead to women's liberation from patriarchal domination.<sup>118</sup> Oral history has also been used to raise women's consciousness. By providing an audience, the oral historian legitimizes and places value on the interviewee's experiences. The act of telling her personal story can be empowering for women. Hearing the stories of other women like her can convince a woman that she is not alone, that her situation is not an individual one, and is not her fault. In the case of battered women, learning that many women suffered from battering and that battering was the product of a larger social problem provided

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<sup>117</sup> I owe this insight to historian Joan Sangster. Joan Sangster, "Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History," *Women's History Review* 3, no. 1 (1994).

<sup>118</sup> Laura Lee Downs, *Writing Gender History* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2004), p. 5.

validation and empowerment. Like the battered women's movement, the academic field of women's history (and the use of oral history interviews by historians writing women's history) emerged in the 1970s, and was closely connected with the feminist political movement.<sup>119</sup>

Oral historian Penny Summerfield argues that “oral history, that is the telling of life stories in response to a researcher's enquiries, is not a simple one-way process, but involves a set of relationships all of which are pervaded by gender. These include a dialogue between the present and the past, between what is personal and what is public, between memory and culture.”<sup>120</sup> Summerfield also cautions that, when women speak for themselves through their personal testimony, they use language that is colored by cultural constructions.<sup>121</sup> In the case of the battered women's movement, the women I interviewed were telling their stories in the context of how they understand the women's liberation movement, given the histories that have been written and the backlash against feminism that they believe has occurred in American culture.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, accounts of women's lived experience cannot be considered

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<sup>119</sup> The field of oral history has its roots in the late 1940s. As women's history evolved into gender history in the 1980s and 1990s, under the influence of poststructuralism, the goal shifted from recovering the experiences of women in the past to tracing how discourses about masculinity and femininity have changed over time. (Downs, pp. 94-95.) I discuss poststructural critiques of second wave feminism in Chapter 6.

<sup>120</sup> Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 2.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>122</sup> Author Susan Faludi defines the “backlash” against women's rights that occurred during the 1980s as “a powerful counterassault on women's rights” and “an attempt to retract the handful of small and hard-won victories that the feminist movement did manage to win for women.” (page xviii) The backlash had an impact on the battered women's movement. According to Faludi, “Just when women were starting to mobilize against battering and sexual assaults, the federal government stalled funding for battered-women's programs, defeated bills to fund shelters, and shut down its Office of Domestic Violence—only two years after opening it in 1979.” (page xix) Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991).

outside of the social discourse in which they are formed. An interview conducted today, thirty years after the beginning of the shelter movement, will yield a different conversation than an interview conducted in the 1980s. However, by situating the oral histories in the discursive context from which they originate, it is possible to analyze how narrators reconstruct their historical experiences.

As a practitioner of oral history, I have attempted to apply a grounded theory approach to the analysis of oral history interviews. Sociologist Kathy Charmaz characterizes grounded theory methods as consisting of “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves.”<sup>123</sup> Intensive interviews, which allow an in-depth exploration of a particular topic with an interviewee who has had relevant experiences to that topic, are a useful method for qualitative research, and facilitate the employment of grounded theory.<sup>124</sup>

Although intensive qualitative interviewing fits well with grounded theory methods, and allows for ideas and issues to be pursued by the interviewer during the interview, it is also important to remember that the narrative produced by the interview is the subject of a relationship between the narrator and an audience, real or perceived. The way that the narrative is told may be highly influenced by the narrator’s perceptions of the cultural values of her perceived audience. Summerfield argues that this is particularly relevant to oral histories in which stories are told which

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<sup>123</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, p.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

reconstruct large parts of the narrator's past life.<sup>125</sup> One of my interviewees explicitly acknowledged the ephemeral nature of oral history interviews, arguing that "if you would have called me three nights ago, I'd tell you a very different story than I'm going to tell you right now."<sup>126</sup> From her perspective, the story that she told in answer to my question was highly dependent on her frame of mind and what she was thinking about at the time that I asked her about her experiences.

### ***Intensive Interviews about the Battered Women's Movement***

Initial contacts with my interviewees came about in a variety of ways, including referrals from archivists, "snowballing," contacts made through social networking sites, and networking with friends who work in the battered women's movement. I reached the co-founders of Transition House through a contact at the Schlesinger Library, which houses archives for Transition House. I called Cherie Jimenez and Chris Womendez, explained that I was a graduate student researching the battered women's movement for my dissertation, and they agreed to speak with me. I asked each person I interviewed who they thought I should talk with in order to write a thorough history of the movement. Jimenez suggested that I talk with long-time activist Betsy Warrior. I located several of my interviewees through the internet. After using Google to find Sharon Rice Vaughan, a co-founder of Women's Advocates, I emailed her and she agreed to an interview. Vaughan suggested that I contact Bernice Sisson. I found Debby Tucker, one of the founders of the first shelter in Austin, Texas, the same way, and she suggested that I talk with Toby Myers. I

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<sup>125</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 20.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Ellen Pence, conducted by author, February 2, 2009, transcript, page 2.

contacted Nova Clite, one of the founders of the Sojourner Truth House in Milwaukee, through Facebook. Contacts with a number of key interviewees came through Joyce Grover, a friend who is an attorney for the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV). She was kind enough to vouch for me, and to give me contact information for several women whose stories are important to the history of the battered women's movement. Interview contacts "snowballed," as I asked each interviewee to suggest other women that I should talk with.

I used a semi-structured interview format in my oral history interviews with movement activists. Each interview began with an open-ended question, and then I tried to let the narrator take control of the interview and structure her own narrative. While I asked follow-up questions to obtain a particular piece of information, I also tried to engage in what sociologists Marjorie L. DeVault and Glenda Gross call "active listening."<sup>127</sup> The practice of active listening requires the interviewer to be attentive to histories, experience, and perspectives that are unfamiliar, or may be easily misrepresented.

Listening to the silences is another facet of active listening. I have tried to listen to what women say, the language they use, and what they don't say. Oral historian Sherrie Tucker warns that interpreting the silences is fraught with problems, and that it is important to recognize how the academic researcher's own "cultural and historical understandings" of a particular aspect of the narratives, spoken or

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<sup>127</sup> DeVault and Gross, "Feminist Interviewing: Experience, Talk, and Knowledge," p. 569. DeVault and Gross describe active listening as being fully engaged, and actively processing information—"allowing that information to affect you, baffle you, haunt you, make you uncomfortable, and take you on unexpected detours." (page 182)

unspoken, play a role in shaping the researcher's expectations, research goals, and "scholarly desires."<sup>128</sup>

My "scholarly desire" to demonstrate that activists' motivation to help battered women was rooted entirely in personal experiences of battering was thwarted in the very first set of interviews that I conducted. My first interviews were with women who founded the WTCS shelter in Lawrence, Kansas. None of them talked about being a formerly battered woman. However, after I completed interviews with activists from the other four shelters, I found that many of the interviewees volunteered that they were motivated by personal experiences of violence. I don't know if the women who founded WTCS had not personally experienced violence, or if their identities as formerly battered women were no longer important to their narrative by the time that I interviewed them. (Or, a third possibility is that they were formerly battered women, but did not wish to reveal that information to me, since I am a member of the community in which they live. The interviewees from other communities do not expect to see me again, which might have permitted them to reveal their identities as formerly battered women more easily.) Since I have been unable to find any information in archival sources that reveals the founders as formerly battered women, I have not been able to reach any conclusions about how to interpret this silence.

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<sup>128</sup> Sherrie Tucker, "When Subjects Don't Come Out," in *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity*, ed. Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 297.

Another problem arises when one narrator reveals information that is not confirmed by other interviewees. One of my interviewees was very frank about her involvement in drugs and prostitution at the time that she was involved with starting a shelter for battered women. Other activists who were involved with that particular shelter did not reveal any information about any members of the group being involved in any illegal activities. Why did one interviewee feel that it was an important part of her narrative, while others did not even mention this aspect of their lives? Was she trying to portray herself as a radical participant in the sexual revolution? How should I interpret this information?

Building trust and confidence with interviewees is a delicate issue. Although the majority of my interviews have been conducted in person, time and financial constraints required that several interviews take place by phone.<sup>129</sup> Regardless of whether we were meeting in person or by phone, I have found that sharing with interviewees my experience of serving on the Board of WTCS during a time period when the organization experienced a major crisis, nearly failed, and was reconfigured from a coordinating collective to a more traditional nonprofit agency, gives me a level of credibility and trust with interviewees. Although I am an outsider in the sense that I am an academic researcher (and not a practitioner in the battered women's movement) I am also an insider in the sense that I have some (albeit limited) experience with a shelter organization. I also recognize that, being a member of the Lawrence community, and therefore, an insider in that sense, may have been a

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<sup>129</sup> All interviews were taped, with the permission of the interviewee.



disadvantage in terms of interviewees' willingness to reveal their identities as formerly battered women.

I believe that gender has also influenced my ability to make connections with interviewees. Men were not allowed to work in many shelters in the early years of the movement, because activists believed that a male presence would perpetuate old, harmful patterns of behavior and cycles of dependence and inequality for women, which were thought to be two of the causes of woman battering.<sup>130</sup> While being female was not necessarily an advantage in building relationships with interviewees, I believe that being male would have been a definite disadvantage.

Sociologist Joey Sprague notes that feminist researchers sometimes try to make relationships with research subjects more reciprocal in nature, and try to draw on their own emotions as analytical guides.<sup>131</sup> When I started the interview process, I was concerned that I would not be able to give anything back to the interviewees. I was surprised and humbled to find that no prospective interviewees turned me down when I requested an interview. During the interview process, a number of women told me that they were pleased that I was doing this work. All of the interviewees seemed pleased to be asked about their activism on behalf of battered women. As one interviewee put it, "Thanks for the opportunity. It really kind of made me look back

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<sup>130</sup> Lois Ahrens, "Battered Women's Refuges: Feminist Cooperatives Vs. Social Service Institutions," *Radical America* 14, no. 3 (1980): p. 46.

<sup>131</sup> Sprague, *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences*, p. 134. Sprague is critical of this strategy, believing that it is more important for feminist researchers to produce credible, socially powerful research than it is for them to share power with their subjects.

at that time in my life. I haven't revisited it in some time, and it's been refreshing and a good experience for me, actually, to do it."<sup>132</sup>

I have discovered that there are a number of things that I can give back to the interviewees, including an audience, validation, and legitimization of their experiences. As an academic researcher asking them about their experiences, I am listening to their stories and ascribing value to them. The act of writing a history of the movement demonstrates its importance to late 20<sup>th</sup> century American history. I am offering interviewees the opportunity to make their story part of a larger history of the battered women's movement, and the history of second wave feminism. The act of including their story in the larger history is validating for participants, and conveys legitimacy to their activism. Many of my interviewees have asked to read my written work product when it is complete. If I am successful in publishing a written history of the beginnings of the American battered women's movement, then I will be able to give my interviewees a public audience as well. In return, I am very grateful to every woman who shared her story, because the narratives make it possible for me to write the history of the battered women's movement from the standpoint of the participants.

In order to make the interview process a more collaborative one, I have shared a copy of the written transcript of the interview with each interviewee, along with a letter requesting her review of the transcript, and soliciting any changes, corrections, or additions that she may wish to make to her story. This is one small way that I have worked to produce the "truly collaborative encounters" encouraged by DeVault and

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<sup>132</sup> Interview with Nova Clite conducted by author, September 5, 2009, transcript, page 16.

Gross, and to reduce the power imbalance between the researcher and the researched.<sup>133</sup> Several of the interviewees prepared for the interviews by rereading documents, including journals, newsletters, and correspondence, in order to refresh their memories. I was given or loaned copies of documents by interviewees so that I could read them and incorporate relevant information. The authority that the interviewees possessed by virtue of having lived the experience was evident in their directions to make sure that I talked with particular people, or considered certain points of view. One interviewee cautioned me not to include Haven House in the history of the battered women's movement, since it was not a feminist shelter, but was instead set up to protect alcoholic men.<sup>134</sup> This comment was a reflection of her standpoint. As a working class, white, formerly battered woman who was still actively engaged in the discourse of the battered women's movement, she was trying to influence the production of knowledge about the movement through my writing about the history of the movement. I believe that her interest was in preserving the history of the feminist movement to stop battering.

I recognize that, like the ethnographer, my mere presence in the interview affects the interview process. The questions that I asked, the way that I asked them, and my position as academic researcher/one-time insider affected the ways that my interviewees responded. The stories that the interviewees told me would surely have

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<sup>133</sup> DeVault and Gross, "Feminist Interviewing: Experience, Talk, and Knowledge," p. 180.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with Betsy Warrior, conducted by author, July 17, 2008, transcript, page 18. Haven House was located in Pasadena, California. It was established by Al-Anon to shelter the battered women and children of alcoholics. Warrior argued that, while Haven House claimed to be a refuge for battered women, the intent of the shelter was to provide a place for the families of alcoholics to go so that when the husbands became sober, the family could be reunited. Thus, Haven House was seeking to preserve the patriarchal family.

been different if I had spent my professional career working in the battered women's movement. Every interviewee asked me about the purpose of my research, how it would be used, and if it would be published. One interviewee in particular emphasized her "contributions" over the course of her career in the movement, telling me what she saw as her most important accomplishments. Another interviewee used the term "struggle" throughout the interview to describe her life and her work with violence against women. Several of the women that I talked with characterized the early 1970s as a time of great personal growth and as "exciting" because there was a great deal of social change and they were active participants in it through the women's liberation and the battered women's movements. One interviewee relied heavily on her written journals to reconstruct her memories of that time in her life. She described her experience of the 1960s and 1970s as a time of great challenge and personal growth: "It was like, 'get out there, do something!'"<sup>135</sup> All of the interviewees had read histories of the women's liberation movement, and many seemed interested in placing themselves in that history, and explaining how they were a part of it.

The political and social climate in the U.S. in the 1970s was characterized by fluidity in personal identities. Although WTCS was unique among the five shelters because none of the founders identified themselves as formerly battered women in their interviews, it was also unique because the interviewees talked a lot about the lesbian feminist identity of many of the shelter participants, and how the dynamics of

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<sup>135</sup> Interview with Nova Clite, conducted by author, September 5, 2009, transcript, page 3.

feminine sexuality played out in the shelter environment and in the perceptions of the shelter in the Lawrence community. While not all of the founding members of WTCS identified themselves as lesbians, the majority did. For some, their sexual identity changed during the time that they were involved with the shelter. One founder, who had been married and had children, came out as a lesbian while she was working at the shelter, and she described that time in her life as “a struggle.”<sup>136</sup> According to Dutton, the majority of the women involved with the shelter in its early years were lesbians. Dutton recalled that some of the lesbian women who worked as volunteers “were really inappropriate . . . everyone was just pushing all of the edges pretty hard.”<sup>137</sup> Dutton described her participation in WTCS as an important aspect of her life during this time, when she was going through a great deal of change in her personal identity as a woman.

Interestingly, although she had come out as a lesbian, Dutton was sent out into the public to represent WTCS because she didn’t “look like a lesbian somehow”—she had been married and had two children. Being silent in public about her lesbian identity empowered her to represent the radical project of the battered women’s shelter publicly, while being part of the WTCS project empowered her to privately acknowledge her lesbian identity. There was controversy within the WTCS organization about how open the volunteers should be about their sexual identities. When a heterosexual member of the group suggested to Dutton that perhaps openly lesbian women shouldn’t be representing the shelter in public, Dutton took umbrage.

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with Judy Dutton, conducted by author, January 27, 2006, transcript, page 2.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

However, Dutton realized that a lesbian identity could be a disadvantage with mainstream funders, like the City of Lawrence. Even though the shelter organization was a site of radical feminism, issues of compulsory heterosexuality affected the choices that activists made about who could represent the shelter in public.<sup>138</sup>

Several of the WTCS interviewees commented on how important the strong friendships that they made with other activists were in their lives, from that time to the present. Bonds between lesbian and straight women were an important element of the women's liberation movement and, at WTCS at least, in the battered women's movement. I believe that the WTCS interviewees talked about their sexuality and that of the other activists at the shelter because it was and remains an important part of their identities. The work that the founders of WTCS did still resonates with them as an important time in their lives, nearly thirty years later. As Judy Dutton put it, "It was fun. Actually, a lot of it was just really, really fun. Because we socialized a lot together too. We have such a bond because of what we were doing."<sup>139</sup> Lesbian activists played an important role in the development of the state and national organizations of the battered women's movement.<sup>140</sup>

I have struggled to produce a critical analysis of the battered women's movement because it is difficult for me not to see the women I have interviewed as heroes. I am a child of the 1970s. Growing up in a small, Midwestern college town, I

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<sup>138</sup> Compulsory heterosexuality is Adrienne Rich's term. Rich describes compulsory heterosexuality as a "bias, through which lesbian experience is perceived on a scale ranging from deviant to abhorrent, or simply rendered invisible." Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," (1983): p. 178.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Judy Dutton, conducted by author, January 27, 2006, transcript. page 9.

<sup>140</sup> See Chapter Four for more detail about lesbian activism in the national battered women's movement.

considered myself a feminist when I graduated from high school in 1977 and began to pursue a business degree and a career in the male-dominated field of investment management. As a member of a working class family of immigrants, I was part of the first generation of my family to obtain a college degree. I was focused on finding a career in which I could support myself, and ultimately achieve financial independence. I pursued the liberal feminist approach to equality through equality of education and opportunity. Although I shared a similar race and class position with the activists, social change was not at the forefront of my personal agenda. The women that I have interviewed took a different path. They employed a more radical feminist approach, and sought to change the world by changing the power dynamics between battered women and their batterers. As activist Sharon Rice Vaughan expressed it, “You really have to change the world in order to end battering. We’ve always realized that the fight was, to end battering was to really change the culture, and to understand how, in a sense, race, class, and gender fit together.”<sup>141</sup> This is an articulation of one of the two primary goals of the battered women’s movement—to end battering, to end violence against women in their own homes.

However, viewing the activists as heroes is problematic to my research project. Although they are proud of their contributions to the movement, my interviewees did not portray themselves as heroic. As Clite put it, “I don’t consider myself a big hero, but I’m just very grateful that I had the opportunity to really

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with Sharon Rice Vaughan, conducted by author, June 1, 2009, transcript, page 4.

contribute in a significant way at that time in my life.”<sup>142</sup> Although their work had a lasting impact on the way that battered women are viewed and treated in American society, the movement has failed to achieve lasting social change in terms of eliminating woman battering.

### ***Radical Roots: Two Entangled Interview Themes***

Two of the themes that emerged from the oral history interviews are closely related. They are the link between interviewees’ activism in the battered women’s movement and their participation in radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the use of the coordinating collective (and consensus decision-making) in the early organizations formed in the battered women’s movement.

Many of the women I interviewed talked about their experiences with radical social change in the 1960s. Barbara Hart, Senior Policy and Legal Advisor for the Battered Women’s Justice Project, remembered that her participation in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in Ann Arbor, Michigan in the 1960s led to her participation in a women’s consciousness raising group, and was the early basis for her social activism.<sup>143</sup> Sharon Rice Vaughan related that she was an active participant in antiwar activism in Minneapolis, through which she formed a close friendship with another woman with whom she would eventually co-found Women’s Advocates.<sup>144</sup> In Milwaukee, Nova Clite worked to bring in speakers from the antiwar movement to her high school political science club in the late 1960s. Clite began to hang out on the

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<sup>142</sup> Interview with Nova Clite, conducted by author, September 5, 2009, transcript, page 8.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Barbara Hart, conducted by author, July 10, 2009, transcript, page 2.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Sharon Rice Vaughan, conducted by author, June 1, 2009, transcript, page 1.



east side of Milwaukee, “which was sort of the radical hotbed area,” and contained a natural foods coop, a housing coop, and a leftist bookstore with feminist reading materials.<sup>145</sup> A similar environment existed in Cambridge, where Cherie Jimenez and Chris Womendez found political bookstores, a food coop, and support for a battered women’s shelter from other politically active women.<sup>146</sup> They had been “politically active” together with the United Farm Workers Movement, antiwar protests, and other activities<sup>147</sup> before they decided to open their apartment as a shelter for battered women.

Toby Myers, a co-founder of the first shelter for battered women in Houston, Texas, remembers a civil rights action as the background for her abusive husband asserting his patriarchal rights:

Well, I think social justice issues have always been part of my upbringing and, during the civil rights movement, I can remember getting on a bus to go to Selma, Alabama, and I was early pregnant with my second child, and my then-husband came and caused a huge scene, [in full view of the people on the bus, many of whom were from her church congregation, which had chartered a bus to go to Selma] and he said I had to get off the bus, and I said, “Well, what do you mean, I can go where I want to go,” and he said, “Well, you have my baby in there and I don’t think it’s safe, and I don’t want you going . . .”<sup>148</sup>

Aspects of Myers’ anecdote transcend the history of her activism in either the civil rights movement or the battered women’s movement. The situation she experienced epitomizes women’s struggles over control of their own bodies and reproductive systems. Even as she was trying to work for social justice by ensuring equal rights

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<sup>145</sup> Interview with Nova Clite, conducted by author, September 5, 2009, transcript, page 2.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Chris Womendez, conducted by author, July 9, 2009, transcript, page 2.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Toby Myers, conducted by author, April 21, 2009, transcript, p. 1.

for African Americans, Myers was oppressed by a husband asserting what he believed to be his rights as the head of the patriarchal family. Myers was not in control of her own body, since her husband asserted his rights to control what happened to his unborn child, and she was forced to get off the bus and relinquish her role as a civil rights activist in order to fulfill her social obligation as a “good” mother and wife. Several years later, Myers would divorce her husband, and after reading about woman battering in the public press, she would recognize her own situation as that of a battered woman. As a part of the women’s liberation movement, the battered women’s movement was also engaged in a critique of the patriarchal family, from which Myers ultimately escaped.

When asked how they became involved in working on issues dealing with violence against women, each of these women talked about their participation in 1960s radicalism. Each experienced a progression in their activism, from antiwar protest or leftism, to women’s consciousness raising groups, to becoming involved in helping women deal with issues of violence.<sup>149</sup> However, there are also important differences in their narratives and experiences. Although her initial experience was with a hotline for women who had been sexually assaulted, Hart’s standpoint was that of a formerly battered woman. Hart intentionally became involved in helping women who were experiencing violence, and found that the experience “was very helpful for me to recognize at that time that it wasn’t just me.”<sup>150</sup> In contrast, Vaughan “did not

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<sup>149</sup> It is important to remember that, at that time, there was no language to describe the violence that was happening to women in their own homes. The term “battered woman” did not come into general use until the 1970s.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with Barbara Hart, conducted by author, July 10, 2009, transcript, page 3.

have any idea of what was happening when I got involved,” with a phone service at the Legal Aid office in Ramsey County for women seeking legal help, or that the initial shelter house for women was “about battering.”<sup>151</sup> Although Vaughan related that “most of us [the activists] had no direct experience” with battering, she also acknowledged that “those of us who did have some experience didn’t make the connection too easily.”<sup>152</sup> Vaughan indicated that “part of what kept us [the activists] fired up in the beginning, was we just had this kind of constant stream of indignation at what was really happening to women.”<sup>153</sup>

For those activists who were not formerly battered women, outrage at the way women were treated in American society in general, and outrage at the way that battered women in particular were treated was a common reaction and motivator. Joyce Grover, who worked with battered women at WTCS during the 1980s, recalled how “shocking it was, to see how, not only how women were treated in their own homes, but how women were treated when they tried to talk about it.”<sup>154</sup> Denial in the community about the existence of woman battering was shocking to movement participants, and motivated them to educate the public about the prevalence of domestic abuse, and to help battered women improve their situation.

For Judy Dutton, one of the founders of WTCS, the motivation to help battered women came not from personal experience of battering, or even outrage at the treatment of battered women, but from a personal commitment to helping women

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<sup>151</sup> Interview with Sharon Rice Vaughan, conducted by author, June 1, 2009, transcript, page 1.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Joyce Grover, conducted by author, September 18, 2006, transcript, page 2.

in general. Dutton had been involved with women's consciousness-raising groups, and decided that she was "ready to get involved . . . more actively with women's issues."<sup>155</sup> Her desire to "be doing something different with women's issues" led her to volunteer to help with the efforts to assist battered women in the Lawrence community.<sup>156</sup>

The link between women's consciousness-raising groups and the emerging "Women's Liberation Movement" is well-documented by historian Sara Evans. According to Evans, for the women of the New Left, "a particular set of experiences in the southern civil rights movement and parts of the student new left catalyzed a new feminist consciousness."<sup>157</sup> This new form of feminist consciousness "included an awareness of group oppression, an analysis of the sources of that oppression, and a willingness to take collective action."<sup>158</sup> The battered women's movement was one thread of the women's liberation movement. Activists who became advocates for battered women were willing to make the issue of domestic abuse, previously a private issue, the subject of public discussion, law, and public policy. Raising public awareness of the extent of domestic abuse was one of the primary goals of early activism on behalf of battered women. Challenging a man's right to physically, emotionally, or economically abuse his wife was a direct challenge to the social institution of the patriarchal family. One of the key tenets of second wave feminism

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<sup>155</sup> Interview with Judy Dutton, conducted by author, January 27, 2006, transcript, page 1.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left*, p. 23.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 219. Evans does not discuss the battered women's movement. The rape crisis movement is mentioned, perhaps because it began at an earlier point in time than the battered women's movement.

was the idea that the patriarchal family was a source of oppression for women, because it fostered women's economic dependence on their husbands, and resulted in gender-based inequality.

Given the origins of the battered women's movement in the social movements of the 1960s, it is not particularly surprising that the coordinating collective became the preferred format for the organizations formed by battered women's activists. In creating alternative institutions, members of the New Left, the Black power and civil rights movements, and women's liberation activists all turned to new ways of organizing. The consensus form of decision-making, which had been part of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC) philosophy of participative democracy, was also used by second wave feminists to construct a non-hierarchical, more egalitarian form of organization. The goal was to share power among all the participants. The process used to reach a decision became as important as the decision itself.

Sharing power by using consensus decision-making was not an easy process. Judy Dutton, a co-founder of WTCS in Lawrence, remembers that everything was done by consensus, and that the process was very difficult:

It was the most difficult thing I've ever done, you know. And not always were we effective, as it turned out. You know, it took hours to make decisions and there would be people having kind of emotional responses . . .<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Interview with Judy Dutton, conducted by author, January 27, 2006, transcript, page 3. Despite its difficulties, the consensus form of decision-making remained in place at WTCS, in some form, from 1976 until 1998.

Consensus decision-making led to meetings that lasted for hours. One dissenting member could “block” a decision, deferring a decision indefinitely. Personalities and politics within the group could hurt the collective’s ability to function effectively.

Many interviewees were critical of the consensus decision-making process, because it absorbed so much of the activists’ time and energy. Nova Clite remarked that “it’s amazing we got anything done”<sup>160</sup> using consensus decision-making. Chris Womendez recalled that the Transition House group “spent so much time just trying to get a decision that it was crazy. It was not effective.”<sup>161</sup> Toby Myers’ critique of consensus decision-making was similar: “You have to spend a lot time doing process, and it isn’t terribly efficient.”<sup>162</sup>

Although the process was not easy, some women found it empowering.

Former WTCS staff member Joyce Grover remembers that:

. . . it feels like I saw so many women find their strength in the Collective. I mean, especially women who had been residents and then came back and volunteered and became part of the Collective, and I think back on some of those women and I think, oh, you know, where else would you be able to do that?<sup>163</sup>

The tension between empowering women through shared decision-making and running the “business” of a battered women’s shelter in an effective manner eventually led to the demise of coordinating collectives as a form of governance for shelter organizations. By the mid-1980s, most shelter organizations had moved away

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<sup>160</sup> Interview with Nova Clite, conducted by author, September 5, 2009, transcript, page 1.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Chris Womendez, conducted by author, July 9, 2009, transcript, page 6.

<sup>162</sup> Interview with Toby Myers, conducted by author, April 21, 2009, transcript, page 6.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Joyce Grover, conducted by author, September 18, 2006, transcript, page 5.

from the coordinating collective to a more traditional nonprofit organizational model, with a Board of Directors, an executive director, and staff.<sup>164</sup>

Consensus decision-making was one element of the philosophy of self-empowerment that was deployed by second wave feminists, including participants in the battered women's movement. Women who had experienced domestic abuse were considered the best experts on their own situation.<sup>165</sup> The recruitment of former victims of domestic abuse as volunteers and staff members in battered women's shelters was another strategy used by feminists to empower women, and to keep the services provided by shelter organizations focused on and accountable to the victims. Transition house, for example, was initially run entirely by volunteers, and led by Jimenez and Womendez, both formerly battered women. The goal of the organization was that women would help each other through peer advocacy. Formerly battered women helped the new residents. According to activist Lisa Leghorn, the shelter employed a feminist analysis, and sought to empower battered women to take control of their own lives.<sup>166</sup>

### ***Motivated by Personal Experience/Outrage at the Treatment of Women***

Working with, for, and on behalf of battered women is emotionally difficult work. It is emotional care work for women who are in a state of personal crisis. Many activists leave the field when they become "burned out" by the constant state of

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<sup>164</sup> The WTCS shelter in Lawrence was one of the few shelter organizations in this study that retained the use of a coordinating collective for a longer time period, until it was abolished in 1998 in favor of a traditional nonprofit model.

<sup>165</sup> This is analogous to other movements that originated in second wave feminism, including the Women's Health Movement and the Rape Crisis Movement.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Lisa Leghorn (aka Lama Shenpen), conducted by author, May 20, 2009.

crisis and lack of resources. However, the majority of the women that I interviewed have remained involved with issues of violence against women in some form all of their professional lives, either as paid staff, in volunteer capacities, at the local, state or national level, or teaching about violence against women. One of the questions that I asked interviewees was what motivated them to do this work. A common, but not universal, response was that they were motivated by personal experiences of violence.

One interviewee expressed the opinion that, “I truly don’t know, had I not been battered, if I would have chosen this as my life’s work.”<sup>167</sup> She credits her batterer for “having taught me great lessons and moved me in this direction of ending violence against women.”<sup>168</sup> This activist found herself in a women’s consciousness-raising group in the 1960s, and learned that she was the only woman in the group who was being physically battered. She decided to talk about her experience, and found that “it shocked everybody,” but her revelations of battering contributed to the group’s decision to open a crisis hotline for women. The hotline was initially for women who had been sexually assaulted, but many of the callers were battered women, and the group began to see the need to help battered women as well.<sup>169</sup>

Several of the women I talked with related that they did not realize that they were being battered until they had become active in the movement. This was complicated by the lack of public discourse about private violence against women. In

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<sup>167</sup> Interview with Barbara Hart, conducted by author, July 10, 2009, transcript, page 10.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., page 3. Starting with a crisis line for women, and finding that many women were calling in crisis because they were being battered, is a common theme in the histories of the five shelters. See Chapter Three for a detailed history of five battered women’s shelters.



the early years of the movement, there was no language to describe the physical, emotional, and other forms of abuse that women were experiencing from their husbands. As Nova Clite remembered, “It was like this undefined problem that didn’t have a name.”<sup>170</sup> Clite recalled that it was only in retrospect, after becoming involved in the development of the Milwaukee shelter, that she realized that her neighbor had been a battered woman when Clite was a child.<sup>171</sup>

The public silence that surrounded women’s experience of domestic abuse contributed to the motivation of women who had observed or experienced battering to do something about battering, and to make it visible as a social problem. Clite remembered going to the University and perusing “the entire Sociology catalog to see if there was any research that had been done at all on domestic violence,” and finding nothing.<sup>172</sup> The reaction of the participants in the Women’s Coalition was that they were shocked:

It was quite shocking, to us, to realize that this immense problem where women were being killed, women were being severely injured, was just completely invisible. Completely invisible. And it was treated like a joke by the criminal justice system. And, so, we really knew we had our work cut out for us with that. And it was very daunting. You know, it was like, ‘Oh, my God!’<sup>173</sup>

This shock and outrage at the way that women were being treated was a key motivating factor for some activists.

Transition House co-founders Cherie Jimenez and Chris Womendez were motivated by personal experiences of domestic abuse. In their interviews, both

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<sup>170</sup> Interview with Nova Clite, conducted by author, September 5, 2009, transcript, page 3.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

women related that they had been abused by their spouse, had been concerned for the safety of their children, and understood what it was like to have “no place to go.” Jimenez and Womendez rented apartments in the same house. The two single mothers shared with each other their experiences of abuse, and decided that they “were going to do something.” Womendez remembered that they decided to open the shelter for battered women in their own home because:

Both of my sisters had been battered, I had been battered, Cherie had been battered, and so we had a lot of that in our family and we knew it firsthand, and we also knew a lot of people that had no place to go. At that time, there was really no place to go if you had been battered.”<sup>174</sup>

Betsy Warrior, who became a member of the group of feminists who supported Transition House, was also a formerly battered woman.

