

WHY BATTERED WOMEN STAY: SOME REFLECTIONS

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(Editor's Note: This is the 2nd article in a series on Domestic Violence forwarded for publication by Denise Alexander.

I. THIS IS THE WRONG QUESTION.

The questions we should be asking are:

- Why do assailants terrorize and torture their partners?
- Why do men beat women?¹
- Why does the community allow battering to continue?

A common mistake in understanding domestic violence is to scrutinize and evaluate the survivor. This practice avoids looking at the behavior and intentions of the perpetrator of the violence. It also misses the essential task of examining the ways in which our culture condones, supports and gives permission for battering.

People believe that if battered women REALLY wanted to leave they could just get up and go. Many people overlook the environmental barriers that prevent women from leaving and too often focus on psychological "characteristics" of women instead.

Further questions we should be asking are:

- how do many, many women overcome incredible obstacles and achieve safety and non-violence for themselves and their children?
- why do women leave?

- when do women leave?
- how can we be helpful to women in the process of leaving?
- which specific counseling and support methods are helpful to women and which are not?

II. THERE ARE INCORRECT ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING THE QUESTION—WHY DO THEY STAY?

- Many battered women do leave. Shelters are usually full.
- Some battered women stay only for a short period. Some battered women leave immediately after the first assault and never return.
- Almost all battered women try to leave at some point.
- For battered women who leave the violence may just be beginning. Batterers escalate their violence when a women tries to leave, shows signs of independence or has left.

Separation Violence

THE PENNSYLVANIA COALITION
AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

Many, perhaps most, people believe that battered women will be safe once they separate from the batterer. They also believe that women are free to leave abusers at any time. However, leaving does not usually put an end to the violence. Batterers may, in fact, escalate their violence to coerce a battered

woman into reconciliation or to retaliate for the battered women's perceived rejection or abandonment of the batterer. Men, who believe they are entitled to relationships with battered women or that they "own" their female partners, view women's departure as an ultimate betrayal which justifies retaliation. (Saunders & Browne, 1990; Dutton, 1988; Bernard et al., 1982)

Evidence of the gravity of separation violence is overwhelming:

- Up to 3/4 of domestic assaults reported to law enforcement agencies were inflicted after separation of the couples. (U.S. Dept. of Justice, 1983)
- One study reveals that 73% of the battered women seeking emergency medical service sustained injuries after leaving the batterer. (Stark et al., 1981)
- Almost 1/4 of the women killed by their male partners in one study in Philadelphia and Chicago were separated or divorced from the men who killed them. 28.6% of the women were attempting to end the relationship when they were killed. (Casanave and Zahn, 1986). In one study of spousal homicide, over half of the male defendants were separated from their victims (Bernard et al., 1982)
- Women are most likely to be murdered when attempting to report abuse or to leave an abusive relationship. (Sonkin et al., 1985, Browne, 1987)

Because leaving may be dangerous—dangerous from the point that the batterer learns that the

relationship may end through years after separation—does not mean that battered women should stay. Cohabiting with the batterer is highly dangerous both as violence usually increases in frequency and severity over time, and as a batterer may engage in preemptive strikes, fearing abandonment or anticipating separation even before the battered woman reaches such a decision. Although leaving may pose additional hazards, at least in the short run, the research data and our experience as advocates for battered women demonstrates that ultimately a battered woman can best achieve safety and freedom apart from the batterer.

Leaving will require strategic planning and legal intervention to avert separation violence and to safeguard survivors and their children.

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III. SOME BATTERED WOMEN ARE HELD PRISONER IN THEIR OWN HOMES. ASSAILANTS USE PSYCHOLOGICAL TERRORISM AND BRAINWASHING TECHNIQUES TO KEEP THEM IN THE VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS.

