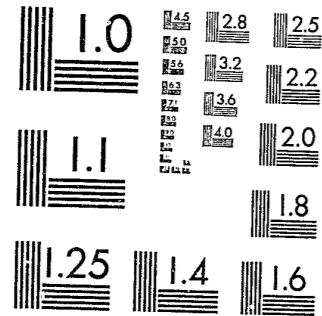


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THE EXPERIENCES OF
WOMEN WITH SERVICES FOR
ABUSED SPOUSES IN NEW YORK CITY

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VICTIM SERVICES
AGENCY

RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

88214

THE EXPERIENCES OF
WOMEN WITH SERVICES FOR
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Victim Services Agency
2 Lafayette Street
New York, New York 10007
February 27, 1982

THE EXPERIENCES OF
WOMEN WITH SERVICES FOR
ABUSED SPOUSES IN NEW YORK CITY

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NCJRS

MAR 4 1983

ACQUISITIONS

PREFACE

When the Victim Services Agency embarked on this study of battered women in 1979, we were a new agency without extensive experience in domestic violence. We recognized that the problems encountered by battered spouses were pervasive and considerable, but we had little documentation to guide us in developing programs. Now, three years later, the final version of the study is complete. At the Victim Services Agency (VSA) we have already taken the findings into account in the development and direction of our existing programs, and in the planning of new ones. We hope that other policy makers and service providers can also benefit from the report's findings and recommendations.

Perhaps the most significant set of findings in the report concerns the reasons why many battered women choose to remain in the battering situation. Some authors, such as Lenore Walker, have proposed that battered women "learn helplessness" due to being beaten, and lose the ability to extricate themselves from the situation. Others, such as Murray Straus, have suggested that external factors such as social norms and financial dependence are responsible for women remaining in abusive situations. The findings

here support Straus' model of battered women as rational decision makers. Those who choose to remain often do so because of financial constraints, concern for their children and unwillingness to become dependent on service agencies.

These findings are both significant and hopeful. They mean that women, given reasonable options, can and will take action to improve their situations. They suggest to us two directions. In developing programs, we must provide services that create choices -- such as employment training to help women become more financially independent. We must also endeavor to get out the word that options and services are available.

According to the study, services currently available to battered women are flawed, but are improving. The quality of services is inconsistent from agency to agency; there are service gaps which need to be filled; and referrals from program to program are sadly rare. Too often, battered women must rely on services that cause the most upheaval and expense, such as court proceedings, hospital emergency rooms and temporary shelters. If more attention were paid to early intervention, the more drastic and expensive measures might often be avoided.

At VSA, we have already used the data contained in this report to plan and implement new programs for battered victims. We have, for instance, worked with emergency room staff at several hospitals and with police officers at precincts to help them recognize the special needs of battered women and to encourage them to refer victims to agencies where they can get help. We have developed Project Oasis, a program which provides a residential family setting as an alternative to shelters. We have worked with the City's Task Force on Domestic Violence to develop programs to facilitate the distribution of emergency financial aid to battered women. We have mounted a public information campaign to inform battered women, their friends and families of the availability of counseling, legal services and emergency financial assistance.

Despite these initiatives, the study points out how much more must be done, both by VSA and other agencies, to aid and support victims of domestic violence. Areas of future action include: education and prevention programs; services for children from violent homes; counseling for batterers; and, a host of measures to increase the independence of battered women, particularly programs for working women, employment training, and counseling.

The subject of domestic violence is a grim one. In the past few years, much has been done to bring the problem to public attention. Our obligation now is to respond with services and procedures that aid victims and ease their involvement with the police, the courts and social service agencies.

This study provides us with grounds for optimism. First, there is evidence that social service agencies, which in the past have too often been either unaware or unresponsive to the needs of these victims, are rising to the challenge and are responding in more useful ways. Secondly, the study provides us with a guide to future actions. The directions it suggests are not necessarily the most expensive. Lastly, it affirms that battered women are ready and willing to help themselves, if provided with realistic alternatives. Our challenge now is to meet those needs.

Lucy N. Friedman
February, 1982

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This project would not have been possible without the cooperation and assistance of many people. We are particularly grateful to those who referred participants to the study, and to the many who generously shared their insights and knowledge about spouse abuse with us. We would especially like to thank the following for their help: Lauren Wedeles and Susan Schechter, formerly of the Family Abuse Project of Henry Street Settlement; Suzanne K. Steinmetz of our advisory committee; Joyce Scott, our project monitor from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services; Marjory Fields and the staff of South Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation; Mobilization for Youth Legal Services; Karen Andrews of the Bronx Crime Victims Assistance Unit; Albert D. Koch of the Kings County District Attorney's Office; Wilda Chevers, Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Probation; Bernice Raisin and other staff of the Brooklyn Family Court's probation department; Rosemary Carroll of the New York City Police Department; VSA's staff in the Brooklyn Complaint Room; Tom Foster and Gregory King, formerly of VSA's Bronx Criminal Court office; VSA's hotline workers; Norma Chernok and staff of the Staten Island Women's Crisis Center; Candy Butcher of the New York State Department of Social Services; staff of the Kings and Queens County Hospital emergency rooms and Borough Crisis Centers; Abused Women's Aid in Crisis; the Jane Addams Center; the New York City Mayor's Task Force on Rape; and staff of the New York City Human Resources Administration Shelter.

Special acknowledgments are also due to several people who worked directly on the project. Janet Palau, Camille Bristow, Fay Kahan, Beatriz Blum, Eleanor Graves, Santa Salgado, Ivonne Elias, Roberta McCombs, and Mary Mann conducted many of the interviews. Susan Blank edited the study. Annie Gilbert-Rolfe, Christine Ondracek, Michele Jenkins, and John Golden typed numerous drafts of the report.

Lastly, we would like to thank the 112 battered women who shared their experiences with us and without whose help this study would not have been possible.

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SUMMARY

The problems of battered spouses have become more widely recognized in recent years, and in New York City services designed to aid this group have begun to be developed. The purpose of this study was to shed light on the nature of those services and on their use. Specifically, the study aimed to:

- describe the population of abused spouses who attempt to make use of governmental and private services in New York City;
- identify and describe some of the characteristics of the women [1] who use these different kinds of services;
- examine the responses with which battered women are met when they approach and use these services; and
- suggest directions for future program development on services for battered spouses.

For the study, a sample of 112 battered women who had sought help from services in New York City were interviewed in 1979 about their situations and about their experiences with the organizations they approached for help. The services to which they turned included the police, family and criminal courts, hospital emergency rooms, counseling facilities, shelters and the Department of Social Services. In most cases, the interviews took place a few months after the women had sought help in a crisis. From the information in these interviews, the researchers were able to analyze the kinds of responses with which the women were met at each type

of agency. In addition, the data gathered on the service users yielded insights into their characteristics and the problems they face, particularly the factors that keep them in abusive relationships.

The study reviews a number of earlier analyses of spouse abuse. Of particular interest are two theories that attempt to explain why women remain in abusive situations. Lenore Walker (1979) advances the hypothesis of "learned helplessness," claiming that beatings "diminish women's motivation to respond" and limit their ability to help themselves. Straus (1977), on the other hand, presents a model of battered women as rational decision-makers, remaining in abusive situations because they presume it to be in their best interests.

Women in the Sample

- Over two-thirds of the women were or had been legally married to the men who hit them. At the time of the interview, however, only 18 percent of the women were living with the men.
- The women were diverse in age -- ranging from 19 to 68 -- and in ethnic background -- 46 percent Black, 36 percent White, 19 percent Hispanic.
- Two-thirds of the women had graduated from high school. Forty-eight percent of the spouses of women in the sample were less educated than their wives, a situation that it is often claimed could lead to feelings of inferiority in the man and a need to dominate a wife with violence.
- One-third of the men were unemployed at the time of the survey. Nevertheless, the income and job skills of the men were markedly greater than those of their spouses. Only 9 percent of the women in the sample reported a personal income of more than \$10,000 a

year. Less than one-quarter (22 percent) reported experience or training that would qualify them as professional or skilled workers. In most relationships, the batterer had been the main financial provider for the family.

- Over one-third of the women had observed violence between their parents as children; 30 percent said they had been bruised by their parents as children. These findings support the theory of the "social heredity" of family violence.

The Battering Situations

Most of the women in the sample had experienced long-term, frequent abuse:

- For 77 percent the abuse had lasted more than a year; for 20 percent, more than 10 years. Fifty nine percent said they had been hit at least once a month; 36 percent, every week.

The women were asked about the causes of their spouses' first episode of violence:

- Jealousy, in many cases with what appeared to be trivial or no apparent provocation (such as asking a man for directions), had sparked 37 percent of the first violent episodes. Other first incidents were also precipitated by seemingly trivial problems (such as an argument over who should make dinner).
- Conflicts over money or unemployment brought on 15 percent of the incidents.

Half of the women in the sample who had been pregnant reported the abuse was more severe or more frequent during pregnancy.

Some of the data speak to the difficulties of leaving the abusive situation:

- Seventy-two percent of the women had left their spouses for at least one night and then returned.
- Forty-four percent returned because they had nowhere else to go; 34 percent because their spouses promised to reform; 25 percent for the sake of the children, 23 percent because they said they loved their spouses.
- In all but one case, the battering resumed after the return.

Fifty-five percent of the women in the sample had left their spouses at least three months before the first interview, some perhaps permanently. Data on these women were analysed to determine what factors had caused them to remain in the abusive situations for as long as they had.