Other activists were motivated by different kinds of personal experiences of violence. Debby Tucker, one of the co-founders of the first battered women’s shelter in Austin, Texas, became a volunteer for the first rape crisis center in Austin because she was horrified by the way that she was treated after she was assaulted by a stranger in her student apartment while attending the University of Texas. Tucker’s personal experience of assault caused her to come to “this dramatic realization that the way these sorts of cases were handled was just so insensitive and inappropriate,” and so she became involved “from the very beginning in establishing what became the first

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<sup>174</sup> Interview with Chris Womendez, conducted by author, July 9, 2009, transcript, page 1. The time was 1975. Both Jimenez and Womendez identified their personal experiences with battering early in their interviews as a key motivator, as did Hart. However, many other movement participants did not mention personal experiences of battering as a motivator.

rape crisis center in Texas.”<sup>175</sup> While she was Director of the rape crisis center, Tucker became involved in the group which started the Austin Center for Battered Women, where she became the Executive Director. The two organizations eventually merged.

Other activists were motivated by the experiences of female relatives with battering. Attorney and activist Julie Field cited her uncle’s murder of her aunt, and her own realization that her childhood home had functioned as a “safe house” for her mother’s sisters when they were experiencing violence, when she described her realization that domestic abuse “wasn’t just an individual problem, that it was a societal problem and that it was—I’d always been interested in civil rights, and what is the most fundamental civil right other than to be safe and secure in your own home . . .”<sup>176</sup> This statement reveals not only that Field’s motivation was grounded in family experiences with domestic abuse, but also that her political philosophy regarding violence against women was grounded in an understanding of civil rights.

Longtime activist Ellen Pence noted that workers in social justice movements are often motivated by anger at injustice, and that it is better for your work if you can be fueled by compassion rather than anger.<sup>177</sup> Pence came to the battered women’s movement by way of working on issues with housing needs for women. While she was working to start an emergency housing project for women in Minneapolis, Pence was inspired by a speech by Andrea Dworkin to work to reduce what Pence termed

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<sup>175</sup> Interview with Debby Tucker, conducted by author, April 2, 2009, transcript, page 1.

<sup>176</sup> Interview with Julie Field, conducted by author, January 11, 2008, transcript, page 9.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with Ellen Pence, conducted by author, February 2, 2009, transcript, page 2.

“the ability to use violence without consequence.”<sup>178</sup> The emergency housing project became a shelter for battered women, and Pence became involved in the movement.

*Strengthening the Movement: Statewide Organizations*

When I inquired about interviewees’ involvement with a statewide coalition of battered women’s shelters, many of the interviewees discussed the importance of activists working in concert to strengthen the movement. Describing the formation of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (PCADV), Barbara Hart said that:

We needed to work in concert, not just so that the statute would work, but so that we could make referrals to each other, so that we could learn from each other, and after all, we were starting shelters from scratch. Nobody had done this stuff before, and so we wanted to make sure that we understood it, developed a philosophical perspective on it, we had standards, we would support each other, . . .<sup>179</sup>

Hart’s comment illustrates her recollection that statewide coalitions were formed so that activists working to help battered women across the state could share information and resources.

Bernice Sisson, a longtime volunteer for Women’s Advocates, recalled that Ellen Pence advocated for a statewide coalition in Minnesota, so that there would be a support system for local shelter organizations throughout the state.<sup>180</sup> Dorothy Halley, one of the early members of the Kansas Coalition, also emphasized the importance of the moral support provided by the Coalition to its members. Working as the director

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., page 3.

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Barbara Hart, conducted by author, July 10, 2009, transcript, page 7.

<sup>180</sup> Interview with Bernice Sisson, conducted by author, June 1, 2009, transcript, page 2.

of a community shelter organization, Halley experienced a sense of isolation, and appreciated talking with other Coalition members and “knowing you’re not crazy when you’re looking at the system and realizing that these changes need to be happen was a critical thing for me to feel like what I was doing made sense.”<sup>181</sup>

In contrast, some interviewees experienced a form of “conversion” when joining statewide organizations. Sandy Barnett, Executive Director of KCSDV, described her introduction to the statewide coalition as a kind of “conversion” experience, not unlike a religious conversion, and similar to her first training as a shelter volunteer:

The only thing I can describe is that going to the initial volunteer training when I became involved was like getting religion. All of a sudden, so much stuff made sense. It was like, ok, now I understand the proof of the world, and I got that, and then going to my first Coalition meeting, I left having that feeling again.<sup>182</sup>

Barnett related that she only went to the Coalition meeting because someone who was supposed to go was not available, but that attending her first Coalition meeting defined a “pathway” for her life. She believes that many activists in the movement share her conviction that they were “meant” to do this work throughout their lives.

Transition House co-founder Chris Womendez also expressed that she had a strong religious conviction that she was meant to work to help battered women.

Womendez expressed a “very strong belief in God,” and a feeling of “knowing and hearing women,” which created “a very strong inspiration in me, personally, to do

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<sup>181</sup> Interview with Sandy Barnett, Juliene Maska, and Dorothy Stucky Halley, conducted by author, October 12, 2009, transcript, page 6.

<sup>182</sup> Interview with Sandy Barnett, Juliene Maska, and Dorothy Stucky Halley, conducted by author, October 12, 2009, transcript, page 5.

this.”<sup>183</sup> By acknowledging this sense of fulfilling their destiny, Barnett and Womendez are defining what their lives have meant. They are making sense of their identity as feminists, as activists, and as women who have worked to help battered women.

Activists recognized that they had to work together in order to ensure that the new laws (in Hart’s case, the Pennsylvania Protection From Abuse statute) they had advocated for would be implemented in ways that would benefit battered women. As activists came together to lobby for new laws governing domestic abuse, they developed what Sharon Rice Vaughan characterized as a “power block—all these people over the state that have called and contacted us and supported us.”<sup>184</sup> The statewide coalitions provided a means for activists across the state to not only communicate, but to use their political power to procure state funding for battered women’s shelters. While they wanted to support the local shelter organizations so that they could provide direct service at the local level, statewide organizations also realized the need to solidify their political power base in order to achieve legislative changes at the statewide level.

As new shelter organizations were formed in each state, they could access the resources at the state coalition to learn how to establish and run a shelter, how to procure funding, how to structure training for volunteers, law enforcement, and court officials, how to deal with confidentiality issues, and how to handle other challenging issues. The goal of the statewide coalitions was not to reinvent the grassroots shelter

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<sup>183</sup> Interview with Chris Womendez, conducted by author, July 9, 2009, transcript, page 3.

<sup>184</sup> Interview with Sharon Rice Vaughan, conducted by author, June 1, 2009, transcript, page 8

organizations at the statewide level. Rather, it was to empower the shelter organizations to be as effective as possible at assisting battered women, and to work at the state and national levels to reduce the incidence of domestic abuse.

Sarah Terwelp, who is the current Executive Director of WTCS, describes the relationship between the Lawrence shelter and the Kansas Coalition as “a really crucial connection, so that we make sure that we understand that we’re part of something bigger. A greater movement.”<sup>185</sup> For Terwelp, knowing that WTCS is not alone in the things that they are experiencing is important. Having an organization at the state level that she can turn to for advice and support, as well as training and technical assistance, helps her to sustain the motivation to keep moving forward.

Describing the work of the Kansas Coalition, Sandy Barnett characterized the Coalition’s role as one of managing circular relationships. For KCSDV, representatives of the member organizations make up the Board, so they are providing the leadership for the Coalition. However, the member organizations also look to KCSDV “to provide leadership for where they’re going.”<sup>186</sup> The local, grassroots, shelter organizations are both the leaders of the Coalition and are led by the Coalition.

The goals of all of the organizations of the battered women’s movement—shelters, statewide coalitions, and national organizations—are twofold. They are to provide services and support to battered women, and to eliminate violence against

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<sup>185</sup> Interview with Sarah Terwelp, conducted by author, October 4, 2005, transcript, page 17.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Sandy Barnett, Juliene Maska, and Dorothy Stucky Halley, conducted by author, October 12, 2009, transcript, page 17.

women. These goals have been the basis for activist's strategies since the movement began, and they were the focus of interviewees' concerns about the "institutionalization" of the battered women's movement.

### ***Concerns about Institutionalization***

In the movement today, there is a great deal of concern that the movement's organizations have become so institutionalized that they cannot be effective in achieving social change. In other words, the movement has become so focused on the provision of services that it has lost sight of the original goal of social change, of reducing/eliminating domestic abuse.

Historian Jo Freeman notes that this is a common "paradox" of social movements: either the movement conforms to social norms of behavior and loses its original goal of social change, or the movement retains its radical goals and operates in an isolated fashion outside the political system. A successful movement, according to Freeman, "must maintain a balance between personal and political change," and also "a creative tension between its 'politics' and its 'vision.'"<sup>187</sup>

In a recent study, researchers Amy Lehrner and Nicole E. Allen interviewed twenty-one women employed by sixteen domestic violence advocacy or service agencies in a Midwestern state.<sup>188</sup> Lehrner and Allen found that some of the advocates understood their work as the provision of social services, and were not aware of the history or even the existence of the battered women's movement.

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<sup>187</sup> Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1975), p. 6.

<sup>188</sup> Amy Lehrner and Nicole E. Allen, "Still a Movement after All These Years?: Current Tensions in the Domestic Violence Movement," *Violence Against Women* 15, no. 6 (2009).



Lehrner and Allen also concluded that the success of the movement in providing services to battered women has resulted in impediments to the movement's ability to achieve social change.<sup>189</sup>

This theme was echoed by interviewees in a variety of different ways. Barnett reminisced that, in the past, "people came to this work with a strong feminist ideal, because they were feminists, they felt like this work needed to be done."<sup>190</sup> Barnett is concerned because she doesn't think that is happening as much today:

In the last decade, in particular, maybe more than ever, we have seen some of the mainstreaming of this work, that what feels to me like a push from being a social change organization that also provided safety services, to being a social services organization that sometimes does social change work.<sup>191</sup>

This trend is alarming to long-time activists, because they fear that the movement will totally lose sight of the original goal of social change. The original "fire in the belly" that motivated early activists is missing from many of the advocates working on behalf of battered women today, according to Debby Tucker.<sup>192</sup> Tucker described her work at the Center for Battered Women as directing "a social service organization, but it was also a social change organization, and I wasn't just interested in ameliorating the worst of the effects, but trying to get underneath it and stop it."<sup>193</sup>

Because my research is focused on the early decades of the battered women's movement, nearly all of the women I interviewed are closer to the end of their careers

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.: p. 660.

<sup>190</sup> Interview with Sandy Barnett, Juliene Maska, and Dorothy Stucky Halley, conducted by author, October 12, 2009, transcript, page 12.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Debby Tucker, conducted by author, April 2, 2009, transcript, page 3.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., page 5.

than the beginning. They were reflecting on their experiences which took place decades ago, and how the movement has evolved over time. Some nostalgia for the exciting times of their youth is evident in their comments. However, these women are, for the most part, still actively working to reduce violence against women. They have not completely “passed the torch” to the next generation. While they embrace the participation of younger activists, they are also tenaciously holding onto the original goals of the movement, and working to ensure that those goals are not lost. Barbara Hart conducted a conference call for practitioners in the movement, featuring Lerhner and Allen discussing their research on the status of the movement. The email announcement for the conference call highlighted these questions: “Where should movement leadership come from (if indeed there is still need for a social change movement)? What would a re-invigorated movement look like? How can we get there?”<sup>194</sup> Many of the current leaders of the movement remember the “fire in the belly” that originally motivated them, and are looking for ways to restore that passion to today’s movement.

These activists are engaged in a critique of the movement’s current focus on providing social services to battered women. Transition House co-founder Cherie Jimenez believes that the battered women’s movement has become part of the system that they were originally seeking to change. Shelters were supposed to be a temporary solution, until violence against women was eliminated.<sup>195</sup> Jimenez believes that there really is not a social movement to end battering any more.

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<sup>194</sup> Email correspondence from Barbara Hart dated June 4, 2009.

<sup>195</sup> Interview with Cherie Jimenez, conducted by author, July 15, 2008.

Longtime Boston area activist Joyce King feels that the battered women's movement has moved away from being a "women's community."<sup>196</sup> Lisa Leghorn also believes that the movement is not political anymore—it is not feminist, and it is not empowering any longer. According to Leghorn, if people's values and consciousness don't change, then the underlying problem of violence against women remains the same.<sup>197</sup>

The evolution of organizational funding from a very grassroots level to grants from nonprofits and corporations to governmental funding has played a role in the institutionalization of the movement. Activists have been wary of the double-edged nature of institutional funding since the beginning of the movement. Lois Ahrens, an activist who was involved in the CBW in its early years, expressed concern in 1980 that the organization had begun to move away from its radical feminist coordinating collective roots toward a professionalized social service institution. Ahrens was concerned that the shelter was already becoming "divorced from the community it was to service" and that the changes in the organization's structure would lead to a "distancing of staff from women who stay in the shelter."<sup>198</sup>

The move toward professionalization within battered women's shelter organizations has been pushed by institutional funders, who want to see shelter staff with the appropriate professional credentials providing quality and consistency in

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<sup>196</sup> Interview with Joyce King, conducted by author, July 16, 2008, transcript, page 9.

<sup>197</sup> Interview with Lisa Leghorn (aka Lama Shenpen), conducted by author, May 20, 2009.

<sup>198</sup> Ahrens, "Battered Women's Refuges: Feminist Cooperatives Vs. Social Service Institutions," pp. 45-46.

services.<sup>199</sup> Vaughan recalled that Women's Advocates' decision to hire an Executive Director was driven by demands from governmental and nonprofit funders.<sup>200</sup> Many interviewees regarded institutional funding as both a blessing and a curse—as necessary to fund direct services to battered women, but also problematic to the extent that pressure from funders reduces the movement's ability to engage in radical critique of the position of battered women in American society. There is concern among activists that pressure from funders has pushed the battered women's movement away from its core mission of helping battered women.

Attorney Julie Field fears that, by institutionalizing and routinizing the treatment of victims of domestic violence, service providers “put people in boxes, and it overemphasizes a law enforcement response, which I think does impact on the social change aspect of it.”<sup>201</sup> Cherie Jimenez also believes that issues of race and class complicate the way that domestic abuse is being addressed now:

I think that sometimes now . . . people that are involved are somewhat removed from the issues of the huge disparities that are going on in communities. The amount of violence that some populations of women are subjected to.<sup>202</sup>

This comment embodies a further critique of the movement's lack of responsiveness to issues of race and class. With one exception, all of the activists that I interviewed were white women with a working class or middle class background. The battered women who sought refuge at the shelters, however, were more racially diverse than

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<sup>199</sup> Lehrner and Allen, "Still a Movement after All These Years?: Current Tensions in the Domestic Violence Movement," p. 666.

<sup>200</sup> Interview with Sharon Rice Vaughan, conducted by author, June 1, 2009, transcript, page 6.

<sup>201</sup> Interview with Julie Field, conducted by author, January 11, 2008, transcript, page 4.

<sup>202</sup> Interview with Cherie Jimenez, conducted by author, July 15, 2008, transcript, page 8.

the shelter staff and volunteers. While domestic abuse cuts across the lines of economic and social class, it was primarily the women from the lower economic classes who sought refuge at battered women's shelters, because they had fewer alternatives than battered women with financial resources.

The feminists who organized and ran battered women's shelters used both race and class as ways of organizing their project of providing shelter to battered women. Despite their explicitly expressed desires to overcome racism and classism in the shelter environment, the activists running battered women's shelters used race and class in a "common sense" manner—as a "way of comprehending, explaining, and acting in the world."<sup>203</sup> The use of consciousness-raising groups by the battered women's movement indicates that the activists of the movement viewed domestic abuse as a shared oppression among battered women, regardless of the race or class of the abused women.

One example of this orientation is the movement's push for mandatory arrest laws. Joyce Grover believes that the movement's push for mandatory arrest laws had an adverse impact on battered women in the African American community, who may hesitate to call the police when they are battered, because their partners will be arrested, and have to face a judicial system which is fraught with racism.<sup>204</sup>

A criticism of the national battered women's movement by women of color was that the hiring of minority staff members had resulted in "tokenization."

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<sup>203</sup> This is Omi and Winant's language. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 60.

<sup>204</sup> Interview with Joyce Grover, conducted by author, September 18, 2006, transcript, page 14.

However, minority staff members were hired by shelter organizations in response to a real concern that the shelters could not adequately serve women of color without adequate representation of those women in the ranks of shelter volunteers and staff members. As a Black survivor of domestic abuse who worked in the national battered women's movement put it, "Still, the most important part of any outreach program is the agency's ability to back its efforts. This means having the staff and agency policies in place that will be supportive of and prepared for the target population. It is not good enough for an agency to hire one woman of color to do outreach to all women of color."<sup>205</sup>

Although it was difficult to implement, many shelters did adopt policies that called for hiring a staff that reflected the ethnic and racial composition of the shelter residents. Women's Advocates posted a statement against racism in the shelter that read, "As a reminder to the staff, residents, and visitors: Racism is a form of violence which will not be tolerated at the shelter."<sup>206</sup> The consequence of racist behavior in the shelter was eviction from the shelter.

Shelters for battered women functioned as projects in which gender-based identities sometimes conflicted with racial or class-based identities. Fighting gender-based inequities and injustices was the primary goal of the shelters, but the women engaged in this work were constructed by the shelter organizations as feminists,

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<sup>205</sup> Charlene M. Waldron, "Lesbians of Color and the Domestic Violence Movement" in *Violence in Gay and Lesbian Domestic Partnerships* ed. by Claire M. Renzetti and Charles Harvey Miley (New York: The Haworth Press, Inc., 1996), p. 47.

<sup>206</sup> Ann Enke, "Taking over Domestic Space: The Battered Women's Movement and Public Protest," in *The World the 60s Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America*, ed. Van Gosse and Richard Moser (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), p. 181.

sometimes without regard to their racial or class-based identities. The categories of gender, race, and class overlapped and intersected, creating a complicated and challenging environment in battered women's shelters. The battered women's movement was forced to deal with issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality as battered women confronted the racism and classism of social services together.<sup>207</sup>

The WTCS shelter in Lawrence provides a case study. While the majority of the shelter's population in the 1980s was white, the representation of Black and Native American women in the shelter was much higher than in the general population in the surrounding city or county. Population statistics kept by the shelter also indicate that the majority of the women seeking shelter at WTCS in the 1980s were from the lower economic groups. WTCS statistics indicate that there was a dramatically larger representation of women from households with incomes below the poverty level in the shelter population than in the general population of the surrounding county. In addition, the majority of shelter residents had a high school education or less. Battered women who chose to escape their abusers by moving into the WTCS shelter faced limited opportunities due to their economic situations and their level of educational achievement.

Dorothy Halley expressed a concern that "it seems like it has become easier for programs to become more social service agencies. . ." than agents of social change.<sup>208</sup>

Jimenez agrees that many shelters have evolved into social services agencies. She is

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<sup>207</sup> I am indebted to Ann Enke for this insight.

<sup>208</sup> Interview with Sandy Barnett, Juliene Maska, and Dorothy Stucky Halley, conducted by author, October 12, 2009, transcript, page 11.

concerned that the goal of social change has been lost. In her interview, Jimenez considered whether writing a history of the movement would help to bring back some of the radicalism of the original movement:

You know, we lost all of that, . . . and yeah, how do we bring some of that back. Maybe by doing some of this history or . . . I don't know. And not forgetting where and how this evolved out of people's efforts to change things, you know. And it was very important back then. But now that we are in a very different place . . .<sup>209</sup>

This concern is tied to the lack of "passion" exhibited by many of the women who work with battered women today. Sandy Barnett believes that it is the difference between advocates like herself, who understand that "there but for the grace, go I" versus advocates who believe "this couldn't happen to me"<sup>210</sup> when they are working with battered women.

### ***Conclusion***

The themes that have emerged from the oral history interviews that I conducted with activists in the battered women's movement support my argument that the battered women's movement challenges the declension narrative of the women's liberation movement.<sup>211</sup> The battered women's movement is one thread of the women's liberation movement, and it is alive and well as a social movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Some of the women who started the first shelters and formed the

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<sup>209</sup> Interview with Cherie Jimenez, conducted by author, July 15, 2008, transcript, page 11.

<sup>210</sup> Interview with Sandy Barnett, Juliene Maska, and Dorothy Stucky Halley, conducted by author, October 12, 2009, transcript, page 13.

<sup>211</sup> The declension narrative of second wave feminism, as defined by historian Sara M. Evans, holds that second wave feminism arose as a social movement in the late 1960s and declined into oblivion in the early 1970s. Evans argues that feminism "reached its heyday in the middle 1970s and continued as a powerful force in U.S. society to the end of the century and beyond." (page 52) See Evans, "Beyond Declension: Feminist Radicalism in the 1970s and 1980s."



first statewide coalitions and national organizations are still active in (and sometimes critical of) the movement today.

In their narratives, my interviewees positioned themselves as participants in the radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. They reminisced about their involvement in the antiwar movement, the New Left, and the women's liberation movement. They characterized themselves as feminists, and they characterized the battered women's movement as a grassroots movement of women seeking equality and self determination. Shelter organizations were often started as collectives, operating with consensus decision-making, a strategy which was borrowed from other radical social movements. Interviewees engaged in a critique of the use of consensus decision-making. They expressed frustration with the consensus process, because they found it slow and unwieldy. There was tension between the feminist desire to share power and decision-making, and the need to get "the business" of sheltering battered women accomplished. The evolution of the structure of the movement, from local shelter organizations, to statewide coalitions and national organizations, was driven by the need to share information, resources, and political power.

Although many of my interviewees were motivated to work with battered women by their own personal experiences with domestic abuse, or observations of abuse within their families, many participants were simply motivated by outrage at the treatment of battered women in American society in the 1970s. Some described "conversion" experiences that led them to make the battered women's movement their life's work.

Many of the activists that I interviewed expressed concern that the battered women's movement has been "tamed" by the increasing professionalization and institutionalization of the field. Some of the move toward social service organizations, and away from being agents of social change, has occurred as a result of pressures from funders. The women who started the movement are concerned that movement organizations not let funders push them around, and that movement participants not lose sight of the original goals of helping battered women, and reducing or eliminating violence against women.

### **Chapter Three: Rescuing Women Who Are Drowning**

*“The reason women who are battered continue to be battered is that they have no place to go.”*

*--Ms. Murphy<sup>212</sup>*

*“In the early 1970s, it sometimes seemed as if the issue of battered women came out of nowhere.”*

*--Susan Schechter<sup>213</sup>*

#### ***Introduction***

Many participants in the battered women’s movement came to their activism through the social movements of the 1960s, including the antiwar movement, the Civil Rights movement, the New Left movement, and the women’s liberation movement. Examples include Barbara Hart, who was a member of SDS, and Sharon Rice Vaughan, who met the co-founder of Women’s Advocates in an antiwar protest group.<sup>214</sup> In the early 1960s, when the young, middle class, primarily white, women who had been active in the antiwar movement, New Left organizations like SDS, or Civil Rights organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) became dissatisfied with the exclusion of women from key leadership roles, they began to form separate consciousness raising groups to share their experiences as women in the movement. Consciousness raising groups discussed many topics of concern to women, giving the participants a shared sense of themselves as women.

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<sup>212</sup> Linda Picone, “Battered women: Haven is a help,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 1, 1976.

<sup>213</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, p. 29.

<sup>214</sup> See Chapter Two for more detail about interviewees’ experiences of social activism in the 1960s and 1970s, prior to their participation in the battered women’s movement.

Casey Hayden, a member of SNCC, described consciousness raising as “trusting our inner feelings,” and “learning to see the world through women’s own experiences.”<sup>215</sup>

Validating each other’s experiences through shared discussion was one form of female empowerment practiced by the women’s liberation movement.

A new feminist consciousness emerged from these groups which became the backbone of the women’s liberation movement. The women’s liberation movement drew its commitment to participatory democracy, consciousness raising, and “making the personal political” from women’s participation in other social movements. Many feminists were interested in helping other women. Feminist groups sponsored a wide variety of activities, including women’s centers and telephone hotlines. From these telephone hotlines grew the first battered women’s shelters in the U.S. This chapter traces the development of five discrete battered women’s shelters, each of which emerged independently, but all of which became part of a national network of organizations providing services and support designed to empower battered women to free themselves from domestic abuse.

### ***Women’s Advocates***

The actions of a small group of women in St. Paul, Minnesota illustrate the development of feminist activism on behalf of battered women. In December of 1971, a group of women in St. Paul, calling themselves “Women’s Advocates” began working together to provide legal information to women, especially in the area of

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<sup>215</sup> Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking, 2000), p. 114. Casey Hayden and Mary King authored a memo in 1964 which outlined the grievances of women who were active in SNCC, including discrimination against women.

family law. The founders, a small group of white women with working class or middle class backgrounds, had become acquainted through their activism in the antiwar movement and had been participants in a feminist consciousness raising group. Having “talked themselves out,” they decided to undertake a project to help women in the St. Paul community. An attorney at the county legal aid office told the group that women needed more information about family law options than the staff attorneys could provide.<sup>216</sup> Learning that women needed legal information and assistance, their first project was a printed booklet which explained divorce rights for women. The group’s second project was a telephone information and referral service, which was established in the Ramsey County Legal Aid (LARC) office in St. Paul. The referral service provided information to women in answer to their questions about health care, children’s issues, financial concerns, welfare, and social services.<sup>217</sup> Women’s Advocates, Inc. was incorporated as a nonprofit corporation on April 5, 1972. Salaries of the first two paid staff members were funded by the federal government’s VISTA program.<sup>218</sup>

The need for emergency housing for battered women immediately became apparent to the women staffing the hotline. As one worker recounted, “It was through the phone service that women in the community began to express the need for emergency housing. When we realized and documented the fact that there were no

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<sup>216</sup> Sharon Rice Vaughan, "Social Change Implications of Battered Women's Stories: A Narrative Approach," (Manchester, UK: University of Manchester, 2003), p. 145.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>218</sup> Letter from Catherine Avina, for Women’s Advocates, Inc., to Karen Thorenson, dated February 4, 1976, *Women’s Advocates, Inc. Records 1973-1984*, Minnesota Historical Society, Box #1, Folder marked “Donations.” (VISTA stands for Volunteers in Service to America.)

resources in this area, we first began housing women in our homes and then began to develop plans for a housing program.”<sup>219</sup> Co-founder Sharon Rice Vaughan remembers that the group was “determined basically to listen to women. And that’s when they really started talking about why they needed housing.”<sup>220</sup> Women calling the information service needed housing because they were being battered, and because they had no place to go. The group studied the situation in St. Paul, and found that there were thirty-seven places for a man in need of emergency housing to go. However, there was only one place that a woman with children could go—to the Grand Hotel in St. Paul. The Grand Hotel could be booked through Emergency Social Services, and women and children were only allowed to stay one night, or over the weekend, until the Welfare Department opened.<sup>221</sup>

In response to battered women’s need to have some place to go, members of Women’s Advocates began to provide emergency housing for women and children in their own homes. In February, 1973, when co-founder Susan Ryan moved in with her boyfriend, she vacated her apartment, and it became the office for Women’s Advocates, and a temporary shelter for women and their children. The apartment at 57 South Avon was located in an adults only building, however, and Ryan lost her lease when a neighbor saw diapers in the trash, and complained to the apartment manager. In August, 1973, the office and temporary shelter then moved to Vaughan’s home. Vaughan remembers the time as chaotic: “Then it came to my house, and I

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Interview with Sharon Rice Vaughan conducted by author, June 1, 2009, transcript, p. 3.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., p. 2. Single women could also stay at the YWCA. See also Ann Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism*, ed. Daniel J. Walkowitz and Barbara Weinstein, Radical Perspectives (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 183.

lived downstairs. So, I was downstairs with three kids, and two bedrooms, and this huge living room. This was the master bedroom, originally, but it's the same—and so, people just slept in the living room, and I had three kids in one room, and then I had the bedroom.”<sup>222</sup> The shelter was immediately filled to capacity, crowded with women and children sleeping anywhere they could.

Vaughan recalls that, at this time, no one in the group “had figured out *why* women needed to get away in an emergency, or, when they said they were escaping violence, that it was anything more than an occasional individual relationship gone bad.”<sup>223</sup> The women who formed Women’s Advocates were providing a service to meet the emergency housing needs of women, even before they had developed an analysis of the causes of women’s need for emergency housing. The activists quickly developed an understanding of domestic abuse as a social problem, however, as they listened to the stories that women were telling when they sought emergency shelter. According to Vaughan, “as the advocates became aware of battering, we felt that groups and programs like ours, small and self-sufficient, could start all over the country. The relationships were what were important.”<sup>224</sup> For Vaughan, the stories that battered women told the advocates were very powerful, and they put women’s experience at the center of the movement.

The demand for emergency housing for battered women began to overwhelm the capacity of members of Women’s Advocates to shelter women and children in

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>223</sup> Vaughan, "Social Change Implications of Battered Women's Stories: A Narrative Approach," p. 147.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

their own homes. By the summer of 1974, the Board of Directors was making plans to hire an Administrative Director, and the staff was negotiating the purchase of a shelter house at 584 Grand in St. Paul. Women's Advocates was immediately successful in obtaining funding for the shelter. They received a \$10,000 grant for the down payment on the house from the Bush Foundation, and \$12,000 matching grants for the rehabilitation of the house from the Bremer Foundation and the HB Fuller Company.<sup>225</sup> The apparent ease with which Women's Advocates obtained funding belies the fact that, in the early years of the movement, it was not easy to obtain funding to start a shelter house. Correspondence from Del Martin indicates that Women's Advocates was "apparently the only group (outside of Haven House in Pasadena which is part of an alcoholic program) in the United States that has managed to obtain funding."<sup>226</sup> By contrast, most battered women's shelters were started with very little funding in place, and were staffed primarily by unpaid volunteers.

On October 8, 1974, Women's Advocates opened the first shelter house for battered women in the U.S. at 584 Grand in St. Paul. The opening was the culmination of a year's work, with volunteers doing the fundraising and preparing the house for occupancy. The first occupants entered the house during a board meeting on October 11, 1974. By the end of the board meeting, the shelter was full, housing

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<sup>225</sup> Letter from Sharon Vaughan to Mary Snitke, dated January 6, 1975, *Women's Advocates, Inc. Records 1973-1984*, Minnesota Historical Society, Box #1, Folder marked "Donations." Minneapolis/St. Paul is the home of several corporate headquarters, and these foundations were established by the founders of major corporations. These foundations contributed to social projects as a way to "give something back" to their communities.

<sup>226</sup> Letter from Del Martin to Sharon Vaughan, dated August 28, 1975, *Women's Advocates, Inc. Records 1973-1984*, Minnesota Historical Society, Box #4, Folder marked "Battered—Del Martin."



twelve women and their children. During its first month of operation, the Women's Advocates shelter housed twenty-two women and fifteen children.<sup>227</sup>

### *Sojourner Truth House*

While Women's Advocates was starting up its telephone information service in St. Paul, National Organization of Women (NOW) members in Milwaukee were forming a collective called "The Women's Coalition." The Women's Coalition was organized in the fall of 1972 by representatives of ten different feminist organizations in Milwaukee who wanted to work together on a variety of projects.<sup>228</sup> The Coalition was founded in order to facilitate the sharing of resources between the member groups, to help the various groups work together to combat sexism, and to help women realize their complete potential. Member groups included NOW, the Amazon Collective (which published a feminist journal), Women Pro Se (which facilitated women handling their own divorce actions without an attorney), the Coalition for a Right to Choice (a prochoice group which focused on legislation), the Wisconsin Task Force on Rape, Grapevine (a lesbian/feminist collective), the UWM Feminist Center, and the UWM Prochoice Abortion Coalition.<sup>229</sup> Projects of the Coalition included the Women's Crisis Line, the Task Force on Battered Women, the Task Force on Displaced Homemakers (displaced as a result of divorce, separation, or

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<sup>227</sup> Martin, *Battered Wives: Revised, Updated*, p. 198.

<sup>228</sup> In her research on the battered women's movement in the late 1970s, Del Martin found that many chapters of NOW had established Task Forces on Battered Women, and were active in the effort to create a national network of shelters. In 1975, the national NOW office established a Task Force on Battered Women/Household Violence.

<sup>229</sup> "The Women's Coalition and Member Groups," undated, *Women's Coalition, Inc.*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee, Box 1, Folder 8: Milwaukee Mss 177: Coalition History (Herstory), pages 1-2.

widowhood), and Myriad, which offered support services to women actively involved in prostitution.

In January, 1973, the Women's Coalition opened the Women's Crisis Line. The Women's Crisis Line was the first major project of the Coalition, and provided a "non-sexist alternative for women in need of help."<sup>230</sup> The Crisis Line was a 24-hour answering service which provided assistance to women in crisis situations, with particular emphasis on women who were victims of sex crimes. Coalition members developed the Crisis Line as a feminist institution, run entirely by women for women, with an emphasis on self-help, independence, and freedom of choice, in order to combat perceived sexism in existing social services.<sup>231</sup> The emphasis on self-help and independence is reflective of the philosophy of the women's liberation movement, which emphasized the empowerment of women, based on their shared experiences as a group. The Crisis Line received many calls from battered women who needed assistance. Crisis Line workers estimated that one of every five calls they received from women with family problems (family problems represented the reason for over 48% of the total incoming calls) was from a woman who was concerned with either the fear of or the threat of violence from her husband or another male household member.<sup>232</sup> In 1974, the Crisis Line received approximately 200 calls from women who left their homes in fear for their own and their children's lives

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>231</sup> "The Women's Coalition of Milwaukee, 1972-1987: Feminist Activism at the Local Level," by J.M. Dombeck aka Jamakaya, found online at [www.jamakaya.com](http://www.jamakaya.com) on 8/9/09.