Another worthwhile model is the "Stockholm Syndrome", which describes how those who are taken hostage begin to identify with, become attached to, and take the side of their captors. Subsequent studies have found that the following groups suffer from the "Stockholm Syndrome": concentration camp survivors; prisoners of war; physically and/or emotionally abused children; battered women;

civilians in Chinese Communists prisons; cult members; and procured prostitutes. (Graham. 1987). See the excellent article by Dee L. R. Graham and Edna I. Rawlings in **Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger** edited by Barrie Levy for a description of this syndrome. Both Biderman's chart and the Stockholm Syndrome are valuable in describing the systematic methods used to break down the victim's will to resist and bring them under control. They also are valuable in explaining how the responses of those who are victimized (which may be difficult to understand under ordinary circumstances) become easily comprehensible survival reactions in these life-threatening situations.

Emotional abuse exists in almost all (I'm tempted to break a personal rule and say all) relationships where physical violence exists. The assailant will use very derogatory, often sexual names. He will employ knowledge gained in an intimate relationship to attack the woman's spirit, and sense of her own value. This constant barrage of verbal abuse wears down the woman's resistance, making it more difficult for her to leave.

Rape, sexual abuse and sexual humiliation are common in battering relationships.² This rule is another tactic habitually practiced by hostage takers and those who run concentration camps. Because sexuality is such a potentially intimate and sacred experience, sexual abuse and domination are particularly degrading to the spirit and weaken the capacity to resist.

Torture and murder of pets - particularly those special to the woman — is also not unusual. Again, the assailant wields these weapons to demonstrate his control and her powerlessness.

IV. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THAT THERAPY WILL HELP THEIR BATTERERS STOP BEING VIOLENT.

Women want the violence to end.

Professionals may refer women to couples or marital counseling. Or they may suggest traditional counseling for the assailant. When the assailant enters counseling, **this bolsters the woman's hope that the relationship can be salvaged through these methods**, and keeps her in the relationship. If he can be cured, she reasons (and her reasoning is supported by the therapist who is doing the counseling, who she sees as the expert), then the violence will end and their relationship can resume.

Research indicates that counseling of assailants is only effective under certain circumstances (i.e. a specially designed counseling program, usually baked up by sanctions from the criminal justice system), and is only effective for men who complete the counseling (which usually takes **at least** six months.)

Most experts believe that a man must be violence-free for two to three years before marriage counseling is safe or appropriate. Even in situations where there is a specialized program backed up by sanctions, this will only help 40-60% of assailants. (Ellen Pence quoted in the February 16, 1992 **New York Times** article "When Men Hit Women" by Jan Hoffman. See review of literature on the efficacy of batterers' counseling by Barbara J. Hart, included in this manual).

Professionals, therefore, must be careful when they refer an assailant to counseling lest they unwittingly help keep a woman in a violent relationship by fostering erro-

neous beliefs in the positive outcomes of therapy. They must diligently inform both parties of the facts about the effectiveness of counseling for assailants.

Assailants can seem romantic and charming. They can behave very well, and oftentimes do so until they begin to lose control of their partner's actions—then they use a variety of coercive methods up to and including physical force to get what they want and bring their partners back under control. Their ability to mask their abusive behavior at certain times also keeps hope alive for the survivor.

V. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE THEY HOPE HE WILL CHANGE AND BECOME NON-VIOLENT.

Battered women (sometimes) stay for varying lengths of time because they very much hope their assailant will change his behavior. **All women want the violence to end; many do not want the relationship to end.**

The assailant usually tells his partner that he will change, that the violence was a one time event, and this bolsters her hope.

CYCLE OF VIOLENCE THEORY.

Lenore Walker developed a theory which she believes describes what happens in battering relationship.