One of the factors that was most compelling in keeping these women in the battering situation had been financial dependency. Those who reported that they had had no job, income, or control over their own money had stayed in abusive situations significantly longer than those who reported that they had had these advantages. Similarly, women with children stayed in such a relationship longer than women without children. Women who had either seen or been a target of violence in childhood stayed longer than those who had not.

There were no significant differences scored on a 20 point self-esteem test between the women who had left the battering situation for at least three months, perhaps permanently, and those who were still living with their spouses. These findings suggest that the factors that keep women in abusive relationships are more grounded in their assessments of objective difficulties involved in leaving and perhaps in familiarity with abuse as a behavior pattern than they are in "learned helplessness" or a low self-image.

Women's Use of the Services

Because a criterion for entering the sample was seeking help outside their families [2], the sample does not reflect the proportion of services users in the population of battered women as a whole. An examination of the experiences of the sample does make it possible, however, to learn more about how services are used and perceived by those battered women who did seek them out.

Police Services

Police service was the type of service most frequently used by women in the sample. Eighty-eight percent of the women had called the police -- or someone had called for them. Confirming findings of previous studies, this study found that police services were used most by women with

the least resources. Calls to the police were most common among women of minority background, without high school diplomas, with less than a \$10,000 a year income from their spouses and with children.

Women who were referred to this study through the courts were not included in the analysis of the use of police services, because their inclusion would have skewed the study's findings on the ratio of arrests to calls. It should be noted that data on police covered a period both before and after implementation of Operations Order 89, a police order which instructed officers under what conditions to make arrests in spouse abuse cases.

Of the 36 women in the sample who were not contacted through the courts and who involved themselves with the police:

- Eight reported that the police had arrived promptly; another eight that they came between 20 minutes and an hour after the call; two that it took more than an hour; one that the police had not arrived at all.
- Police made arrests in 10 of the 36 cases. Arrests were more frequent if the woman requested one; in 8 of the 14 cases in which it was requested, an arrest was made.
- Of those cases in which there was no arrest, other actions were: removing the spouse from the home (11 percent); taking the woman to the hospital (6 percent); advising the women to resolve the problem without the police (36 percent); and no action at all (11 percent).

Two-thirds of the women in the survey did not perceive the police as responsive to their needs. The women were most likely to be satisfied with the police response when an arrest was made. Those for whom the police did not make an arrest were the most likely to be (20 out of 25) dissatisfied.

The evidence suggests that many police officers did not regard spouse abuse as a police or criminal matter. However, there was some tentative evidence that the police were changing their behavior in response to the recent policy change in the department. Of the six women in the sample who requested an arrest after the implementation of Operations Order 89, five had their requests filled. This contrasts to three out of eight who had requests for arrests filled before the order went into effect.

While the police were not consistently responsive to battered women, the evidence was that they were increasingly becoming more sensitive and responsive. The findings suggest that police response could be further improved by the institution of training focusing on:

- the appropriateness of arrest in cases of spousal abuse involving a felony;
- the value of arrests, even in those cases that do not result in conviction and prison sentences;
- the services available for battered women and how to make referrals to them.

It also might be useful to try in New York City a model that has been used elsewhere: deploying teams that bring together police and social service workers to help violent families.

Medical Services

- Seventy percent of the women in the sample had sought out medical services at least once. Most had used emergency rooms.
- Most women in the sample (72 percent) did not hesitate to identify themselves as battered to the medical staff. (However, it should be noted that the women interviewed may have been more willing than others to identify themselves as battered.) The most frequent reasons for not revealing the cause of the injury were embarrassment, fear of what the spouse would do if he found out about the disclosure, and the presence of the spouse at the medical interview, so that the woman was unable to discuss the problem privately.
- Less than one third of the women (29 percent) reported that medical personnel offered them referrals or assistance for the battering problem that extended beyond immediate medical attention.

It appears that medical personnel, like police, could use further training on domestic violence. Topics to be covered in such training could include:

- methods for identifying battered women;
- procedures for preservation of evidence, such as ripped clothing;
- availability of and procedures for referral to other services;
- protocol for excluding spouses from part of the medical procedure when battering is suspected.

In New York City, the Borough Crisis Centers administered by the Human Resources Administration are helpful in dealing with cases of domestic violence brought to the four hospitals where the centers are. Because there are insufficient funds to institute a center at every hospital, however, training of emergency room staff on the topics described above would seem a valuable alternative.

Legal Services

Criminal Court. The women in this study were among the first in New York State to be subject to new laws (passed in 1977) that allow victims of spouse abuse to pursue cases in either criminal or family court, rather than, as in the past, limiting them primarily to family court.

- Forty-five percent of the sample had initiated criminal court cases against their spouses. These women appeared to have fewer resources and more injuries than the sample as a whole.

Composed of women willing to take enough action to seek out services, the sample may overrepresent abused women determined to prosecute their spouses. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, contrary to some criminal justice mythology, the majority of battered women in this sample did not withdraw charges against their spouses once filed.

- Among the 50 women who filed complaints in criminal court, only 24 percent reported that they did not follow through.

The court seldom imposed sanctions on abusers:

- Ninety-three percent of the 38 women who followed through with their cases reported that the judge gave a verbal admonishment to the batterer.
- Yet, the majority of women felt that the prosecutor had followed their wishes. Seventy-three percent reported it had been helpful to take the case to court.

These findings suggest that the courts were not generally unresponsive to battered women. Even though the courts did not mete out harsh punishments, they may have improved some situations:

- Forty-seven percent of the women said their spouses did not bother them after the disposition of the case.

However, since 89 percent of the women had left home before they filed complaints, they may have received less retaliation from spouses -- and have been taken more seriously by court officials about their determination to press charges -- than women who stayed with abusers. An ability to sever the relationship with the batterer may be important for successfully pursuing a case in criminal court.

The fact that 53 percent of the 38 women who followed through with their cases reported that their spouses attacked them again after the case had been settled suggests that while it can be helpful, criminal court alone is not an adequate source of assistance for battered women. Although satisfaction with the court was relatively high, it appears

that once again further training might be helpful:

- to make court officials more sensitive to the value the court process has even for women who do not follow through with it;
- to help court officials view spouse abuse as seriously as other assaults; and
- to inform court officials about additional resources for violent families.

These data also suggest the need for programs for abusers in an effort to intervene in the battering pattern.

Family Court. Sixty-one of the women in the sample had been to family court at least once. These women had more resources, were better educated and had spouses earning higher salaries than the women who used criminal court.

An Order of Protection was the most common remedy of the family court judges for the women in this study; 83 percent of the women who went to family court and requested an Order of Protection received one. Such an order lasts up to one year, and provides that one spouse cannot assault or otherwise menace and endanger or harass the other. It can also entail rulings for the abuser regarding children, living situations and, most recently, counseling.

The majority of women in the sample were satisfied with the family court. Nevertheless:

- Fifty-nine percent of the women who received one reported subsequent violations of their Orders of Protection. This is about the same proportion of women in the sample whose spouses repeated abuse after the settlement of a criminal court case.
- Six of the seven women who were living with their spouses after they had initiated family court cases reported that their Orders of Protection had been violated. In contrast, 16 of the 32 not living with their spouses reported their orders were violated.

As in criminal court, actions taken in family court appeared to result in some reduction of violence but seemed to be most effective for women who had left the batterer.

Counseling

More than three-quarters of the sample had discussed the battering problem with friends or relatives and most of the women had found this helpful. Still, friends and relatives were sometimes skeptical that battering had occurred; some gave advice on how to avoid "provoking" the spouse and several grew tired of discussing the problem. These findings suggest a need for nonjudgmental, professional counseling or hotline services, where the victim could feel more confident that she would receive an empathetic response, grounded in an assumption that battering can be a serious problem.

- Among the women interviewed there had been 25 contacts with crisis centers, hotlines and women's centers. Satisfaction with these services was high.
- Thirty-one of the women had used professional counseling. Almost two-thirds of them had found it helpful.
- Five of 10 women in the sample who had used marriage counseling did not find it helpful.

Although the study did not provide direct evidence on the question whether counseling helped avert the escalation of violence, the data suggest that counseling helps the women make decisions about their options and provides general support.

Shelters

Only 7 percent of the women in the sample had used shelters for battered women, perhaps reflecting the few available in New York City. The women who had gone to shelters found them useful as a refuge and also received assistance from their staff in obtaining other types of services. Since shelters are in short supply in New York City, it seems advisable that other institutions develop systems to help battered women get access to services in the way that shelters do.

Public Assistance

Half of the women in the sample were receiving public assistance when first interviewed. Thirty-three of the women had first applied for welfare at the time they left their spouses. Although 82 percent of these women qualified for aid, they reported that the process was difficult. The Department of Social Services has made innovations recently in the application process for battered women in an effort to make the process less cumbersome. While this study could not assess the effectiveness of these procedures, the number of women who received public assistance suggests that the procedures were helpful.

More than half the women in the sample on public assistance wanted a job. Since most lacked skills and work experience, however, it seems unlikely that many would find employment. This suggests that one of the long-term responses to the problems of battered women would be to develop employment possibilities for this group so that they would not be faced with a choice between welfare and staying in a violent home.

Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations

Popular opinion and some formal models share the view that battered women as a group are particularly low in self-esteem with a psychological need to stay in an abusive situation. This description did not characterize the battered women in this sample -- women who had sought services and were willing to identify themselves as battered. These women appeared rational, but caught in dangerous circumstances, and had made sensible, if difficult choices among available options. They seemed competent and concerned about improving their lives and those of their children. In light of these findings it is useful to reflect on the findings on another issue addressed by this study -- the question of the responsiveness and accessibility of the services the group turned to. The study suggests that agencies providing services are in fact making efforts to be more open and sensitive to the needs of battered women. In most cases, the women received concrete assistance and were therefore able to improve their lot. Yet the work has just begun. Services were neither uniformly available nor useful. The study revealed discontinuities among the various service areas, so that staff at one agency were often not sufficiently informed to make referrals to another service. These discontinuities, and problems in individual service areas, have been discussed in the preceding pages. In addition, the analysis also highlighted services that were needed, but were not available.