<sup>232</sup> "The Battered Woman Project," undated, *Women's Coalition, Inc.*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 2, Folder 7: Milwaukee Mss 177: Miscellaneous, p. 1.

and safety.<sup>233</sup> Co-founder Nova Clite remembers that, “it was through the Women’s Crisis Line that we found that there was a certain percentage of calls that were from women who were victims of domestic violence. And so, then, that started us down the path of doing something about it.”<sup>234</sup>

That path led to another major project of the Coalition, which became the “Task Force on Battered Women.” Founded in November, 1975, the Task Force on Battered Women initially provided volunteer counseling and advocacy programs for battered women. The Women’s Coalition newsletter, *Common Ground*, listed the two major goals for the Task Force as “to establish an emergency shelter for battered women (Sojourner Truth House), and raise consciousness in the community regarding the major problem of domestic violence against women.”<sup>235</sup> The Task Force promoted community education on battering through a speaker’s bureau which engaged in public speaking, radio and television appearances, and newspaper coverage of the issues. Task Force members also held public meetings and “speakouts” for battered women. Their mission to make battered women visible in the Milwaukee community is illustrated in this statement from *Common Ground*: “Battered women in this city are not heard or seen: THEY ARE INVISIBLE. But we, as a well-organized group of concerned people, will make this community not only aware of battered women but responsive to them as well.”<sup>236</sup> It didn’t take long

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Interview with Nova Clite, conducted by author, September 5, 2009, transcript, page 2.

<sup>235</sup> *Common Ground: A Monthly Newsletter of The Women’s Coalition*, May/June 1978, p. 15, *Women’s Coalition, Inc.*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 2, Folder 1: Milwaukee Mss 177: Women’s Coalition Newsletters, 1978-1981.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

for the community to become aware of and responsive to battered women. Clite remembers that, “as soon as we started getting the word out there about battered women,” and that they intended to do something about it, “it started snowballing and other agencies, like social service agencies in town, started calling us, too.”<sup>237</sup> The Task Force’s resources were limited, and there soon were many battered women seeking assistance.

Task Force members also provided in-service training sessions for members of the Milwaukee police force.<sup>238</sup> Working with local law enforcement was an important contribution of the early battered women’s shelter organizations. Shelter staff provided trainings for the police on how to handle domestic abuse situations. As the laws governing domestic abuse were changed, encouraging local police to enforce the new laws appropriately was important to ensure the effective implementation of new protections for battered women.<sup>239</sup>

Reflecting their feminist roots and connections, the Milwaukee Women’s Coalition took part in “Women’s Strike Day” on October 29, 1975. Women’s Strike Day was a national feminist protest designed to show that, if women did not work, American society would not be able to function. A Women’s Coalition flyer for Women’s Strike Day explained that “All these actions [driving with your lights on, and attending events at the Women’s Coalition headquarters] are intended to

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<sup>237</sup> Interview with Nova Clite, conducted by author, September 5, 2009, page 4.

<sup>238</sup> *Common Ground: A Monthly Newsletter of The Women’s Coalition*, March/April 1979, p. 5, *Women’s Coalition, Inc.*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 2, Folder 1: Milwaukee Mss 177: Women’s Coalition Newsletters, 1978-1981.

<sup>239</sup> Please see Chapter Five for a more complete discussion of the evolution and implementation of laws governing domestic abuse.

dramatize the feminist argument that women are everywhere doing the work that keeps this country running smoothly and that their work is undervalued and underpaid.”<sup>240</sup> Activists in the battered women’s movement believed that the financial empowerment of women would help free women from economic dependence on men, one of the conditions that contributed to domestic abuse.

On October 2 and 3, 1976, the Task Force sponsored the first national conference for women working on the issue of domestic abuse. The Wisconsin Conference on Battered Women attracted 200 participants from across the U.S., including many from Wisconsin. This gathering provided one of the first opportunities for battered women’s activists to network, share information and make contacts. Lisa Leghorn, a feminist writer and activist from Boston, was the keynote speaker at the conference.<sup>241</sup> Her speech, titled “Social Responses to Battered Women,” explained the social problem of woman abuse and called for an expansion of the options available to battered women, through the establishment of shelters and support services, changing the laws governing domestic abuse, and consciousness raising. Leghorn cited the “fundamental power relations” between men and women as “the root of the problem,” arguing that “[the] day that we control our own money and working conditions, the day that we have the power to effect the changes that are needed, is the day that the battering of women will cease.”<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Women’s Strike Day Flyer, *Women’s Coalition, Inc.*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 2, Folder 4: “Alice Doesn’t” National Women’s Strike Day, 1975.

<sup>241</sup> “The Women’s Coalition of Milwaukee, 1972-1987: Feminist Activism at the Local Level,” by J.M. Dombek aka Jamakaya, found online at [www.jamakaya.com](http://www.jamakaya.com) on 8/9/09.

<sup>242</sup> “Social Responses to Battered Women: A speech given at the Wisconsin Conference on Battered Women,” by Lisa Leghorn, October 2, 1976, p. 16.

The conference played an important role in the creation of the national movement. It provided the basis for the formation of the National Communication Network Against Domestic Violence (NCNADV). NCNADV was one of the first coalitions among battered women's shelters and projects throughout the U.S.<sup>243</sup> NCNADV began to publish a bi-monthly newsletter which became an important source of news and information for activists. The conference was also the first of three different gatherings of activists that began a dialogue that eventually led to the formation of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV).<sup>244</sup>

Like the Women's Coalition, the Task Force on Battered Women was organized as a coordinating collective, in which each member had an equal vote in decisions. Many of the collective members were survivors of domestic abuse. In order to achieve its goals, the Task Force organized itself into three committees: Community Education, Counseling/Advocacy, and Housing. The Community Education Committee focused on the activities of its speaker's bureau, raising awareness of and creating visibility for battered women in Milwaukee. In 1977, the Task Force formed "Advocates for Battered Women" as a joint project with the Junior League of Milwaukee and the Milwaukee District Attorney's Office. Advocates for Battered Women was housed in the District Attorney's office, and trained volunteer advocates to help battered women negotiate their way through the criminal justice system. Advocates also tried to facilitate a positive institutional

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<sup>243</sup> "Task Force on Battered Women Report: November 1975 to May 1977," dated June 13, 1977, *Women's Coalition, Inc.*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 2, Folder 14: Milwaukee Mss 177: Task Force on Battered Women, p. 2.

<sup>244</sup> See Chapter Four for a history of the founding of NCADV.

response to battered women. Meanwhile, the Housing Committee worked to prepare the shelter for its opening.

Before the shelter house was opened, Task Force volunteers sheltered battered women in their own homes, putting their own safety at risk. The Task Force opened a battered women's shelter, called "Sojourner Truth House," in Milwaukee in July, 1978. The first shelter house was a duplex that was opened up into one unit and could accommodate 18 women and children.<sup>245</sup> Like the Women's Advocates' shelter, Sojourner Truth House received funding from six area foundations, which collectively donated \$50,000 to the purchase of the shelter house.<sup>246</sup> The United Way of Greater Milwaukee supported the shelter financially, and staff were paid with funding from the federal VISTA program.<sup>247</sup> In early 1981, the shelter moved into a new house which was nearly twice the size of the original shelter, and could accommodate 32 women and children.<sup>248</sup> As the Crisis Line had done before it, the Task Force on Battered Women became a separate organization, independent from the Women's Coalition, when it incorporated in 1979.

### ***Transition House***

Although the origins of the battered women's shelters in different cities around the U.S. may appear to have been independent of each other, there were

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<sup>245</sup> "New women's shelter is bigger, but more space would be nice," *The Milwaukee Journal*, February 16, 1981.

<sup>246</sup> "On, Wisconsin: An Editorial," *The Milwaukee Journal*, undated, found in *Women's Coalition, Inc.*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 2, Folder 14: Milwaukee Mss 177: Task Force on Battered Women.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>248</sup> "New women's shelter is bigger, but more space would be nice," *The Milwaukee Journal*, February 16, 1981.

connections between the different organizations. Clite's 1975 report on "The Battered Woman Project," addressed to the member groups of the Women's Coalition, indicated that she had "been investigating via the mail other programs in the country, and have found one in St. Paul which sounds exactly like the BWP, and I would like to go visit them."<sup>249</sup> The publication in 1974 of Erin Pizzey's book, *Scream Quietly or the Neighbors Will Hear*, which detailed the beginnings of the shelter movement in England and described Chiswick Women's Aid, the first London shelter, served as a model for the American shelter movement. Boston feminist Gabrielle Bernard visited one of the shelter houses in London in 1974, and then held a Boston NOW general meeting on the subject of battered women. Bernard also appeared on two local television stations' programs to discuss the topic, and drafted a resolution regarding domestic abuse for the NOW conference in Philadelphia in 1975.<sup>250</sup> A year later, Boston feminist Betsy Warrior began compiling and publishing a directory of battered women's programs and shelters. *The Battered Women's Directory* became an important source of information for both battered women and the activists who were trying to help them.

Boston feminist Lisa Leghorn, who was the keynote speaker at the 1976 Wisconsin Conference on Battered Women in Milwaukee, was also an activist in the battered women's movement. Lisa Leghorn and Betsy Warrior published *The*

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<sup>249</sup> "Memo to Member Groups of the Women's Coalition, Inc." dated April 20, 1975, *Women's Coalition, Inc.*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 8: Milwaukee Mss 177: Coalition History (Herstory), p. 1. "Via the mail" meant that Clite had written letters to other programs, asking for information about their operations.

<sup>250</sup> Letter from Gabrielle Bernard to Betsy Warrior dated August 29, 1975, *Battered Women's Directory Project Records, 1975-1982 (inclusive)*, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, 84-M140 Box 1, Folder 8 "Massachusetts."



*Houseworker's Handbook* in 1975. Leghorn was a regular public speaker on the issue of women's unpaid labor, using a radical feminist analysis to argue that women's unpaid work relegated women to virtual slavery, and created an economic dependence on men that made them vulnerable to domestic abuse. (The battered women's movement shared with the women's liberation movement a critique of the patriarchal family. Activists in the battered women's movement believed that wives' economic dependence on their husbands, and the inequalities it created, contributed to domestic abuse.) Leghorn and Warrior, who met through their participation in Cell 16, a radical feminist group in Boston, did fundraising and community organizing work for Transition House, which was the first battered women's shelter in the Boston area.<sup>251</sup>

Transition House was founded by two women who were survivors of domestic abuse, Cherie Jimenez and Chris Womendez. Their desire to start a shelter for battered women grew directly out of personal experience with domestic abuse. As Womendez explained it, "Both of my sisters had been battered, I had been battered, Cherie had been battered, and so we had a lot of that in our family and we knew it firsthand, and we also knew a lot of people that had no place to go."<sup>252</sup> Jimenez and Womendez, shared a five bedroom apartment in Cambridge with their two children, and subsisted on welfare. During an earlier period in her life, when she had done some traveling with her daughter, Jimenez visited a shelter house in Toronto and been

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<sup>251</sup> Interview with Lisa Leghorn conducted by author, May 20, 2009.

<sup>252</sup> Interview with Chris Womendez conducted by author, July 9, 2009, transcript, p. 1.

impressed with the program there.<sup>253</sup> It served as a model for Jimenez and Womendez when they were considering what they could do for battered women in Cambridge. After investigating the issues, in January, 1976, they decided to open their apartment at 157 Pearl Street to shelter battered women and their children. They put posters up in various places around Cambridge, advertising the availability of the shelter, and were immediately inundated with phone calls. Rather than starting their services as a crisis line and evolving into a shelter, Transition House began as a shelter with a crisis line in it.

Although there was an active feminist community in Cambridge, which centered around the Cambridge Women's Center, Transition House was started by two women, without the support of a larger network. While Women's Advocates and the Task Force on Battered Women were both started by feminists, they started with a crisis line and then did fundraising and ultimately purchased shelter houses. Transition House began with the opening of a shelter, completely operated by two volunteers with virtually no funding, and the organizing and fundraising came afterwards. For the first few months that Transition House was open, the founders supported its operation using their welfare checks, food stamps, and any donations they could solicit, including food, clothing, and money. Jimenez considered herself more of an anarchist than anything else, and remembered the time as a very exciting one, in which "we just did things. We didn't think about liability issues . . . what

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<sup>253</sup> Interview with Cherie Jimenez conducted by author, July 15, 2008, transcript, p. 2.

could happen or funding or money or we needed to do this first before we could do that. We just went ahead and did it, I think.”<sup>254</sup>

Warrior and Leghorn were part of the shelter’s support group, and organized fundraising dinners. All four women participated in the Cambridge feminist community, and soon had the entire feminist community supporting the shelter. The small group of women running the shelter evolved into a larger collective, which met at the Women’s Center. After about six months, the number of battered women seeking shelter overwhelmed the capacity of the small apartment. The shelter closed, and then reopened a few months later in a larger house purchased by the collective.<sup>255</sup> At this point, the shelter was being run by a collective composed of nine women who had worked with the first shelter. Dozens of women also volunteered their time at the shelter. Jimenez and Womendez both stayed involved with the shelter as paid employees for a few years, then moved on to other projects.<sup>256</sup>

On August 26, 1976, Cambridge was the site of the “Women Support Women” march. Many of the activists involved with Transition House devoted time to organizing the march. It was the first mass speakout in the U.S. on the problem of battered women. Jimenez remembers that the march brought a lot of people together

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<sup>254</sup> Interview with Cherie Jimenez conducted by author, July 15, 2008, transcript, p. 3.

<sup>255</sup> “Transition House,” dated September 1977, p. 2, *Betsy Warrior Papers, 1966-1994* (*inclusive*), Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Carton Two. In a followup conversation to her interview, Womendez mentioned that she and Cherie decided to close Transition House after one of the residents committed suicide. They decided that the environment was just too intense, and they were concerned about the negative effects that it was having on their children. Transition House subsequently reopened as a battered women’s shelter in a new location, run by the members of the collective.

<sup>256</sup> Both Jimenez and Womendez are still working on issues relating to violence against women. Jimenez works for Kim’s Project, a program that is specifically for women victimized by or at risk for sexual exploitation, violence and prostitution. Womendez is the founder of Finex House, Inc., a shelter for battered women with disabilities.

around the issue of violence against women, and produced even more community support for Transition House. As a result of the publicity, several small local foundations gave grants to Transition House, and Boston area housewives held bake sales and donated the proceeds to the shelter. Senator Edward Kennedy did a radio appeal for donations for the shelter, and raised \$60,000.<sup>257</sup> The collective then began receiving grants from area foundations, and received federal CETA funding for paid staff positions.<sup>258</sup> Although Transition House was started with no funding, within two years it enjoyed widespread community support.

As shelters were opened across the U.S., the battered women's movement continued to grow, and so did the need for communication and information. In April, 1976, Betsy Warrior published the first edition of the *Battered Women's Directory*. The *Directory* was international in scope, containing addresses, phone numbers, and information about services and programs for organizations assisting battered women across the U.S. and around the world. It was designed to be used both as a referral source for battered women, and as a networking tool for activists in the movement. Sociologist Kathleen Barry characterized the Eighth Edition of the *Directory* as "a resource for practitioners, a guide for abused and beaten women, and a source of important feminist analysis," adding that, "[b]ecause of Warrior's ability to address feminism on all these levels at once, it is a radical feminist work in its fullest

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<sup>257</sup> Interview with Chris Womendez conducted by author, July 9, 2009, transcript, pages 2 and 5.

<sup>258</sup> CETA stands for Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, a federal program started in 1973 to train workers and provide them with jobs in public service.

meaning.”<sup>259</sup> Warrior received no funding for the *Directory*, and published it herself, in order not to compromise her work to pressures from potential funders. Warrior believes that many groups began programs for battered women using information provided in the *Directory*.<sup>260</sup> Married as a teenager, Warrior was also a survivor of domestic abuse. Her activism grew out of her personal experience with battering, and her understanding of the lack of options open to abused women. As Warrior reflected, “If I had had some place to go, I think I would have left him years earlier.”<sup>261</sup>

### ***Women’s Transitional Care Services, Inc.***

The founders of Transition House discovered that the women who volunteered at the shelter enjoyed supporting other women. Although their original goal was to staff the shelter with women who were survivors of abuse, the majority of their volunteers were not battered women. (Staffing battered women’s shelters with survivors was a strategy in keeping with the feminist strategy of self-empowerment.) That was also the case with Women’s Transitional Care Services, Inc. (WTCS), the battered women’s shelter in Lawrence, Kansas. WTCS was formed in October, 1976 by a group of feminists who were interested in working on women’s issues. Like other feminist groups, they quickly determined that there was a need for a shelter for

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<sup>259</sup> *Review of Battered Women’s Directory, Eighth Edition*, by Kathleen Barry, p. 1, *Betsy Warrior Papers, 1966-1994 (inclusive)*, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Carton One, File “Kathleen Barry.”

<sup>260</sup> Letter from Betsy Warrior to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, dated August 7, 1984, *Betsy Warrior Papers, 1966-1994 (inclusive)*, Schlesinger Library, Carton Two.

<sup>261</sup> “Battered Women” by Linda Bird Francke, *Newsweek*, February 2, 1976. Warrior changed her last name to reflect her radical feminist persona, a strategy used by a number of second wave feminists.

battered women through the operation of a crisis line for women. WTCS filed its Articles of Incorporation with the State of Kansas on February 4, 1977. According to the organization's bylaws, WTCS's purpose was "to provide services, by women, for women relating to both economic and psychological needs as women confront personal crisis."<sup>262</sup> The bylaws indicated that WTCS intended to accomplish this by operating a transitional shelter house for women and their children, creating an environment in which women could trust each other and change their lives, educating the community about WTCS's services and the need for those services, and working with judicial, legal, law enforcement, medical, and social services agencies in providing services to women in crisis.<sup>263</sup>

The majority of the founders were associated with the University of Kansas in some way—as students, faculty members, or the wives of faculty members. They had been involved in the anti-war movement and the feminist movement, and wanted to do work that would help other women in need. WTCS co-founder Pamela Johnston described herself as a feminist:

More than a radical feminist I had always seen myself more as a leftist, and I was involved in the back-to-the-land movement. As a college student I was very involved in civil rights, anti-poverty, and anti-war work. My involvement with WTCS melded my leftist politics with feminism. The combination of coming face to face with violence against women, the consciousness raising that was at the core of the WTCS volunteer training, and my leftist leanings, certainly made me see myself as a radical feminist.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Lawrence Women's Transitional Care Services, Inc., "Bylaws," revised February 4, 1979, found in WTCS Training Manual, dated June, 1980, in WTCS Archives. (The WTCS Archives are located at the public offices of WTCS in the United Way Building at 2518 Ridge Court, Lawrence, Kansas.)

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Email from Pamela Johnston to author dated April 4, 2006.

Johnston's description of herself indicates that she is typical of early activists in the battered women's movement. She was an activist in the Civil Rights and anti-war movement. She considered herself a "leftist," meaning that she was critical of the capitalist economic system, and embraced consciousness raising, making the personal political, and participatory democracy. By describing herself as a radical feminist, Johnston is indicating that she believed that women were oppressed by men, and that the entire sex/gender system needed to be changed. Radical feminists engaged in a critique of the patriarchal family, believing that the power held by men contributed to women's oppression, which included domestic abuse. Johnston was "making the personal political" by calling attention to women's experiences of domestic abuse, and making them the subject of public discussion and the law.

WTCS was organized as a coordinating collective. Any woman was eligible to be a voting member of the collective, if she had completed the WTCS training, and was either an on call advocate, working with abuse survivors, or was an active member of a committee. All decisions were made by consensus. A member who was eligible to vote at the coordinating collective was also eligible to nominate herself to the Board of Directors. According to collective member Joyce Grover's written herstory of WTCS, the policies and procedures of WTCS "were grounded in an empowerment model—in essence, the group believed that what a battered woman needed was room to make her own decisions about her life, not directions from

someone else as to what was a right or wrong decision for her . . . <sup>265</sup> The empowerment model operated within the WTCS organizational structure, as well as in the way that services were delivered to clients.

After sheltering battered women in their own homes on an emergency basis for nearly two years, WTCS opened the first battered women's shelter in Lawrence in August of 1978 in a rented house at 1317 Kentucky Street, near the college campus.<sup>266</sup> At the time of its opening, it was the only shelter in Douglas County. The members of the coordinating collective were responsible for the operations of the shelter, including: "(a) furnishing the facility; (b) determining house rules, policies, and intake procedures; (c) planning, with the advice of the staff, program activities; (d) planning community education seminars and in-service training programs; (e) advising the staff; [and] (f) seeking out permanent sources of funding."<sup>267</sup> In its first year of operation, WTCS received funding from a federal CETA grant, several local churches, the NOW Domestic Violence Project, Inc., the Kansas State Nursing Association, and a Lawrence women's service organization, the "Jaycee Jaynes."<sup>268</sup> In that first year of operation, WTCS housed 101 women and 125 children.<sup>269</sup> In addition to providing shelter for battered women and their children, WTCS promoted community education on domestic abuse, averaging about two speaking engagements

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<sup>265</sup> Joyce Grover, "An Informal Herstory of WTCS," page 1, in WTCS Archives. See Chapter Two for activists' critiques of the consensus decision-making model.

<sup>266</sup> For the first two years, calls from battered women were fielded by Headquarters, a Lawrence counseling service, or the KU Information Center at the University of Kansas. "Group Offers Refuge," by Rhonda Holman, *University Daily Kansan*, January 24, 1979.

<sup>267</sup> Application for Subgrant, Governor's Committee on Criminal Administration, page 2d, found in grant files, WTCS Archives.

<sup>268</sup> WTCS Newsletter dated November 1, 1979, in WTCS Archives, pages 1-2.

<sup>269</sup> "Stats," in WTCS Archives.



a month, and also provided in-service training programs to the Lawrence Police Department.<sup>270</sup>

WTCS quickly developed connections to the national battered women's movement. In February, 1979, representatives from WTCS attended a two day conference about battered women, titled "A Conference on Battered Women," which was held at Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. Featured speakers included author and activist Del Martin, then the Coordinator of the NOW Task Force on Battered Women, and Louise Bouschard, who was the Center Coordinator of Women's Self Help Center in St. Louis, Missouri.<sup>271</sup> WTCS also acquired a listing in *Warrior's Battered Women's Directory*.

### ***The Center for Battered Women***

At approximately the same time that a small group of women was forming WTCS in Lawrence, the Austin Commission on the State of Women in Austin, Texas was sponsoring a half day conference titled "The Battered Woman: Breaking the Silence." Over 100 people attend the conference, including a number of battered women. One of the recommendations that emerged from the conference was that Austin needed a battered women's shelter. That goal was achieved on June 1, 1977, when the Center for Battered Women (CBW) was opened as a shelter for battered women in Austin and Travis County.<sup>272</sup> CBW was the first "modern" battered

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<sup>270</sup> Application for Subgrant, Governor's Committee on Criminal Administration, page 2a, found in grant files, WTCS Archives.

<sup>271</sup> Pamphlet, "A Conference on Battered Women," page 2, found in WTCS Archives.

<sup>272</sup> "Proposal: Center for the Prevention of Family Violence, 1978," page 1, *Texas Council on Family Violence Collection, 1974-2001*, University of Houston Libraries, Box 1, Folder 1.

women's shelter in the state of Texas.<sup>273</sup> In its first year of operation, CBW sheltered over 400 women and children.<sup>274</sup>

Unlike the shelters in St. Paul, Milwaukee, Cambridge, and Lawrence, CBW did not start with few resources and then seek broader community support. Although CBW was organized by a group of women, it also started with widespread community support. CBW was supported by the Austin Women's Center, and it also received moneys from Travis County and the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. The shelter also received support from the City of Austin, which provided a \$1 a year property lease, giving CBW both significant financial support and a physical location in which to operate a shelter. Private donations from community members supplied all the furniture, dishes and other household items needed, and private donations established a contingency fund for the shelter.<sup>275</sup> The degree of community support for the shelter is important, since the Austin community provided everything the shelter needed to get started. In October, 1978, CBW was awarded funding for five CETA staff positions. Because the organization had been operating as a coordinating collective, using consensus decision making, a period of confusion and conflict ensued over the next nine months. Eventually, Debby Tucker was hired as the

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<sup>273</sup> I use the term "modern" here because there was a shelter in Belton, Texas, which was established by Martha McWhirter in 1875, as a refuge for abused women, which she defined as women who were beaten by their husbands, or whose husbands spent the crop money on Saturday night drinking binges. The Belton shelter existed into the 1890s. It was so prosperous that the residents donated money to Belton civic causes, until they finally sold the property, moved to Washington, D.C., and purchased a hotel. "Working Together for Change: Battered Women's Advocates & The Criminal Justice System, 1987," page 5, *Texas Council on Family Violence Collection, 1974-2001*, University of Houston Libraries, Box 5, Folder 51.

<sup>274</sup> "Battered women seek refuge," by Mary Dudley, *Austin-American Statesman*, June 15, 1978.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

Executive Director, and the organization began to move forward again.<sup>276</sup> In 1980, the Austin Association of Homebuilders adopted the CBW, and built the first shelter in the U.S. which was specifically designed for battered women and their children.<sup>277</sup>

According to its bylaws, the mission of the CBW was to “assist the community by providing temporary refuge and comprehensive services which are responsive to the individual needs of the women and children who are experiencing family violence.”<sup>278</sup> Because it operated as a collective, membership on the Board was open to any individual who demonstrated an interest in CBW, with two positions elected by the volunteer group.

Like the founders of Transition House, Debby Tucker’s motivation to work on issues relating to violence against women was grounded in personal experience. Tucker was the first Director of the Rape Crisis Center in Austin, which was the first of its kind in the State of Texas. She had been the victim of a sexual assault and battery, and was appalled at the treatment she received from the Austin police. As Tucker explained it, “I got involved, essentially, by having a personal experience that led me to realize how common violence against women was in so many different forms, and then to realize how limited the responses were of systems and that things

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<sup>276</sup> “Volunteer Handbook, Center for Battered Women, History and Development, September 1979,” page 6, *Texas Council on Family Violence Collection, 1974-2001*, University of Houston Libraries, Box 1, Folder 93. Dobash and Dobash report that the price the organization paid for the support of “local funders and influential members of the community” was a “purge of activists whose personal politics or sexual preferences did not ‘fit.’” However, this information was not revealed in my oral history interviews. R. Emerson Dobash and Russell P. Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 79.

<sup>277</sup> K.J. Wilson, *When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse*, Second ed. (Alameda, CA: Hunter House Publishers, 2006), p. 342.

<sup>278</sup> “Center for Battered Women, ByLaws, 1978,” page 1, *Texas Council on Family Violence Collection, 1974-2001*, University of Houston Libraries, Box 2, Folder 17.

didn't really exist that needed to exist to support victims and to try to stop the problem."<sup>279</sup> Tucker was so outraged by her personal experience of violence, and the way that she was treated by the police that she decided to work to change the systems and to provide support and services to women who were victims of violence.

In the early 1970s, feminists believed that the police response to violence against women was extremely inadequate.<sup>280</sup> When the movement began, battered women complained that police would not come to the scene of a domestic disturbance when they were called. Or, if the police did arrive on the scene, they would refuse to arrest the abuser. Women who complained of violence were frequently harassed by the police. Prosecutors could use their discretion to drop criminal complaints against abusers. James Bannon, who was the Commander of the Detroit Police Department in the early 1970s, characterized the criminal justice response to domestic abuse as "laissez-faire," because abuse was regarded as a "personal problem," and because police "are socialized to regard females in general as subordinate."<sup>281</sup> Tucker and her colleagues were determined to change the systems and put into place what was needed to support victims of domestic abuse and to end violence against women.

While working at the Rape Crisis Center, Tucker and her colleagues began to learn about domestic abuse. The Rape Crisis Center fielded many calls from women who said that they had not been raped, but they were being beaten by their husbands,

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<sup>279</sup> Interview with Debby Tucker conducted by author, dated April 2, 2009, transcript, page 2.

<sup>280</sup> Please see Chapter Five for a more complete analysis of the police response to violence against women.

<sup>281</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, p. 158.

and could not get any help from the police.<sup>282</sup> Abused women called the Rape Crisis Center seeking assistance, and the women running the Center began to realize that domestic abuse was a problem. When a group formed to work on starting a shelter for battered women, Tucker got involved, and became CBW's first Executive Director.

Tucker characterizes the philosophy of CBW as "rooted in two fundamental beliefs: that any woman can become the victim of domestic violence" and, of equal importance, "that we must stop trying to find out 'what's wrong with her' and instead hold the abuser responsible."<sup>283</sup> Even if they had not been abused, many activists in the battered women's movement were motivated by a belief that battering could happen to any woman, regardless of her class or race. The criminalization of domestic abuse was an attempt to hold the batterer accountable for his actions, as was the implementation of batterer intervention programs. After operating independently for more than twenty years, in 1998 the CBW and the Austin Rape Crisis Center merged their organizations to become one organization called "SafePlace."

### ***Conclusion***

There are many similarities in the histories of these five shelters. All of the founding groups were composed of women who had been active in other social movements, primarily the anti-war movement and second wave feminism. They had been "radicalized" by their participation in feminist consciousness raising groups. All

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid., page 3.

<sup>283</sup> Wilson, *When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse*, p. xvii.

five of the shelters were located in communities which had active feminist communities. Transition House and CBW were actively supported by the local Women's Center, and the Milwaukee Task Force on Battered Women was a project of the Women's Coalition, itself supported by the local NOW chapter. The shelter organizations all began as coordinating collectives, engaged in participatory democracy and consensus decision-making. The organizations were formed by women for women, and they empowered battered women through consciousness raising, giving them an understanding that battering was not a personal problem, but a symptom of a larger social problem. Activists sought to empower battered women financially, helping them to find the resources they needed to lead a life independent from their abusers. Battered women's organizations engaged in a radical feminist critique of the unequal power relations found in the patriarchal family. Activists employed a public form of consciousness raising, speaking out in public forums to inform people about the social problem of domestic abuse. By speaking out publicly against domestic abuse, and seeking to change the laws to criminalize abuse and protect battered women, activists were making the personal issue of abuse a public and political issue, and trying to hold batterers accountable.

Many of the founders of shelter organizations had experienced male violence personally, in the forms of sexual assault or domestic abuse. They were motivated by personal experience to do something to help victims of domestic abuse, and to work toward the goal of reducing or eliminating violence against women in American society. Other founders were motivated by their outrage at the way that battered

women were treated in American society. All five groups of women began their efforts by providing shelter for battered women in their own homes. Four of the five groups began by “listening to women”—they established telephone hotlines, provided legal advice and/or counseling and support, and discovered that women and their children needed emergency shelter because they were being battered.

All five shelter houses were established as confidential locations where battered women could go and they and their children could be safe from their abusers. In all five shelters, activists employed a feminist understanding of the patriarchal family, and concluded that the economic and political power that men wielded contributed to their ability to abuse their wives. By providing battered women a “place to go,” the activists running these shelters were empowering battered women.

The founders of these five shelters blurred the lines between radical and liberal feminism. They employed radical feminism to argue that battering is the product of a patriarchal social system that results in unequal power relations between men and women. The patriarchal system condones violence against women, and makes it very difficult for women to marshal the power and resources necessary to escape their abuser. Battering is used by men to control women’s bodies and their access to resources, and to maintain dominance over women. Men’s violence against women is one of the sources of women’s oppression, according to radical feminists. Shelters for battered women gave women a new alternative to remaining in the patriarchal family system. As WTCS staff member Laura Farha stated, “We try to empower women to make their own choices by giving them options. Then we

support their decisions.”<sup>284</sup> Feminists in the battered women’s movement believed that it was necessary to change the patriarchal system, including men’s ability to use violence to control women, in order to end the oppression of women.

However, shelter activists also employed liberal feminism to argue that the root of women’s oppression lay in the fact that they were treated differently than men based on biological differences. The differential treatment of labor based on gender provides an example: men’s work outside the home was paid labor, while women’s work (housework and childcare) was unpaid labor.<sup>285</sup> Liberal feminists wanted to work within the existing systems to provide women with equal opportunities in education and employment. They believed that equality of opportunity would end women’s oppression. The feminists who were active in the battered women’s movement were seeking sexual equality for battered women—a form of gender justice which would allow battered women to leave their abusers and lead independent lives.

Regardless of whether activists were employing a radical or liberal feminist analysis of women’s oppression, economic independence for battered women is a key element of the philosophy of the battered women’s movement. The activists involved in these five shelters used strategies and tactics that blurred the lines between radical and liberal forms of feminism—they believed that unequal power relations between

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<sup>284</sup> “A Haven for Domestic Violence Victims,” *Lawrence Journal World*, September 26, 1992.