She observed three phases in battering relationships. PHASE I is the tension-building phase. It involves a gradual escalation of tension. The abuser instigates minor incidents of physical, sexual or emotional abuse. This stage may last anywhere from minutes to days, weeks or months. PHASE II is the acute battering incident. The assailant attacks his partner. The violence may last for hours, days, or even longer. PHASE III. This has

been named the "loving, contrition phase", the "honeymoon" phase or the "respite" phase. The batterer cries, pleads, buys presents, sends flowers, and swears to change. He apologizes and pleads with the woman not to leave. He may enter therapy briefly during this phase. Sometimes the woman perceives this phase as a sign that the assailant is changing his behavior and stays in the relationship. Unfortunately, the cycle starts right up again at some future time.

In her 1984 study, Walker found that 65% of all women report a tension building phase, and 58% report a "loving, contrition" phase".

Battered women and advocates have objected to the names for PHASE III. They have (I believe correctly) pointed out that the ostensibly better behavior of the batterer is another means of control. He is afraid she will leave so he uses different tactics to keep her in the relationship.

VI. SOME BATTERED WOMEN ARE FORCED TO STAY BECAUSE THEY CAN'T AFFORD JUSTICE.

A woman often cannot afford as skilled an attorney as her spouse and injunctive orders often are expensive. The assailant may have told her that he will hire an attorney who will take her children from her if she leaves him. Too often, this threat becomes reality.

VII. BATTERED WOMEN SOMETIMES STAY FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

Battered women fear that their partner will get custody of the children—and the majority of the time that men contest custody, men are awarded custody.³

Sometimes survivors reason that they will sacrifice themselves for

their children—so that their children can have a father, or so that their children will be able to go to good schools, live in a safe neighborhood and have financial security. Women may not want to see their children have to leave their home, their neighborhood and their schools (this is especially true for older children).

VII. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE THERE IS NO PLACE FOR THEM TO GO.

Shelters do not exist everywhere. They are often full. Their funding is in constant danger, and they are vulnerable to attacks from groups that decide they are "destroying the family" or are "anti-male".

Housing is a major roadblock. In Michigan, the General Assistance program has been abolished. This provided some support for single women seeking independence. The Emergency Needs program, which provided first month's rent and security deposits, has been replaced by a program which is much more restrictive and is funded at a fraction of previous levels.

Most women cannot find or afford safe housing. They become stuck in emergency shelters, unable to find a place to live. Women (who are not battered!) with children face discrimination in the rental market. Landlords are often reluctant to rent to formerly battered women, believing that their assailant will show up and cause property damage or physical harm. The assailant often deliberately sabotages his partner's credit rating (or prevents her from establishing one at all) so as to keep her from independent action.

IX. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT GIVEN ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT BATTERING.

They are told (by professionals, family, friends and the batterer) that

alcohol or other drugs causes battering. They are told that they are codependent, that they enable his behavior, and if they would change, then their assailants would. Women then endlessly attempt to modify their behavior only to watch the violence worsen. They are then told that they are not trying hard enough or that they are resistant.

They are sent to mediation or couples counseling, and told that if this does not work out, it is their fault.

X. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE WHAT MOST PEOPLE IN OUR SOCIETY THINK ABOUT BATTERED WOMEN.

They may believe that:

- battered women imagine, exaggerate, deliberately fabricate, or initiate the violence.
- battered women somehow provoke or are to blame for the violence.
- all battered women come from poor, uneducated, or minority backgrounds.
- their partner just has a problem controlling his anger, or that stress or unemployment problems have caused the battering.

If those that the woman goes to for help (family, friends or professionals) believe these myths, they might (for example) suggest to the woman that she help her partner reduce his stress or find a job or stop making him angry. If the woman believes she is provoking his violence, she will work on pacifying him. These strategies will not work, the violence will continue, the woman will stay in the relationship longer, and it will be harder for her to escape.

XI. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY (for varying lengths of time) BECAUSE THEIR

ASSAILANTS DELIBERATELY AND SYSTEMATICALLY ISOLATE THEM FROM SUPPORT.

People who are in trouble need support. They need the aid of family, friends, co-workers and professionals to weather the crisis and make the best decisions for themselves.