These include:

- Services and day care for children of violent families. Children living with mothers who have just left home need counseling and support. Short-term day care for children would also help the mothers by freeing them for a few hours each day to take care of their practical needs: going to court, finding a new apartment, attending job training, looking for a job.
- Services for batterers. Many battered women wanted the abuser to get help to reduce his abusive behavior. Steps in this direction are being made in New York City -- in 1980, the Family Court Law was changed to allow judges to include an educational program for the batterer as part of a finding in family offense cases -- but there needs to be more program development in this area.
- Testing and development of a wider range of vocational services, job placement and supported work programs for battered women. Unless battered women have incomes or a means to earn money, they will often be in a bind between welfare and remaining in an abusive situation.
- Services for battered women who are working. If a woman has some assets or earnings -- even a low-paying job -- she is unlikely to qualify for public assistance and thus for shelter, for city housing and for free medical services. Procedures need to be modified so that such women can be helped, without quitting their jobs.
- Preventive services. Methods ought to be developed to identify families at high risk of domestic violence so that they can be counseled and helped before the violence escalates.

This study revealed that the options available to battered women often determine their decisions to stay with or leave abusers. Services for battered women are essential to helping them find realistic alternatives to abusive relationships. The battered women interviewed for this study were primarily service users. This sample was therefore

not representative of all battered women. It is likely that many battered women do not reach out to services for help and are not aware of the available services. For such women, public education about the prevalence of battering and the services that respond to it would be a necessary first step toward intervening in and improving their lives.

FOOTNOTES

1. Although men as well as women are battered, this study focused on women because they are seeking services in much larger numbers than men. For example, during September 1981, 441 abused women called the Victim Services Agency's hotline compared to 2 abused men.
2. This criterion was changed during data collection. However, almost all the women in the sample had sought help from outside agencies.

INTRODUCTION

The public has become increasingly aware of the existence, needs and problems of battered women [1] during the past decade. As a result of the women's movement, the media, and concern for the crime victim, battered women have begun to find a voice and make their needs known. Since 1975, laws to address problems of family violence have been enacted in 44 states. As with other social problems, social programs have not followed recognition to help achieve solutions as quickly or as comprehensively as concerned citizens would wish. Nevertheless, about half the states have allocated funds for services to violent families.

In New York City, several services for battered women have developed during the past six years. In 1975, AWAIC (Abused Women's Aid in Crisis) opened a hotline and counseling service for abused women in New York City. In 1976, a class action suit (Bruno vs. Codd) was brought against the New York City Police Department, charging that neither the police nor the Family Court or Probation were enforcing existing laws against domestic violence. The New York City Police Department's response to the suit resulted in a consent decree which requires police to answer domestic dispute calls promptly and to make arrests when a felony has been committed or an Order of Protection [2] issued by criminal or family court has been violated. In 1977, the State Assembly passed a bill

giving battered spouses the choice of pursuing their cases either in family court or in criminal court. Also in 1977, the City established borough crisis centers at four municipal hospitals where victims of domestic violence are offered advocacy, counseling and referral services.

When Victim Services Agency began in 1978, we recognized that battered women represented a group of victims with special needs. Since 1975, VSA's predecessor program - the Victim/Witness Assistance Project - has been serving victims assaulted by common-law spouses by helping them through the Brooklyn Criminal Court and providing referrals for social services. However, we wanted to expand services available to battered women and thus this present research was undertaken to help policy-makers both within VSA and in the broader community to better understand and respond to the needs of battered women.

Specifically, the aims of the study were: (a) to describe the population of abused spouses who seek help from government institutions and service organizations in New York City; (b) to identify and differentiate the kinds of victims who use different kinds of services; (c) to examine the responses of services to battered women and their success both in changing the lives of abused spouses and in reducing the potential for continued violence; and (d) to develop recommendations for program development and future research.

The original design of the study called for 250 interviews with battered women who were seeking emergency assistance at courts or hospitals. Half of these women were to be interviewed six months later to determine what resources they had used, what problems they had encountered in obtaining services, and which services had been helpful.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to complete the design as anticipated because women in crisis were not willing or able to spend the time necessary for interviews. Thus, other intake sites and methods were tried (see Appendix for description), yielding a sample of 112 women, most of whom were initially interviewed a few months after a crisis rather than in the midst of one. We did not intend to obtain a representative sample of battered women, and in fact, the final sample may overrepresent women who were successful in negotiating services and in extricating themselves from a violent home.

The difficulties encountered in completing the original design provided lessons on research with battered women. These problems are reviewed in the Appendix in the hope

that they will be useful to other researchers in designing future studies on spouse abuse.

Although the methodological difficulties prevented an analysis of the effect of services on helping a woman leave an abusive situation or reduce the violence, other analyses were possible. The findings provide insights on why some battered women stay in abusive relationships for a long time; the obstacles that women encounter when they turn to government institutions or service organizations for aid, the kind of services battered women with few resources feel that they need, and the availability of such services in New York City.

In Chapter II of this report, literature on spouse abuse is reviewed with an emphasis on theories that offer explanations for the causes of domestic violence. The third chapter describes the sample - demographic characteristics of women and their spouses, the nature of the battering relationships, the reason why women stay in such relationships, and the women's goals and aspirations for the future. The fourth chapter describes the experiences women in the sample had when they sought help, drawing on interviews with service staff as well as with their clients. It describes some of the obstacles women must overcome to receive assistance. The final chapter summarizes conclusions drawn from the study, and recommends changes in services and procedures to make the

social and criminal justice systems more responsive to the needs of battered women.

1. Recent studies have also made it clear that men are often the victims of abuse by their spouses. Men, however, rarely identify themselves as battered and seldom use services available for battered spouses. (For example, during September 1981, 441 abused women called Victim Services Agency's hotline compared to 2 abused men.) Because this report focuses on users of services for battered spouses and because this population includes extremely few men, the sample examined was confined to battered women.
2. An Order of Protection is an order issued by a judge directing that a spouse, parent, child or other member of the same family or household observe certain conditions of behavior for a specified period of time (usually one year). The directives which may be contained in an Order include the following: to stay away from the family or household member against whom an offense has been committed, or from another member of the same family or household, or from such person's residence or place of employment; to abstain from offensive conduct against a spouse, parent, child or other member of the same family or household; to refrain from engaging in conduct which interferes with the custody of a child as set forth in the Order; to permit a parent to visit a child at stated intervals; and to obtain medical, alcoholism or drug abuse treatment, or employment or family counseling services.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

by Barbara Bryan and Robert C. Davis

This section reviews literature on the frequency of spouse abuse, its causes, and the reasons why women remain in abusive relationships. This literature provides a background for later sections that deal with the problems battered women experience in their contacts with social services and the ways in which services are used by women to assist them in making changes in their lives.

A. The Scope of Spouse Abuse

It is difficult to obtain an accurate estimate of the frequency of spouse abuse. One problem in obtaining an estimate is that no consistent definition of spouse abuse has been adopted by experts in the field. Spouse abuse is commonly perceived as distinct, abnormal and largely incomprehensible behavior that occurs among a small portion of the population. Researchers have discovered, however, that some sort of violence occurs at least once between many couples. Indeed, Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) estimate that two-thirds of American couples probably experience violence at least once in the course of their relationship. Spousal violence has been found to occur along a continuum, with those on the more extreme end fitting more the classic

picture of the abused spouse. Thus, violence is not an infrequent phenomenon among couples. The point at which it becomes defined as "abusive" is a subjective determination.

A second difficulty in estimating the scope of the problem is obtaining reliable statistics. Most victims of spouse abuse probably do not come to the attention of the police or courts. Thus, national crime statistics are likely to greatly underestimate the extent of the problem. Most hospitals do not keep separate statistics on the number of abused spouses whom they treat. Even if such statistics were gathered, however, they too would be likely to underestimate the problem because some victims would probably be reluctant to identify their spouses as the cause of their injuries.

Over the last fifteen years a variety of estimates of the scope of spouse abuse have been generated from a number of research studies. Levinger (1966) and O'Brien (1971) examined the frequency of allegations of physical violence among couples seeking divorce. Gelles (1974) studied the incidence of spousal violence among families selected from police records and social agencies, and their neighbors. College students were surveyed by Straus (1974) concerning violence between their parents. Gaquin (1977-78) analyzed findings from the National Crime Survey (NCS) to determine the incidence of domestic violence. Steinmetz (1977) interviewed families in New Castle, Delaware, concerning the frequency of

all forms of violence in the family. Nisonoff and Bitman (1979) conducted a telephone survey of Suffolk County (N.Y.) residents to determine the frequency of spouse abuse.

These studies were all important in the development of a body of empirical data and theory concerning spouse abuse. Nevertheless, estimates of the frequency of spouse abuse based on these data were susceptible to question. In some instances, the samples in the studies were quite small (e.g., Gelles' study contained 80 families and Steinmetz's contained 57). In addition, the representativeness of the sample populations was clearly questionable in some cases, such as the studies of couples seeking divorces. Other methodological concerns could be raised in some cases, such as whether college students have accurate knowledge of the frequency of violence between their parents.