<sup>285</sup> Lisa Leghorn and Betsy Warrior employed this argument in their *Houseworker’s Handbook*, published in 1974. “As such, women are the only group in society who work as unpaid laborers (slaves) providing services and commodities that in turn create value. This is the primary oppression of women, from which all others spring.” (page 47) Betsy Warrior and Lisa Leghorn, *Houseworker’s Handbook* (Cambridge, MA: Self-published bound book, 1974).



men and women contributed to men's use of violence to oppress women, and that the devaluation of women's work relative to men's kept women from becoming economically empowered enough to free themselves from the control of their male abusers. As advocate Rachel Berger at Transition House in Boston notes, "People come back and show off. They say, 'Hey, look at me. Look at my kids. Look at where we are now.'"<sup>286</sup>

Today, there are over 2,000 programs serving battered women across the U.S. The core of these programs is providing safe shelter for battered women and their children. Other services provided by shelters include legal, economic, housing, and medical advocacy; accompaniment to court hearings; education and job training assistance; support groups for formerly battered women and children; child care; counseling for children; and batterer intervention programs.<sup>287</sup> Although shelters have assisted many battered women to break free of the oppression of domestic abuse, many more women still seek the assistance of shelters every day.

Another historical element that at least four of the five shelters have in common is that they were key players in the development of the statewide coalition in their home states, and in the development of national organizations in the battered women's movement. (The membership of statewide coalitions is composed of individual shelters throughout the state which provide direct service to survivors of abuse.) That involvement is the subject of Chapter Four.

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<sup>286</sup> "No Prescription for Halting Cycle of Domestic Violence" by Laura A. Kiernan, *Boston Globe*, October 17, 1988

<sup>287</sup> Wilson, *When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse*, p. 343.

## **Chapter Four: Keeping Women From Falling In**

*“Women are the objects of violence so wide-ranging and so much the result of interlocking attitudes, that to untangle the violent web and understand the various strands will be a difficult task requiring broad efforts.”*

*--Wisconsin Coalition Against Woman Abuse<sup>288</sup>*

*“Our ultimate goal in the battered women’s movement is not to provide a social service, but to create social change.”*

*--Mass. Coalition of Battered Women’s Service Groups, Inc.<sup>289</sup>*

### ***Introduction***

In this chapter, I examine the development of statewide and national coalitions of battered women’s organizations. These coalitions began to emerge in the late 1970s, as a result of the organizing efforts of women in community-based shelter organizations. Forming state and national organizations was one of the strategies that feminists used to define and institutionalize their collective political vision.<sup>290</sup> As they tried to provide shelter and support to battered women, and began to work on changing the way that police responded to domestic abuse and the legal system’s response to woman battering, activists found that they needed to work together in order to accomplish the goal of creating social change. As activists communicated

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<sup>288</sup> “Program History,” undated, *Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 30: Milwaukee Mss M2000-119: Program Plan and History, 1984-1994, p. 1.

<sup>289</sup> Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women Service Groups Inc., *For Shelter and Beyond: Ending Violence against Battered Women and Their Children* (Boston: Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women Service Groups, Inc., 1990), p. 114.

<sup>290</sup> Claire Reinelt, "Moving onto the Terrain of the State: The Battered Women's Movement and the Politics of Engagement," in *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, ed. Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), p. 88. I owe this insight to Claire Reinelt’s analysis of the Texas Council on Family Violence.

with each other and worked together across their home state, or across many states, they catapulted the battered women's movement from a series of discrete shelters to an organized national movement with serious political power. While individual shelters were primarily focused on the provision of services to battered women, state and national coalitions worked to change attitudes, laws, and to raise public consciousness of violence against women. Activists solidified a national battered women's movement at the first NCADV conference in Washington, D.C., which was held on February 27, 1980, and attracted 600 participants.

### ***Making Connections***

Although shelters for battered women were started by small groups of women in discrete locations throughout the U.S., it was not long after the first shelters opened that the women running them began to assemble an informal network.<sup>291</sup> Activists built their network through contacts made by letter or phone, and maintained it through the interactions that they had with one another at conferences or during site visits. As the need for legislative advocacy grew, the informal network evolved into a more formal structure consisting of state and national coalitions of battered women's service groups. Activists in the battered women's movement used these organizations to share information and resources, to advocate collectively for legislative changes, and to empower themselves and each other to create social change.

Before the state and national coalitions were formed, however, several publications raised awareness of domestic abuse as a national problem, and made

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<sup>291</sup> The network incorporated not just American shelters, but also included shelters located in Europe, as evidenced by the international scope of the *Battered Women's Directory*.

activists aware of others doing work on behalf of battered women. The *Battered Women's Directory*, which Betsy Warrior began publishing in 1976, was an important source of information for feminists who wanted to start a battered women's shelter, as well as for battered women looking for assistance.<sup>292</sup> Activists were able to use the *Directory* to contact the women running the early shelters, including Women's Advocates in St. Paul and Transition House in Boston, who provided them with advice and instructions on starting and running a shelter. Battered women were able to use the *Directory* to analyze their personal situations and to locate services and support in their own communities, or to identify communities which could offer them the assistance they needed to leave their abuser.

Publisher Ruth Gottstein is responsible for another important publication that raised awareness of battered women in the U.S. Gottstein traveled to London, where she met Erin Pizzey and visited Chiswick Women's Aid, the London shelter founded by Pizzey. Gottstein returned home convinced that woman battering was not just a British problem, but also an American problem. She convinced activist and author Del Martin to write a book about the problem of domestic abuse in the U.S.<sup>293</sup> The publication in 1976 of Martin's book, *Battered Wives*, was another catalyst for the emergence of a national movement. It contained detailed information about the first few shelters, and documented the existence of many more American (and European) shelters. Martin's book was also validating for movement activists, because it

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<sup>292</sup> The title of the first edition of Warrior's *Directory* was *Working on Wife Abuse*.

<sup>293</sup> Del Martin, "Battered Wives," in *Violence against Women: Classic Papers*, ed. Raquel Kennedy Bergen, Jeffrey L. Edleson, and Claire M. Renzetti (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2005), p. 166. Del Martin was the co-chair of the National Organization for Women's Task Force on Battered Women.

legitimized the viewpoint that violence against women is rooted in a sexist society, which was a viewpoint shared by many feminist activists in the movement.<sup>294</sup>

*Battered Wives* was followed by Susan Schechter's book, *Women and Male Violence*, which was published in 1982. Schechter recounted the brief history of the battered women's movement in great detail, including its successes and failures. Schechter's work lent credibility to the battered women's movement as a legitimate social movement by documenting the institutions that were created by the movement, including shelter organizations, networks of safe homes, and state, regional and national coalitions. By the time Schechter's book was published, the battered women's movement had become a national social movement. The list of "resource organizations" detailed by Schechter included the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) and coalition organizations for each of the fifty states and for the District of Columbia.<sup>295</sup>

### ***The Pennsylvania Coalition***

The first statewide coalition of organizations working against domestic abuse was established in Pennsylvania in 1976. The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV) was founded one month after the enactment of the Pennsylvania Protection from Abuse (PFA) Act. Longtime activist and attorney Barbara Hart was a member of the group of women who cofounded the Pennsylvania Coalition. The founders met when they traveled to Harrisburg in 1976 to testify in

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<sup>294</sup> I am indebted to K.J. Wilson for this insight.

<sup>295</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, pp. 356-58.

support of the PFA legislation. Thrilled to find that there were other groups working on the same issues, the women decided to meet again to share information and support each other. Seventeen different programs were represented on the first board of directors of the PCADV.<sup>296</sup> According to Hart, the PCADV was founded in part to facilitate the implementation of the Protection from Abuse Act, which was one of the first of its kind in the U.S. Hart also recalls that, in coming together to give testimony in support of the legislation, activists from across the state realized that “we needed to work in concert, not just so that the statute would work, but so that we could make referrals to each other, so that we could learn from each other, and, after all, we were starting shelters from scratch.”<sup>297</sup> Recognizing that “nobody had done this stuff before,” (starting shelters and working to change the laws and the social justice system) the founding members decided that “we wanted to make sure that we understood it, developed a philosophical perspective on it, we had standards, we would support each other, we’d make referrals back and forth, people would share.”<sup>298</sup> State coalitions played a key supporting role for the movement, providing technical assistance to shelter organizations, bringing advocates together for workshops, publishing and distributing educational materials, and lobbying legislators and policymakers for the systems changes needed to work toward reducing violence against women.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Mollie Whalen, *Counseling to End Violence against Women: A Subversive Model* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996), p. 149.

<sup>297</sup> Interview with Barbara J. Hart conducted by author, July 10, 2009, transcript, p. 7.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Wilson, *When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse*, p. 344.

### ***Building a National Coalition***

Activists in the battered women's movement formed a national organization before most state coalitions existed. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) was founded in 1978. However, the founding of the NCADV was the culmination of several years of organizing work. Movement toward the establishment of a national coalition began two years earlier, at the Wisconsin Conference on Battered Women. The Wisconsin Conference was held on October 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1976, in Milwaukee. It attracted 200 participants from twenty different states, and served as a forum for activists to share information, support one another, and address common problems. The vision of a national organization of grassroots service providers began to be articulated at this conference. According to conference participant Lisa Leghorn, "The dream was of a feminist national coalition grounded in state and regional coalitions. We would share responsibility and serve as a power base to support each other."<sup>300</sup> It was Cathy Avina, a member of Women's Advocates, who first articulated the notion of a "National Battered Women's Corporation, to lobby for, collect, and distribute funds to local groups"<sup>301</sup> during the Wisconsin Conference. The Wisconsin Conference was quickly followed by other, similar events, including a Conference on Battered Women, which was organized by advocates in St. Paul, and held on December 3, 1976.

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<sup>300</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, p. 133.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

The need for a national coalition was reinforced by two events in 1977. On July 20, 1977, the White House held its first meeting on domestic abuse, which began with testimony from battered women, followed by prepared remarks from twelve different advocates.<sup>302</sup> The advocates described the shelters, explained why they are important, and advocated for shelters that are community run and autonomous.<sup>303</sup> They also had suggestions for new legislation, and for how federal agencies could help shelter organizations. According to activist Valle Jones, “The feelings of unity and success that grew out of this [meeting] provided additional incentive to struggle across 3,000 miles in order to form a national coalition.”<sup>304</sup> Jones attributed the quick development of a national organization to the fact that the movement was new and based in grassroots activism.<sup>305</sup>

In November of 1977, the International Women’s Year Conference convened in Houston, Texas. Reflecting the roots of the battered women’s movement in second wave feminism, the Conference included workshops on woman battering and resolutions about domestic abuse, as well as a Caucus on Battered Women. The Caucus met three times, and agreed to work toward the development of a national feminist coalition which was based in the locally run, autonomous grassroots programs like Women’s Advocates and Transition House.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Wilson, *When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse*, p. 344.

<sup>303</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, p. 136.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.* Please see Chapter Three for a detailed history of five battered women’s shelters which arose out of grassroots feminist activism.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*



As I discussed in the previous two chapters, there were direct links between women's participation in the Civil Rights movement and their activism in the battered women's movement. One strong connection between the movements was the shared belief in a set of "rights" held by all individuals. Activists in the battered women's movement believed that all women had the right to live a life free from violence and abuse. Another connection was a shared commitment to making personal experience the subject of political action.

A meeting of the Civil Rights movement also provided the physical space for the formation of the NCADV. The NCADV was formed during a United States Commission on Civil Rights event, held on January 30th and 31st, 1978, titled "A Consultation on Battered Women: Issues of Public Policy." Over six hundred activists from across the U.S. traveled to Washington, D.C. for the Consultation. In a series of thirty formal presentations and responses, advocates from different geographic regions of the U.S. testified before the Commission about their work helping battered women. The Consultation was opened by activist Del Martin, who provided an overview of the social problem of woman battering.<sup>307</sup> Martin called for "revolutionary changes in attitudes towards the roles of women and men in our society," because "without such changes we cannot ensure women 'equal protection under the law,' and without such protection they will remain vulnerable to their husbands' abuse."<sup>308</sup> The Commission had a statutory mandate to investigate the denial of equal protection of the law based on sex. The primary purpose of the

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<sup>307</sup> Dobash and Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change*, p. 130.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

Consultation was to inform the Commissioners on the topic of domestic abuse. The gathering was important for the movement because it provided battered women's activists an opportunity to go to Washington to listen and to organize.<sup>309</sup> The proceedings of the Consultation were published by the Commission, educating federal agencies about the social problem of domestic abuse, and providing further legitimacy to the battered women's movement.

The formation of the NCADV was based in grassroots organizing, using strategies learned at the local level, but implemented on a national scale. Activist Valle Jones, who was invited by the Commission staff to testify, provides an example. Jones mailed postcards to all of the individuals and groups who had registered for the Consultation, and invited them to meet the night before the Consultation began to organize and to discuss pending federal legislation. A group of approximately sixty women met that evening, and the group grew as they gathered during meals and at the end of each day to organize regional caucuses, to develop an interim structure for the national organization, and to write a statement of purpose. Echoing the philosophy of the grassroots shelter organizations, the founders emphasized the use of consensus decision-making whenever possible, and included diverse representation across the boundaries of age, race, socio-economic categories, and sexual preference.<sup>310</sup> They formed a steering committee and organized nine working task forces.

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<sup>309</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

Monica Erler and Bernice Sisson from Women's Advocates attended the Consultation, as did Sharon Rice Vaughan, who was working for the Harriett Tubman shelter in Minneapolis at that time. Monica Erler was one of the advocates who testified before the Commission. Although she did not testify, Barbara Hart also attended. Hart organized the advocates that she had helped in the two years since the Protection from Abuse Act was passed in Pennsylvania, encouraging them to attend a meeting to discuss the legal work that the Pennsylvania Coalition was doing, and the community organizing that accompanied and supported the legal work. Hart remembers the discussion that led to the creation of the national coalition, and that it took place as the group "sat in the bathroom on the floor in the Commerce building, [the] women's bathroom, and founded the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence."<sup>311</sup> Hart became active in the NCADV, serving as the Legislative Chair for many years. In this role, Hart assisted advocates across the country in the implementation of new protection order statutes, warrantless arrest statutes for misdemeanor acts of crimes of domestic violence, and other state laws.

Another issue that Hart became involved in was the issue of lesbian battering. Although lesbians were responsible for much of the pioneering work in feminist theory about violence against women,<sup>312</sup> the early battered women's movement was primarily focused on male battering of women. Efforts to address woman battering by another woman were initially met with resistance. Hart became one of the

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<sup>311</sup> Interview with Barbara J. Hart conducted by author, July 10, 2009, transcript, p. 7.  
<sup>312</sup> Lobel, Lobel, *Naming the Violence: Speaking out About Lesbian Battering*, p. 28.

organizers of the first National Conference on Lesbian Battering in 1983.<sup>313</sup> This effort also had its roots in the Consultation in 1978, when a group of about forty lesbian activists met, despite some resistance from non-lesbian activists. The lesbian activists discussed homophobia in battered women's programs, and the issue of lesbian battering. Finding that they were shocked and frightened by revelations of lesbian domestic abuse, the group agreed that they could not take these two issues forward to the larger activist group without risking their credibility and possibly discrediting the battered women's movement with the general public. Instead, the group agreed not to discuss lesbian battering until the first NCADV conference in 1980.<sup>314</sup>

The initial NCADV Steering Committee, which became a policy making group that functioned as the Board of Directors, was formed "to develop membership, facilitate regional and local coalition-building, share information and resources, monitor federal and state domestic violence legislation, and organize the NCADV's

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<sup>313</sup> Interview with Barbara J. Hart conducted by author, July 10, 2009, transcript, pp. 7-8. Hart co-chaired the Lesbian Task Force of NCADV with Suzanne Pharr. Hart's standpoint was that of a white, middle class, formerly battered, lesbian woman. She was interested in promoting social justice for battered lesbians. As a leader in the battered women's movement and a lesbian, she was in a position to influence the social discourse and the production of knowledge about lesbian battering. Hart played an important role in the first national conference on lesbian battering, and the publication of the first book on lesbian battering. Hart believes that *Naming the Violence* (see citation above) gave birth to a "vital justice movement" to end lesbian battering. Barbara J. Hart, "Lesbian Battering: An Examination," in *Violence against Women: Classic Papers*, ed. Raquel Kennedy Bergen, Jeffrey L. Edleson, and Claire M. Renzetti (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2005).

<sup>314</sup> Lobel, Kerry Editor for the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Lesbian Task Force, p. 12. A Lesbian Task Force was formed at the NCADV First National Meeting in February, 1980. A lesbian presence at times created problems for the NCADV. For example, in 1985 two dozen members of Congress, describing themselves as "pro-family Republicans," complained to Attorney General Edwin Meese that Justice Department funding of NCADV would benefit lesbian rights activists, temporarily delaying the award of a grant to NCADV. ("Grant Ok'd to Fight US Domestic Violence, *Boston Globe*, August 10, 1985.)

first national conference and membership meeting.”<sup>315</sup> Materials from the NCADV First National Meeting in 1980 indicate that the organization began with a grassroots, feminist orientation:

NCADV is a network of grassroots shelter and service programs for domestic violence victims. The network is designed to help local organizers develop local resources to deal with domestic violence in their communities and to help increase their effectiveness at the state and national level. NCADV programs support and involve battered women of all lifestyles, ages, and racial ethnic, social and religious groups. The Coalition opposes the use of violence as a means of control and supports equality in relationships and self-empowerment of women.<sup>316</sup>

The following mission statement, which was printed in the materials for the second NCADV Annual Conference in 1982, echoes the feminist, grassroots orientation of the Coalition:

The mission of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence is to provide leadership in developing a feminist model for programs working to empower women who have been battered, to provide a national communication and sharing network among all grassroots battered women’s shelters, groups, organizations and individual workers, and to form a national powerbase around battered women’s issues and other important issues affecting women. NCADV seeks to involve all women regardless of age, race, color, creed, sexual/affectional orientation, marital status, social or economic status, disability or geographical location.<sup>317</sup>

These statements reflect aspects of the philosophical foundations of second wave feminism. They include a belief that personal experience is a legitimate basis

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<sup>315</sup> “NCADV Herstory,” undated, *Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 4: Milwaukee Mss M2000-119: Support Correspondence: 1980-81, p. 1.

<sup>316</sup> “National Coalition Against Domestic Violence” notebook, 1980, *Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 3, Folder 2: Milwaukee Mss M2000-119, p. 17.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

for political action, that women can (and should) empower themselves by sharing information and resources, and that the patriarchal family is a source of sexual inequality which fosters domestic abuse. The statements also espouse a politics of inclusion of all women, regardless of race, class, age, or sexual orientation, although in practice there were rifts between different groups. The primary focus of these statements is on the first goal of the movement, which is empowering battered women through the provision of services and support. Implicit in the goal of “forming a national powerbase around battered women’s issues” is the second goal of the movement, which is to reduce or eliminate violence against women. However, the second goal was not explicitly articulated in these early statements of NCADV’s mission.

By 1982, the NCADV Steering Committee/Board of Directors was composed of one representative from each of the twenty-nine geographical regions (made up primarily of two states each) who were elected by the active members in the region. One elected NCADV staff representative and one elected representative from each of the official NCADV Task Forces (the Women of Color Task Force, the Rural Women Task Force, and the Lesbian Task Force) also sat on the Steering Committee.<sup>318</sup> Within the NCADV organization, there were three “major” committees: a Coalition-Building Committee, whose charge was to “facilitate the growth and development of state and regional coalitions as well as their relationships with the National Coalition,” a Communications Committee, whose function was to “serve as a

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid., p. 2. The Task Forces were formed in response to concerns raised by caucuses meeting during the 1980 First National NCADV Conference and Meeting.

communication network and to disseminate information among member domestic violence programs,” and a Fundraising Committee, which raised funding for the NCADV’s general operations, as well as for various projects of the coalition. Other “minor” committees reported to the three major committees, and included an Ethics Committee, a Personnel Committee, an Employment Project Management Team, and a Southeast Coalition Team.<sup>319</sup>

After two years of struggle to organize and raise the money for a national conference, the first NCADV Conference was held on February 27, 1980, in Washington, D.C. at the 4-H Center. Because most of the shelter programs had been started by volunteers operating with very little funding, most of the potential participants did not have money to travel to the first NCADV conference. The temporary staff at NCADV wrote funding proposals, and raised money for travel scholarships. Over \$122,000 was raised for travel and expenses from private foundations, individual contributions, and registration fees. Federal agencies agreed to contract with NCADV for some of the work being done, including a \$30,000 research grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare’s Office on Domestic Violence for the development of a handbook and workshop on Title XX services to battered women, a \$15,500 grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the development of a handbook and workshop on the use of Community Development and Block Grant funds to buy buildings for shelters, and a \$10,000 grant from the Office on Domestic Violence’s clearinghouse for the

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-3.

development of a manual and a workshop on state domestic violence legislation.<sup>320</sup>

All of the funds raised were used to support scholarships for the conference. Six hundred women from forty-nine states traveled to Washington to attend the conference. The African American a capella singing group, “Sweet Honey in the Rock,” performed a benefit concert on Friday night during the conference.

Conference participants took home the workbooks and manuals, which they used to manage the shelters and navigate state and federal bureaucracies. Activists operating individual shelters no longer had to work in isolation. They could join NCADV and benefit from the work done by other activists to develop policies and procedures. Activists had created a national battered women’s movement.

The NCADV’s first project was to work for passage of federal legislation authorizing funding for services for battered women. Using federal funding for the provision of services to battered women was controversial within the feminist community. Many activists expressed concern about the possible negative effects that governmental funding would have on the movement’s ability to engage in a radical critique of American social institutions, such as the patriarchal family.<sup>321</sup> The fear was that accepting money from the very political institutions that it was seeking to change would compromise the movement’s ability to achieve social change.

History demonstrates that this was a legitimate concern. Many of the activists that I interviewed criticized the movement for yielding to pressure from funders and

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<sup>320</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, pp. 143-44.

<sup>321</sup> Whalen, *Counseling to End Violence against Women: A Subversive Model*, p. 148.



focusing their efforts solely on providing services and support to battered women, and losing sight of the original goal of social change—of reducing/eliminating violence against women. Lehrner and Allen's recent study found that many advocates currently working on behalf of battered women understand their work as the provision of social services, and are not even aware of the history or even the existence of the battered women's movement.<sup>322</sup> The success of the movement in providing services to battered women has also resulted in its failure to achieve lasting social change with respect to eliminating violence against women.

### ***National Communication Network***

Another important outcome of the 1976 Wisconsin Conference on Battered Women was the formation of the National Communication Network for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (NCN). The NCN published its first national newsletter on battered women in April, 1977.<sup>323</sup> Activists from Women's Advocates and Transition House worked together to compile the *NCN* newsletters, which contained articles about the issues that were important to shelter programs.<sup>324</sup> *NCN* then merged with *FAAR*, the newsletter of the Feminist Alliance Against Rape, publishing the first issue of *Aegis: The Magazine on Ending Violence Against*

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<sup>322</sup> Lehrner and Allen, "Still a Movement after All These Years?: Current Tensions in the Domestic Violence Movement."

<sup>323</sup> Wilson, *When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse*, p. 344.

<sup>324</sup> In the first edition of the *NCN* newsletter, Nova Clite from the Task Force on Battered Women in Milwaukee wrote the statement of purpose, description, editorial policies and forum requirements, while Pat Murphy from Women's Advocates in St. Paul authored a column titled "Exchanging Services," which suggested a permanent column in the newsletter listing the currently operating shelters which would be able to find emergency housing for women who wished to relocate to another state.

*Women*, in August, 1978.<sup>325</sup> *Aegis* fulfilled many needs for the battered women's and rape crisis movements, including offering inspiration, alleviating women's sense of isolation, building a national community of politically active women, providing insight and direction, articulating a political vision, providing information and resources, and circulating political articles that generated discussion among activists at the local, regional, and national levels.<sup>326</sup> *Aegis* was dedicated to building and preserving a feminist analysis of violence against women and a grassroots movement against it.

The *NCN* newsletter was originally intended to be the printed voice of the NCADV. However, some members of the NCADV steering committee saw the *NCN* as too radical. Its commitment to a feminist philosophy was a problem for some of the more conservative NCADV members. Differences between NCADV members created rifts from the very beginning of the organization's history. Activist Lisa Leghorn remembers that "problems of abrasive and dogmatic personal styles, combined with the radical feminist and lesbian baiting politics of some individuals, alienated and discouraged many local programs from participating in the newly formed coalition."<sup>327</sup> Issues of difference based on race, class, and sexual preference also surfaced during the first NCADV national conference in 1980. Caucuses were formed for women of color, feminist socialists, rural women, handicapped women,

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<sup>325</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, pp. 133-34.

<sup>326</sup> I am indebted to Susan Schechter for this analysis of the many contributions of *Aegis* to the battered women's movement.

<sup>327</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, p. 139.

and women from particular states or regions. The written statements from the various caucuses reveal disagreements over the meaning of feminism and the appropriate goals for the battered women's movement.<sup>328</sup> Eventually, the national coalition was able to move beyond these differences.

Differences within feminist organizations are not unique to the battered women's movement. Jo Freeman argues that, because feminism is a constructed identity, it is formed by personal experience and "buffeted by competing communities."<sup>329</sup> Although feminists generally agree that the primary goal is to empower women as a group, there is disagreement among feminists about what women should be empowered to do.<sup>330</sup>

### ***Wisconsin Coalition Against Woman Abuse***

Following Pennsylvania's lead, other activists began to form statewide coalitions of organizations helping battered women. Before the Wisconsin Coalition was formed, Milwaukee's Task Force on Battered Women organized the first state conference on woman battering in 1976. The Wisconsin Coalition Against Woman Abuse, Inc. (WCAWA) was founded in May of 1977 at a Conference on Woman Abuse held in Steven's Point, Wisconsin. The primary goal of the Coalition was to coordinate the efforts of battered women's programs throughout the state. The Milwaukee Task Force on Battered Women was one of the founding organizations.

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<sup>328</sup> I owe this insight to Susan Schechter's analysis of the caucus statements.

<sup>329</sup> Jo Freeman, "From Seed to Harvest: Transformations of Feminist Organizations and Scholarship," in *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, ed. Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), p. 407.

<sup>330</sup> This problem is not unique to feminism. It is also true of activists other social movements with constructed identities, such as civil rights activists.

The WCAWA was incorporated as a nonprofit organization on May 4, 1978, with nine organizational members and twenty-two individual members.<sup>331</sup> By late 1978, nineteen Wisconsin-based organizations had joined WCAWA.<sup>332</sup> The WCAWA established an office in Madison, Wisconsin. The initial goals of the Coalition included establishing bylaws and a steering committee; developing a statewide phone tree to facilitate communication; and printing a newsletter to share information and resources between members.<sup>333</sup> WCAWA worked closely with Wisconsin NOW, the Wisconsin Women's Network, and the YWCA throughout the 1980s, organizing crisis lines and safe home networks for battered women and their children.<sup>334</sup>

In the organization's first year, officers of the Coalition provided technical assistance to Wisconsin service organizations for battered women, worked on the introduction and passage of statewide legislation, and shared information and resources with member organizations. As the Coalition's activities grew, so did the need for paid staffing. In early 1980, WCAWA received federal VISTA funding for one paid position, which was responsible for organizing local service providers statewide.<sup>335</sup> WCAWA began publishing a bimonthly newsletter, which eventually grew to a circulation of 700, and functioned as an important vehicle for outreach and

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<sup>331</sup> "Item 24: History of Organization," undated, *Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 4: Milwaukee Mss M2000-119: Support Correspondence: 1980-1981, p. 1.

<sup>332</sup> "Newsletter of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Woman Abuse," November, 1978, *Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 1: Milwaukee Mss M2000-119: Correspondence, 1972-1980, "Phone Tree."

<sup>333</sup> "Item 24: History of Organization," undated, *Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 4: Milwaukee Mss M2000-119: Support Correspondence: 1980-1981, p. 1.

<sup>334</sup> "History," found at <http://www.wcadv.org/?go=about/history#top>, accessed September 20, 2009.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

education. The newsletter included detailed articles about specific issues, reports from local programs on their current projects, news of upcoming events, meetings, and workshops, and articles from regional and national sources.<sup>336</sup>

As efforts to pass legislation at the state and federal level were successful, the organization's focus shifted from legislative activism to information sharing and technical assistance. Coalition members first worked to introduce and pass Assembly Bill 169, which provided state funding of services to battered women, mandated standard training requirements in the area of domestic abuse for police and sheriff's departments statewide, and provided for changes in Wisconsin laws to protect abuse victims.<sup>337</sup> In 1981, the Coalition applied for and was awarded a Community Education Grant from the state of Wisconsin. The Grant funded salaries for two staff members, who focused on providing technical assistance, resources, and information to member organizations.<sup>338</sup> WCAWA developed a resource library, based in the Madison office, which contained films, slide presentations, books, and other information pertaining to domestic abuse. WCAWA staff also developed a "Skills Bank," which listed people working in domestic abuse programs in Wisconsin, Minnesota, or Illinois, who had agreed to be available to help member programs with program development, volunteer recruitment and/or training, community organizing,

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<sup>336</sup> "Program History," undated, *Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 30: Milwaukee Mss M2000-119: Program Plan and History, 1984-1994, p. 2.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>338</sup> Susan Schechter's history of the Wisconsin Coalition indicates that, prior to 1981, there were two competing statewide organizations. They were WCAWA, which was feminist in nature, and the Domestic Abuse Prevention Council, which was not. In 1981, the two WCAWA staffers began to build a unified organization of groups in Wisconsin whose primary focus was on domestic abuse. (Schechter, page 124.)

or resource development. WCAWA coordinated technical assistance workshops for member organizations which were led by NCADV representatives or third party consultants. (For example, in 1983, Ellen Pence gave a training session on developing a coordinated community response intervention model.)<sup>339</sup>

The Wisconsin Coalition was also active in the national movement. WCAWA co-sponsored the second NCADV Annual Conference, which was held in 1982 in Milwaukee. WCAWA played a key role in the planning and implementation of the Conference, which drew over 1,000 participants. This activity illustrates the close relationship between the state and national coalition organizations.

WCAWA employed a formal nonprofit organizational structure, with a governing Board of Directors, consisting of a representative from each member program. The Executive Committee included the President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer of the Board, and representatives from the WCAWA taskforces (Rural and Children's Social Action) and standing committees (Funding/Finance, Personnel, Membership, and Legislative). The Executive Committee was endowed with decision-making authority in the absence of a full Board meeting. One staff member was responsible for technical assistance and training, office management and bookkeeping, while the other was responsible for resource development, and served as the liaison to the State Legislature, the Department of Health and Social Services, and the Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Program History," undated, *Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 30: Milwaukee Mss M2000-119: Program Plan and History, 1984-1994, p. 1.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

The “Principles of Unity” for WCAWA illustrate the grassroots orientation of the organization:

The Wisconsin Coalition Against Women Abuse is composed of not for profit women’s organizations, including shelters, crisis lines, and task forces which are community-based and run primarily by women for battered women and their families from all racial, social, ethnic, religious, and economic age groups and lifestyles. We represent both rural and urban areas. We exist in order to provide quality services on a statewide basis to battered women and their families to enable them to rebuild their lives and to expand services until every victim of domestic violence in Wisconsin has access to immediate protection and local services.<sup>341</sup>

This statement expresses the feminist strategy of empowering women (both activists and battered women) in order to create social change. The WCAWA’s “Principles of Unity” also explicitly recognized domestic abuse as a social problem, and emphasized the importance of social change, stating that “We are working toward the creation of a society in which domestic violence, as part of a larger problem of violence against women, will no longer exist.”<sup>342</sup> WCAWA’s “Principles of Unity” incorporated both goals of the battered women’s movement—to empower battered women through the provision of services and support, and to eliminate violence against women in American society.<sup>343</sup>

### ***Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women***

In the mid-1970s, Minnesota-based activists in the battered women’s movement formed an advisory committee called the “Minnesota Battered Women’s

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<sup>341</sup> “Principles of Unity,” dated 8/81, *Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Box 1, Folder 31: Milwaukee Mss M2000-119: Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation and Principles of Unity, 1980-1988.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> WCAWA changed its name to the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence in 1986.

Task Force,” which was the precursor to a statewide coalition. The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women (MCBW) was organized during a statewide conference on battered women in St. Cloud, Minnesota in August of 1978.

Bernice Sisson, a longtime volunteer for Women’s Advocates in St. Paul, was one of the incorporators of the MCBW in 1979.<sup>344</sup> According to the Articles of Incorporation, the purpose of the MCBW was to “provide information to the public about violence against women and its effects; to work for the alleviation of woman abuse; [and]to provide a clearinghouse and the coordination of information and services available to abused women in Minnesota.”<sup>345</sup> The MCBW established an office in St. Paul. The organization began with twenty-five grassroots member groups, including ten shelters and fifteen organizations which provided services ranging from crisis intervention phone lines to community education and services for abusers.<sup>346</sup> By 1982, the MCBW had grown to a membership of thirty-eight grassroots feminist organizations which were receiving a total of \$3.7 million in funding from the state of Minnesota.<sup>347</sup>

The goals of the MCBW included coalition building, providing training and technical assistance to member groups, the development of a centralized information center, and the development of a coordinated training program for member

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<sup>344</sup> Bernice Sisson served as the Coordinator for the Region XI Consortium in the Minnesota Battered Women’s Task Force from 1980 to 1984, when it became part of the MCBW.

<sup>345</sup> “Articles of Incorporation of Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women,” dated 1979, *Women’s Advocates, Inc. Records 1973-1984*, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 2, Folder marked “Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, 1980-1981.”

<sup>346</sup> “Goals and Objectives: Description of the activities of the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, August-November 1980,” *Women’s Advocates, Inc. Records 1973-1984*, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 3, Folder marked “Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, 1980-1981.”