Assailants commonly force their partner to account for every minute of their time. One assailant marked the tires of his girlfriend's car to monitor her use of it. Another nailed the windows shut and put a lock on the outside of the door. Many take car keys, disable cars, and unplug or break telephones.

Assailants methodically drive friends and family away. Sometimes this is accomplished through overt threats or physical attacks; sometimes they make life thoroughly unpleasant for anyone with the temerity to be around them.

Many assailants are extremely jealous and possessive. They constantly accuse their partners of affairs, and sexual advances. They demand that their partner speak to no one, and enforce this by accusing them of infidelity every time they do so.

Friends and family who believe myths about battering and who do not support survivors also help keep women in battering situations.

XII. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE IN LOVE AND THEY STILL LOVE THEIR PARTNERS.

This is often one of the hardest phenomena for people who have not been battered to understand. However, many people have been in difficult relationships or jobs that they knew they should leave, but either couldn't, or needed time to be able to depart.

Love is glorified in our culture. Popular songs and movies perpetually reinforce the idea that love is the most important thing in life, and that people should do anything for love. This is particularly reinforced for women.

Women may love their partners, and at the same time hate their violent and abusive actions. A helpful comment when working with survivors is to point out that the woman does not have to stop loving her assailant in order to leave.

Some women may be troubled about making it on their own, and about being lonely. When they leave, they may endure feelings of grief and loss. Frequently, leaving a batterer means abandoning a circle of friends, family, a neighborhood and a community. Some women have to change their names and disappear in order to live without an assailant's constant harassment. It is hard for women to live by themselves without any of their customary supports.

XII. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE WHAT THEIR ASSAILANT IS TELLING THEM: (such as:)

- "You're crazy and stupid. No one will believe you."
- "You're the one that's sick. You need help. You're hysterical."
- "I know the judge; he won't put me in jail."
- "The police will never arrest me."
- "It's not serious. You're not really battered."
- "If you leave, I'll get custody because you'll have abandoned me and the kids."
- "If you leave, I'll find you and kill you. I'll kill your family, your kids,

and your pets. You'll never escape me.

Assailants deliberately supply their partners with false information in order to keep them in the relationship. They may sabotage their partner's attempt to use the civil or criminal justice system by giving spurious information about the process. At the same time, assailants often play on their partners' concern for their well-being. A common ploy is to tell their partner that if they are prosecuted they will spend long years in prison. (In fact, convictions are rare. They are almost always for misdemeanors. Assailants are more likely to be sentenced to counseling than to jail).

Many assailants tell their partners that shelters are lesbian recruiting stations, that all the staff are lesbians, that she will be attacked by lesbians if she goes to the shelter, and if she leaves him she will become a lesbian. Battered women who believe this are sometimes reluctant to seek shelter.

When no one believes a battered woman, when her assailant isn't arrested, when she is criticized and scrutinized, when he gets custody of the children, and when he tracks her down and tries to kill her—she believes what he says. Why? Because his predictions too often turn out to be true.

XIV. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE THEIR ASSAILANT ENCOURAGES OR COERCES THEM INTO USING ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUGS, AND/OR SABOTAGES THEIR RECOVERY.

When a woman has an alcohol or other drug problem, it is severely difficult for her to leave the battering relationship. Some women may be consuming alcohol or other drugs to numb the psychic and emotional—or the real physical pain—caused by violence. The assailant often

promotes consumption. It makes the woman less able to act on her own behalf, and it gives the assailant a handy tool for discrediting and blaming her.

Doctors may prescribe tranquilizers for a battered woman's "nerves". Few women know or are told that minor tranquilizers can be seriously and quickly addictive.

If a woman is in recovery, the assailant may prevent her from going to meetings, or to treatment. He may physically force her to use, or threaten her with physical violence if she does not.