The most rigorous attempts to determine the frequency of spouse abuse come from two recent studies: a random telephone survey of 1,793 women in Kentucky by Louis Harris and Associates (1979) and a random survey of 2,143 American families by Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980). Louis Harris and Associates (1979) found that 10 percent of Kentucky women had been the victims of some form of physical abuse [1] by their husbands during the past year, and that 21 percent had been victims of abuse at some point in their marriages. Harris, et al. also found that 4 percent of women had been the

victims of beatings or had been assaulted with weapons by their husbands during the past year and that 9 percent had been victims of such serious assaults at some time during their marriages.

Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) arrived at similar findings. (Both studies, however, may underestimate the extent of domestic violence because of victims' reluctance to report abuse.) Straus, et al. estimate that some form of physical abuse by one spouse against another occurs in 16 percent of American families each year, and has occurred at some time in 28 percent of American families. They estimate that instances of serious abuse (defined as beatings or use of a weapon by one spouse against another) have occurred in 13 percent of American families at some time. While Straus, Steinmetz, and Gelles note that the instances of abuse and of severe abuse are roughly the same for both husbands and wives, they argue that the consequences are usually more serious for women than for men.

The National Crime Survey data suggest that assaults against spouses are likely to be more serious than other assaults. Although only 5 percent of the sampled assaults were committed by a spouse or ex-spouse, these incidents accounted for 12 percent of assaults requiring hospitalization, 16 percent of assaults requiring medical care, and 18 percent of

assaults in which one or more days of work were lost (Gaquin, 1977-78).

Homicide figures confirm the seriousness of spouse abuse. The Uniform Crime Reports for 1975 show that about one-fourth of all homicides were committed by family members and that about one-half of these family killings involved spouse killing spouse (United States Department of Justice, 1975). A Kansas City study sponsored by the Police Foundation (Wilt, Bannon, et al., 1977) showed that about one-third of homicides resulted from "domestic disturbances." Marvin Wolfgang analyzed 588 homicides over a six year period and found that 11 percent of all men killed were slain by their wives and that 41 percent of all women killed were slain by their husbands (Wolfgang, 1958). Beating was the most common method used by husbands for killing their wives.

Studies of homicide suggest that murder is often preceded by a pattern of repeated, escalating violence. The Kansas City study showed that for half the cases, the police had been at the address of the incident for disturbance calls at least five times in the two years preceding the homicide (Wilt, Bannon, et al., 1977).

B. Explanations of Spouse Abuse

Explanations of spouse abuse range from individual pathology to larger social issues of inequality between men and women and societal acceptance of violence. However, since family violence is a relatively new area of study, theories of spouse abuse have not been well developed or tested. In addition, the empirical evidence to support or refute the theories is scarce. Some surveys of female victims of domestic violence (e.g., Gayford, 1975; Truninger, 1971; Roy, 1977; Walker, 1979) have been conducted, and psychologists and counselors have contributed case studies and typologies developed from observation. The research has been limited, however, by relatively little contact with the abuser; thus more is known and written about the victim than about the assailant.

Immediate triggers of domestic violence. Interviews with victims of spouse abuse have yielded a list of common precipitating factors, or situational stresses, which trigger spouse abuse. For example, in interviews with 150 women who sought help from AWAIC, a women's center in New York, the nine factors most often cited as precipitating violence were: arguments over money; jealousy; sexual problems; husband's use of alcohol or other drugs; disputes over children; husband's unemployment; wife's desire to work; pregnancy; and wife's use of alcohol or other drugs (Roy, 1977). A study of 33 spouse

assault victims generated a similar list: financial problems; health or employment problems; conflicts over the marital relationship or children; jealousy; mental disturbances; and alcohol abuse (Flynn, 1977). Situational stresses help to explain when spouse abuse may occur, but not why it occurs. Approaches presented in the following sections attempt to explicate the interpersonal dynamics that lead to abuse.

Frustration-aggression theories. Frustration-aggression theory (Dollard et al., 1939) from experimental psychology assumes an innate connection between frustration and aggression and would predict marital violence when one or both spouses become seriously frustrated. Berkowitz (1969) has refined the theory to include aggression as only one of several possible responses to frustration. This view is consistent with the knowledge that many couples who experience serious frustrations do not become violent. However, the frustration-aggression theory fails to explain frequent outbursts of violence against a spouse which appear to have no particular immediate cause or which appear to be triggered by trivial incidents (Martin, 1976).

It has been suggested that in some cases, the catharsis of "levelling" (giving free expression to aggressive feelings) would reduce the likelihood of physical violence. In short, verbal aggression could substitute for physical aggression between spouses. Straus (1974) asked 385

first-year college students about conflicts in their families during the last year they were in high school. Sixteen percent reported violence; there was a significant correlation between the measures of verbal and physical aggression. Straus concluded that releasing inhibitions in expressing anger leads to an increased likelihood of physical violence between spouses rather than preventing it. This conclusion was confirmed by Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) on a larger sample.

Alcohol use. Alcohol use is frequently mentioned by victims as a factor precipitating, or associated with, violence (Hilberman and Munson, 1977-78; Gayford, 1975; Flynn, 1977; Nisonoff and Bitman, 1979; Roy, 1977). Bard and Zacker's (1974) study which examined records of police responses to 1,388 cases of domestic disputes over a 22-month period, showed that in 14 percent of the incidents, officers judged alcohol to be a primary cause of the dispute and in 30 percent of the cases, the accused had been drinking. These data suggest that alcohol is frequently associated with spouse abuse. However, no causal relationship between drinking and spouse abuse has been established. In fact, Gelles (1974) suggests that some spouse abusers may drink in order to create an excuse for their abuse, later blaming the alcohol for their behavior. The consensus of experts on spouse abuse seems to be that alcohol, like stress, may precipitate violence in some assailants, but that it is not an underlying cause of violence.

Individual pathology. Some authors have suggested that battering is the result of physiological or psychiatric disturbance of the assailant. In fact, a common outsider's response to a severe beating is: "You'd have to be crazy to do that."

Data indicate that in some (relatively few) cases, the assailant has suffered head injuries, chemical imbalance, minimal brain damage, or certain forms of disease (Elliott, 1977). Similarly, some spouse abusers may suffer from psychiatric disturbances. But because of the difficulty of interviewing assailants directly, little empirical evidence on the incidence of psychiatric disorders is available. In the few existing studies, the subjects were in prison either for the murder or serious assault of their spouse. One study of 23 incarcerated men found that at the time of the offense 16 were suffering from psychiatric disorders ranging from depression to dementia (Faulk, 1977). However, it is not possible to generalize from 23 jailed abusers to the larger population of men who are physically violent toward their wives and partners.

Other studies have found that batterers are more likely to have arrest and conviction records than other men. For example, more than half the husbands in Gayford's (1975) study had been arrested previously; Wolfgang (1958) found that 64 percent of the offenders in his marital homicide study had previous criminal records. Flynn (1977) and Carlson

(1977) also report unusually high rates of criminal records among wife batterers. However, the significance of these findings is dubious given that (a) the people studied were poor and crime rates among the poor are higher than for other segments of society, and (b) the previous arrests may have been for previous assaults on the spouse.

Some attempts have been made to develop typologies or syndromes based on neurotic or psychotic symptoms found in some spouse abusers (see, for example, Schultz, 1960, and Elbow, 1977). These typologies may be helpful to the practitioner trying to identify and treat spouse abusers, but they are descriptive rather than explanatory.

History of family violence. A history of violence in the parental family of the abuser or the victim has also been suggested as an important factor in the etiology of spouse abuse. Although the abuser's history is not always known, when it is, the evidence shows that the abuser often was harshly punished or abused as a child/or observed violence between his parents. Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) found that the likelihood of abusing one's spouse was higher among persons who had observed parental violence as children or who had been physically punished as children than among those who had not.

Other studies have reached similar conclusions. Gelles (1974) found, for example, that husbands reported as violent almost always were from families where husband-wife violence had occurred. The association between parental family violence and violent behavior among wives, he found, was not as strong but still significant. Gayford's study (1975) of 100 English battered women showed that 51 of the husbands had been exposed to family violence as children. Flynn (1977) reports that of the abusers whose family history was known, over half came from families where parents had abused one another, while 40 percent had been abused as children. Clinicians also often note a history of family violence in the assailant (Elbow, 1977; Walker, 1979; Hilberman and Munson, 1977-78).

It has also been shown that victims frequently grew up in violent households. Harris and Associates (1979) found that women who had observed violence between parents or who been victims of violence as children were more likely than others to be physically abused by their husbands. In Gayford's (1975) study, nearly one-quarter of the abused women had been exposed to family violence in childhood. Of 60 battered women treated at a rural mental health center, more than half reported violence between their own parents, and physical or sexual abuse of themselves as children (Hilberman and Munson, 1977-78).

Spouse abuse is also related to child abuse. Hilberman and Munson (1977-78) reported child abuse in 20 of the 60 families in which spouse abuse had been identified as a primary problem. The abuse was of two types: either the spouse abuser (in this study, the husband) also beat the children, or the abused spouse turned on the children and beat them. Gayford's study (1975) showed that 37 percent of the beaten women admitted to having beaten their children, and 54 percent claimed that their husbands were violent toward the children. In Roy's (1977) study, women reported that about 45 percent of the attacks on them were accompanied by attacks on at least one child.

Social learning theory (e.g., Bandura and Ross, 1961) hypothesizes that violent behavior is a learned response. According to this hypothesis, violence would be expected in marriages of individuals who had observed familial assaults and where the behavior was positively reinforced. Straus (1977-78) points out that the family is the setting in which most people first experience physical violence and learn its meaning. Physical punishment of children may teach them lessons that parents never intended. One lesson is the association of love with violence, since the child is most often physically punished by his parents. A second lesson taught by punishment is that it is acceptable to hit other family members. According to Straus, these lessons provide a model for later treatment of one's own children, and are

generalized to other relationships, especially that of husband-wife.