<sup>347</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women’s Movement*, p. 123.



organizations that would help them become more effective in legal and legislative advocacy efforts. Incorporated in the primary goal of coalition building among grassroots service providers were the following objectives: establishing a central phone line for the Coalition; publishing a statewide newsletter; holding quarterly statewide meetings; serving as a liaison to the NCADV for member organizations; and planning a statewide conference of service providers. Training objectives included the implementation of quarterly statewide training sessions for service providers in the areas of fundraising and legal advocacy. Community and legislative objectives involved working with attorneys and judges, developing state level police training, and education on statutory changes related to domestic abuse.<sup>348</sup>

MCBW sponsored the first statewide conference for Minnesota on June 8<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> in 1983. The topic of the conference was racism. Nearly all of the Coalition's member programs participated in the conference. Topics covered in the anti-racism conference included "the foundations of racism in the family, the development of personal behaviors/attitudes, racism within programs manifested through the structure and organization of the work place, and constructive intervention skills to enhance early detection, prevention and management of problems arising in cross-racial communication."<sup>349</sup> At the same time, the MCBW reorganized itself into two statewide networks: the Black, Indian, Hispanic and Asian

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> NCADV "Voice" Newsletter, dated January, 1984, found in *Betsy Warrior Papers, 1966-1994 (inclusive)*, Schlesinger Library, Radcliff College, Carton Two, p. 5.

(BIHA) Women in Action, and American Indian Women Against Domestic Violence.<sup>350</sup>

Racism within the movement was an ongoing concern for activists. Because the genesis of the battered women's movement was in shelters, which were begun primarily by white, middle-class or working class women, activists were concerned about the existence of white privilege, and the failure to acknowledge differences of experience based in the race or social class of battered women. Longtime battered women's activist Joan Featherman, who helped to found the New England Learning Center for Women in Transition and the NCADV, represented Massachusetts on the NCADV Steering Committee. According to Featherman, combating racism is one of the guiding principles of the battered women's movement: "In our work against domestic violence, we are also working against racism, and we try to make sure that poor women in rural areas have a voice, as well as middle-class women in cities."<sup>351</sup> Shelters and coalitions worked to ensure that the composition of their staff in terms of race, social class, and national origin reflected the composition of the women they were serving. (Later in the history of the movement, these efforts were expanded to include staff who spoke the language of immigrant women and accommodations for battered women with disabilities.)

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>351</sup> Diane Broncaccio, "Pioneer for Women Greenfield Woman Honored," *The Recorder*, December 27, 1999.

### *Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women's Services*

The Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women's Service Groups (MCBWSG) was also founded in 1978, when a group of feminists saw the need to form a statewide organization. MCBWSG began with eleven member organizations, and grew to eighteen members by 1981. In its first two years, the Coalition employed a staff of eight people, whose salaries were funded by a Community Services Administration (CSA) grant. Using quarterly statewide meetings and bimonthly workshops in four different regions, the MCBWSG staff helped its members determine the political direction of their programs and the movement, and provided a forum for sharing information and developing skills.<sup>352</sup>

In 1981, the MCBWSG published a manual, titled *For Shelter and Beyond*, which outlined the philosophy, tasks, skills, and information that battered women's service groups needed to effectively assist battered women.<sup>353</sup> As the following excerpt from the manual indicates, the Coalition was formed to strengthen the battered women's movement:

Coalition building is an important step in moving beyond simply providing battered women and their children with shelter, toward finding a way to eliminate male violence against women. By coalescing, we can reach across the lines which divide us: race, class, culture, age, and sexual preference. Our work is not simply to provide service, though that is in itself an enormous task; we need to change attitudes, raise consciousness, and take action (whether through demonstrations, direct action, lobbying, etc.).

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<sup>352</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, p. 119.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118, and Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women's Service Groups, Inc., *For Shelter and Beyond: Ending Violence against Battered Women and Their Children*. Quotes from the 1981 manual were found in Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*.

We need to gain immediate reforms while also working for long range changes. We need to build coalitions with other groups . . . by coming together to share our strength, by working together to make our voices heard, and by sharing with each other what we know, we strengthen our movement.<sup>354</sup>

This statement reflects the dual goals of the movement, to empower battered women through services and support, while also working to eliminate male violence against women. It also addresses the issues of difference which could fracture feminist organizations. It recognizes that supporting shelter organizations so that they can provide services to survivors is important, and it emphasizes the importance of creating social change by changing public attitudes, raising public consciousness, and taking action in a variety of ways.

The second goal, creating social change, requires advocates to take a long-term approach. The Massachusetts Coalition articulates the process of social change in the following six steps: (1) “start at the grassroots” by developing a vision for specific social change which is based on the experience of battered women and their advocates; (2) “get out in the world and connect with other advocates;” (3) “find out who makes the rules and how to influence that process;” (4) use crises and the media productively; (5) “use the power of direct confrontation;” and (6) “rejoice in victories and keep the work headed to basic social change.”<sup>355</sup>

The “Principles of Unity” drafted by the MCBWSG incorporate a feminist approach that includes the empowerment of women through information sharing and

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<sup>354</sup> Gail Sullivan, “The Movement Against Woman Abuse,” in *For Shelter and Beyond: An Educational Manual for Working with Women Who are Battered* (Boston: Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women’s Service Groups, Inc., 1981), p. 19.

<sup>355</sup> Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women Service Groups, Inc., *For Shelter and Beyond: Ending Violence against Battered Women and Their Children*, pp. 137-39.

self-help, working to reduce racism and sexism in American society, and making woman battering, which had previously been treated as a private, personal issue, the subject of public, political action. The Principles describe the MCBWSG as a “coalition of individuals and community-based women’s organizations” which exist to help women and children in crisis. They state the organization’s commitment to “helping women acquire the information and skills necessary to control their own lives” and to not encouraging women to remain in or return to violent situations, as well as a focus on self-help for women. According to the Principles, MCBWSG was committed to “a violence-free society and to combating racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and ageism” which was viewed as inherent in the American political and judicial system. Finally, the Principles state the MCBWSG’s commitment to “struggle” with all of these issues, to “build trust, avoid competition, and make power and leadership available to all women.”<sup>356</sup>

Like the national coalition, statewide coalitions struggled with issues of racism, classism, and heterosexism. The comments of Curdina Hill, an African American woman, illustrate the ongoing struggle that the MCBWSG experienced:

My issue with this coalition is a need for a third world base of support in the shelter movement. Shelters are too white on all levels. Individual shelters need to look at outreach to third world women. People agree but little happens; the coalition has made attempts in its own hiring. However, the member groups of the coalition need to make a more serious commitment to actually doing this.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, p. 119.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120. (“Third world women” was used in the 1970s to describe women of color.)

The MCBWSG merged with the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault in 1998, to form Jane Doe, Inc. Current Executive Director Mary R. Lauby joined Jane Doe, Inc. in 2004. Lauby served as the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence for ten years, and was involved with the establishment of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault in the mid-1980s. Lauby has occupied key leadership roles in the national battered women's movement, including serving on the National Violence Against Women Advisory Committee of the U.S. Departments of Justice and Health & Human Services, and as the Board President for the National Network to End Domestic Violence.<sup>358</sup>

Thirty years after its birth, the current mission statement of Jane Doe, Inc. emphasizes networking among advocates and remaining focused on survivors, while also creating social change:

Jane Doe Inc., the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence brings together organizations and people committed to ending domestic violence and sexual assault. We create social change by addressing the root causes of this violence, and promote justice, safety and healing for survivors. JDI advocates for responsive public policy, promotes collaboration, raises public awareness, and supports our member organizations to provide comprehensive prevention and intervention services. We are guided by the voices of survivors.<sup>359</sup>

Being “guided by the voices of survivors” is an important commitment. It means that the coalition places value on keeping its services victim-centered and victim-focused.

There is an ongoing concern in the movement that the battered woman will get lost in

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<sup>358</sup> “Jane Doe, Inc. Names New Executive Director,” found online at <http://www.mjd.org>, accessed September 20, 2009.

<sup>359</sup> “Mission Statement,” found online at <http://www.janedoeinc.org>, accessed on March 30, 2008.

the growing bureaucracy of service providers. Keeping services victim-centered means remembering that the movement began to help battered women, and that concerns for the safety and welfare of battered women should be at the heart of all decisions.

### ***Texas Council on Family Violence***

The Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) was organized at a kitchen table meeting on April 8, 1978 by the same group of women who started the Center for Battered Women in Austin the year before. The Austin Center for Battered Women hosted that first meeting, and Debby Tucker was a member of the group who met to decide how they could work together. TCFV was incorporated as a nonprofit organization on December 27, 1978. At that time, there were six battered women's shelter organizations in Texas. The initial goals of TCFV were to secure state funding for shelter organizations and to advocate for protective order legislation in Texas.<sup>360</sup> The organization began with a structure that Tucker describes as "a very baby feminist egalitarian model"—it was essentially run as a collective, with each woman serving as "Coordinator" of a particular area, like internal communication, membership and treasurer, volunteers, public education, legal issues, fundraising, and research.<sup>361</sup> TCFV operated with a collective structure for the first five years, then moved to a more traditional organizational structure in response to pressure from

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<sup>360</sup> "History of the Battered Women's Movement in Texas," found online at [http://www.tcfv.org/pdf/updated\\_wheels/History.pdf](http://www.tcfv.org/pdf/updated_wheels/History.pdf), accessed September 20, 2009.

<sup>361</sup> Interview with Debby Tucker conducted by author, April 2, 2009, transcript, p. 2, and information from the *Texas Council on Family Violence Collection, 1974-2001*, University of Houston Libraries.

outside influences, like the Texas Governor's office, on whom they were dependent for funding.

Toby Myers served as the first Chair of the TCFV, and recalls that "communication and staying in touch was the most important thing" for the Council. Myers remembers that the primary purpose of the organization was "to try to get shelters going, and provide technical assistance and support to anybody who was doing this, because we were all out there not knowing what we were doing." Her work for the Texas Research Institute for Mental Sciences required Myers to travel to different locations in the state, and she used those opportunities to gather information on battered women's shelters across the state.<sup>362</sup>

A 1978 funding proposal explains why a Texas state coalition was needed: "Facing common problems of articulating the extent of family violence in our society while struggling to develop and finance the programs that are required, the shelter people definitely needed each other." The philosophy of the TCFV was characterized as "share what you've got and ask for what you need."<sup>363</sup> By its second year of operation, the members of the TCFV had agreed to divide the 254 counties in Texas up, each taking responsibility for certain counties, so that a battered woman anywhere in Texas would receive a response from a shelter organization.<sup>364</sup>

Like other state coalitions, the TCFV provides technical assistance to member organizations, sponsors training opportunities for various constituencies, coordinates

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<sup>362</sup> Inter view with Toby Myers conducted by author, April 21, 2009, transcript, p. 2. Myers was also one of the founders of the first battered women's shelter in Houston, Texas.

<sup>363</sup> "Funding Proposal: Levi Strauss," p. 1, *Texas Council on Family Violence Collection, 1974-2001*, University of Houston Libraries, Box 1, Folder 3.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.



an annual statewide conference, distributes a variety of educational materials, advocates for state and national legislation related to domestic abuse, maintains resource files and a library of reference materials, and creates public awareness of violence against women and the need to eliminate it. TCFV has been successful in securing state funding for battered women's organizations. In 1979, when TCFV was beginning its advocacy role, the six battered women's shelters in Texas received a total of \$200,000 from the state. This pilot program of state funding was the result of advocacy efforts by the TCFV, which viewed state funding as a more stable funding source for the local shelter programs.<sup>365</sup> By 2004, seventy-two battered women's shelters in Texas received a total of \$4.4 million in funding from the state.<sup>366</sup> TCFV received the state contract for administering the funds for local programs, thereby providing itself with an ongoing funding source.<sup>367</sup> Under the contract, TCFV visited each shelter that qualified for state funding, further reinforcing the TCFV's role in the provision of services to battered women in Texas.

In 1980, Erin Pizzey attended the TCFV's statewide conference, and Toby Myers was elected as the first Coordinator of Internal Communication, in part because she had access to a statewide WATS line and a Xerox machine at her workplace.<sup>368</sup> In 1982, the TCFV opened its first office in Austin, and its statewide

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<sup>365</sup> Reinelt, "Moving onto the Terrain of the State: The Battered Women's Movement and the Politics of Engagement," p. 93.

<sup>366</sup> Wilson, *When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse*, p. 308.

<sup>367</sup> Reinelt, "Moving onto the Terrain of the State: The Battered Women's Movement and the Politics of Engagement," p. 93.

<sup>368</sup> Interview with Toby Myers, conducted by author, April 21, 2009, transcript, p. 2 and "The Texas Council on Family Violence, 1988 Conference and Annual Meeting: Ten Years of Courage and

conference was attended by over 200 people. During that year, the state's Family Violence Program provided \$2 million per year in funding to 41 different shelters in Texas.<sup>369</sup> The TCFV organized another statewide conference in Austin in 1984, which drew approximately 400 participants to hear keynote speaker Susan Schechter.<sup>370</sup>

Lenore Walker served as the keynote speaker for the TCFV's 1989 statewide conference, which employed a theme of "Moving to the Head of the River." The 1989 Conference Brochure explained the conference theme:

We're swimming in a river of change . . . We've spent the last decade standing on the river bank, rescuing women who are drowning. In the next decade, some of us have to go to the head of the river to keep women from falling in.<sup>371</sup>

The shelters, laws, and resources developed during the TCFV's first decade were characterized as "lifelines" thrown to battered women. The Council looked forward to its second decade, planning to strengthen the existing "lifelines," and to "move to the head of the river" by working to end domestic abuse "at its sources: the individual abuser and the societal attitudes that support his behavior. As resources allow, we will begin more initiatives for family violence prevention, so that more and more women will never 'fall in.'"<sup>372</sup> This illustrates a shift in focus that was

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Caring" brochure, *Texas Council on Family Violence Collection, 1974-2001*, University of Houston Libraries, Box 4, Folder 2.

<sup>369</sup> "History of the Battered Women's Movement in Texas," found online at [http://www.tcfv.org/pdf/updated\\_wheels/History.pdf](http://www.tcfv.org/pdf/updated_wheels/History.pdf), accessed September 20, 2009.

<sup>370</sup> NCADV "Voice" Newsletter, dated January, 1984, found in *Betsy Warrior Papers, 1966-1994 (inclusive)*, Schlesinger Library, Radcliff College, Carton Two, p. 7.

<sup>371</sup> 1989 Conference Brochure, "The Second Decade . . . Moving to the Head of the River," p. 1, *Texas Council on Family Violence Collection, 1974-2001*, University of Houston Libraries, Box 4, Folder 3.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

occurring in the battered women's movement, from a primary focus on providing services and support to battered women through the operations of shelters, to a primary focus on creating social change by changing abuser behavior and social attitudes that support or condone violence against women.

TCFV reorganized itself and realigned its efforts in 2007. At that time, the Council adopted the following mission statement: "The Texas Council on Family Violence promotes safe and healthy relationships by supporting service providers, facilitating strategic prevention efforts, and creating opportunities for freedom from domestic violence."<sup>373</sup> Today, TCFV's three major areas of focus include: (1) providing support to service providers through training and education of advocates, criminal justice personnel, health care providers, faith communities, and other organizations and individuals; (2) public policy development, working with members of the Texas Legislature to draft and pass laws that help victims and survivors; and (3) supporting the prevention efforts of local programs across the state of Texas.<sup>374</sup> Prevention efforts of domestic violence programs have emerged in the past decade, and focus on educating communities about alternatives to the use of violence and changing societal factors that allow violence to occur.

TCFV's longtime Executive Director, Debby Tucker, has held many leadership positions in the national battered women's movement. Tucker was a cofounder of the National Network to End Domestic violence, which was formed to

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<sup>373</sup> "TFCV Undergoes Organizational Transformation," *The River* (Spring 2007) found online at <http://www.tcfv.org>, accessed on September 26, 2009.

<sup>374</sup> "What is the Texas Council on Family Violence?" found online at [http://www.tcfv.org/about\\_tcfv](http://www.tcfv.org/about_tcfv), accessed on September 20, 2009.

advocate for the passage of the 1994 Violence Against Women Act. Tucker also co-chaired the U.S. Department of Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence. She now directs the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, where she consults, trains, and advocates for change.<sup>375</sup>

### ***Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence***

The battered women's movement was also organizing in Kansas in the 1970s. The first rape crisis center in Kansas opened its doors in 1972 in Lawrence, and the first battered women's shelters in the state opened in Lawrence, Emporia, Hutchinson, and Wichita in 1976.<sup>376</sup> The Kansas Organization of Sexual Assault Centers was founded in 1978. One year later, an independent organization, the Kansas Association of Domestic Violence Programs, was formed by battered women's organizations in Manhattan, Overland Park, and Pittsburg, Kansas.<sup>377</sup>

The Association was run as an all member board. At the beginning, there was no central office. The organization's location moved to the community where the current volunteer President resided, and met at various locations around the state. One of the early participants remembered that they met in church basements, and sat on the floor to have their meetings. Everything was run on a shoestring.<sup>378</sup> The organizations providing services to battered women in Kansas got together, did

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<sup>375</sup> Wilson, *When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse*, pp. xvii-xviii.

<sup>376</sup> "History of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Movement," *Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence Newsletter*, Spring 2003, p. 2, found online at <http://www.kcsdv.org> on September 20, 2009.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

<sup>378</sup> Interview with Sandy Barnett, Juliene Maska, and Dorthy Stucky Halley, conducted by author, October 12, 2009, transcript, p. 4.

legislative work, worked on state-level accreditation requirements, and had conversations about how to provide services. At that point in their history, local shelter programs in Kansas were moving from providing safehomes to having rented shelter spaces. The volunteer directors went to the state capitol in Topeka to meet with legislators and advocate for the passage of legislation to help battered women.<sup>379</sup>

Ten years later, in 1989, the two coalitions merged to form the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV). The merger was prompted by the leaders of the organizations that provided both types of services, who found it inefficient to attend the meetings of two statewide coalitions. (The majority of the organizations in Kansas provided dual sets of services, helping both sexual assault victims and domestic abuse survivors.) Attorney Kathy Greenlee was KADVP's first executive director. Greenlee began working for KADVP in 1987, while she was still in law school, and then became the organization's executive director and first paid staff member.<sup>380</sup> In 1989, when the two organizations were merged, Alita Brown became the director for the new organization, KCSDV.<sup>381</sup> The Board of Directors consisted of one representative from each active member organization across the state, Coalition officers, and ex-officio members designated by the membership.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>380</sup> "Assistant Secretary for Aging: Who is Kathy Greenlee?" dated July 28, 2009, found online at <http://www.AllGov.com> on September 20, 2009.

<sup>381</sup> *Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence Newsletter*, October, 1989, page 1. In the possession of Dorthy Stucky Halley.

<sup>382</sup> *Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence Newsletter*, June, 1990, Volume 1, No. 2, page 1.

A 1990 mission statement described the KCSDV as “a network of programs reaching across the state, helping us unify on a state level to end battering and sexual assault wherever it occurs.” The primary focus of the organization was on providing safety and support to battered women through the direct services of the member programs. The Coalition’s role was to support its member programs through “education and advocacy, providing technical assistance and training, exploring new options for services and funding, and by working for social change.”<sup>383</sup>

The current mission statement of KCSDV reflects the dual goals of the battered women’s movement:

The purpose of the Coalition is the prevention and elimination of sexual and domestic violence through a statewide network of programs providing support and safety for all victims of sexual and domestic violence and stalking, with primary focus on women and their children; direct services; public awareness and education; advocacy for victims; comprehensive prevention, and social change efforts.<sup>384</sup>

In keeping with national trends in the battered women’s movement, prevention of violence against women has also become an area of focus for the KCSDV.<sup>385</sup>

Texas activist Toby Myers refers to the current focus of the battered women’s movement on prevention as “draining the swamp,” in an analogy linked to the steps for eradicating malaria. The first step is to strengthen the host, which Myers equates to battered women’s shelters providing services and support. The second step is to detoxify the mosquito, which Myers compares to the provision of batterer

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<sup>383</sup> *Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence Newsletter*, June, 1990, Volume 1, No. 2, page 1. In the possession of Dorothy Stucky Halley.

<sup>384</sup> “KCSDV Mission,” found online at <http://www.kcsdv.org>, accessed on September 20, 2009.

<sup>385</sup> For example, Texas activist Debby Tucker is currently working with the Center for Disease Control on a prevention initiative that involves fourteen different state coalition organizations.

intervention programs, which help batterers find alternatives to violent behavior. The third step is to drain the swamp where the mosquitoes breed, which she characterizes as creating a change in “all of our attitudes where this kind of behavior [domestic abuse] is no longer acceptable and everybody believes it is [not acceptable].”<sup>386</sup> This is the second and more elusive goal of the battered women’s movement—to eliminate violence against women. Achieving this goal requires changing people’s attitudes and belief systems, so that violence against women is no longer a socially acceptable behavior.

### ***National Domestic Violence Hotline***

Another indication that the battered women’s movement had become a national movement was the implementation of the National Domestic Violence Hotline. The first National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH) began operations in September, 1988. It was a toll-free telephone number, 1-800-333-SAFE, which was answered twenty-four hours per day by advocates providing information and assistance to battered women across the country. There were 1200 shelters for battered women in the U.S. at that time, housing 310,000 women and children a year. The NDVH was operated by the NCADV, and the operations were funded by a grant from Johnson & Johnson.<sup>387</sup> The Hotline operated until January, 1992, when the grant expired and the Hotline was closed due to a lack of funding.

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<sup>386</sup> Interview with Toby Myers, conducted by author, April 21, 2009, transcript, pp. 8-9.

<sup>387</sup> Yvonne Brooks, “Johnson & Johnson Funds Hot Line and Shelters for Battered Women,” *The Boston Globe*, June 7, 1987.

The NDVH had been receiving calls at the rate of approximately 10,000 per month prior to its closure. After the Hotline was closed in 1992 due to a lack of ongoing funding, calls from battered women were referred to the National Victim Center, which operated a nationwide information and referral service known as “Infolink.” Infolink began receiving a large number of calls from battered women, following the publication of its phone number on three television programs dealing with the topic of domestic abuse. Staff of the TCFV were asked by Infolink to help field over 13,000 calls which came in following the airing of the television programs.<sup>388</sup>

In response to the overwhelming number of phone calls, TCFV Executive Director Debby Tucker hosted a meeting in San Marcos, Texas, with representatives from TCFV, the NCADV, the PCADV, the National Women Abuse Prevention Project, the Domestic Violence Coalition on Public Policy, the Family Violence Prevention Fund, and other national leaders in the battered women’s movement, to decide how to manage the future of the NDVH.<sup>389</sup> Tucker remembers that the closure of the NDVH was seen by the group of approximately twenty-five leaders in the movement as a “giant step backwards.”<sup>390</sup> After several days discussing the alternatives, Tucker recalls that the group decided that “people would support Texas in reestablishing the hotline, they would support Pennsylvania in establishing the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, . . . that we would continue to

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<sup>388</sup> Wilson, *When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse*, p. 306.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid., and Interview with Debby Tucker conducted by author, April 2, 2009, transcript, p. 8.

<sup>390</sup> Interview with Debby Tucker conducted by author, April 2, 2009, transcript, p. 8.



nurture and grow the National Network to End Domestic Violence, and the National Coalition, and that those organizations might, at some future point, take on a larger role.”<sup>391</sup> Even though it was expected that the NNEDV might become the operator of the NDVH at some point when it was a strong enough organization, the TCFV took on the operational responsibility for the Hotline at that point.

The TCFV began raising money from private donors, and recruiting members for the NDVH’s advisory board and national development council. When the Violence Against Women Act was passed in 1994, it contained five years of funding for a national hotline for victims of domestic abuse. In the fall of 1994, the TCFV received pledges of support from all of the state coalitions and twenty-nine national domestic violence organizations to resurrect the NDVH. In the spring of 1995, the TCFV was awarded a \$1 million grant by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to open and operate the NDVH. Congress authorized additional funding of up to \$850,000 per year through 1999 for the operation of the NDVH.

On December 18, 1995, a new office for the NDVH was opened in Austin, Texas. Volunteers were trained on issues related to domestic abuse, cultural sensitivity, and computer and telecommunications equipment. On February 21, 1996, the new NDVH was started by the TCFV. During the first twenty-four hours that the new Hotline was open, it fielded 1,242 calls from women and men across the U.S.

Director Ellen Rubenstein Fisher articulated the goals of the NDVH:

We hope to provide the tools—crisis intervention, information and referrals to resources—that will assist callers achieve their dream

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

of ending the violence and healing the devastating effects that domestic violence inflicts on all members of the family.<sup>392</sup>

When it was reauthorized in 2000, the Violence Against Women Act provided \$2 million per year of funding for the Hotline for 2001 through 2005. Federal funding requires a match of private funds each year, which is raised by soliciting donations from individuals, foundations, corporations, and other organizations. The NDVH is currently supported through a mix of public and private funds.<sup>393</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

Forming coalitions was a strategy that feminists used to define and institutionalize a collective political vision for the movement. Statewide and national coalitions played an extremely important role in the battered women's movement. Initially, coalition organizations took the movement from a series of discrete shelters working independently to an organized network of shelter organizations with common goals of empowering battered women by providing services and support, and advocating for systems changes that would lead to the reduction (and eventually, elimination) of the domestic abuse of women. Perhaps as important, coalitions provided a space for activists to talk with one another, to share information and resources, and to learn from one another. They embodied the feminist commitment to self-help and self-empowerment for women. Coalitions have served as the locus for organizing and lobbying efforts aimed at changing the police response and the laws

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<sup>392</sup> "Calls Flood into National Domestic Violence Hotline on Opening Day," News Release of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, dated February 22, 1996, *Texas Council on Family Violence Collection, 1974-2001*, University of Houston Libraries, Box 3, Folder 59.

<sup>393</sup> Wilson, *When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse*, pp. 307-08 This raises an interesting question about how social structures support gender inequality. I discuss this issue in Chapter Six.

governing domestic abuse. Coalitions have had to walk a fine line, balancing the feminist principles of decentralization, local autonomy, empowerment, and self-determination with the goal of building a political powerbase for women on a state and national level. They have struggled to remain progressive organizations with anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-homophobic political agendas incorporating diverse membership groups, while at the same time garnering political power for women in a larger society that is fraught with sexism, racism, and heterosexism.

## **Chapter Five: Moving to the Head of the River**

*“When my husband tried to kill me,  
I finally called the police, who came,  
took one look at the house and at me  
and we were both broken and bloody,  
asked if my husband was gone—he  
was—and said, ‘lady, it’s his house,  
he can do what he wants.’”*

*--a victim<sup>394</sup>*

*“Violence against women, in its many  
forms, is thus a large part of the  
explanation of how women are oppressed,  
and why we have not succeeded in ending  
the longest standing case of oppression  
on the planet.”*

*--Ann Cudd<sup>395</sup>*

### ***Institutional Advocacy***

Activists in the battered women’s movement have been engaged in two forms of advocacy since the movement began. The first form, advocating for individual battered women, includes providing safe shelter for women and their children, assisting them in obtaining the resources that they need, and helping them to negotiate the legal system.<sup>396</sup> The goal of the second form, institutional advocacy, is to create social change. This chapter explores the three primary forms of institutional advocacy employed by activists in the battered women’s movement. They include: efforts to change the police response to battering; advocating for changes in existing laws and the passage and implementation of new laws, at the local, state and federal

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<sup>394</sup> Attorney General’s Task Force on Family Violence, “Attorney Generals’ Task Force on Family Violence: Final Report,” (Washington, DC: Attorney General of the United States, 1984), p. 23.

<sup>395</sup> Ann Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 96.

<sup>396</sup> Since the focus of my interviews with movement activists was on the formation (or the early years) of shelters for battered women, I have more interview data on individual advocacy than institutional advocacy. Therefore, much of the material in this chapter draws on sources other than my oral history interviews.

levels; and designing and implementing a coordinated community response to domestic violence. Individual advocates, local shelter organizations, and state and national coalitions all play a role in influencing public policy regarding domestic abuse. The discourse that activists and others use to frame the social problem of domestic abuse is an important component of my analysis.

### ***The Power of Language***

Since the inception of the movement, activists in the battered women's movement have struggled with the appropriate language to describe domestic abuse. The struggles over language that have received the most attention have focused on the issue of gender neutrality.<sup>397</sup> The discourse has shifted, over time, from the use of terms specifically describing the abuse of women by men, to terms which are more gender neutral. While feminists used the terms "woman battering," "wife abuse," "woman abuse"<sup>398</sup> or "violence against women" in the early years of the movement, by the 1980s the gender neutral term "domestic violence" had become prevalent in public discourse. While the strengths of the term "domestic violence" are that it is gender neutral (it can be used to apply to men or women as victims), it is more inclusive of different types of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, economic, etc.) and it also can be used to include children as victims, its major shortcoming is that it

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<sup>397</sup> Kathleen J. Ferraro, *Neither Angels nor Demons: Women, Crime and Victimization*, ed. Claire M. Renzetti, The Northeastern Series on Gender, Crime, and Law (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2006), pp. 14-15.

<sup>398</sup> Dobash and Dobash note that both "wife abuse" and "woman abuse" are problematic terms—wife abuse implies that both marriage and gender are central, but limits the definition of battering to married couples, while woman abuse focuses exclusively on gender but loses the emphasis on the institution of marriage as a patriarchal framework for the problem of woman battering. Dobash and Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change*, p. 39.

undermines the reality that the overwhelming majority of victims of physical abuse in a domestic setting are women who have been abused by men. By the late 1990s, the gender neutral term “intimate partner violence” had replaced “domestic violence,” in recognition that domestic abuse is not limited to heterosexual and/or married couples. “Family violence” is yet another gender neutral term that has been used to describe violence occurring in the home. Even though it better conveys the gendered nature of violence between intimate partners, the term “battered woman” is problematic because it emphasizes the physical aspects of violence, and conveys the impression that intimate partner violence consists of nothing more than physical assault of a spouse or intimate partner.<sup>399</sup> Emotional abuse, economic control, isolation and other tactics used by abusers are an important part of the power and control that abusers exert over their victims.

The term “battered woman” has also been controversial because it focuses on the victim and suggests an identity as victim rather than a set of experiences.<sup>400</sup> In American society, the victim identity is stigmatized by a culture that values individual responsibility, strength of character, and assertiveness.<sup>401</sup> For this reason, both battered women and their advocates have use the term “survivor” of domestic abuse, rather than “victim” or “battered woman.” “Survivor” denotes a woman who is strong, who has taken responsibility for her life, asserted her rights, and escaped from abuse to begin a life apart from her abuser. The use of the term “survivor” is

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<sup>399</sup> Ferraro, *Neither Angels nor Demons: Women, Crime and Victimization*, p. 15.

<sup>400</sup> Dobash and Dobash argue that the terms “battered woman,” “abused woman,” and “battered wives” all have the additional problem of implying a permanent status, “a master identity that can never be escaped.” Dobash and Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change*, p. 40.

<sup>401</sup> Ferraro, *Neither Angels nor Demons: Women, Crime and Victimization*, p. 19.

necessitated by a culture which continues to blame the victim—to blame the battered woman for inciting the abuse, or at least for not leaving the domestic situation immediately when the abuse begins. However, “survivor” has the advantage of portraying an abused woman as an active subject, rather than an object of abuse. This characterization is consistent with the battered women’s movement goal of empowering battered women.

### ***Failure to Protect***

In the early years of the battered women’s movement, advocates struggled to redefine domestic abuse as a public problem. At the beginning of the movement, there was no language to describe what battered women were experiencing. Activists were challenged by the lack of official statistics about woman battering, as well as the lack of a clear definition of what actions constituted domestic abuse. They also faced many challenges in dealing with the criminal justice system. The first significant legal issue encountered by the movement was the failure of the police to protect women from abuse by an intimate partner.

In the early 1970s, most police departments did not consider domestic abuse to be a “real” crime. Instead, the crime of woman battering (technically, a form of assault and battery) was classified as a misdemeanor. In this environment, one of the primary problems with the criminal justice response to domestic abuse was that it was not viewed as “legitimate” police work by most police officers.<sup>402</sup> Time spent by police officers on domestic assaults was viewed by the police as time not available for

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<sup>402</sup> Eve S. Buzawa and Carl G. Buzawa, *Domestic Violence: The Criminal Justice Response* (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, 1990), p. 27.

major felony cases. Violence between intimate partners was considered a private problem and a less serious matter than violence between strangers. Police officers also feared that personal injury might result from handling domestic assault cases--a fear which was exacerbated by statistics published by the FBI in the early 1980s, which reported that most deaths of police officers were caused by "responding to disturbance calls."<sup>403</sup> Some analysts argue that police fear of injury from handling domestic abuse cases was widely overblown.<sup>404</sup> Regardless of the reality, the police perception that handling domestic abuse calls was dangerous and not legitimate police work contributed to a lack of police responsiveness to calls from battered women.