XV. SOME BATTERED WOMEN ARE TRAPPED IN BATTERING RELATIONSHIPS BECAUSE OF SEXISM (UNEQUAL TREATMENT OF WOMEN):

Barbara Hart states in this manual quoted above: "The most likely predictor of whether a battered woman will permanently separate from her abuser is whether she has the economic resources to survive without him."⁴

Women do not have economic resources equal to or approaching men. The poverty rate in female-headed households is five times that of married families. Nearly one-half of all female-headed households with children live in poverty, as compared with only 8% of male-headed households. The majority of African American and Latina female-headed households live at or below the poverty level, and nearly 60% of all African American children under the age of 14 live in a female-headed household.⁵

Many battered women cannot find a job. Her assailant may have systematically damaged her employment record by harassing her at the work place or by causing excessive lateness and absenteeism.

Indigent battered women may only be able to find a job at an hourly wage. If she has children, this wage will not be sufficient to support her children. If she does not receive public assistance, she probably will not be able to afford medical insurance for herself or her children.

Child care is a serious problem for women entering the work force. It costs a lot of money. Women worry about the risk of leaving their children for long periods of time, and it is sometimes difficult to find quality care.

Even if battered women can find a job, full-time female workers earn 70 cents for every dollar that male workers earn. Three out of five working women earn less than \$10,000/year; one out of three earns less than \$7,000. Nearly two-thirds of all minimum wage earners are women, and more than one-third of all employed women work in low-paying clerical jobs.⁶

XVI. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE INSTITUTIONS ARE HELPLESS OR UNWILLING TO OFFER THEM PROTECTION OR ASSISTANCE.

I have used some examples of the helplessness of institutions. There are many other examples.

In every institution, there are those who are allies to battered women and actively search for ways to be helpful. Others are well intentioned, but have no training or knowledge about domestic violence. This analysis of institutional practice is not meant to blame the people in the institutions, or in any particular agency. It is designed to: look at how almost everyone in our society believes incorrect information about battering, battered women, and assailants; how institutional policies and practices reflect that misinformation; how those policies help to keep women in abusive relation-

ships, and to begin the process of exploring how to create new policies which will undercut the assailant's control of his partner.

THE LEGAL SYSTEM

A research study by Browne and Williams correlates an increase in legal protections and services for battered women with a decrease in the number of homicides committed by women against male partners. In Michigan, some communities (notably Washtenaw County) are struggling to implement reforms. Institutions such as the Michigan Judicial Institute and the Michigan Law Enforcement Officers' Training Council are engaging in critically important training initiatives. The State of Michigan Bar Association recently financially supported an important training institute on defending battered women. There are many dedicated and highly competent individuals within the criminal justice and civil legal system. However, the overall picture remains bleak.

In Michigan, police may arrest without a warrant (on misdemeanors) if they have probable cause to believe an assault has occurred. A woman has the right to obtain a court order restraining her abuser from attacking or harassing her. If an assailant is arrested for domestic assault, he must be held in jail until arraignment or until 20 hours is up. Despite these important laws:

- Depending on the county, police routinely do not arrest in misdemeanor assault and battery cases. Few know that the police came to the residence of Hedda Nussbaum and Joel Steinberg. Ms. Nussbaum had visible signs of injury. When asked by the police whether she would prosecute she said no, believing that she would be killed if she said yes. Steinberg later murdered their daughter.

- Cases where a crime would in other circumstances (stranger assault) be charged as a felony are charged as a misdemeanor (because they are "domestics" and not as important.)

- A woman often cannot get a domestic assault injunctive order, because of the lack of money, or the lack of availability of legal aid for poor people.

- There may be a 6 week or longer waiting period before a woman can get an injunctive order.

- Some judges refuse to issue domestic assault injunctive orders.

- Many judges refuse to enforce injunctive orders. There is a tortuous process of: using the correct form; getting a lawyer; going to court; having a hearing; having the assailant served the papers (which takes time and more money); filing the order properly in the police lien computer; and making sure every police agency in every locale has a copy on file.