Socio-economic factors. Controversy surrounds the question of whether some socio-economic groups are more likely to engage in spouse abuse than others. Wolfgang has hypothesized a subculture of violence (Wolfgang, 1958; Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967) in which violent acts are normative, not deviant. The subculture-of-violence hypothesis supports the middle-class impression that violence is a fact of life among the poor and among certain minority groups; this impression is supported by the fact that violent assaults against strangers are more often committed by members of those groups. Goode (1969) and Hepburn (1973) have adopted the subculture of violence theory to help explain spouse abuse.

Empirical data on the extent to which spouse abuse is correlated to poverty abuse is most common among the young, poor and unemployed. The Kentucky study of Harris and Associates (1979) found wife abuse most prevalent among urban, young, and non-white families, but did not find an association between abuse and income level. In fact, one of the conclusions which Harris emphasizes is that spouse abuse is "found at every societal level." And neither Straus et al. nor Harris found spouse abuse to be higher among less educated people; in fact both studies report that spouse abuse was

somewhat less common among people with less than a high school education than among high school graduates.

Spouse abuse, however, may be more visible in poor families. The Harris study found that women who are poor or members of minority groups are more likely to call the police than middle class or white women. Similarly, Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967) suggest that middle class people may be less likely to admit to having been abused than poor people. Whitehurst (1974) has suggested that the middle class assaulter has more to lose if his or her assaults become known and that resources available for covering up the abuse are generally greater for middle class persons than for poor. (Middle class people, for example, can use private physicians instead of emergency rooms, or psychiatrists instead of community mental health centers.)

Status, resources, and power. O'Brien (1971) theorizes that a factor contributing to spouse abuse is a discrepancy between the expected "superior" status of the husband within the family and the husband's actual status, based on such factors as employment, earnings and education. O'Brien found in his research that when a husband's achievement was low -- that is, when a husband was seriously dissatisfied with his job; when he started but failed to finish either high school or college; when his income was a source of serious conflict; when his educational achievement was less than that of his wife; or when

his occupational status was lower than that of his father-in-law -- he was more likely to respond with violence to perceived threats or challenges from his wife.

Goode (1971), Rodman (1972) and Rogers (1974) suggest that people resort to violence when they lack other legitimate resources. Allen and Straus (1975) put forth the "ultimate resource" theory of violence which predicts that violence will be used by an individual who lacks other resources to serve as the basis of power. They found that the more the wife's resources exceeded those of her husband, the more likely her husband was to have used physical force during the year preceding the study.

Cultural norms. It has been argued that spouse abuse is an outgrowth of cultural norms that prescribe that men be the head of the household and that legitimize men's use of violence to maintain that position when other resources fail (Straus, 1976; 1977). For hundreds of years, the legal systems and the community norms of Europe, England and, later, America supported a husband's right to beat his wife (Dobash and Dobash, 1977-78). In America, the legal "right" to use physical force against one's wife was not completely rejected until 1891, but there are many indications that community norms have not kept pace with law (Bannon, 1975).

Many who have observed and studied domestic violence believe that a continuing attitude of permissiveness toward spouse violence has characterized key institutions such as the police and the courts, and that such attitudes both reflect and contribute to the acceptance of violence between two people as long as they are married or living together (Straus, 1976; Fields, 1977-78; Parnas, 1967; Field and Field, 1973; Bannon, 1975). Comic strips, television, and popular music have often depicted violence against women as normal or legitimate. (See Julia London's article, "Images of Violence Against Women", 1977-78.) Gelles (1974) even developed a classification of "normal violence" because so many people he interviewed expressed attitudes such as "I deserved it" or "She needed to be brought to her senses," indicating that they saw violence as an acceptable way of dealing with conflict.

An Empirical Model of the Determinants of Spouse Abuse

Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) examined the relationship between many of the aforementioned factors and spouse abuse. They developed a model which predicts the families in which spouse abuse is likely to occur. The factors which the authors included in the model are the following:

Husband employed part time or unemployed
Annual family income under \$6,000
Husband a manual worker
Husband very worried about economic security
Wife very dissatisfied with standard of living
Two or more children

Age under 30 years
Married less than 10 years
Non-white racial group
Grew up in family in which father hit mother
Disagreement over children
High score on a "Marital Conflict" index
High life stress
Wife dominant in family decisions
Verbal aggression between spouses
Alcohol problems
Lived in neighborhood less than two years
No participation in organized religion

Among families which scored the lowest on Straus et al.'s combined index, none had experienced husband-wife violence during the last year. But as a family's score on the index increased, so did the likelihood of spouse abuse; two in three families with the highest scores on the index reported having experienced husband-wife violence during the last year. Theorists who attribute spouse abuse to frustration, alcohol, social learning of violence from parents, life stress and status inconsistency between husband and wife can find partial support from the Straus, Steinmetz and Gelles model.

Theories on Why Women Remain in Abusive Relationships

It is difficult to understand why abused women remain in a situation that has proven painful and dangerous. One early view was that a female victim of spouse abuse is a masochist who stays in an abusive relationship because she derives pleasure from it. The theory of female masochism suggested that for women, suffering is "inherently bound up.

with erotic pleasure and is desired for that reason" (Waites, 1977-78). Psychoanalytic theorists who have reinforced the idea of female masochism are Freud (1905, 1919, 1924), Reich (1949), Deutsch (1930), Bonaparte (1951) and Horney (1967). Today, however, few would argue that women remain in abusive relationships because they derive psychological pleasure from it.

Lenore Walker (1979) has suggested another view of why battered women stay in relationships, based on the concept of "learned helplessness." As a result of beatings, women come to believe that they cannot control their lives. According to Walker:

Once we believe that we cannot control what happens to us, it is difficult to believe that we can ever influence it.... This concept is important for understanding why battered women do not attempt to free themselves from a battering relationship. Once the women are operating from a belief of helplessness, the perception becomes reality and they become passive, submissive, helpless.... In this way, battered women become blind to their options. (Walker, 1979:47-48)

Walker bases her theory on the findings of experimental psychologists working with animals in laboratories. In a series of experiments, animals were subjected to intensive inescapable electric shock. Although at first the animals tried vigorously to escape, they eventually gave up and simply endured the punishment passively. Later, when the situation was changed so that the animals were able to

escape the shock they were very slow to develop escape responses; in fact, repeated dragging of the animals out of the shock chamber was necessary to teach them to respond voluntarily again. (Walker, 1979:45-48)

Walker (1979:49) believes that repeated beatings, like electrical shocks, "diminish a woman's motivation to respond." She comes to think that nothing she can do will stop her husband from battering her. Eventually, the belief that she is powerless generalizes to other situations in her life as well; the woman has internalized the idea that she is incapable of controlling her life. She becomes passive, and prone to depression and anxiety.

Findings of other clinicians support Walker's views. A British study (Joblin, 1974) reported that spouse abuse victims were generally submissive and passive, while Gayford (1975) reported that victims felt helpless and dependent on their violent husbands. Carlson (1977) found battered women characterized by low self-esteem, isolation and intense concern with their children. Hilberman and Munson (1977-78) reported passivity and lack of decisiveness in many battered women, along with suicidal depression, aggression against themselves, denial of anger and low self-esteem.

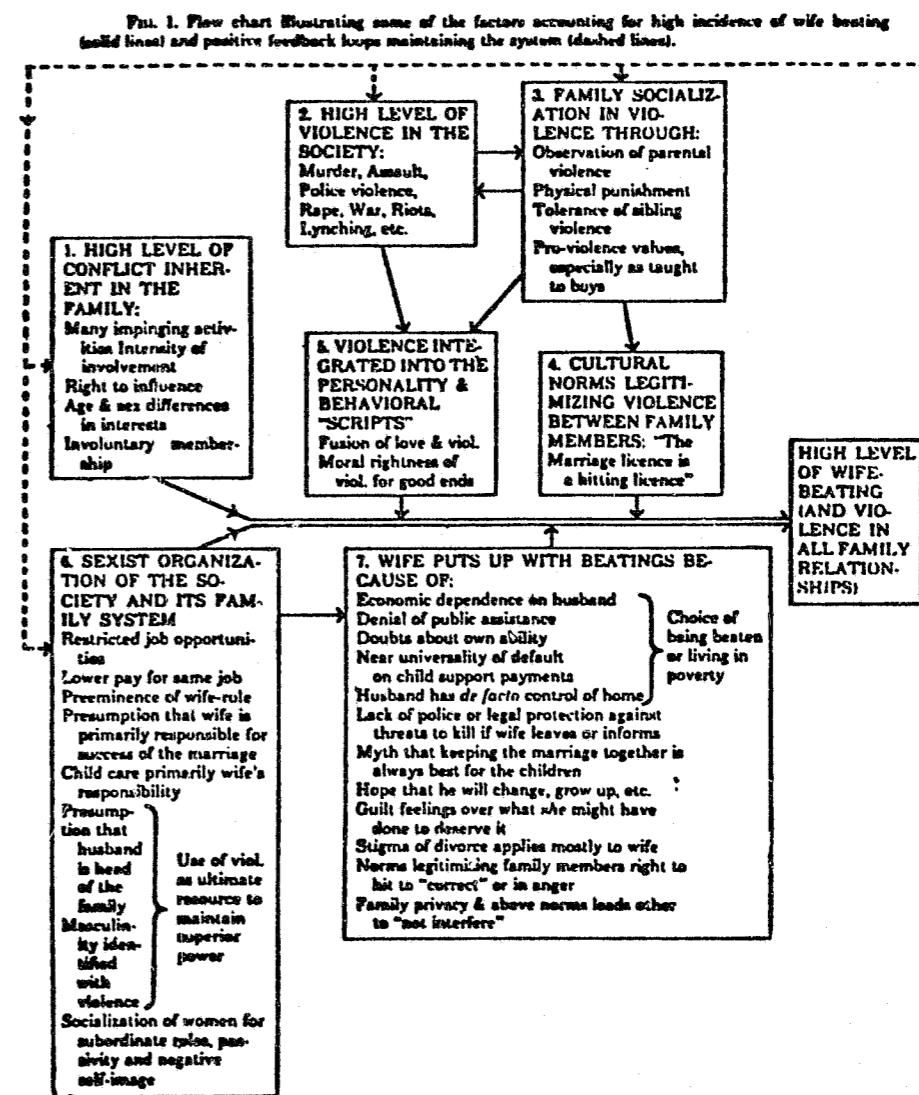
Walker concludes that battered women cannot help themselves; if they are to improve their lot, it must be with active assistance from others:

Turning back to the animal studies, we see that the dogs could only be taught to overcome their passivity by being dragged repeatedly out of the punishing situation and shown how to avoid the shock.... A first step [for abused women] would seem to be to persuade the battered women to leave the battering relationship or persuade the batterer to leave. This "dragging" may require help from outside, such as the dogs received from the researchers. (Walker, 1979:53)

In contrast to the psychoanalytic explanation of masochism and Walker's view of battered women as helpless, Straus (1977) has presented a model of spouse abuse that presumes abused women to be rational decision-makers. The model (see Figure 3.1) is an ambitious one which seeks to explain the causes of abuse through a variety of social, structural and psychological factors.

Of particular interest in the present context is Straus' analysis of why women remain in abusive relationships (point 7 in Figure 3.1). The model states that there are incentives for women to remain in abusive relationships, even though they are battered -- or alternatively that there are disincentives for change. The factors that "cause" women to stay in abusive relationships are, according to Straus, economic reliance on their spouses, fear of physical harm if they leave, concern for the welfare of

FIGURE 3.1
STRAUS' MODEL OF SPOUSE ABUSE



Source: Murray A. Straus, "Wife Beating: How Common and Why?" Victimology 2, Nos. 3-4 (1977-78): 450.

children, the social stigma of divorce, and the belief that their spouses may change.

Other researchers have presented data which lend some support to the idea that women remain in battering relationships only as long as there are benefits to be gained from staying or as long as the costs of leaving are unacceptable. Truninger (1971) found that many women finally seek divorce or separation when they can no longer believe their husbands' promises that they will reform. Gelles (1976) found that women were more likely to seek separation or divorce as the severity of abuse they suffered increased. Gelles also reported that women who hold jobs -- and who therefore have less to fear economically by being on their own -- are more likely than other battered women to leave their spouses.

Surveys of battered women have found that the welfare of children is often cited as a reason for staying (Gayford, 1975; Truninger, 1971; Gelles, 1976; Straus, 1977-78). Concern for the children's welfare may encompass the impact of dislocation (loss of friends, new schools, loss of the family home), worry about children growing up with only one parent, and - perhaps most importantly - the children's economic well-being. These fears appear to be grounded in reality. One study showed that within one year after a court awarded support payments, full compliance characterized only 43 percent of the cases; five years after the award had been made,

65 percent of the awards were not being paid at all, while only 18 percent were being paid in full (reported by Fields, 1977-78). According to the Bureau of the Census, in 1969, 32 percent of families with female heads of household were living below the poverty line, and the median income of female-headed households was only one-third that of households headed by males (1970 United States Census).

The loss of social status is also a risk for battered women who leave their spouses. Divorce still carries a stigma in many circles, and women are more likely than men to feel that a divorce is their fault (Straus, 1977-78). Women are less likely to remarry than are men (Martin, 1976) and the prospect of coping socially as a single person is particularly ominous to a woman who has made a career of being a wife and mother and whose social existence has been defined by her role as wife (Geller and Walsh, 1977-78).

Another disincentive to leave is that even when a woman chooses to seek intervention or separation, she will not be assured of reducing or eliminating abuse. Many husbands threaten to kill their wives if they try to leave. Separated and divorced women have a high probability of being assaulted by a spouse or ex-spouse (Gaquin, 1977-78). Thus for the dubious safety of having left abusive husbands, women may sacrifice economic security, custody of children, community property, community respect and companionship. Since leaving

involves substantial risk and sacrifice, many women stay, hoping for reform, or living without hope to preserve what often seems to them to be their only valuable function -- their roles as mothers and wives.

Because Straus' model assumes that battered women are rational decision-makers who decide to leave or stay with their spouses based upon what they perceive to be in their best interests, it suggests that the elimination of disincentives (such as economic reliance upon spouses, fear of retaliation and so forth) would result in women taking steps to alter their situations. This view is in sharp contrast to Walker's view of battered women as in need of being "dragged" out of the battering relationship by others because they can no longer make decisions on their own. The applicability of each of these views to the behavior of the sample of battered women described in this report is examined in subsequent sections.

FOOTNOTES - Chapter II

1. Defined as throwing something at spouse; pushing; grabbing or shoving spouse; slapping spouse; kicking, biting, or hitting with fist; hitting or trying to hit with something; beating up spouse; threatening with a knife or gun.

III

A PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE

by Elizabeth Connick

As a background for understanding the kinds of services the 112 women in the sample needed and their responses to them, this section describes the women, their marital situations, their aspirations for the future and the factors that might inhibit them from attaining those aspirations.

Much of the information on this section, and the ones that follow, is statistical. However, to provide the reader with a picture of the women as individuals, a case study is first presented that in many respects illustrates a typical woman in the sample:

Tom and Joanne were married and had three children, ages 17, 15, and 4. Tom beat Joanne for 13 of the 18 years of their marriage. The first time Tom beat Joanne was during an argument over her in-laws. Although initially Tom used violence infrequently, as time progressed the beatings became more severe and occurred several times a month. On one occasion Joanne had to seek treatment at an emergency room for a broken finger. Joanne sought assistance from the police once and the Family Court twice. Once after a beating, Joanne took her children and left her husband for two weeks. She returned, however, because she had run out of money and because her husband promised to reform. Nevertheless, the beatings continued, and ultimately she left her husband again. At the time that she was interviewed, Joanne had been separated from her husband for eight months. She and her children were living on welfare.

Joanne reported that her husband, who earned an annual income over \$20,000, sporadically sent money for the children's expenses. Her concerns at the time of the initial interview were to get a job and to see her children successfully complete their schooling.

A. Description of Women in the Sample

Like Joanne, most (67 percent) of the women were or had been legally married to the men who hit them. Another fourth were living with or had lived with the batterer in a consensual relationship; and the remaining 8 percent had neither been married to the batterer, nor had lived with him. At the first interview, however, only 18 percent of the women were living with the man; in 27 percent of the cases the woman had been living apart from the man for less than three months, and in the remainder (55 percent) she had been living apart from him for more than three months.

The women in the sample ranged from 19 to 68 years in age, with a median age of 32 years. The women were also ethnically diverse: 46 percent were Black; 36 percent were White; 19 percent were Hispanic. Two-thirds were high school graduates, but only seven percent reported having graduated from college. More than three-quarters had children living with them (see Table 3.1).

TABLE 3.1
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN
AND THEIR SPOUSES

	WOMEN (n=112)*	SPOUSES (n=112)*
<u>RACE</u>		
White	36%	34%
Black	46	46
Hispanic	19	20
Asian	0	1
	100%	100%
<u>EDUCATION</u>		
Less than high school	34%	49%
High school graduate	35	34
Some college	24	14
College graduate	7	3
	100%	100% (n=98)
<u>ANNUAL INCOME</u>		
Welfare	49%	2%
Less than \$5,000	24	18
\$5,000 to \$15,000	27	58
More than \$15,000	0	22
	100%	100% (n=88)
<u>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</u>		
Working	30%	65%
Not working	70	35
	100%	100% (n=101)
<u>EMPLOYMENT SKILLS</u>		
Professional work	5%	8%
Trained or skilled work	17	31
Clerical or sales work	44	15
Semi-skilled or unskilled work	35	46
	100% (n=110)	100% (n=109)

*Data were missing in some cases. In those instances the n is indicated in parentheses.

Most of the women had, at best, modest financial resources of their own. Although 30 percent held either full-time or part-time jobs at the time of their first interview and 49 percent were receiving public assistance, only 9 percent of the total sample reported personal annual incomes in excess of \$10,000. Only 22 percent of the women reported experience or training that would qualify them as professional or skilled workers.

The incomes and job skills of the women's spouses were markedly greater; 59 percent of their spouses were employed in full-time jobs (only two percent received public assistance), 22 percent were reported to have incomes in excess of \$15,000 per year, and 39 percent had been trained as professional or skilled workers. Thus, in most relationships, the husband had been the primary source of income for the household.

Despite their greater skills, however, one-third of the men were unemployed at the time of the survey. This suggests that economic worries in many families may have compounded existing problems. Other factors also suggest that many of the abusers were under stress. According to the women, 43 percent of their spouses were poorer now than they had been as children -- a factor which Palmer (1972) found to be prevalent among individuals who commit violent crimes. Forty-eight percent of the abusers had had less education than

their spouses, a situation that many authors (O'Brien, 1971; Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Rodman, 1972; Goode, 1971; Rogers, 1974; Allen and Straus, 1975) have argued leads to feelings of inferiority and a need by males to use violence to maintain a sense of power over their wives. Finally, alcohol abuse was frequent among the husbands; according to 62 percent of the women, alcohol use was at least sometimes associated with violent behavior in their spouses. While these circumstances may not have "caused" the men to be abusive, they may well have amplified other existing problems.