Writing from professional experience, former police officer Richard L. Davis observed that "the majority of domestic violence calls I was dispatched to around this time [1977] were, by law, misdemeanors with no powers of arrest. In the majority of the calls to which they responded, officers could not arrest the abuser even with probable cause."<sup>405</sup> According to Davis, the limitations of Massachusetts laws governing domestic abuse left police officers with the impression that, "if they made an arrest the courts would do little to correct the actions of the abuser."<sup>406</sup>

Massachusetts passed the Abuse Prevention Act in 1978, which allowed police to make arrests for misdemeanor crimes which involved domestic violence, even if the

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., A 1986 study by J. Garner and E. Clemmer concluded that FBI statistics overstated the rate of police injuries and deaths related to domestic assault cases by a factor of three.

<sup>405</sup> Richard L. Davis, *Domestic Violence: Facts and Fallacies* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1998), p. 58. Davis worked as a police officer in several cities in Massachusetts.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.



arresting officers did not observe the crime. However, the crime of assault and battery remained a misdemeanor (whether committed by a family member or not) and was, therefore, given a low priority by police because it remained a minor crime.<sup>407</sup>

Police training programs are an important component in preparing new police officers for active duty, and in imparting procedural changes to members of an existing police force. Criminal justice scholars Eve S. and Carl G. Buzawa conducted a national review of police training programs in the late 1970s, and found that “the domestic violence-related component of virtually all police training programs examined was perfunctory in nature, usually comprised of a single 4-to-8-hour lecture segment [out of an eight to twelve week training program] under the general rubric of handling ‘disturbed persons.’”<sup>408</sup> Even more problematic, arrests in domestic disturbance calls were actively discouraged, since they were viewed as unproductive and potentially dangerous for the officers involved.

Unlike other victims of violent crimes, battered women and rape victims are often seen as culpable for the harm that is inflicted upon them. Battered women are often viewed by the police, prosecutors, judges, jurors, and others as responsible for the crimes that are committed against them. This is because battered women are believed to ‘provoke’ the batterer into violence or because they failed to avoid the criminal assault through accommodation of the batterer’s demands.<sup>409</sup> The belief that

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<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

<sup>408</sup> Buzawa and Buzawa, *Domestic Violence: The Criminal Justice Response*, p. 32.

<sup>409</sup> Eve S. Buzawa and Carl G. Buzawa, eds., *Do Arrests and Restraining Orders Work* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996), p. 101.

battered women are somehow responsible for the violence visited upon them contributes to a lack of willingness to fully prosecute and punish batterers.

### *Calls for Change*

Frustrated by what was perceived as a lack of police responsiveness to domestic assault calls, activists in the battered women's movement demanded an improvement. Increasing the responsiveness of the police to domestic assault calls was one of the top priorities of the battered women's movement in the 1970s.<sup>410</sup> Advocates worked with police departments in their geographic area to overhaul police policies and procedures pertaining to calls from battered women. While activists were successful in implementing legislation to protect battered women at the local and state levels, they were less successful in obtaining federal legislation throughout the first two decades of the movement. Although federal funding for battered women's shelters was achieved when the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) was passed by Congress in 1984, the first major piece of federal legislation to legitimize domestic abuse as a social problem was the Violence Against Women Act, which was not passed by Congress until 1994.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> Clare Dalton and Elizabeth M. Schneider, *Battered Women and the Law* (New York: Foundation Press, 2001), p. 594.

<sup>411</sup> FVPSA provides federal funding for emergency services for battered women and their children. FVPSA funds emergency shelters, crisis lines, counseling, and victim assistance programs. Although Congress has authorized \$175 million per year for FVPSA programs, the annual appropriations for FVPSA have often been at much lower levels. From 2002 to 2007, FVPSA funding ranged between \$124.5 and \$127.2 million. (<http://www.ncadv.org/files/FVPSA.pdf>, accessed March 14, 2010.) It is important to note that FVPSA was signed into law as an amendment to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, not as independent legislation designed to protect battered women. The NCADV had been lobbying for this legislation since 1979, and was only able to achieve its passage when it was attached to the more socially acceptable cause of child abuse. Dobash and Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change*, p. 141.

However, several civil lawsuits filed against metropolitan police departments had a major impact on the ability of activists to obtain local and state laws protecting battered women. A key legal case was a lawsuit brought by Tracey Thurman against the city of Torrington, Connecticut in 1984.<sup>412</sup> Despite repeated calls to the Torrington police to arrest her husband for domestic abuse, Thurman received no real police assistance. After she was attacked by her husband in the presence of the police, and received multiple stab wounds to her chest and neck, resulting in permanent disfigurement and partial paralysis, Thurman sued the Torrington Police Department. The lawsuit argued that the police were negligent, and that Thurman's constitutional rights had been violated under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The court found that the police had practiced deliberate indifference to battered women, which violated the Equal Protection Clause, and awarded Thurman \$2.3 million in damages.

The Thurman verdict had two major implications for the battered women's movement. First, police departments began to fear future civil lawsuits from (and monetary losses to) battered women, which affected police policies and procedures—in some cases, leading to mandatory arrest policies for batterers. Second, there was a sudden proliferation of consent decrees resulting from negotiated settlements of class action lawsuits in which the plaintiffs alleged that there was a past policy of police to not make arrests in domestic abuse cases.<sup>413</sup> Major cities, including New York,

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<sup>412</sup> *Tracey Thurman et al. v. the City of Torrington, Connecticut* 595 F. Supp. 1521 (Dist. Conn., 1984). See Buzawa and Buzawa, Davis, or Dalton and Schneider for detailed discussions of this case.

<sup>413</sup> Buzawa and Buzawa, *Domestic Violence: The Criminal Justice Response*, p. 75. In addition, mandatory arrest legislation was enacted in Connecticut immediately following the Thurman decision.

Oakland, California, and Dallas, Texas, operated under consent decrees, which required them to treat domestic violence as a crime, to make the appropriate arrests without consideration of marital status, and to advise the victim of her legal rights.<sup>414</sup>

The civil suit which led to the changes in the Oakland Police Department's policies and procedures was *Scott v. Hart*.<sup>415</sup> It was a class action suit which alleged that the Oakland Police Department had failed to provide adequate protection to battered women. (A class action is a form of lawsuit that is filed on behalf of a group of similarly situated plaintiffs who claim to have been injured by the actions of the defendant(s).) Under the settlement, the Oakland police department agreed to respond promptly to domestic violence calls, and arrest the abuser when the officer involved had probable cause for a felony arrest, or if the abuser committed a misdemeanor in the presence of the police.<sup>416</sup>

The New York civil suit was also a class action suit, but it was brought on behalf of twelve married battered women, and alleged that New York police had failed to arrest men who battered their wives.<sup>417</sup> One of the plaintiffs was Carmen Bruno, who told the court how the police refused to arrest her husband, even after they witnessed him attempt to strangle her.<sup>418</sup> A consent judgment reached in an out of court settlement nearly two years after the case was filed required the police to respond to a request for protection made by a woman against her husband if she said

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<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> No. C-76-2395, filed on October 28, 1976.

<sup>416</sup> Dalton and Schneider, *Battered Women and the Law*, p. 594.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., The case was *Bruno v. Codd* (90 Misc. 2d 1047, 396 N.Y.S. 2d 974 Sup. Ct. 977).

<sup>418</sup> Dobash and Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change*, p. 166.

he was beating her or if he had violated a protection order.<sup>419</sup> New York police officers were required to arrest batterers if they believed that a felony had been committed, and were expected to arrest the perpetrator if the officer had probable cause for a misdemeanor arrest. Officers were expected to find battering husbands who left the scene, and to help battered women get medical assistance if needed. They were also expected to inform battered women of their rights to obtain an order of protection. The court ordered the New York city police to develop new policies and implement new training materials.<sup>420</sup>

These legal cases resulted in changes in the policies, practices, and training programs of many police departments across the country, as police departments began to fear civil suits which could result in considerable legal expenses and possible monetary damages. Battered women's activists exploited this fear by advocating for police departments to implement policies and procedures which provided more protection and assistance to battered women. In the parts of the U.S. which had strong women's communities, such as the larger cities in Minnesota, there was also greater success in the implementation of innovative domestic abuse programs.<sup>421</sup> This was a successful strategy for the battered women's movement, because police departments responded to the combination of public pressure and the fear of civil litigation (and possible resulting monetary damages) by instituting new policies and procedures pertaining to domestic abuse.

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<sup>419</sup> Dalton and Schneider, *Battered Women and the Law*.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid.

<sup>421</sup> Kathleen J. Ferraro, "The Legal Response to Woman Battering in the United States," in *Women, Policing, and Male Violence: International Perspectives*, ed. Jalna Hanmer, Jill Radford, and Elizabeth A. Stanko (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 166.

Legal scholars argue that class action suits can also be successful, even if the plaintiffs don't prevail, because the lawsuits can educate both the public and the police about battered women's needs for an effective response from the criminal justice system.<sup>422</sup> Legal scholar Pauline Gee maintains that the *Scott v. Hart* suit was very worthwhile, given the following outcomes: "the City of Oakland gave \$89,000 of federal monies to three Oakland women's shelters" in 1980; "use of the police's Battered Women's Resource Card that explains the legal rights of domestic violence victims has increased follow-through by victims; the district attorney's office has voluntarily changed some of its policies; temporary restraining orders when enforced by police have been shown to work and prevent future violence;" and the lawsuit has given rise to similar lawsuits in other states, and led to voluntary changes in police policies in many other locations.<sup>423</sup>

### ***Research Implications***

At the same time that the court cases were being decided, research was also underway that would support activists' efforts to encourage police to arrest abusive men. A grant from the National Institute of Justice funded a study by Lawrence W. Sherman and Richard A. Berk called the "Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment," which was published in 1984. Sherman and Berk worked with the Minneapolis Police Department to carry out what Berk described as "the first

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<sup>422</sup> Pauline W. Gee, "Ensuring Police Protection for Battered Women: The Scott V. Hart Suit," *Signs* 8, no. 3 (1983): p. 566.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*

controlled, randomized experiment in history in the use of arrest for any offense.”<sup>424</sup> The Minneapolis experiment tested the effectiveness of arrest policies in deterring repeat violence against the same victim. The results of the Minneapolis experiment showed that arrest and a night in jail for the suspect cut the risk of repeat violence against the same victim in half over a six-month follow-up period, from about 20% to 10%.<sup>425</sup> Alternatives to arrest used by the Minneapolis police in the experiment included keeping the suspect out of the home for eight hours, or police advising the couple to calm down and leaving the scene. The report recommended that “police in all 50 states be allowed to make warrantless arrests in misdemeanor domestic violence cases.”<sup>426</sup>

Although the Minneapolis experiment has been criticized for its small sample size (314) and its specificity to Minneapolis and the city’s particular socioeconomic demographics, the report was widely and successfully used by battered women’s advocates, police leadership, and public policymakers to argue that arrest was a strong deterrent to men who batter women. The Minneapolis experiment had a significant impact on public policy. Surveys show that, by 1989, 90% of police departments nationally either encouraged or required arrest in domestic disturbances, whereas in 1984 only 10% of police departments in cities with populations over 100,000 had mandatory arrest policies for domestic abuse.<sup>427</sup> In the short space of

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<sup>424</sup> Lawrence W. Sherman, *Policing Domestic Violence: Experiments and Dilemmas* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), p. 2.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid., p. 3. It is important to note that the authors recommended against wholesale adoption of mandatory arrest laws until further studies had been completed.

<sup>427</sup> Davis, *Domestic Violence: Facts and Fallacies*, p. 60.

five years, activists working on behalf of battered women achieved dramatic changes in police policies regarding domestic abuse.

### *State Legislation*

In the wake of the civil suits by battered women and the publication of the Minneapolis Experiment, another successful strategy used by battered women's advocates was to push state legislators to implement laws that required a more progressive response to domestic abuse. By 1983, police arrest powers in domestic violence cases had been expanded in two thirds of the states.<sup>428</sup> Of the thirty-three states with expanded statutes, fourteen permitted warrantless arrests in all domestic abuse cases, while twenty-eight permitted warrantless arrest if the arresting officer had probable cause for a misdemeanor arrest, and nineteen states permitted warrantless arrest if there was probable cause for the violation of a protective order.<sup>429</sup> By the mid-1980s, police in most states had more legal authority than ever before to arrest men who battered their intimate partners.

Oregon was the first state to pass a "mandatory arrest" law in 1977, primarily as a result of intense lobbying efforts by the members of the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.<sup>430</sup> Oregon's mandatory arrest law required police to arrest the perpetrator if they had probable cause to believe that an assault had been committed, or that a victim with a restraining order was in fear of imminent

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<sup>428</sup> Dalton and Schneider, *Battered Women and the Law*, p. 595.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> Marvin Zalman, "The Courts' Response to Police Intervention in Domestic Violence," in *Domestic Violence: The Changing Criminal Justice Response*, ed. Eve S. Buzawa and Carl G. Buzawa (Westport, Connecticut: Auburn House, 1992), p. 86.



serious physical injury.<sup>431</sup> Mandatory arrest laws were gradually adopted across the country—by 1982 five states had mandatory arrest laws for misdemeanor domestic assault or violation of a protection order, and by 1992 fifteen states had mandatory arrest laws for misdemeanor domestic assault, and nineteen states had mandatory arrest laws for violation of a protection order.<sup>432</sup> Many cities also adopted mandatory arrest laws for domestic assault or the violation of protection orders. A decade or so after police gained more legal authority to arrest batterers, in the majority of states they were actually required by the law to arrest batterers. This was a dramatic change from the situation where police had great discretion over whether or not to arrest batterers. Mandatory arrest laws were designed to make the police more accountable to the public for their treatment of domestic abuse cases. Moreover, in states where battered women’s coalitions had significant political power,<sup>433</sup> police began to respond to public pressure to arrest batterers even before mandatory arrest became required procedure. Officially, the ability of the police to exercise discretion in domestic assault cases disappeared because it had become politically unacceptable in these communities.

### ***The Debate on Mandatory Arrest***

Mandatory arrest laws for domestic abuse have been the subject of significant debate in the field. Various studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of

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<sup>431</sup> Dalton and Schneider, *Battered Women and the Law*.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid.

<sup>433</sup> Buzawa and Buzawa, eds., *Do Arrests and Restraining Orders Work*, p. 127. These states included Oregon, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Illinois. “Political power” in this context means the power to persuade state legislators to make changes in the laws governing domestic violence.

mandatory arrest laws on reducing the incidence of domestic assaults. However, the results are inconclusive.

In actuality, the existence of mandatory arrest laws did not always mean that batterers were arrested. Even the Minneapolis Police Department, which “enthusiastically” supported the use of arrests following the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment, reported in 1986 that only 3,645 arrests were reported, out of 24,948 domestic assault calls, which is less than 20%. In 12% of the reported cases, the police did not respond to the call and in 60% of the cases, the police officers involved resolved the case through talking with the couple, or “mediation.”<sup>434</sup> This data indicates that, by the mid 1980s when mandatory arrest laws were becoming common, police in Minneapolis still found a way to circumvent the intention of the law and failed to arrest the abuser in the majority of the domestic abuse calls that they handled. The data also illustrates why activists emphasized the importance of police training—so that new laws were implemented in ways that improved the safety of battered women.

In September 1984, the Attorney General’s Task Force on Family Violence<sup>435</sup> issued its “Final Report.” In the section pertaining to the justice system, the task force placed the responsibility for making progress against the problem of family

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<sup>434</sup> ———, *Domestic Violence: The Criminal Justice Response*, p. 99.

<sup>435</sup> “Family violence” is a gender neutral term used to denote domestic abuse. By calling it “family violence,” abuse is viewed as gender neutral, and perpetrated by or against any member of a family. This term obscures the fact that the vast majority of domestic abuse is perpetrated by men against women. See Stacy A. Hammons “Family Violence: The Language of Legitimacy” for a discussion of the argument for the use of this term from a social-psychological perspective on domestic violence. Stacy A. Hammons, “Family Violence”: The Language of Legitimacy, *Affilia* 19, no. 3 (2004).

violence squarely with the criminal justice system. The first recommendation of the Task Force for the justice system was that “Family violence should be recognized and responded to as a criminal activity.”<sup>436</sup> The Task Force’s recommendations for law enforcement included treating family violence as a priority response, and establishing arrest as the “preferred response” in cases of family violence.<sup>437</sup> Citing the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment, the Task Force argued that the research “demonstrated that arrest and overnight incarceration are the most effective interventions to reduce the likelihood of subsequent acts of family violence.” The report notes that, not only does arrest reduce the chance of immediate additional assault by two and a half times, but that the probability of future violence is also reduced, because “the assaulter views the enhanced stature of the victim and subsequent arrest and overnight incarceration as a judgment that his behavior is criminal.”<sup>438</sup> (This comment demonstrates the degree of social acceptance of intimate violence by men against women—only if arrested does the batterer get the message that his behavior is socially unacceptable!)

Some activists, however, argue that mandatory arrest policies are not desirable, for the following reasons: (1) mandatory arrest policies significantly increase costs to public agencies arguably without offsetting benefits; (2) mandatory arrests can result in unintended consequences to both abuser and victim; (3) victim preferences should be considered, and they are not under a mandatory arrest policy;

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<sup>436</sup> Violence, "Attorney Generals' Task Force on Family Violence: Final Report," p. 10.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

(4) a mandatory arrest policy puts far more power in the hands of the police departments, who have historically been unsympathetic to the needs of abused women; and (5) mandatory arrest policies may reduce the inclination of judges to treat domestic violence calls in a serious manner.<sup>439</sup> In general, critics of mandatory arrest policies argue that the policies do not work to reduce violence, arrest does not help either the victim or the offender, and that battered women don't necessarily want their batterer to be arrested.<sup>440</sup> Mandatory arrest policies may also have a disparate impact on battered women who are ethnic minorities, as they and their batterers face racism in the judicial system.

The battered women's movement had five distinct reasons for advocating for mandatory arrest laws: (1) a desire to control police behavior—to make police more accountable to women in general, and battered women in particular; (2) a desire to protect women from current violence by a batterer; (3) a desire to reduce the incidence of domestic abuse—directly by deterring recidivism, and indirectly by sending a message that battering was unacceptable to society in general; (4) a desire to remove the police discretion to arrest, thus acknowledging a legitimate social interest in redressing the legacy of discriminatory treatment of women by law enforcement personnel and systems; and (5) a desire to redistribute the social resource of the police, and to make it more available to women.<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> Buzawa and Buzawa, *Domestic Violence: The Criminal Justice Response*, pp. 102-05.

<sup>440</sup> Evan Stark, "Mandatory Arrest of Batterers: A Reply to Its Critics," in *Do Arrests and Restraining Orders Work?*, ed. Eve S. Buzawa and Carl G. Buzawa (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996), p. 125.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128-9.

Although the results of the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment were used by many women's advocates to argue for mandatory arrest policies, Sherman and Berk did not support mandatory arrest. Rather, the researchers recommended that police be *allowed* to make warrantless arrests in misdemeanor domestic abuse cases.<sup>442</sup> The goal of mandatory arrest laws is to reduce the incidence of domestic abuse. Kathleen Krennek, a staff member for the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence, argues that only an evaluation of the state's mandatory arrest law from the victims' perspective can reveal whether battered women believe that mandatory arrest is having the desired effect, and reducing domestic abuse.<sup>443</sup> This comment highlights ongoing concerns about the unreliability of official statistics on domestic abuse, and the need to adopt the victim's standpoint when considering the effectiveness of mandatory arrest laws.

Movement toward mandatory arrest policies was the result of a combination of factors. Sociologist Richard Gelles argues that "it is unusual, if not unprecedented in the social sciences, when empirical research results combine with social advocacy, popular political agendas, public support, and conventional wisdom to bring about a change in social policy and social action." However, this is exactly what occurred with respect to the implementation of mandatory arrest procedures for crimes of domestic abuse.<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Davis, *Domestic Violence: Facts and Fallacies*, p. 61.

<sup>443</sup> Marion Wanless, "Mandatory Arrest: A Step toward Eradicating Domestic Violence, but Is It Enough?," *University of Illinois Law Review* 1996, no. 533 (1996): p. 11.

<sup>444</sup> Richard J. Gelles, "Constraints against Family Violence: How Well Do They Work?," in *Do Arrests and Restraining Orders Work?*, ed. Eve S. Buzawa and Carl G. Buzawa (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996), p. 30.

### *Protective Orders*

While activists were working to obtain mandatory arrest laws at the state and local level, they were also advocating for new laws that would allow battered women to obtain civil protection orders against their batterers. Civil protection orders pertaining to domestic abuse are known as restraining orders (RO), temporary restraining orders (TRO), protective orders (PO), civil protective orders (CPO) or protection from abuse (PFA) orders. For many battered women, going to court for a protection order is the first legal step towards ending the abuse in their relationships.<sup>445</sup> Before 1976, there were only two states which had legislation that provided protection orders which were designed specifically to help battered women. The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence was the first advocacy organization for battered women to actively urge its state legislature to adopt this civil remedy for victims of domestic abuse.<sup>446</sup> When Pennsylvania passed the Protection from Abuse Act in 1976, it marked a turning point—by 1980 there were similar laws on the books of forty-five states and the District of Columbia, and by 1998 every state offered protection orders to victims of abuse.<sup>447</sup>

The 1994 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) represents another turning point in the battered women's movement, because it contains two provisions which strengthened the legal protection that state protective orders conveyed. First, VAWA provides that states must give "full faith and credit" to protection orders issued in

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<sup>445</sup> Dalton and Schneider, *Battered Women and the Law*, p. 498.

<sup>446</sup> Barrie Levy, *Women and Violence* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), p. 148.

<sup>447</sup> Dalton and Schneider, *Battered Women and the Law*.

other states or tribal courts, as long as due process requirements are met at the time the order is issued.<sup>448</sup> Second, VAWA makes crossing of state lines to violate a protection order, or interstate violation of a protection order, a federal crime.

Protection orders offer abused women a legal remedy to stop the abuse, and to restrain the abuser from threatening them. However, there is not much statistical evidence that protection orders can effectively curb intimate partner violence, or research to help determine when and where protection orders will be helpful and when and where they might be harmful to abuse victims. Even more problematic, batterers have not passively accepted the laws governing protection orders, nor have the police and the courts. One police response to mandatory arrest policies has been to arrest both parties involved, rather than determining who is at fault. Defendants have also sought mutual protection orders, or filed for a protection order as a preemptive move when they anticipated that their abused partner would file for one.<sup>449</sup> Again, these problems stem from a lack of consistency in the way that new laws are implemented by the police and participants in the legal system.

The National Institute of Justice recently funded a study of the effectiveness of civil protection orders for women who were experiencing domestic abuse in the state of Kentucky.<sup>450</sup> The study encompassed both rural and urban areas. The results of the study indicate that battered women in both rural and urban areas found protective orders to be effective in reducing abuse, reducing their fear of future abuse,

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid.

<sup>450</sup> TK Logan et al., "The Kentucky Civil Protective Order Study: A Rural and Urban Multiple Perspective Study of Protective Order Violation Consequences, Responses, & Costs," (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009).

and reducing their distress due to the abuse. Researchers also concluded that women living in rural areas experienced more problems obtaining protective orders, less relief from the fear and abuse over time, and weaker enforcement of protective orders than women living in urban areas.<sup>451</sup> Finally, the results of the study indicate that the costs of civil protective orders are low—protective orders provide increased safety for battered women at little or no additional cost to society, but actually produce substantial savings when the victims’ quality of life is taken into account.<sup>452</sup>

Long-time battered women’s activist Barbara Hart argues that protection orders are valuable tools “that can significantly facilitate the achievement of the goals of safety and autonomy for abused women and children and the goals of constraint and deterrence of abusing men.” Hart cites data that suggests that “civil protective orders increase police responsiveness to the requests of battered women for assistance.”<sup>453</sup> The authors of the Kentucky study agree. They cite three primary advantages of protective orders: (1) they require a lower burden of proof than would be required for criminal charges; (2) violations of protective orders may be addressed with a contempt of court charge, resulting in quicker punishment than a criminal charge; and (3) they provide a “source of empowerment and flexibility for victims in meeting their specific needs.”<sup>454</sup> Activists in the battered women’s movement were

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<sup>451</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Dalton and Schneider, *Battered Women and the Law*, p. 500-01. "Why Protective Orders?" by Barbara Hart, *State Codes on Domestic Violence: Analysis, Commentary and Recommendations*, 1992 *Juvenile and Family Court Journal* 3,23-24 (92).

<sup>454</sup> Logan et al., "The Kentucky Civil Protective Order Study: A Rural and Urban Multiple Perspective Study of Protective Order Violation Consequences, Responses, & Costs," p. 14.



successful in obtaining protective order legislation at both the state and federal level which has been used by battered women to protect themselves from their abusers.

### *Feminist Lawmaking*

The feminists in the battered women's movement have used lawmaking to transform the social meaning of battering, and to express the vision of the battered women's movement.<sup>455</sup> As chair of the National Network to End Domestic Violence, Texas activist Debby Tucker spent many long months in Washington, D.C. working to get a hearing in the House for the legislation that would become the Violence Against Women Act. Tucker believes that the Violence Against Women Act was passed in Congress because legislators had learned that woman battering was a social problem from the shelter organizations in their communities and the coalitions in their states.<sup>456</sup> Grassroots activism at the local and state level provided members of Congress with a knowledge base about woman abuse that activists working at the national level were able to leverage into federal legislation to help battered women.

Legal scholar Elizabeth M. Schneider observes that there is a “dialectical interrelationship between rights and politics,” and a dialectic between consciousness and social change which is embedded in feminist lawmaking—feminists’ assertion of the legal rights of battered women is grounded in women’s experiences, and those experiences shape feminist theory and practice.<sup>457</sup> However, Schneider also cautions that “lawmaking and the assertion of rights must be understood as part of a larger

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<sup>455</sup> Schneider, *Battered Women & Feminist Lawmaking*, p. 34.

<sup>456</sup> Interview with Debby Tucker, conducted by author, April 2, 2009, transcript, p. 7. See the section of this chapter titled “VAWA 1994” for a full explanation of the legislation.

<sup>457</sup> Schneider, *Battered Women & Feminist Lawmaking*.

process of change . . . Legal discourse can be either a means to articulate new values and political vision or an alienated and artificial language that constricts political debate.”<sup>458</sup> In other words, social movements can become hamstrung by their own lawmaking and rights discourse.<sup>459</sup>

Legal discourse operates at many levels in society and culture. The law has a material impact on people’s lives. The law also operates at a symbolic level, which means that it plays a role in shaping social messages.<sup>460</sup> For example, the arrest of a batterer sends the social message to the batterer, the victim, and the public that domestic assault is a crime, is not socially acceptable behavior, and does have real consequences. Failure to arrest a batterer sends the opposite message—that domestic assault is not a serious crime, is socially acceptable behavior, and does not have serious consequences. The law also plays a role in constructing American social life and producing cultural meanings and identities.<sup>461</sup> It affects public consciousness, reflecting the process of social change as the various participants respond to new laws. However, the legal process is also shaped by those participants, sometimes in unexpected ways.<sup>462</sup> (One example of this is the use of mandatory arrest laws by police officers to justify the arrests of both the abuser and his victim.)

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<sup>458</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>459</sup> Mandatory arrest laws, for example, can be problematic if the police interpret the law to mean that both participants in a domestic dispute should be arrested. Feminist lawmaking designed to protect women from their batterers can be used to discourage battered women from calling the police if they fear that they will also be arrested.

<sup>460</sup> Schneider, *Battered Women & Feminist Lawmaking*.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

The law is a form of “disciplinary power,” as Michel Foucault defined the term. Disciplinary power permeates society through a vast network of relationships, or capillaries. Disciplinary power acts to discipline subjects, channeling their behavior in the ‘right’ direction and defining certain behaviors as abnormal or deviant.<sup>463</sup> The law is a productive form of power—changes in the law are produced by social change, and they also produce further social change. This is consistent with Foucault’s theorization of power—power is not hierarchical, but power is relational. Foucault envisioned power as positive and productive. Power and resistance are inseparable for Foucault, because resistance to power does always occur within power relations, even as resistance to power affects power relations.<sup>464</sup> Foucault understands power as:

The multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, or in the various social hegemonies.<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> Susan Hekman, "Feminist Identity Politics: Transforming the Political," in *Feminism and the Final Foucault*, ed. Dianna Taylor and Karen Vintges (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p. 201.

<sup>464</sup> Margaret A. MacLaren, "Foucault and Feminism: Power, Resistance, Freedom," in *Feminism and the Final Foucault*, ed. Dianna Taylor and Karen Vintges (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p. 223.

<sup>465</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume I* (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc., 1978), pp. 92-93.

According to Leona English, Foucault's basic theory of power has four primary aspects: "(a) power is pervasive and is capillary or operates at the extremities; (b) power is always connected to resistance; (c) power operates through disciplinary practices or techniques that give rise to self-surveillance; and (d) power is productive (good and bad), not repressive."<sup>466</sup> This formulation reveals that power and resistance are closely interrelated.

Feminist theorists building on Foucault's theories of power distinguish between "power" and "domination," and between two primary levels of analysis—the microlevel and the macrolevel. For example, Amy Allen defines the microlevel of analysis as "a specific power relation between two individuals or groups of individuals" or "the foreground" of power relations and the macrolevel of analysis as "the cultural meanings, practices, and larger structures of domination that make up the context within which a particular power relation is able to emerge," or "the background" of power relations.<sup>467</sup> In actuality, power operating at both levels is interrelated. Domestic abuse operates at the microlevel and reflects the batterer's power over his victim, whose ability to resist the abuse is limited by the extent of her resources. At the macrolevel, cultural discourse which privileges masculinity and devalues femininity contributes to the social acceptability of domestic abuse.

At the microlevel, the funding policies of governmental entities have been used to control the behavior of feminist activists (by requiring a traditional form of

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<sup>466</sup> Leona M. English, "Foucault, Feminist and Funders: A Study of Power and Policy in Feminist Organisations," *Studies in the Education of Adults* 37, no. 2 (2005): p. 140.

<sup>467</sup> Amy Allen, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Feminists," in *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*, ed. Susan Hekman (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), p. 267.

nonprofit organizational structure for shelters, for example). Legal discourse falls into the macrolevel of analysis—it is both part of our cultural discourse, and part of the institutional context in which violence against women operates. However, changes in the legal discourse can result in changes in the way that batterers exercise power over their victims. (For example, protective orders, which were designed to be used by battered women, have been used preemptively by batterers against battered women.)

Allen argues that Foucault's understanding of power is useful to feminists trying to explain women's oppression, but it is also incomplete: "it is not the case that the network of power relations in which women find ourselves is congealed, so that women are incapable of exercising power; instead, this network is constricted, so that women's range of options for the exercise of power is limited."<sup>468</sup> Activists working on behalf of battered women have been successful in using the law to bring about social change—as in the case of mandatory arrest laws. However, the range of options for a battered woman is still limited by the willingness of the police to make an arrest, her ability to obtain a protective order, and her ability to support herself in the absence of her batterer.

Activists in the battered women's movement have used the law as a tool to achieve protection for abused women. Enacting legislation designed to protect battered women and to ensure criminal prosecution of their batterers at the local, state, and national level was an important and successful strategy for the movement.

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

However, the law is not merely a tool used by advocates for battered women.

Participants in the legal process have shaped the way that the law is interpreted and the extent to which legal strategies have helped or harmed battered women.

### ***Battered Women Who Kill Their Abuser***

Legal reform for battered women who kill their abusers has been one of the most significant areas of feminist lawmaking on domestic abuse.<sup>469</sup> Lawyers working on behalf of battered women accused of killing their batterer have recognized that there is an implicit gender bias in criminal defense law for these women. That bias lies in the fact that women who are violent are perceived differently than men who are violent in American society. While a man who kills another man who is attacking him may be perceived to have acted reasonably in self defense, a woman who kills a man who is beating her may not be perceived in the same way. Battered women are often perceived as having “caused” their beatings through their own actions, either through provoking the batterer or not removing herself from the batterer’s reach. The question, “why didn’t she leave?” is often asked. Battered women who are defendants experience significant problems in meeting the judicial application of the standard of reasonableness and other elements of the law of self-defense. These elements include the requirement of temporal proximity to the danger perceived by the defendant; the requirement of equality of force used by the defendant to that used against her by the batterer; and the duty to leave the scene of the abuse.<sup>470</sup> (Federal legislation, in the form of VAWA 1994, recognized the gender inequality embedded

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<sup>469</sup> Schneider, *Battered Women & Feminist Lawmaking*, p. 112.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

in the American legal system, and contained provisions designed to overcome that gender inequality.)

Over the past thirty years, legal advocates for battered women have made substantial progress in gaining admissibility of expert testimony on battering and the “battered woman syndrome.”<sup>471</sup> The use of expert testimony in criminal cases in which a battered woman has killed her abusive husband is a double-edged sword. While the admission of expert testimony on the battered woman syndrome is based on a recognition that the traditional legal definitions of self-defense are sex biased, and have been shaped primarily by male experience, the use of the battered woman syndrome as a defense is dangerous, because it appears to be based on concepts of excuse.<sup>472</sup> The use of the battered woman syndrome as a defense seems to imply that the defendant was so incapacitated by her abuse that her only option was to kill her abuser, or that she killed rather than be killed. This defense is based in the individual defendant’s personal experience; it is not generalizable to all battered women. According to Schneider, “The stereotype of the reasonable battered woman who suffers from battered woman syndrome creates a new and equally rigid classification, which has the potential to exclude battered women whose circumstances depart from the model and force them once again into pleas of insanity or manslaughter.”<sup>473</sup> Use of the battered woman syndrome as a defense for battered women who kill their abusers fails to link domestic abuse with gender inequality in society at large. While

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<sup>471</sup> Psychologist Lenore Walker coined this term to describe the psychological effects produced in women who were battered.