- Police have the option of arresting an assailant for violation of a domestic assault injunctive order. Often, they do not.

- Many judges issue "mutual restraining orders" so as not to "take sides". This then reinforces the belief that domestic violence is not a crime of the perpetrator against the victim, but a problem with messy and dysfunctional relationships. It indicates to the survivor, the assailant, and the community, that the court thinks that the survivor is at least partially responsible for the violence. Some women may agree, to a mutual injunctive order because she has no other way of getting any protection. I have seen in

Washtenaw County mutual orders used as evidence against the survivor in other court cases as "proof" that she is also violent.

- Many jurisdictions have "informal" cooling off periods of a week or more. Women are told they must wait a period of time before they can press charges against their assailants.

- Police officers often will not sign warrants based on "information and belief". Battered women must risk further violence by signing a complaint against her batterer.

- Some courts do not make sure that battered women are notified of their court date. Then, when she doesn't show up, they blame her for dropping the charges.

- Some courts issue bench warrants and threaten to jail the woman for contempt if she determines she cannot continue with prosecution, ignoring the terrorism her batterer is exercising over her.

- Many prosecutors will drop charges when the survivor calls them on the telephone to ask them to do so, ignoring the possibility that the woman is being coerced into the phone call, (or in some cases, that is not the survivor on the phone at all).

- A battered woman may see the prosecutor for only two or three minutes immediately before her court case, making it very difficult for the prosecutor to gather enough information to proceed in the most effective manner.

- Despite legislation requiring police to inform battered women of their right to an injunctive order and the number of the local shelter, many



police agencies are ignorant of this law, or ignore it.

- Some judges in Michigan are denying battered women custody of their children even when the children have been abused by the batterer. There is a fallacious assumption that the woman will return to her abuser or will become involved with another batterer.
- Courts often believe that the woman is making up, or exaggerating the violence. They often believe the assailant's story, and go to great lengths to empathize with his problems.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Clergy have tremendous influence in women's lives, and there are those who have been very helpful to survivors of violence. For example, the Rev. Marie Fortune has written a number of different articles and books for women of faith. (See the bibliography) Too often, however, people in religious institutions have helped to keep the battered woman in the relationship. In an article "Women Who Have Ended Abuse" (Horton, Wilkins, and Wright), the authors tabulated reports from clergy whose responses served to keep women in the abusive relationship.

One minister suggested sex to wear the assailant out; another that the survivor cook more appetizing meals. Some women were told to pray, sing hymns to raise their spirits, go to services and read Scriptures. Some were told that battering was their cross to bear, and that it was God's will. Some were told that divorce was against God's law. Others were told not to provoke him or that they needed to forgive and forget. One woman I spoke to told me her minister told her to pray to be a better wife, and then her husband would not beat her.

If battered women get the message that they are at fault, they will focus their attention on changing and staying in the relationship.

PSYCHIATRISTS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, THERAPISTS, MENTAL HEALTH WORKERS, DOCTORS.

These professionals may not have the adequate tools, time and/or training to assess domestic violence. Studies have indicated that up to one quarter of all women entering hospital emergency rooms have been battered, yet most emergency rooms identify only a small fraction of those women. Some professionals do not even ask the questions—are you battered? or is there violence in your relationship? They may not interview the partners separately. Battered women may not identify their experiences as "battering", or they may not label forced sexual intercourse by spouse as "rape". A whole series of specific questions (examples are in the article by Amy Cocha about interviewing battered women charged with a crime in this manual or "Empowering Interventions with Battered Women" by Susan Schechter.) may be necessary to adequately assess the nature and level of the violence.

Some professionals may misdiagnose battered women as mentally ill. Others may believe that violence is caused by alcohol or other drug use. Some report being afraid of the assailant, and therefore unwilling to counsel the survivor. Some see battering as a dysfunctional relationship, and may do couples counseling with the two people. Professionals may not be aware of, or refer to their local domestic violence program for counseling, shelter, and advocacy.