Many women in the sample and their spouses had been exposed to familial violence as children. According to respondents' reports, between 39 percent and 54 percent of the men had observed parental violence, and between 24 percent and 42 percent had been bruised by their parents [1]. Among the women, 36 percent reported having observed violence between their parents when they were children and 30 percent reported having been bruised by their parents. These data are in accordance with Straus' et al.'s (1980) finding (reported in the previous chapter) that there is often a history of violence in the families of abusers and victims.

B. The Battering Situations

In most cases in the sample, incidents of abuse were long-standing and frequent. In 77 percent of the cases, the physical abuse had been going on for more than a year, and in 20 percent of the cases, it had been going on for more than 10 years. Fifty-nine percent of the women reported having been hit an average of at least once a month, and 36 percent of them said that they were abused every week. Although a few respondents (8 percent) reported that they had not suffered physical harm aside from headaches or emotional trauma, the majority had sustained injuries: 68 percent had suffered cuts or bruises; 18 percent broken bones; and 5 percent internal injuries. Seventy percent of the women had sought medical assistance at least once, and 6 percent had been hospitalized at least once.

In an effort to add to the understanding of the factors that contribute to spouse abuse, each woman was asked to describe the events leading up to the first violent incident. Although the first incident of violence may not necessarily be representative of succeeding incidents, it provides a uniform basis for comparison. As the studies by Roy (1977) and Walker (1979) found, jealousy on the part of the men was reported to trigger many violent acts, 37 percent of the first incidents of violence. In one-fourth of these jealous incidents, the violence was first brought on when the women

attempted to end the relationship. In a few cases the woman was seeing another man. Nevertheless, as Walker (1979: 38) and Martin (1976: 60) have observed, in many cases the man's jealousy seemed to be obsessive, often sparked by trivial events, or to have no apparent cause. For example, one woman said that her husband had first hit her after she stopped the car to ask a man for directions. Men were jealous not only of other men, but also of women's female friends. Several women said that their spouses tried to restrict their outside activities and thus their contact with female friends. One woman said that she would not leave the house without first informing her husband, for fear that he would call and discover that she was not at home.

Conflicts over money or unemployment accounted for 15 percent of the first violent incidents. Frequently, husbands accused the women of spending too much money. One woman said that her husband first beat her because he was frustrated by looking for a job for nine hours every day. Roy (1977: 42) found in her study that the wife's desire to work often precipitated violence. This appears to have happened in the case of one of the women in the study, who said that her husband made her quit her job (in which she was earning more money than he). Conversely, two other women in the study reported that their spouses first hit them because they wanted the women to get jobs and they either could not or did not want to do so [2].

Pregnancy also precipitated violence; 6 percent of the women in the sample said that their spouse first hit them when they became pregnant. Roy (1977) and Gelles (1974) report that in some cases battering became more severe when women were pregnant. In VSA's sample close to half (48 percent) of the women who had been pregnant reported that the hitting was harder or more frequent during this time. In some of the cases the spouse appeared to be concerned about the financial burden that a child would generate. Three of the women reported miscarriages as a result of the abuse.

Although some of the first incidents of violence could be categorized as arising from jealousy, financial problems, or pregnancy, others were difficult to categorize. Many first incidents appeared to have erupted out of trivial problems, such as conflicts over who should prepare dinner. One woman said that her husband would "fly off the handle" about things as minor as the way she ironed his shirt.

A striking aspect of abuse situations revealed in the interviews was the extent to which women feared their spouses and the extent they went to avoid a violent confrontation. Two-thirds of the women felt that fear of their spouses made them do things that they would not do otherwise [3]. Many of the women reported that they restricted their outside activities to avoid provoking their spouses; 20 percent of the women reported that the statement, "I always check with

my spouse before I do anything," accurately described their behavior [4]. In one particularly graphic report on behavior motivated by fear, a respondent said that if her husband did not come home early in the evening, she knew that he would come home drunk and angry. She would instruct her children to lie in bed and pretend they were asleep. Then she would unscrew all of the light bulbs in the house. She, too, would lie in bed and pretend to be asleep. When her husband came home he would call to them and try to turn on the lights, but eventually would go to sleep.

C. Factors Affecting A Woman's Decision to Leave

Even though many battered women find living in constant fear of another violent episode intolerable, they have difficulty changing the situation. Trying to stop the abuse while maintaining a relationship with the abuser is rare and would probably require that the abuser admit that he has a problem and seek help. One of the surest ways for ending the battering is for the woman to leave the abuser. Even this may not always work; there were several instances in the sample in which women who had left their spouses were subsequently attacked. This section examines attempts women had made to leave their spouses or stop the violence and discusses factors that keep women in abusive relationships. An understanding of

the obstacles to leaving is important to understanding the kinds of services battered women need.

Most of the women (85 percent) had tried at some point to discuss the problem of violence with their spouse. In 8 percent of the cases, women reported that the abuse became worse as a result of efforts to discuss it. Although one-quarter of the men (30) promised the abuse would abate as a result of discussions, only one man reportedly did stop.

All but 11 percent of the women had discussed the problem with a third party. Of the women who had talked to another person, most (78 percent) had discussed it with a friend or relative, 28 percent with a friend or a relative of their spouse, 22 percent with a counselor, 17 percent with a doctor, nurse, or social worker, and 13 percent with a member of the clergy. Most women (72 percent) found discussing the problem helpful, although some found it hard to convince others that there was a problem, or received unhelpful advice such as that they should try being "sweeter" to their spouses.

Seventy-two percent of the women in the sample had left their spouses at some point (often on more than one occasion), for at least one night, and then returned. Women typically stayed with friends or relatives. The most frequent reason for returning, cited by 44 percent of the women, was

that they had nowhere else to go, or that the apartment was theirs. In 34 percent of the cases, the women said that they had returned because their spouses promised to reform. A cycle of apologies and contrite, loving behavior on the part of the men after a violent incident has been documented by Walker (1979), and it was supported by evidence from interviews in this sample. One woman explaining why she returned said, "He'd woo me." Another reported that her husband would try to win back her affection with gifts and sex. One-fourth of the women said that they returned for the sake of the children. In 23 percent of the cases the women said they returned because they loved their spouses. A small proportion (3 percent) said that they returned because they were afraid of what their spouses might do if they did not [5]. In all but one instance, the battering resumed after the women returned.

To study factors which kept these women in abusive relationships, cases of women who had left the batterer more than three months before the initial interview (that is, women who were assumed to have left the battering relationship permanently) were examined in order to ascertain what factors influenced the length of the abuse which they endured before leaving (these women constituted 55 percent of the sample).

Financial dependence upon the spouse was found to be one of the determinants of the length of time women remained in abusive relationships. Women who reported that

they had no income of their own from jobs or public assistance while with their spouses, or no control over their own income, remained in abusive relationships significantly longer than those who did have financial resources (see Table 3.2). Nonetheless, several women who held full or part-time jobs were still living with batterers. This may perhaps be explained by the fact that even women who have some ability to support themselves often make financial sacrifices when they leave their spouses; 66 percent of the women who were not living with their spouses at the time of the first interview reported that they had worse economic situations at the time of the study than they had had in their childhoods. In contrast, only 24 percent of the women who were still living with their spouses reported they were currently worse off than they had been in their childhoods.

Table 3.2 also suggests that the presence of children made women more reluctant to leave their spouses. Those women who did not have children remained in abusive relationships for a significantly shorter period of time than the women with children. The hold that children have on keeping their mother in an abuse situation probably reflects primarily financial dependence, but also may reflect the value women place on having a father in the home.

TABLE 3.2
FACTORS AFFECTING LENGTH OF TIME WOMEN REMAINED IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS*

	<u>In Relationship Less Than 1 year</u>	<u>In Relationship 1-5 years</u>	<u>In Relationship More Than 5 years</u>	
<u>Income</u> ^a				
Some personal income	41%	47	12	100% (n=17)
No personal income	16%	47	37	100% (n=43)
<u>Children</u> ^a				
Never had children	60%	30	10	100% (n=10)
Had children	16%	50	34	100% (n=50)
<u>Married to Spouse</u> ^a				
Yes	16%	45	39	100% (n=38)
No	36%	50	14	100% (n=22)
<u>Exposed to Violence as a Child</u> ^b				
Yes	26%	29	45	100% (n=31)
No	21%	66	14	100% (n=29)

*Based upon those women in the sample who had been living apart from their spouses for more than three months.

^ap < .01 The differences between the groups are statistically significant. There is less than one chance in 100 that these differences would happen by chance.

^bp < .10 The differences between the groups are marginally significant. There is less than one chance in 10 that it would happen by chance.

Several women expressed their feelings about the importance of having a man in their life and their fears of being alone. For example, one woman said that it was helpful for her to discuss the hitting with her friends because she had been "afraid to be without a boyfriend" and they gave her "the courage to break up with him."

Some women feared the social consequences of ending a marriage. For example, one legally married woman reported, "I had to live with him because I didn't want to appear a failure." As Table 3.2 shows, women who were legally married to the batterer endured the abuse for a significantly longer period of time before leaving the relationship than did unmarried women.