<sup>472</sup> Schneider, *Battered Women & Feminist Lawmaking*, p. 135.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

this defense may serve the individual battered woman well in her particular legal battle, it does nothing to advance the goal of reducing domestic abuse in American society as a whole. The use of the battered woman syndrome as a defense returns domestic abuse to the realm of the individual problem, rather than treating abuse as a larger social problem.

Psychiatrist Mary Ann Dutton argues that battered woman syndrome should not be used as a legal defense, but instead is simply one approach to explaining the experiences of battered women, and an inadequate one at that.<sup>474</sup> While the term “battered woman syndrome” is vague, it also implies that there is a common set of symptoms. However, battered women’s psychological reactions to abuse vary considerably. While post traumatic stress disorder can result from domestic abuse, it is not necessarily more relevant to cases of domestic abuse than other psychological reactions, from either a legal or a clinical perspective. Dutton is concerned that battered woman syndrome language creates a “stereotyped image of pathology,” which causes battered women to be viewed as “somehow flawed, damaged, disordered or abnormal in some way.”<sup>475</sup> Again, the use of the battered woman syndrome relegates domestic abuse to the level of the individual, obscuring the larger social problem.

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<sup>474</sup> Mary Ann Dutton, "Critique of The "Battered Woman Syndrome" Model," (VAWnet, 1996),

p. 1.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid., p. 3.



## **VAWA 1994**

The first piece of federal legislation to address domestic abuse in a comprehensive manner was the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which was passed by Congress in 1994. This legislation was the result of many years of efforts by a broad coalition, including individual advocates for battered women, state and national organizations, and civil rights groups. The legislation which became known as VAWA 1994 was first introduced in 1990 by Senator Joe Biden and Representative Barbara Boxer.<sup>476</sup> When VAWA 1994 was signed into law on September 13, 1994, by President Bill Clinton (whose own mother had been physically abused by his stepfather), it was the culmination of more than four years of Congressional hearings into the social problem of violence against women. In the course of these hearings, Congress found that violence against women has an adverse impact on the American economy and interstate commerce because it “restricts movement, reduces employment opportunities, increases health expenditures, and reduces consumer spending.”<sup>477</sup> This legislation was an extremely important outcome for the battered women’s movement, because it legitimized domestic abuse as a public issue on a national scale.

VAWA 1994 was a comprehensive effort to address the problem of domestic abuse through a variety of different mechanisms. These mechanisms included federal funding for battered women’s shelters, a national domestic abuse hotline, education

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<sup>476</sup> Pat Reuss, "The Violence against Women Act: Celebrating 10 Years of Prevention and Healing," *National NOW Times*, Fall 2004, p. 5.

<sup>477</sup> Richee A. Byrd, "Specific Provisions of the Violence against Women Act," *The Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law* 3, no. 2 (2001): p. 596, fn 12.

and prevention programs for rape, and training for judges at the state and federal levels.<sup>478</sup> VAWA 1994 resulted in an important shift in the perception of domestic abuse, on the part of both Congress and the general public.<sup>479</sup> The passage of VAWA 1994 validated an understanding that domestic abuse should be understood and treated as a national social problem. The legislation's treatment of domestic abuse as a legitimate national social concern also led to a shift in the public perception of the American criminal justice system—from a perception that it was gender-neutral to a belief that it is gender-biased.<sup>480</sup> This shift in perception came with a recognition that the gender-biased criminal justice system was actually contributing to the social problem of intimate violence against women.

VAWA 1994 is seen as landmark federal legislation, because it was the first federal legislation to provide protection to victims of domestic assault, sexual assault, and stalking. These are all considered to be “gender-motivated” crimes of violence.<sup>481</sup> According to the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women, the passage of VAWA 1994 “changed the landscape for victims who once suffered in silence,” by improving the responsiveness of both the

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<sup>478</sup> Elizabeth M. Schneider, "The Violence against Women Act of 1994: A Promise Waiting to Be Fulfilled," *Journal of Law and Policy* 4, no. 371 (1996): p. 1.

<sup>479</sup> Tara McGraw Swaminatha, "The Violence against Women Act," *The Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law* 5, no. 1 (2004): p. 270.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 271.

<sup>481</sup> A “gender-motivated” crime is a crime that occurs “at least partially out of animus directed toward the victim ‘because of’ or ‘based on’ her gender.” Byrd, “Specific Provisions of the Violence Against Women Act,” p. 598.

criminal justice system and community-based responses to violence against women.<sup>482</sup>

VAWA 1994 provided a total of \$1.6 billion of federal funding over six years, including funding for the following programs: grants to encourage arrest policies; rural domestic violence and child abuse enforcement grants; STOP grants (Services and Training for Officers and Prosecutors); National Stalker and Domestic Violence Reduction grants; grants to fund shelter services for battered women and children; funds for a National Domestic Violence Hotline; funding for Federal victims' counselors; grants to fund assistance to victims of child abuse, including Court-Appointed Special Advocate Programs (CASA) and Child Abuse Training Programs; grants to fund rape prevention and education; grants to fund community initiatives for coordinated responses to violence against women; grants to fund increased security in public transportation systems, crime prevention assistance in the National Park System, and crime prevention assistance in public parks; Youth Education and Domestic Violence grants; grant funding for the treatment of released sex offenders; and education and prevention to reduce sexual abuse of runaway, homeless, and street youth.<sup>483</sup>

As important as these new sources of funding were for efforts to protect battered women, the legislation embodied a new direction that was even more important to the goals of the battered women's movement. The legislation moved the

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<sup>482</sup> "The Violence Against Women Act: 10 Years of Progress and Moving Forward, found online at [www.ncadv.org/files/OverviewFormatted1.pdf](http://www.ncadv.org/files/OverviewFormatted1.pdf) on December 24, 2008.

<sup>483</sup> "Comparison of VAWA 1994, VAWA 2000 and VAWA 2005 Reauthorization Bill 1/16/06," found online at [www.ncadv.org/files/VAWA\\_94\\_00\\_05.pdf](http://www.ncadv.org/files/VAWA_94_00_05.pdf) on December 24, 2008.

U.S. criminal justice system toward the goal of being responsive to the needs of female victims of violence, and helped to encourage the development of individual community-wide responses to violence against women that were coordinated in a way that empowered battered women and children. According to The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women, VAWA 1994 fostered the following elements which are important to the provision of services to battered women and children:

- Coordinated community responses that brought together, for the first time, the criminal justice system, the social services system, and private nonprofit organizations responding to domestic violence and sexual assault;
- Recognition and support for the efforts of domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and other community organizations nationwide working every day to end this violence;
- Federal prosecution of interstate domestic violence and sexual assault crimes;
- Federal guarantees of interstate enforcement of protection orders;
- Protections for battered immigrants;
- A new focus on underserved populations and Native victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.<sup>484</sup>

In addition to providing federal funding to many programs designed to assist battered women and children, VAWA 1994 created new crimes of “interstate domestic violence” and “interstate violation of a protective order,” with attendant criminal penalties for the perpetrators of these crimes.

VAWA 1994 also created a private federal civil rights cause of action for crimes of violence that were motivated by gender.<sup>485</sup> It legitimized the criminality of

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<sup>484</sup> “The Violence Against Women Act: 10 Years of Progress and Moving Forward, found online at [www.ncadv.org/files/OverviewFormatted1.pdf](http://www.ncadv.org/files/OverviewFormatted1.pdf) on December 24, 2008.

domestic abuse at the federal level. The civil rights clause would prove to be the most controversial piece of this landmark legislation. In 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that VAWA 1994's civil rights provision was unconstitutional, in *United States v. Morrison*.<sup>486</sup> Although Congress clearly believed that gender-motivated violence was an economic activity, the Supreme Court disagreed, and found that Congress had exceeded its legislative authority to regulate activity under the Commerce Clause.<sup>487</sup>

### ***Coordinated Community Response***

Initially, battered women's advocates focused on keeping battered women safe in shelters, improving the police response to battering, and reforming the civil and criminal justice systems. However, advocates had ongoing concerns about their inability to coordinate and communicate with the various components of the justice system in order to achieve meaningful, consistent reform of institutional practices regarding battered women. According to longtime activist Barbara J. Hart, this frustration with the lack of coordination and communication between the various elements of the justice system led battered women's advocates to conclude "that a process must be devised to create a unified vision about the goals of reform, the fundamental principles of intervention, the roles of each component, the merit of collaboration, and the necessity for public accountability."<sup>488</sup> These efforts to produce an effective criminal justice reform effort at the local level became known as

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<sup>485</sup> Swaminatha, "The Violence against Women Act," p. 271.

<sup>486</sup> *United States v. Morrison*, 529 U.S. 598, 614 (2000).

<sup>487</sup> Swaminatha, "The Violence against Women Act," p. 273.

<sup>488</sup> Barbara J. Hart, "Coordinated Community Approaches to Domestic Violence," in *Strategic Planning Workshop on Violence Against Women, National Institute of Justice* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 1995), p. 2.

a “coordinated community response (CCR).” The goal of a coordinated community response program is to improve the safety, autonomy, and quality of life for battered women in the community. This goal can be achieved using a variety of different approaches to the CCR.

The first, and one of the most often cited, examples of a CCR is the Duluth Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP). Ellen Pence is one of the founders of the DAIP, which began in 1980. Pence describes the environment of the 1970s for battered women as one in which there was a perception that there was “community collusion with batterers.”<sup>489</sup> Not only were women devastated by the personal betrayal of their abusers, but they were also harmed by the “seemingly endless ways that police officers, clergy, welfare workers, judges, family members, landlords, attorneys and therapists found to blame them for their partners’ violence.”<sup>490</sup> Pence viewed the goal of the battered women’s movement as a paradigm shift:

We wanted practitioners in agencies that battered women needed for protection to refrain from finding fault with the victims and instead to understand and eliminate the social facilitators of this violence. We wanted to train the eye of scrutiny away from a woman’s so-called ‘healthy’ response to being beaten, on to both the abuser and the institutional practices that failed to help women.<sup>491</sup>

The philosophy underlying CCR is that the entire community, not just the individuals within it, is responsible for holding abusers accountable for their violence

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<sup>489</sup> Pence, "Advocacy on Behalf of Battered Women," p. 340.

<sup>490</sup> Levy, *Women and Violence*, p. 143.

<sup>491</sup> Pence, "Advocacy on Behalf of Battered Women," p. 2.

and for making sure that victims are safe.<sup>492</sup> This is achieved by encouraging all of the participants in the community to work together, with safety for battered women as the primary consideration in all of their actions.

The DAIP was organized not as a shelter for battered women, but as a “project with advocates at the center of a planning and implementation strategy for law enforcement, courts, and human service agencies, responding to the mounting criticism of inadequate protection for battered women.”<sup>493</sup> Pence notes that the DAIP was started by a group of women who wanted to focus on the social change goal of the battered women’s movement, rather than on individual advocacy for battered women. Duluth was chosen as the site for this project because it was a smaller community (than Minneapolis or St. Paul) where access to the appropriate public officials was relatively easy to obtain, and Duluth had just experienced a murder committed by a battered wife against her abusive husband. Pence describes the philosophy of a CCR as “a coordinated community response is trying to say that each practitioner in the system should be organized in a way that positions them to take the safest measures . . .” for battered women.<sup>494</sup> Not only does the CCR help everyone involved in the community response to battered women do their job well, but it also challenges people to think about how they can do their jobs in a way that best facilitates the protection of women, and the prosecution of abusers.<sup>495</sup> In Duluth,

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<sup>492</sup> Melanie F. Shepard, Dennis R. Falk, and Barbara A. Elliott, "Enhancing Coordinated Community Responses to Reduce Recidivism in Cases of Domestic Violence," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 17, no. 5 (2002): p. 552.

<sup>493</sup> Pence, "Advocacy on Behalf of Battered Women," p. 347.

<sup>494</sup> Interview with Ellen Pence conducted by author, February 2, 2009, transcript, p. 7.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

advocacy on behalf of battered women is clearly divided into two components—the battered women’s shelter, which provides individual advocacy for battered women, and the DAIP, which coordinates the community interventions to protect battered women and to prosecute their abusers. The DAIP coordinates the work of battered women’s advocates, the police, prosecutors, probation officers, judges, and rehabilitation services.<sup>496</sup>

One of the tools that the DAIP developed is the “Power and Control Wheel.” It has become an important part of the discourse of the battered women’s movement. The Power and Control Wheel is grounded in the experiences of battered women, and rooted in a feminist analysis of power and control. The fact that it has been translated into forty different languages demonstrates how effective it has been as a tool for understanding domestic abuse. The Power and Control Wheel was first developed as a visual tool to be used in an educational curriculum for male batterers.<sup>497</sup> The origins of the Power & Control Wheel can be traced to a gathering of battered women’s advocates in a cabin in northern Minnesota in March of 1983.<sup>498</sup> By asking abused women what specific behaviors their abusers were engaging in, the DAIP activists were able to identify and categorize the elements of abuse. After listening to the stories of battered women, and categorizing the behaviors of batterers, the activists devised the Power and Control Wheel to visualize how domestic abuse

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<sup>496</sup> Shepard, Falk, and Elliott, "Enhancing Coordinated Community Responses to Reduce Recidivism in Cases of Domestic Violence," p. 556.

<sup>497</sup> Ellen Pence, *Building a Coordinated Community Response: The History of the Duluth Model* (St. Paul: Praxis International, 2006), Video.

<sup>498</sup> Lucille Janette Pope, "An Exploration of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project as a Site of Resistance and Border Crossing," (Arizona State University, 1999), p. 183.



works. The Power and Control Wheel is a graphic depiction of domestic abuse, with power and control in the center of the wheel, tactics used by batterers serving as the spokes of the wheel, and physical and sexual abuse serving as the rim of the wheel. Pence notes that the Power and Control Wheel still resonates with battered women around the world today: “No matter what culture you go to . . . that’s the thing that I think is beautiful about it is that, so many women from around the globe, they’ve translated this, because it just fits, and . . . you know that it’s real, and it’s real because it came from those women kind of saying that.”<sup>499</sup> Perhaps because it was developed using the standpoint of battered women as a starting point, the Power and Control Wheel has contributed to a shared understanding of domestic abuse as a product of gender-based power.

The coordinated community response developed by the DAIP has been described as the most promising innovation in the last twenty years for the study or treatment of domestic violence.<sup>500</sup> The ongoing challenge for the battered women’s movement is to determine how CCR’s can be more effective in the prevention of domestic abuse.<sup>501</sup>

### ***Has VAWA 1994 Been Effective?***

The encouragement of a coordinated community response to domestic violence was one of the key objectives of the Violence Against Women Act. A study

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<sup>499</sup> Interview with Ellen Pence, conducted by author, February 2, 2009, transcript, p. 12. Several of my interviewees named the Power and Control Wheel as one of the most important contributions of the battered women’s movement.

<sup>500</sup> Melanie F. Shepard, "Twenty Years of Progress in Addressing Domestic Violence: An Agenda for the Next 10," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 20, no. 4 (2005): p. 439.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 440.

undertaken by three social science researchers found that VAWA 1994 saved \$14.8 billion in “net averted social costs,” leading them to conclude that VAWA 1994 “is an affordable and beneficial social program.”<sup>502</sup> Net averted social costs include the impact of domestic abuse on the legal system, the health care system, social programs, and on victims. (The health care costs of intimate partner violence, including rape, assault, stalking, and homicide in the U.S. were estimated at more than \$5.8 billion a year, according to a 2003 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.<sup>503</sup>) In another study which examined the effect of VAWA 1994 on the response of the criminal justice system to domestic violence, the authors found that VAWA 1994 had a positive impact on victims’ contact with the authorities (e.g., court officials or prosecutors), but did not have a significant impact on the incidence of domestic violence, the rate of victim reporting to the police, or the arrest rate for domestic violence.<sup>504</sup>

VAWA legislation has not been without criticism. VAWA 1994 has been criticized for reinforcing state domestic violence laws which do not empower victims to break free from an ongoing cycle of domestic abuse. Critics have also argued that VAWA 1994 may make domestic violence situations worse for women of color, especially if they are immigrants.<sup>505</sup> Cultural differences, language barriers, and

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<sup>502</sup> Kathryn Andersen Clark, Andrea K. Biddle, and Sandra L. Martin, "A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Violence against Women Act of 1994," *Violence Against Women* 8, no. 4 (2002): p. 417.

<sup>503</sup> Levy, *Women and Violence*, p. 95.

<sup>504</sup> Hyunkag Cho and Dina J. Wilke, "How Has the Violence against Women Act Affected the Response of the Criminal Justice System to Domestic Violence?," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* XXXII, no. 4 (2005): p. 134.

<sup>505</sup> Swaminatha, "The Violence against Women Act," pp. 277-8.

immigration status may present immigrant battered women with challenges that are not addressed in VAWA 1994.<sup>506</sup>

VAWA 2000 was designed to address some of these concerns. VAWA 2000 was signed into law by President Bill Clinton on October 28, 2000. The following provisions were contained in VAWA 2000:

- Title I: Provides grants to law enforcement to assist with the enforcement of protection orders;
- Title II: Provides grants for legal aid to victims of domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault;
- Title III: Provides safe visitation for children whose parents are involved in domestic violence, child abuse, or sexual assault;
- Title IV: provides grants for education programs for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault;
- Title V: provides protections for battered women who are immigrants.<sup>507</sup>

VAWA 2000 also reauthorized VAWA 1994's grant programs and the national domestic violence hotline. Title I of VAWA 2000 amended the criminal provisions of VAWA 1994, and required that each state grant "full faith and credit" to the enforcement of other states' criminal penalties. Title I also added "dating violence" to the federal definition of domestic violence.<sup>508</sup> Title V alleviated some of the problems faced by immigrant battered women under the provisions of VAWA 1994.

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<sup>506</sup> VAWA 2000 allowed for immigrant women to petition for lawful residence without the sponsorship of their abuser, correcting one of the problems with VAWA 1994.

<sup>507</sup> Byrd, "Specific Provisions of the Violence against Women Act," pp. 606-07.

<sup>508</sup> Swaminatha, "The Violence against Women Act," p. 281.

### *Legal Discourse*

Feminist legal scholars believe that it is imperative that the state's involvement in domestic abuse issues be based on an explicit framework of gender equality. Schneider argues that "the identification of intimate violence, sexual abuse, and rape as gendered, as affecting women's freedom, citizenship, and autonomy, and as fundamental to women's equality," is one of the core principles of the battered women's movement, but that "this context of gender equality has been lost in both public and legal discourse concerning domestic violence."<sup>509</sup>

The legal discourse of "crime control" is one example of how focusing on domestic assault as a crime, with mandatory arrests and criminal prosecution of the batterer, can remove domestic abuse from the context of gender inequality. If domestic abuse is treated as a crime problem that is not related to historical inequalities between men and women, the social institution of the American family, or a cultural tolerance for a certain level of violence against women, then significant opportunities for permanently reducing the incidence of domestic abuse may be lost.

Title III of VAWA 1994 was an attempt to link the right to live a life free from intimate partner violence with gender equality. The civil rights remedy, also known as the "Gender-Motivated Violence Act," was enacted by Congress in order to protect the civil rights of victims of gender motivated violence and to promote public safety and health, and activities affecting interstate commerce.<sup>510</sup> Unfortunately for

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<sup>509</sup> Schneider, *Battered Women & Feminist Lawmaking*, p. 197.

<sup>510</sup> Byrd, "Specific Provisions of the Violence against Women Act," p. 597.

the battered women's movement, this provision was found to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2000.

### *Conclusion*

The battered women's movement has made great progress since the first shelters were opened in the early 1970s. Significant legislation has been passed at the local, state, and national levels which makes battering a crime, makes the police more responsive to battered women and accountable to the public, funds services for battered women, and legitimizes domestic abuse as a social problem. Activists have secured financial resources from a variety of sources which are now used to provide services and support to battered women. Many communities have developed a coordinated response to domestic abuse, with coordination between different agencies and resources to ensure the safety of battered women. Activists and organizations in the battered women's movement have gained a great deal of experience and have developed a sophisticated approach to creating social change, working through various forms of institutional advocacy.<sup>511</sup>

In order to achieve progress in their institutional advocacy efforts, feminist activists have had to soften the radical nature of their work. Organizations of the movement have had to transition from consensus decision-making to top down leadership in order to gain the trust and credibility of legislators and funders. Advocates in the battered women's movement have had to conform to social norms of behavior in order to obtain the passage of significant legislation. As Debby Tucker

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<sup>511</sup> Pence, "Advocacy on Behalf of Battered Women," p. 350.

put it, “so, we sort of bowed to internal and external pressure, and became a little more traditional.” Tucker believes that the choices the activists made were rational, based on what they were trying to accomplish at the time, but that “something was lost in terms of a more radical orientation.”<sup>512</sup> This is the part of the broader institutionalization of the battered women’s movement which was critiqued by many of the activists that I interviewed.<sup>513</sup>

Despite all of the progress that the movement has made to ensure the safety of battered women, much work remains to be done. Social institutions, including law enforcement and the legal system, still preserve men’s power over women in American society.<sup>514</sup> Some of the discourse designed to make battered women visible and to keep them safe has been co-opted by father’s rights organizations and used against battered women. Some of the legal tools, like protection orders, have been co-opted by batterers and used against battered women. Both forms of advocacy—providing support and services to individual battered women, and working for change in the systems and institutions that protect battered women, prosecute abusers, and prevent domestic abuse--remain the dual focus of the battered women’s movement.

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<sup>512</sup> Interview with Debby Tucker, conducted by author, April 2, 2009, transcript, p. 3.

<sup>513</sup> See Chapter Two for a discussion of activists’ critique of the institutionalization of the movement.

<sup>514</sup> See Chapter Six for an analysis of domestic abuse using structural feminist theory.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

*“By claiming that what happened between men and women in the privacy of their home was deeply political, the women’s liberation movement set the stage for the battered women’s movement.”*

*--Susan Schechter<sup>515</sup>*

*“Women helping women is our strength and our salvation.”*

*--WTCS Newsletter, December, 1978*

*“Domestic violence is about power and control, it’s not about anger.”*

*--Barbara Hart<sup>516</sup>*

*“Feminism is a social movement whose basic goal is equality between women and men.*

*--Judith Lorber<sup>517</sup>*

### ***Introduction***

In the 1970s, feminists were shocked to learn that battered women were invisible—that women were being severely injured and sometimes killed by their batterers, yet the battering of women was completely invisible in American society. Today, the battering of women is no longer invisible, yet woman abuse still exists as a significant social problem. The NCADV reports that an estimated 1.3 million American women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner every year, nearly one-third of female homicide victims are killed by an intimate partner, and the

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<sup>515</sup> Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, p. 31.

<sup>516</sup> Interview with Barbara Hart, conducted by author, July 10, 2009, transcript, page 10.

<sup>517</sup> Judith Lorber, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, Third ed. (Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company, 2005), p. 1.

cost of intimate partner violence exceeds \$5.8 billion each year.<sup>518</sup> The battered women's movement has become institutionalized. While women can still volunteer (or work for pay) at a local shelter for battered women, they can also make a donation to their local battered woman's shelter or to the state coalition, or to the NCADV or another national organization of the movement. Contributions to these organizations may be motivated by outrage at violence against women, as the founders of the movement were, but this does not reconnect the ongoing abuse of women to the issue of gender inequality in American society.

Although domestic abuse is now recognized as a legitimate social problem, it has become disconnected from the issue of gender inequality, which is the underlying problem that the feminists who started the battered women's movement were seeking to address.<sup>519</sup> Although the success of the movement in criminalizing woman battering, changing the police response, obtaining protection order legislation, institutionalizing funding for shelters, and providing a coordinated community response to battering has helped countless individual battered women, it has also contributed to the current view of domestic abuse as an isolated problem, without either a historical or a social context.<sup>520</sup> As the recent Lehrner and Allen research study demonstrates, many of the people currently working to help battered women do not know the history of the movement, do not view themselves or their work as part of a social movement, and understand their work as simply the provision of social

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<sup>518</sup> "Domestic Violence Facts," found online at NCADV.org, accessed March 18, 2010. NCADV also reports that 85% of domestic violence victims are women.

<sup>519</sup> I owe this important insight to legal scholar Elizabeth M. Schneider. Schneider, *Battered Women & Feminist Lawmaking*, p. 27.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid.



services.<sup>521</sup> They are disconnected from the origins of the movement—from stories like those of Toby Myers, who tells how the first battered women's shelter in Houston finally got up and running on a Monday morning, when a battered woman called to ask for help, after she and her two children had spent the weekend in a Goodwill box, rather than go home to their batterer.<sup>522</sup> I believe that, in order for the movement to make substantial progress on its second goal—reducing or eliminating violence against women in their own home—activists must reposition domestic abuse in the context of women's subordination and gender inequality.

### *Listening to Activists*

A feminist analysis of domestic abuse begins from the standpoint of the battered woman. Feminists argue that woman battering is rooted in sexual inequality, and that violence against women denies them their basic civil rights. Because the battered women's movement began with small groups of women opening crisis lines for women, sheltering battered women in their own homes, and then opening shelters for battered women, it is important to understand the history of the movement from the standpoint of the activists who initiated it. I have used oral history interviews as a primary methodology in order to understand the standpoint of the activists who started the movement.<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>521</sup> Lehrner and Allen, "Still a Movement after All These Years?: Current Tensions in the Domestic Violence Movement."

<sup>522</sup> Interview with Toby Myers, conducted by author, April 21, 2009, transcript, p. 3.

<sup>523</sup> One of the limitations of the methodology of open-ended oral history interviews is that the narrative is constructed primarily by the interviewee. The majority of my interviewees occupied a similar standpoint (as white, working class or middle class, educated, heterosexual or lesbian women).

I have argued that the themes emerging from my oral history interviews with activists in the battered women's movement demonstrate that the battered women's movement challenges the declension narrative of the women's liberation movement.<sup>524</sup> Although they are critical of some of the strategies that the movement used, like coordinating collectives and consensus decision-making, activists believe that the battered women's movement is a successful social movement. They are proud of the work that they did to establish a network of shelters that have provided support, services, and empowerment to battered women for more than thirty years.

In their narratives, my interviewees positioned themselves as participants in the radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. They characterized themselves as feminists, and the battered women's movement as a grassroots movement of women seeking equality and self determination. The evolution of the structure of the movement, from local shelter organizations to statewide coalitions and national organizations, was driven by the need to share information, resources, and political power.

Although many of my interviewees were motivated to work with battered women by their own personal experiences with domestic abuse, or observations of abuse within their families, many participants were simply motivated by outrage at the treatment of battered women in American society in the 1970s. Many of the activists that I interviewed expressed concern that the battered women's movement has been "tamed" by the increasing professionalization and institutionalization of the

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<sup>524</sup> See Chapter One, footnote 4, for a discussion of the declension narrative of second wave feminism.

field. Some of the move toward social service organizations, and away from being agents of social change, has occurred as a result of pressures from funding entities. The women who started the movement are concerned that movement organizations not let funders push them around, and that movement participants not lose sight of the original goals of helping battered women, and reducing or eliminating violence against women.

### ***The Shelter Movement***

There are many similarities in the histories of the five shelters that I have studied. All of the founding groups were composed of women who had been active in other social movements, primarily the anti-war movement and second wave feminism. All five of the shelters were located in communities which had active feminist communities, and the activists had been “radicalized” by their participation in feminist consciousness raising groups. These five shelter organizations began as coordinating collectives, engaged in participatory democracy and consensus decision-making. They were formed by women for women, and they empowered battered women through consciousness raising, giving survivors an understanding that battering was not their personal problem, but a symptom of a larger social problem. Battered women’s organizations engaged in a radical feminist critique of the unequal power relations found in the patriarchal family. Activists employed a public form of consciousness raising, speaking out in public forums to inform people about the social problem of domestic abuse. By speaking out publicly against domestic abuse, and seeking to change the laws to criminalize abuse and protect battered women,

activists were making the personal issue of abuse a public and political issue, and trying to hold batterers accountable for their actions.

Whether they were motivated by a personal experience of domestic abuse, or their outrage at the treatment of women, activists wanted to do something to help victims of domestic abuse, and to work toward the goal of reducing or eliminating violence against women in American society. All five groups of women began their efforts by providing shelter for battered women in their own homes. Four of the five groups began by “listening to women”—they established telephone hotlines, provided legal advice and/or counseling and support, and discovered that women and their children needed emergency shelter because they were being battered.

These five shelter houses were established as confidential locations where battered women could go and find refuge from their abusers. In these shelters, activists employed a feminist understanding of the patriarchal family, and concluded that the economic and political power that men wielded was the basis for their ability to abuse their wives. By providing battered women a “place to go”—which included not only the physical refuge of the shelter, but also a support group, childcare, assistance in dealing with the judicial system, access to social services, assistance with longer term housing and employment, etc.--the activists running these shelters empowered battered women to change their lives. Feminists in the battered women’s movement believed that it was necessary to change the patriarchal system, including men’s ability to use violence to control women, in order to end the oppression of women.

### ***Coalition Building***

Forming coalitions was a strategy that feminists used to define and institutionalize a collective political vision for the movement. Statewide and national coalitions played an extremely important role in the battered women's movement, taking the movement from a series of discrete shelters working independently to an organized network of shelter organizations with common goals of empowering battered women by providing services and support, and advocating for systems changes that would lead to the reduction (and eventually, elimination) of the domestic abuse of women. Perhaps as important, coalitions provided a space for activists to talk with one another, to share information and resources, and to learn from one another. They embodied the feminist commitment to self-help and self-empowerment for women. Coalitions have served as the locus for organizing and lobbying efforts aimed at changing the police response and the laws governing domestic abuse. Coalitions have had to walk a fine line, balancing the second wave feminist principles of decentralization, local autonomy, empowerment, and self-determination with the goal of building a political powerbase for women on a state and national level. They have struggled to remain progressive organizations with anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-homophobic political agendas incorporating diverse membership groups, while at the same time garnering political power for women in a larger society that is fraught with sexism, racism, and heterosexism.

### *Institutional Advocacy*

The battered women's movement has made great progress since the first shelters were opened in the early 1970s. Significant legislation has been passed at the local, state, and national levels which makes battering a crime, makes the police more responsive to battered women and accountable to the public, funds services for battered women, and legitimizes domestic abuse as a social problem. Activists have secured financial resources from a variety of sources which are now used to provide services and support to battered women. Many communities have developed a coordinated response to domestic abuse, with coordination between different agencies and resources to ensure the safety of battered women. Activists and organizations in the battered women's movement have gained a great deal of experience and have developed a sophisticated approach to creating social change, working through various forms of institutional advocacy.<sup>525</sup> As longtime activist Toby Myers noted, "I think it's just amazing that a handful of women . . . [created] all kinds of institutional change, which has been incredible."<sup>526</sup>

Despite all of the progress that the movement has made to ensure the safety of battered women, much work remains to be done. Social institutions, including law enforcement and the legal system, still preserve men's power over women in American society. (For example, batterers are not evicted from their homes. Even if they are arrested for battering, they can return home upon their release. It is the battered woman and her children who have to leave to seek safety.) Some of the

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<sup>525</sup> Pence, "Advocacy on Behalf of Battered Women," p. 350.

<sup>526</sup> Interview with Toby Myers, conducted by author, April 21, 2009, transcript, p. 8.

discourse designed to make battered women visible and to keep them safe has been co-opted by father's rights organizations and used against battered women. Some of the legal tools, like protection orders, have been co-opted by batterers and used against battered women. Both forms of advocacy—providing support and services to individual battered women, and working for change in the systems and institutions that protect battered women, prosecute abusers, and prevent domestic abuse—remain the dual focus of the battered women's movement.

### ***Explaining the Battered Women's Movement***

One of the primary contributions of second wave feminism is the recognition that women suffer from oppression in American society—that there is an underlying condition of gender inequality which attaches greater value and status to the male than the female. Kolmar and Bartkowski argue that feminist theories, which are bodies of writing that attempt to “describe, explain, and analyze the conditions of women's lives,” try to explain “the causes and conditions in which men are more powerful and men's production, ideas, and activities are seen as having greater value and higher status than women's.”<sup>527</sup>

A large body of feminist theory exists. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss all of the current forms of feminist theory. However, several forms of feminist theory are useful to understanding and explaining the battered women's movement. They are liberal feminism, radical feminism, structural

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<sup>527</sup> Wendy K. Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski, *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, Second ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2005), p. 2.

feminism, and standpoint feminism. In addition, poststructural feminist theory provides a useful critique of second wave feminism.