These issues prevent battered women from getting the help they need to leave their assailants.

XVII. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE WHAT WOMEN HAVE BEEN TAUGHT TO BELIEVE ABOUT BOTH WOMEN'S ROLES AND MEN'S ROLES. (GENDER SOCIALIZATION)

It is my hypothesis that gender stereotyping and enforce adherence to it play a major role in battering.

Certainly girls are taught to be passive, to smile, to be nice, to be accommodating, to take care of others and to be sensitive to others needs. Beyond "teaching", our culture actively **punishes** girls who violate those rules. Such punishment includes social ostracism, ridicule, poor grades in school, and oftentimes sexual harassment, assault, and physical violence. Girls soon learn the price of speaking out, independence and autonomy. Individual females may have these lessons mitigated or more strictly enforced by their own particular family members, extended family, neighborhood, school and teachers, **but the overall cultural message remains constant.** Those who are singled out for encouragement and special treatment are often brainwashed into seeing themselves as different, better, singular, and are taught to treat other women with (at best) tolerance and (at worst) contempt.

Usually, (in discussions of gender stereotyping) the issue is raised that men are taught to be tough, not to cry, not to be verbal and not to discuss their emotions. However, I do not think that this is the aspect of gender stereotyping that contributes to battering. Batterers express emotions of anger, pain, grief and loss very well. They do cry. Many are highly articulate, persuasive and skilled at identifying and expressing their feelings.

The facet of gender roles that I think directly contributes to domestic violence is the concept of **entitle-**

ment. Men are taught that they are entitled to the attention and services of women. This includes: listening to them talk; supporting them emotionally; enhancing their status with other men; fulfilling their sexual needs; and caring for their children. Some men are more up to date — they demand intellectual stimulation as well. If they are more traditional, they expect cooked meals, clean clothes and houses, too. When men don't get these services, some may try negotiation, and some may leave their partners. Some men choose to use violence to obtain those services that society has caused them to believe they are entitled.

Many men (and women) do not even realize the extent to which we have all been socialized to accept our differential status. Some men are struggling conscientiously to divest themselves of the benefits that they accrue just by being men. Gender roles are so pervasive and so insidious that men (and women) don't even realize how seriously they affect and inform our behavior. Those men who have chosen non-violence, who are actively working on equal relationships with women, and who are challenging men's entitlement should be welcomed as allies. They must take a greater role in changing other men's violence and sexism.

Women are indoctrinated with the notion that women are only valuable if: a) they are with a man, either married or in a relationship or b) they want to be in a relationship and c) they have children. In addition, family looms large in our culture. The threat of losing a family is a grievous one. Women are taught to believe that they are responsible for their family, and charged with its health and well-being. Society teaches women to be nurturing, caring, and self-sacrificing. Women are taught to put their partners' and children's welfare above their own.

These beliefs work against women who become trapped by violent men. When women do what they have been taught to do (stand by their man; take care of their kids), they are blamed for staying. They are labeled masochistic or codependent.

XVIII. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE IN ADDITION TO BEING WOMEN AND BEING BATTERED, THEY ARE FROM ANOTHER HISTORICALLY DISENFRANCHISED POPULATION.

Women of color face additional barriers due to racism. There is more discrimination in housing. Women of color make less money than white women, and so have a more difficult time finding the economic means to live independently. Women of color are less likely to be believed when they report rape and battering. If their assailant is white, they have even less hope for belief, a police report, an arrest and a conviction than do white battered women.

Lesbians and gay men face additional threats from their assailants. If their assailants threaten to expose their sexual orientation, the survivor could lose his or her job, housing, children or family.