Since so much of current feminist theory defines itself relative to liberal feminist theory, liberal feminism is perhaps the best place to begin a discussion of feminist theory.<sup>528</sup> Liberal feminists locate the source of gender inequality in beliefs that biological differences between men and women mandate differential treatment based on gender. Liberal feminists find gender inequality in the gendered socialization of children, in women's primary roles as caretaker of children and the home; in the division of paid labor into sex-segregated job roles (and the general devaluation of work which is primarily done by women), in unequal access by gender to managerial and leadership positions in paid employment, and in limitations on reproductive choices for women.<sup>529</sup>

Radical feminists, by contrast, relied primarily on the concept of patriarchy as a central construct to explain gender inequality. Radical feminists saw the root of women's oppression in what they termed the "sex/gender system."<sup>530</sup> While using biological facts as a basis for constructing sets of masculine and feminine identities and behaviors that empower men and disempower women, patriarchy also manages to convince people that these cultural constructions are natural, and that a person's

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<sup>528</sup> Rosemarie Putnam Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), p. 2.

<sup>529</sup> Lorber, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, p. 26.

<sup>530</sup> The sex/gender system was defined by radical feminist Gayle Rubin as a "set of arrangements by which society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity." Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, p. 48.



ability to perform these gendered roles constructs their “normality” in society.<sup>531</sup>

Thus, gender inequality manifests itself in the unequal power relationships between men and women that are the product of a patriarchal ideology. In addition to locating gender inequality in patriarchy, radical feminists believed that men’s violence against women, the objectification of women in advertisements and mass media, the sexual exploitation of women (including pornography and prostitution), the sexual harassment of women, and the legitimation of female oppression in social institutions such as medicine, religion, science, and the law were all sources of women’s oppression.<sup>532</sup> Radical feminists viewed woman battering as a means for men to exercise social control over women.

Lesbian feminism was a form of radical feminism which brought together same-sex sexual desire, women’s friendships, women’s culture, and independence from men into a movement that resisted the gendered social order of American society.<sup>533</sup> Heterosexuality and heteronormativity were the sources of women’s oppression, according to this feminist theory. Lesbian feminism was powerful, to the extent that it gave women the freedom to give “each other the power of self-definition and the energy continually to rebel against any individual man, group of men, or patriarchal institution seeking to disempower or otherwise weaken women.”<sup>534</sup>

Activists in the WTCS shelter employed radical lesbian feminism to empower themselves to help battered women. They employed a separatist philosophy,

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>532</sup> Lorber, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, p. 117.

<sup>533</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>534</sup> Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, p. 71.

excluding men from the shelter community. They formed strong bonds with each other, and found strength in an all female organization to rebel against the patriarchy and provide services and support for battered women.

Battered women's advocates have argued that woman battering has its roots in sexual inequality. An understanding of domestic abuse as a civil rights issue is at the center of a feminist understanding of the abusive experience.<sup>535</sup> The crime of domestic assault is different from other forms of assault because domestic assault is rooted in a social understanding of male authority and the legitimacy of male control of women. Buzawa and Buzawa argue that there are various forms of control that continue to support domestic abuse, including a man's ability to exploit his wife economically, to isolate her from her family and friends, and his ability to intimidate her into submission.<sup>536</sup> The definition of "battering," therefore, should include both the violent acts and what can be characterized as their "political framework"—defined as "the pattern of social, institutional, and interpersonal controls that usurp a woman's capacity to determine her destiny and make her vulnerable to a range of secondary consequences," such as suicide, substance abuse, and mental illness.<sup>537</sup> Only by addressing both male violence and gender inequality will we be able to permanently and substantially reduce male violence against women in American society.

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<sup>535</sup> Buzawa and Buzawa, eds., *Do Arrests and Restraining Orders Work*, p. 121.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

This is a feminist view of woman battering, which Demi Kurz defines as “one based on an understanding of battering as a structural problem in which it is women, primarily, who are abused by men.”<sup>538</sup> Structural feminism is helpful to understanding and explaining why domestic abuse happens, and why battered women often find it difficult to leave an abusive situation. Sociologist Barbara Risman argues that “men and women behave differently because they fill different positions in institutional settings, work organizations, or families.”<sup>539</sup> According to Risman, gender must be considered a structural property of society.<sup>540</sup> Gender differentiation operates at three levels in society, including the individual level, the interactional level, and the institutional level. Gender as structure comes to bear on woman battering at all three social levels. The socialization of individuals into gendered roles affects their perceptions of the acceptability of intimate violence as a form of behavior. A critique of the patriarchal family is implicit in this understanding of gendered roles. Marriage institutionalizes the control of wives by husbands through prescribed gender roles.<sup>541</sup> Interactions between husbands and wives are influenced by cultural expectations of gender roles. If male-dominated marriages are perceived as the social norm, and physical violence by husbands is one manifestation of male domination, then gendered structures implicitly support continued abuse of women by their husbands.

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<sup>538</sup> Demi Kurz, "Battering and the Criminal Justice System: A Feminist View," in *Domestic Violence: The Changing Criminal Justice Response*, ed. Eve S. Buzawa and Carl G. Buzawa (Westport, Connecticut: Auburn House, 1992), p. 22.

<sup>539</sup> Barbara J. Risman, *Gender Vertigo* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 19.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>541</sup> Kurz, "Battering and the Criminal Justice System: A Feminist View," p. 28.

Risman asserts that “gender structure at the interactional and institutional levels so thoroughly organizes our work, family, and community lives that even those who reject gender inequality in principle sometimes end up being compelled by the ‘logic’ of gendered situations and cognitive images to choose gendered strategies.”<sup>542</sup> This argument resonates with a feminist analysis that using violence as a form of male control of an intimate partner is perpetuated not only through normative views of a man’s rights in marriage but through women’s continued economic dependence on their husbands. Even if battered women have a safe place to go, leaving is very difficult when they are dependent on their husbands for financial support. This dependence is reinforced by the lack of adequate and affordable child care and affordable job training, both of which would help women obtain paid employment to support themselves.<sup>543</sup>

The institutional components of the current gender structure include a sex-segregated labor force, a gender-based wage gap, the lack of available, accessible, and affordable childcare, and full-time employment being defined as forty or more uninterrupted hours per week.<sup>544</sup> Solutions to the problem of reducing the prevalence of male violence against women include not only an explicit recognition of the gender role expectations that encourage men to use violence and women to accept the use of violence, and a need to change those expectations so that domestic abuse is no longer seen as an acceptable behavior by either party, but also a recognition of the

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<sup>542</sup> Risman, *Gender Vertigo*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>543</sup> Kurz, "Battering and the Criminal Justice System: A Feminist View," p. 28.

<sup>544</sup> Risman, *Gender Vertigo*, p. 41. The current employment structure is based on a social understanding of the “typical” worker as a male.

institutional forces that keep women from achieving financial equality with and independence from men. Without the ability to earn a wage with which they can support themselves and their children, without the availability of affordable, accessible child care, and without equal access to full-time, paid employment, women who suffer from domestic abuse will continue to find themselves without acceptable long-term alternatives to enduring abusive partners. In order to change the system of oppression that produces domestic abuse, change is required at the level of individual relationships, as well as in the social institutions which support gender inequality (including family structure, work, child care, etc.).

Changes in the way that government provides funding for the organizations serving battered women are also needed. For example, federal funding for the National Domestic Violence Hotline currently requires matching private funding. If funding services for battered women is a legitimate role for the government, then why is matching private funding required? Changes at all levels of the social structure are necessary so that battered women can gain more control over their lives.<sup>545</sup>

Standpoint feminist theory is also useful in understanding and explaining the battered women's movement. Standpoint feminism argues that women's experiences should be central to the development of knowledge and culture. According to sociologist Joey Sprague, "the argument of standpoint epistemology is not psychological; it is social."<sup>546</sup> Standpoint feminists locate the sources of gender inequality in the absence of women's perspectives in the production of knowledge,

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<sup>545</sup> Hammons, "'Family Violence': The Language of Legitimacy," p. 284.

<sup>546</sup> Sprague, *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences*, p. 66.

male bias in social science research, the absence of women from the sciences, and the invisibility of women's cultural productions.<sup>547</sup> Standpoint feminists argue that all knowledge is constructed in a matrix of physical location, history, culture, and interests, which changes in configuration from location to location.<sup>548</sup> According to standpoint feminists, gender inequality can be mitigated by the production of knowledge by women—knowledge which is for women and/or about women. By grounding the production of knowledge in women's specific social and historical contexts, we can understand women's experiences and the ways that gender inequality is intertwined with other sources of social inequality, such as race and class and sexual orientation.

Feminist bell hooks advocates an intersectional approach to feminism. Her observation that Black women “bear the brunt of sexist, racist, and classist oppression,” demonstrates that standpoint feminism can be used by Black women to recognize their own special vantage point and “make use of this perspective to criticize the dominant racist, classist, sexist hegemony as well as to envision and create a counter-hegemony.”<sup>549</sup>

The feminists who founded the battered women's movement used a form of standpoint feminism to recognize the special vantage point of battered women. They

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<sup>547</sup> Lorber, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, p. 176.

<sup>548</sup> Sprague, *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences*, p. 41.

<sup>549</sup> bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," in *Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, ed. Christina Gilmartin Sharlene Hesse-Biber, and Robin Lydenberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 180. Bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins both employ an intersectional approach to feminist standpoint theory. Intersectional theory is a poststructural derivation of standpoint theory which argues that race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, and national origin intersect to produce different experiences of oppression based on the social location of a particular group.

used the standpoint of battered women to criticize the gender inequalities which forced battered women to endure physical and other forms of domestic abuse.

Although the battered women's movement was founded primarily by white, working or middle class, women, they did not all share the same standpoint. Lesbian feminists were active in the battered women's movement, and they brought different locations and interests to the work of the movement. Activists recognized that many of the shelter residents had different locations and interests, as Black, Native American, or Hispanic/Latina women. There were competing discourses within the movement at times, based on the different locations and interests of the activists and residents.

### *Poststructural Critiques*

Postmodern and poststructural feminist theories locate the source of gender inequality in the gendered social order, which maintains the dominance of masculinity and the subordination of femininity. The gendered social order includes the daily practices that men and women undertake to perform gender, the gendered nature of the organizations in which men and women work, the way that gender is reproduced through the division of labor in the family, the “scientific search for sex differences that downplays similarities between men and women,” and the “legal power of gender as a social institution.”<sup>550</sup> They are forms of cultural feminist theory<sup>551</sup> that focus on the processes that create gender differences, and also render the construction of gender invisible.<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>550</sup> Lorber, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, p. 241.

<sup>551</sup> Cultural forms of feminist theory argue that gender is a form of social interaction—it is something we do, or perform. Gender inequality is manifest in a gender ideology which takes for

Poststructural feminists have critiqued the use of binary gender categories by second wave feminists, arguing that other social categories (such as race, class and sexual orientation) are important, and that gender may not always be the most important political issue.<sup>553</sup> By placing its emphasis on how people perform gender, poststructural feminism examines how men and women all collude in maintaining the gendered social order, without even realizing it. According to sociologists Candace West and Don Zimmerman, “Doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological.”<sup>554</sup> Once created, these differences are used to naturalize the social constructions of gender. West and Zimmerman argue that doing gender normalizes and naturalizes the social arrangements that are based on sex category—they become “legitimate ways of organizing social life.”<sup>555</sup> The implications of this theory for future social change are that social change must occur at both the institutional level of sex category and at the personal, interactional level of gender.<sup>556</sup>

Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker offered “an ethnomethodological understanding of gender as an accomplishment.”<sup>557</sup> They argued that gender is “an emergent feature of social situations that is both an outcome of and a rationale for the

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granted the “natural” biological differences between men and women and uses them to enforce a subordinate position for women.

<sup>552</sup> Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, p. 260.

<sup>553</sup> Lorber, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, p. 195.

<sup>554</sup> Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," *Gender and Society* 1, no. 2 (1987): p. 137.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid.: p. 146.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.: p. 147.

<sup>557</sup> Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker, "Power, Inequality, and the Accomplishment of Gender: An Ethnomethodological View," in *Theories on Gender/Feminism on Theory*, ed. Paula England (New York: Aldine, 1993), p. 151.



most fundamental division of society.”<sup>558</sup> Rather than viewing masculinity and femininity as internalized attributes, West and Fenstermaker view gender as an “interactional accomplishment.”<sup>559</sup> They are interested in analyzing how power and social control are exercised through performances of gender. West and Fenstermaker argue that holding people accountable for their gender performance as men and women is one way that social control and power are exercised. Their notion of accountability “pertains not only to those activities that *conform* to prevailing normative conceptions . . . but also to those activities that deviate.”<sup>560</sup> Furthermore, West and Fenstermaker use intersectional theory to argue that “the doing of gender may involve something very different for white women and women of color, given the difference in their *relational position* to white men.”<sup>561</sup>

What I find particularly interesting about West and Fenstermaker’s argument is their assertion that “collective social movements may, by calling into question *particular* institutional practices based on sex category, promote alternatives to those practices.”<sup>562</sup> The battered women’s movement is an example of a social movement that called into question the way that abused women were treated, and formed alternative organizations to provide support and services to battered women. The battered women’s movement also called into question the way that batterers were treated by law enforcement, and promoted changes in the laws that required the arrest of batterers, and criminalized the act of woman battering.

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<sup>558</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>559</sup> Ibid., p. 152.  
<sup>560</sup> Ibid., p. 156.  
<sup>561</sup> Ibid., p. 169.  
<sup>562</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

Poststructural feminists argue that the categories of gender, sex, and sexuality are never fixed. Rather, they are always in a state of flux, being constructed and reconstructed by those enacting the performance of gender. Judith Butler's work on gender as performance is perhaps the most widely recognized example of this form of feminism. Butler argued that "Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity"—rather, she conceived of gender as "an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*."<sup>563</sup> Therefore, reasoned Butler, the social construction of male and female identities as "normal" is merely part of the strategy that hides the performative nature of gender. Feminists should contest the constructions of normative gender behavior by engaging in strategies that subvert the repetition of the stylized acts that constitute gender.

Butler critiqued second wave feminism for not understanding that the category of "women" was "produced and restrained by the very structures of power" through which feminists were seeking to emancipate women.<sup>564</sup> She criticized the assumption that there was a universal category of women, pointing out that gender is constituted differently in different historical contexts, and that gender intersects with race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality, producing different standpoints and identities. Therefore, Butler argued, "it becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained."<sup>565</sup> If gender

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<sup>563</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. xi.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

is produced and restrained by structures of power, then a theory of power is important to reducing gender inequality.

### ***Gender Inequality and Theories of Power***

Gender inequalities are at the heart of feminist theorists' criticisms of Foucault's theory of power. Allen argues that Foucault offers feminists "two completely different ways of understanding power, neither of which are, in themselves, adequate."<sup>566</sup> Foucault dichotomizes power, seeing either "general networks or patterns of power, in which unstable and variable force relations allow power to circulate freely, or 'states of domination,' in which power does not circulate freely, such that some individuals are left completely unable to exercise power."<sup>567</sup> The power relations within which women find themselves do not always fit nicely into one of these two categories of power. Sometimes women are able to exercise their own power, and sometimes they are not. Rather than being incapable of exercising power at all, the network of power relations for women is "constricted, so that women's range of options for the exercise of power is limited."<sup>568</sup> Domestic abuse is an example of constricted power relations. Victims of domestic abuse may have the power to leave their abuser, or they may be constrained by their economic situation, children, or other aspects of their personal and social situation so that they are unable to leave their abuser. The availability of social services, such as battered women's shelters, is another factor that may empower a battered woman, or

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<sup>566</sup> Allen, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Feminists," p. 277.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid.

disempower her if it is absent from her community. Other factors, including her race, class, immigration status, and sexual orientation, may also limit her options. Feminist theorists find it necessary to add a structural analysis to Foucault's theory of power in order to produce a theory of power which is complete and which explains the position of battered women in American society.<sup>569</sup>

Linking the prevalence of male violence against women with gender inequality is an important step. More recently, international organizations have sought to advance the goal of reducing violence against women by redefining the right to live free from violence as a basic human right. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has called upon all nations to enact legislation pertaining to violence against women "which address violence against women as a form of gender-based discrimination and a violation of women's human rights."<sup>570</sup> This statement not only links gender inequality with violence against women, it redefines the right to live a life free from violence as a human right. This is a powerful statement which has the potential to dramatically reduce violence against women if it can be implemented effectively.

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<sup>569</sup> Butler argues that "If we consider this relation of knowledge and power in relation to gender, we are compelled to ask how the organization of gender comes to function as a presupposition about how the world is structured." Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 215. Allen cites Chris Weedon and Sandra Bartky and Judith Butler as examples of feminist theorists who build on Foucault's theory of power.

<sup>570</sup> "Good practices in legislation on violence against women," found online at [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw\\_legislation\\_2008/Report%20EGMGPLVAW%20\(final%2011.11.08\).pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw_legislation_2008/Report%20EGMGPLVAW%20(final%2011.11.08).pdf) on December 26, 2008, p. 6.

### *The Future of the Battered Women's Movement*

The work of activists in the battered women's movement has been rooted in the standpoint of battered women. As Sandy Barnett expressed it, "Our first obligation, the people to whom we are primarily responsible and accountable, are victims."<sup>571</sup> Over 2,000 shelter organizations now provide services, support, and empowerment to battered women across the U.S.

Because their work is viewed as "women's work," it is devalued by society. While the work of the movement is "simple"—it is guided by the question, "How would you want to be treated if you were in this set of shoes?"<sup>572</sup>—it is also complex, because activists must navigate social perceptions of appropriate gender roles and behavior, the police, the courts and the legal system, city, state, and federal government, nonprofit and corporate funding organizations, and work with representatives of other social service organizations which provide assistance to battered women.

All of this work is happening in a social context in which the underlying causes of woman abuse are at risk once again of becoming "invisible." One manifestation of this phenomenon is the changes in the language used to describe woman battering. "Intimate partner violence" is the current language used to describe violence occurring in a domestic situation. It is language which completely obscures the fact that 85% of domestic violence victims are women. Another manifestation of

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<sup>571</sup> Interview with Sandy Barnett, Juliene Maska, and Dorthy Stucky Halley, conducted by author, October 12, 2009, transcript, p. 15.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

the increasing invisibility of battered women is the renaming of battered women's shelters. The Center for Battered Women in Austin, Texas merged with the Austin Rape Crisis Center in 1998 and became "SafePlace," which obscures the nature of the organization's work. WTCS in Lawrence, Kansas recently changed its name to "The Willow Domestic Violence Center." While WTCS's mission has not changed, the new name makes it more difficult to immediately identify it as a battered women's shelter. While "women" figured prominently in the original names of these two organizations, "women" do not appear in either of the current names.

Publicly naming the violence against women that was happening in their own homes was an important accomplishment of the battered women's movement. Forming organizations led and staffed by women to serve battered women in their own communities was another critical step toward ending violence against women. Being visible in their communities, raising public consciousness about woman battering, was an important strategy of the battered women's movement. The simple act of renaming woman battering in a gender neutral way and renaming the organizations that serve battered women in ways that obscure their purpose reduces the visibility of battered women in American society. Shelters for battered women become a part of the everyday fabric of life. Domestic abuse becomes a commonplace fact of life, and women's injuries and deaths from abuse are no longer "shocking."

Perhaps even more troubling is the popular news media's focus on high profile cases of battering as individual, isolated behavior, rather than as part of a

larger social problem of violence against women. Recent allegations that pop star Chris Brown abused his girlfriend, singer Rihanna, provide an opportunity for public education about the prevalence of woman abuse, but popular media coverage merely makes the story as sensational as possible, focusing on the individuals involved, and removing the assault from the context of American culture, “which continues to teach our boys that male dominance, control, privilege, and entitlement is the correct way to behave.”<sup>573</sup>

Even as they are concerned about the lost “radicalness” of the early battered women’s movement, activists continue to look toward the future and to work toward the movement’s second goal of eliminating domestic abuse. Debby Tucker believes that the movement needs to focus on discerning which strategies “can have an impact so that violence is never even considered a choice.”<sup>574</sup> Work to prevent teen dating violence is an example of a prevention strategy.

The Kansas Coalition is part of the Center for Disease Control’s “Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Alliances Program (DELTA),” which is also focused on the prevention of domestic violence. The CDC began to fund the DELTA Program in 2002. Fourteen state coalitions currently receive funding through the DELTA Program. DELTA is designed to support coordinated community responses at the local level which are focused on the primary prevention of domestic abuse.<sup>575</sup> Interestingly, the CDC’s description of its DELTA

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<sup>573</sup> Deborah Kotz, “On Women: What Rihanna Can Teach Us About Domestic Violence,” *U.S. News & World Report*, posted February 20, 2009.

<sup>574</sup> Interview with Debby Tucker, conducted by author, April 2, 2009, transcript, p. 5.

<sup>575</sup> Information on the CDC’s DELTA program can be found online at <http://www.cdc.org>.

Program contains language that demonstrates the impact that the feminist battered women's movement has had on approaches to preventing domestic violence. The Program recognizes that strategy or policy changes will not prevent domestic violence. Instead, the Program is focused on addressing factors that might prevent violence at multiple levels of the social structure, including individual level influences (attitudes and beliefs that support domestic violence, isolation, and a family history of violence), relationship level influences (relationships with peers, intimate partners, and family members), community level influences (social contexts like schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods), and societal level influences (macro-level factors such as gender inequality, religious or cultural belief systems, societal norms, and economic or social policies).<sup>576</sup>

The battered women's movement has been successful in providing services, support, and empowerment to American battered women for over thirty years. However, much work remains to be done to reduce the prevalence of woman battering in American society, so that women no longer have to seek refuge from their abusers in battered women's shelters. The ultimate goal of the movement—to make shelters for battered women obsolete—remains elusive.

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<sup>576</sup> Found online at <http://www.cdc.org> on March 20, 2010.



## **Appendix A: Timeline of the Battered Women's Movement**

### **1971**

\*\*December, 1971: Women's Advocates starts a legal telephone information service in Ramsey County Legal Aid office in St. Paul (Incorporates on April 5, 1972)

### **1972**

\*\*Fall, 1972: NOW members in Milwaukee form The Women's Coalition

### **1973**

\*\*January, 1973: The Women's Coalition (Milwaukee) opens The Women's Crisis Line

### **1974**

\*\*October 8, 1974: Women's Advocates in St. Paul opens its first shelter house for battered women

\*\*Erin Pizzey authors *Scream Quietly or the Neighbors Will Hear* about the British battered women's movement

### **1975**

\*\*October 29, 1975: Women's Strike Day, a feminist national day of protest

\*\*November, 1975: The Task Force on Battered Women is established by The Women's Coalition, which is the first specific response to woman abuse in Milwaukee

\*\*Betsy Warrior and Lisa Leghorn publish *The Houseworker's Handbook*

\*\*The National Organization of Women establishes a Task Force on Battered Women/Household Violence

### **1976**

\*\*January, 1976: Transition House in Cambridge, MA is opened by Cherie Jimenez and Chris Womendez

\*\*June, 1976: Harriett Tubman Women's Shelter is incorporated in Minneapolis

\*\*August 26, 1976: "Women Support Women" march in Cambridge, MA (first "mass speakout" in the U.S. about the problem of battered women)

\*\*October 2-3, 1976: Milwaukee Task Force on Battered Women holds the Wisconsin Conference on Battered Women in Milwaukee; Lisa Leghorn is the keynote speaker (The idea of the NCADV was formed at this meeting and it provided the basis for the formation of the National Communication Network Against Domestic Violence.)

\*\*October, 1976: Women's Transitional Care Services, Inc. organization is formed in Lawrence, KS to assist battered women

- \*\*November, 1976: The Austin, TX Commission on the Status of Women holds a half day conference titled “The Battered Woman: Breaking the Silence”
- \*\*December 3, 1976: Conference on Battered Women is held in St. Paul, MN
- \*\*Betsy Warrior publishes the first *Battered Women’s Directory*; Del Martin publishes *Battered Wives*
- \*\*Women’s Advocates combines two houses at 584 Grand Ave. and 588 Grand Ave. to shelter battered women
- \*\*The Task Force on Battered Women in Milwaukee begins operating a 24 hour crisis line for women
- \*\*Pennsylvania passes the Protection from Abuse Act and PCADV, the first statewide coalition, is founded (in part to implement the new law)
- \*\*Oregon passes the first statewide mandatory arrest law

### **1977**

- \*\*March 1, 1977: Symposium on Family Violence is held in Vancouver, Canada (sponsored by United Way of Greater Vancouver); Murray Straus is the keynote speaker; Del Martin attended
- \*\*June 1, 1977: The Center for Battered Women (a shelter) is opened in Austin, TX
- \*\*The Task Force on Battered Women is a founding member of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Woman Abuse (founded at a conference held at Steven’s Point, WI)
- \*\*National Women’s Year Conference is held in Houston, TX, where a national organization (NCADV) is discussed
- \*\*Advocates for Battered Women Project is created by the Women’s Coalition and the Milwaukee Junior League as a joint project with The Milwaukee District Attorney’s office
- \*\*Women’s Advocates and Transition House staff publish the “National Communication Network Newsletter” together
- \*\*Emerge, the first batterer intervention program, is founded in Boston, MA

### **1978**

- \*\*January, 1978: U.S. Civil Rights Commission “Consultation” is held in Washington, D.C. (NCADV is formed; cofounders include The Task Force for Battered Women of Milwaukee and Women’s Advocates of St. Paul)
- \*\*July, 1978: The Task Force on Battered Women (Milwaukee) opens Sojourner Truth House, a battered women’s shelter, in Milwaukee
- \*\*August, 1978: Women’s Transitional Care Services, Inc. opens a shelter house for battered women in Lawrence, KS
- \*\*August, 1978: Statewide Conference on battered women is held in St. Cloud, MN and the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women is formed
- \*\*The Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women’s Service groups is formed
- \*\*Betsy Warrior publishes *Working on Wife Abuse*

### **1979**

- \*\*The Kansas Organization of Sexual Assault Centers (KOSAC) is formed
- \*\*The Kansas Association of Domestic Violence Programs (KADV) is formed
- \*\*The Wisconsin Domestic Abuse Act is passed

### **1980**

- \*\*February 27-March 1, 1980: The first NCADV National Conference is held in Washington, D.C.
- \*\*Massachusetts passes the “Abuse Prevention Act”

### **1981**

- \*\*The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women is incorporated

### **1982**

- \*\*July, 1982: The fourth annual conference of the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault is held in Seattle
- \*\*August, 1982: NCADV National Conference and Annual Meeting is held in Milwaukee, WI
- \*\*Texas Council on Family Violence (state coalition) is formed
- \*\*Susan Schechter publishes *Women and Male Violence*

### **1983**

- \*\*June 8-11, 1983: Minnesota Coalition on Battered Women sponsors its first statewide conference

### **1984**

- \*\*September, 1984: Attorney General’s Task Force on Domestic Violence issues its report
- \*\*October 9, 1984: NBC airs *The Burning Bed*, a film starring Farah Fawcett and based on Faith McNulty’s book
- \*\*October 18-24, 1984: Texas Council on Family Violence holds a conference in Austin, TX; Susan Schechter is the keynote speaker
- \*\*1984: The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act is passed by Congress, providing funding for battered women’s shelters
- \*\*1984: The Duluth Abuse Intervention Project is formed to develop the first coordinated community response
- \*\*1984: Sherman and Berk publish the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment
- \*\**Tracey Thurman et. al. v. the City of Torrington, Connecticut* is decided. The court awards Tracey Thurman \$2.3 million in damages, ruling that the police had practiced deliberate indifference to battered women, which violated the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment

### **1987**

- \*\*NCADV establishes the first national toll free domestic violence hotline

**1989**

\*\*The U.S. has approximately 1200 battered women's shelters

\*\*The KOSAC and the KADVP merge to form the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCADV)

**1990**

\*\*The Clothesline Project is created in Cape Cod, MA

**1994**

\*\*The first Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is passed by Congress

**1996**

\*\*February 2, 1996: The National Domestic Violence Hotline is started by the Texas Council on Family Violence

**1998**

\*\*The Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women's Service Groups and the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault merge to become Jane Doe, Inc.

## **Appendix B: Oral History Interviews**

### **Shelter Organizations:**

Women's Advocates (St. Paul) Founded 1971

\*First shelter opened October 8, 1974

- Sharon Rice Vaughan, co-founder, interview dated June 1, 2009
- Bernice Sisson, volunteer and Board President, interview dated June 1, 2009

Women's Coalition (Milwaukee) Founded 1972

\*Task Force on Battered Women started in 1975; Sojourner Truth House opened July, 1978

- Nova Clite, co-founder, interview dated September 5, 2009

Transition House (Cambridge, MA) Founded 1976

\*First shelter opened January, 1976

- Cherie Jimenez, co-founder, interview dated July 18, 2008
- Chris Womendez, co-founder, email correspondence dated July 22, 2008 ; interview dated July 9, 2009
- Betsy Warrior, long-time activist/volunteer, interview dated July 17, 2008
- Joyce King, Transition House and Casa Myrna Vasquez Board member, interview dated July 16, 2008
- Lisa Leghorn, long-time activist/volunteer, interview dated May 20, 2009

Women's Transitional Care Services, Inc. (Lawrence) Founded 1976

\*First shelter opened August, 1978

- Judy Dutton, co-founder, interview dated January 27, 2006
- Maura Piekalkiewicz, co-founder, interview dated March 4, 2006
- Written correspondence and email with Laura Templet, early volunteer and employee
- Email correspondence with Pamela Johnston, co-founder
- Email correspondence with Valerie Kelly, co-founder

- Interview with WTCS Executive Director Sarah Terwelp dated October 4, 2005
- Interview with Social Welfare Professor Margaret Shutz Gordon dated August 11, 2006
- Interview with WTCS Board Member (now works for KCSDV) Jean Rosenthal dated August 19, 2006
- Interview with WTCS staff member and Board Member (now attorney for KCSDV) Joyce Grover dated September 18, 2006
- Email correspondence with WTCS volunteer and staff member Kiesa Kay

Center for Battered Women (Austin)

Founded 1977

\*First shelter opened June 1, 1977

- Debby Tucker, co-founder and first Executive Director (CBW and TCFV), interview dated April 2, 2009

**Coordinated Community Response:**

Duluth Abuse Intervention Project (Duluth)

Founded 1984

- Ellen Pence, co-founder, interview dated February 2, 2009

**State Coalitions:**

Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Founded 1977

- Interview with Mary Lauby, former Executive Director and current Executive Director of Jane Doe, Inc., dated July 15, 2008

Jane Doe, Inc. (MA Coalition)

Founded 1978

\*Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women's Service Groups founded 1978; merged with Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault in 1998 to become Jane Doe, Inc.

- Interview with Mary Lauby, current Executive Director of Jane Doe, Inc., dated July 15, 2008
- Interview with Joyce King, Board member, dated July 16, 2008

Kansas Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence      Founded 1979

\*Kansas Organization of Sexual Assault Centers (KOSAC) and Kansas Association of Domestic Violence Programs (KADVP) both founded in 1979; KOSAC and KADVP merged to form KCSDV in 1989

- Interview with WTCS Board Member (now works for KCSDV) Jean Rosenthal dated August 19, 2006
- Interview with WTCS staff member and Board Member (now attorney for KCSDV) Joyce Grover dated September 18, 2006
- Interview with Sandy Barnett, Executive Director of KCSDV, dated October 12, 2009
- Interview with Juliene Maska, former KCSDV Board President, dated October 12, 2009
- Interview with Dorthy Stucky Halley, longtime KCSDV Board member, dated October 12, 2009

Texas Council on Family Violence      Founded 1978

- Debby Tucker, co-founder and first Executive Director (CBW and TCFV), interview dated April 2, 2009
- Toby Myers, Board member (also Board member for NCADV in early years), interview dated April 21, 2009

**National Organizations:**

NCADV:      Founded 1978

- Toby Myers, Board member (also Board member for NCADV in early years), interview dated April 21, 2009
- Barbara Hart, Legal Counsel and cofounder, interview dated July 10, 2009 (Also a founding member of PCADV)

BWJP:

- Barbara Hart, Senior Policy and Legal Advisor, interview dated July 10, 2009

NNEDV:

- Debby Tucker, co-founder and first Executive Director (CBW and TCFV), interview dated April 2, 2009 (Also past Chair of NNEDV)

### Appendix C: Interview Themes

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Count</u>
1. 60s-70s radicalism/SDS/antiwar/CR group/"revolution"	11
2. Personal experience of being battered/motivation	9
3. Silence about being battered	8
4. Started with crisis hotline	6
5. Means to power to end violence against women	4
6. No law is self implementing	1
7. Difficulty of getting a divorce/need for protection orders	2
8. Coalition was formed so that shelters could work together	9
9. Founding member of the NCADV/present at "Consultation"	2
10. Lesbian connection to the battered women's movement	7
11. Activist men should organize other men to end violence	1
12. Racism within the battered women's movement	7
13. Batterer intervention programs	6
14. Model for confidentiality for victims of violence	1
15. Importance of dialogue between researchers and practitioners	1
16. Domestic violence is about power and control	2
17. Concern about "institutionalization" of the movement	9
18. We had this "idea of a house"	3
19. Donations/support from friends	2
20. Started with a women's consciousness-raising group	4
21. Organized as a collective	12
22. Started as a volunteer	9
23. Supported by foundation grants	4
24. We worked for legislative change	7
25. Importance of newsletter as communication tool	4
26. Strength of demand for shelter for battered women	4
27. Informal network between shelters	8
28. Idea for shelter came from listening to women	3
29. Struggles re: lesbians in the movement	3
30. "We were going to change the world"	5
31. "I'm glad you're writing this history"	4
32. VISTA or CETA funded position	4



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