A person with a disability has formidable obstacles to overcome. Sometimes, her assailant is her personal care attendant, and she is dependent upon him for food, clothing, mobility, and medical care. If a batterer takes away a person's telecommunications device for the deaf (t.d.d.), that survivor may not be able to call for help. Elderly women may have more serious barriers than young women for some of the same reasons.

XIX. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE OF WHAT THE MEDIA SAYS ABOUT

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, AND BATTERED WOMEN.

The media does an abysmal job of covering domestic violence. Usually it is ignored. In the City of Ann Arbor, there is more than one report of domestic assault each day, and about one arrest every other day. This is reported in the *Ann Arbor News* about once a week. Language (such as "love triangle", "domestic squabble" and "estranged" husband) reinforces the idea that battering is trivial, uncommon and really part of messy relationships.

When batterers murder their partners, these crimes are usually portrayed as unintentional "crimes of passion" caused by the man's intense love for the woman and his inability to live without her, rather than his ultimate expression of power and control over her.

The media is one of the prime purveyors of the new (or revived) mythology about women — that women are conniving, manipulative, vengeful liars. They feverishly search the newspapers for information about new laws. They are just waiting (like giant black widow spiders) for men to make a wrong move. They will seize the chance to make a false police report and get revenge (for what? is my question. What is it about this fantasy that makes me think that too many men think women have something to seek revenge for/)

There has been a lot of discussion about how men feel "unsafe". They don't want to touch their children, or say the wrong thing, or "go too far" on a date for fear of being falsely accused of crimes against women and children. But there is no empirical evidence that women are making false reports. All the research demonstrates the opposite. It is, in fact, women who are unsafe and becoming less safe. If women are raped or battered, many

people jump to the conclusion (because of the media blitzes) that women are lying. So a man can rape and batter with impunity, and then claim that the woman was trying to get back at him. Rather than "male-bashing", we are seeing a campaign of discredit, bigotry and hatred towards women.

XX. SOME BATTERED WOMEN STAY BECAUSE THEY ARE AFRAID THAT IF THEY TRY TO LEAVE THEY OR THEIR CHILDREN WILL DIE.

They should fear death. Battered women are in real danger.

So should battered women stay? No. The community, professionals and individuals must help battered women leave safely.

1. The research demonstrates that the majority of the time it is men who perpetrate domestic violence and women who are victimized. Research and practice indicate this configuration describes between 90 and 905 couples where there is violence in the family.

However, there are women who do batter men (often they are men who are "one-down" societally, such as a man with a physical disability). Battering does occur in lesbian and gay relationships.

Those who assume that domestic violence programs are

only for women survivors are incorrect. The Domestic Violence Project (for example) offers services to any person victimized in an intimate relationship. This includes gay and heterosexual men, and lesbians.

There is great discomfort surrounding the issue of gender and violence. Some assume (or insist) that violence is a "dynamic" **between** a couple. Dynamic is a neutral term, and as such, it is sometimes used deliberately. It can describe a conflict (e.g. a non-violent negotiation of who takes out the garbage) without assigning blame. Used to characterize violent relationships, it evades putting the responsibility on the assailant for his actions. Without accepting responsibility, the assailant will not choose to change his behavior. Without that choice, the violence will continue.

Some see the insistence of the battered women's movement in pointing out that the majority of perpetrators are men as "male-bashing". Some incorrectly interpret our adamant stance as really saying that all men are batterers. Why do we keep bringing up men's role in violence? Why can't we be polite? Some men feel guilty hearing the facts about domestic violence, or think they should feel guilty, or become defensive. Women become defensive on men's behalf and rush to rescue them from perceived attacks.

Women also worry (correctly) that to keep raising the gender issue will bring more attacks on women and women's programs. It is safer to be gender neutral.

If we continue to ignore the role of gender in domestic violence, our analysis will be fatally flawed. Any strategies springing from that analysis will also be defective. The gender differences in who batters and who is victimized should be a tool that we can use to analyze the cases of battering, and develop the most effective methods of prevention.

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