Finally, Table 3.2 suggests that childhood exposure to domestic violence increased women's tolerance of abuse or reduced their confidence in attempting a life independent of their spouses. Women who had either observed or experienced violence as children remained in battering relationships for longer periods of time before leaving than those with no childhood exposure to violence (see Table 3.2).

Self-esteem did not appear to be a factor in women's decisions to leave the battering relationships. A 20-point self-esteem test was administered to the women in the study [6]. There were no significant differences, indeed only

slight variations, between the self-esteem scores of women who were living with their spouses (mean score = 12.4), the scores of women who separated from their spouses for less than three months (mean score = 11.5) and the scores of women who had permanently left the abusive relationship (mean score = 13.2). If these findings were to be replicated in other samples it would suggest that women's abilities to extricate themselves from the battering relationship were not necessarily related to low self-esteem, as Walker's learned helplessness theory would suggest.

D. Plans for the Future

The women were asked what, if any, specific plans they had for the future. The two most frequent responses given by the women were that they wanted to find a job (54 percent) or they wanted to further their education (33 percent) [7]. In many cases the impetus for acquiring more education appeared to be a desire to improve their employment qualifications so that they could become more independent of their spouses. For example, one woman, although still living with her husband at the time of the first interview, reported that she was enrolled in college and working toward "my degree and independence."

Some of the other specific plans for the future cited by the women were that they wanted to move away (18 percent), they wanted to secure a separation or divorce (7 percent), or they wanted to remarry or find a new boyfriend (6 percent). In 20 percent of the interviews the women did not articulate any specific goals.

To implement the plans for economic self-sufficiency that many women had, they relied on help from services and government institutions. Their experiences with these organizations is the subject of the next chapter.

FOOTNOTES - Chapter III

1. Only 55 percent of the women were sufficiently knowledgeable about their spouses' childhoods to respond to these questions. Because it is more probable that a woman would be aware that violence had occurred in her spouse's family than to be aware that violence had not occurred, it is likely that answers of the 55 percent of the women who responded inflate the actual number of men who experienced abuse in their families as children. Therefore, a range was used. The lower boundary of this range is obtained by dividing the number of affirmative responses by the total number of cases in the sample (probably an underestimate). The upper boundary of the range is obtained by dividing the number of affirmative responses by the number of cases in which the women claimed to know whether or not violence had occurred (probably an overestimate.)
2. The variation here between Roy's findings and this study's findings can probably be attributed to class differences between the two samples. Roy's study contained more middle class women than did this study, which consists predominantly of low income and working class women (who have a more extensive history of working outside the home).
3. This question was only asked on the follow-up and modified interviews N=87.
4. This question was only asked on the follow-up and modified interviews N=86.
5. The percentages add up to more than 100 percent because some women gave more than one reason for returning.
6. The self-esteem test was a modified version of a self-esteem scale developed by Berzins, Welling, and Wetter (1977).
7. The women were allowed to give more than one response to this question. In 21 percent of the cases the women said that they both wanted to get a job and further their schooling.

IV

WOMEN'S USE OF SERVICES

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and

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This chapter discusses services used by the sample of battered women surveyed in the study. The women used the following six categories of services: police, medical, legal, counseling, shelter, and public assistance. (For a breakdown of how many women in the sample used each type of service, see Table 4.1.) For each type of service this chapter: 1) describes the characteristics and availability of the service, and 2) analyzes how it was used by the women in the sample.

Because the women in the survey were mainly recruited from the courts (indicating that they had already gone outside their families for help), compared to the sample in the Harris survey cited in Section 2 the sample in this study had a much higher proportion of service users. However, since the purpose of this study was not to estimate how many women use services but rather how such services are used, the nonrepresentative composition of the sample does not diminish the usefulness of the findings.

TABLE 4.1
PERCENTAGE OF BATTERED WOMEN IN THE SAMPLE WHO USED
EACH TYPE OF SERVICE
(N=112)

1. <u>Police Services</u>	88%
2. <u>Medical Services</u>	70
3. <u>Legal Services</u>	
Criminal Court	45
Family Court	54
Legal Services	30*
4. <u>Counseling and Shelter Services</u>	
Crisis Counseling	37*
Marriage Counseling	11
Professional Counselor, Psychologist, Psychiatrist	28
Shelters	7
5. <u>Public Assistance</u>	75**

*Questions regarding legal services and crisis counseling were only included on the follow-up interviews (n=67).

**Questions regarding public assistance were only included on the modified and follow-up interviews (n=87).

As Table 4.1 shows, the service used most by the women in the sample (perhaps reflecting the way the women were identified for the study) were police, legal, and medical services. Shelters were the least used service, perhaps reflecting the shortage of shelters in the city. A majority of the clients had tried counseling, and about one-third depended on public assistance at some time.

A. Police Services

Background. Police are called upon in cases of spouse abuse for several reasons. They are one of the few agencies that respond on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week -- and many incidents of spouse abuse occur on weekends or in the evenings (Gelles, 1977). Police service is free. Also, when a person fears for his or her safety, the natural response is to call the police. Police are called not only after an assault has occurred, but often are also called upon to prevent violence from occurring. Bard (1974) found that in 64 percent of the "domestic disturbance" calls he studied, neither party charged that an assault had occurred.

Police policies and training have frequently encouraged an arrest avoidance strategy, treating assaults between husbands and wives differently from other assaults (Fields, 1978). In some jurisdictions, police have been specifically directed not to arrest in these cases (Martin,

1976), or even not to respond (e.g., "call screening," described by Bannon, 1975). Some departments have attempted to mediate "family conflicts" regardless of whether an assault has occurred, or to dissuade the victim from pressing charges, reminding her of the economic price she will pay if her husband goes to jail (Fields, 1978).

The arrest avoidance practices of many police departments have been cited as a factor contributing to the continuance of spouse abuse. According to Marjory Fields, an attorney who has represented many battered women in divorce actions, "...the non-arrest, mediation, and adjustment practiced by police officers has a negative effect on the victim seeking help or escape and encourages the offender to continue his violence" (Fields, 1978:248).

In many jurisdictions, notably in New York City, police handling of spouse abuse has changed. Rather than trying to mediate domestic disputes, professional criminal justice publications counsel police departments to treat domestic violence like stranger-to-stranger violence. One example is the International Association of Chiefs of Police training key #245 that stresses that a beating "is foremost an assault -- a crime that must be investigated" and that a policy of arrest, when the elements of the offense are present, promotes the well-being of the victim. Another example is the Police Executive Research Forum guide for police departments on

dealing with domestic violence. This guide recommends that wife beating cases be handled like stranger-to-stranger assault cases using similar criteria for arrest and prosecution (Loving, 1980).

In New York City, policy changes were hastened by a suit brought in 1977 against the police department by 12 women who were assaulted by their husbands and denied police protection. On June 26, 1978, the Police Department agreed to a consent judgment in Bruno vs. Codd; the terms of the settlement took effect on October 1, 1978, and were spelled out operationally in the New York City Police Department's Operations Order 89.

The most important provision of the order is that the officer must make an arrest if there is probable cause to believe a felony has been committed. He may not attempt to mediate or reconcile the parties, and he may not leave the decision as to whether or not an arrest should be made to the injured party; he must arrest. (In misdemeanor cases, the officer and the injured party have greater discretion. Officers are instructed in misdemeanor cases not to refrain from making an arrest solely because: the parties are married or the aggrieved spouse has no Order of Protection; or the officer prefers to reconcile the parties against the aggrieved spouse's wishes for an arrest; or the aggrieved spouse has a

CONTINUED

1 OF 2

1976), or even not to respond (e.g., "call screening," described by Bannon, 1975). Some departments have attempted to mediate "family conflicts" regardless of whether an assault has occurred, or to dissuade the victim from pressing charges, reminding her of the economic price she will pay if her husband goes to jail (Fields, 1978).

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case pending in either family or criminal court; or the aggrieved spouse intends to initiate family court proceedings.)

In addition, even if the act the officer is called to investigate would not of itself constitute a violation of the penal law, the officer must arrest if: 1) the Order of Protection has been violated and 2) the party with the Order of Protection desires that an arrest be made. Other procedures are also specified. The officer must follow normal procedures for locating the attacker if that person is not on the premises when the police arrive; must help the victim secure medical assistance if necessary; must stay on the premises until satisfied that the danger of recurrence of the incident has passed; and must explain the criminal court/family court choice. Thus, police in New York City must now respond to domestic violence as they do to other assaults. If grounds for an arrest are present, an arrest should be made; if the assailant is gone by the time the police arrive, it should be expected that he will be sought as in any other crime; if no grounds for arrest exist, the victim should be told what options are available.

Although women in this study were interviewed after Operations Order 89 went into effect, because of the retrospective nature of the interviews, approximately half of the experiences with the police that they described preceded the order.

Use of Police Services. The police department was the service most frequently used by women in the sample. Eighty-eight percent of respondents reported that they or someone else had called the police to prevent or stop a battering incident on at least one occasion, and 19 percent reported that the police had been called nine or more times.

Harris et al. (1979:36) reported that use of police services was greatest among economically disadvantaged battered women. As Table 4.2 shows, in this study as well, the police were called most by women with the least resources. Calls to the police were most common among women who were members of ethnic minorities, who did not have a high school diploma, whose spouses earned less than \$10,000 per year, who had no personal incomes, who had children, and who had sought medical attention at least once.

In order to assess the response of the police to battered women, respondents were asked to recount their most recent experience with the police. Figure 4.1 summarizes these responses.

Cases in the sample obtained through the criminal or family court were excluded from this analysis because the frequency of arrests among cases received through the courts was by definition higher than among other cases in which women had had contact with the police. The analysis is based on

TABLE 4.2

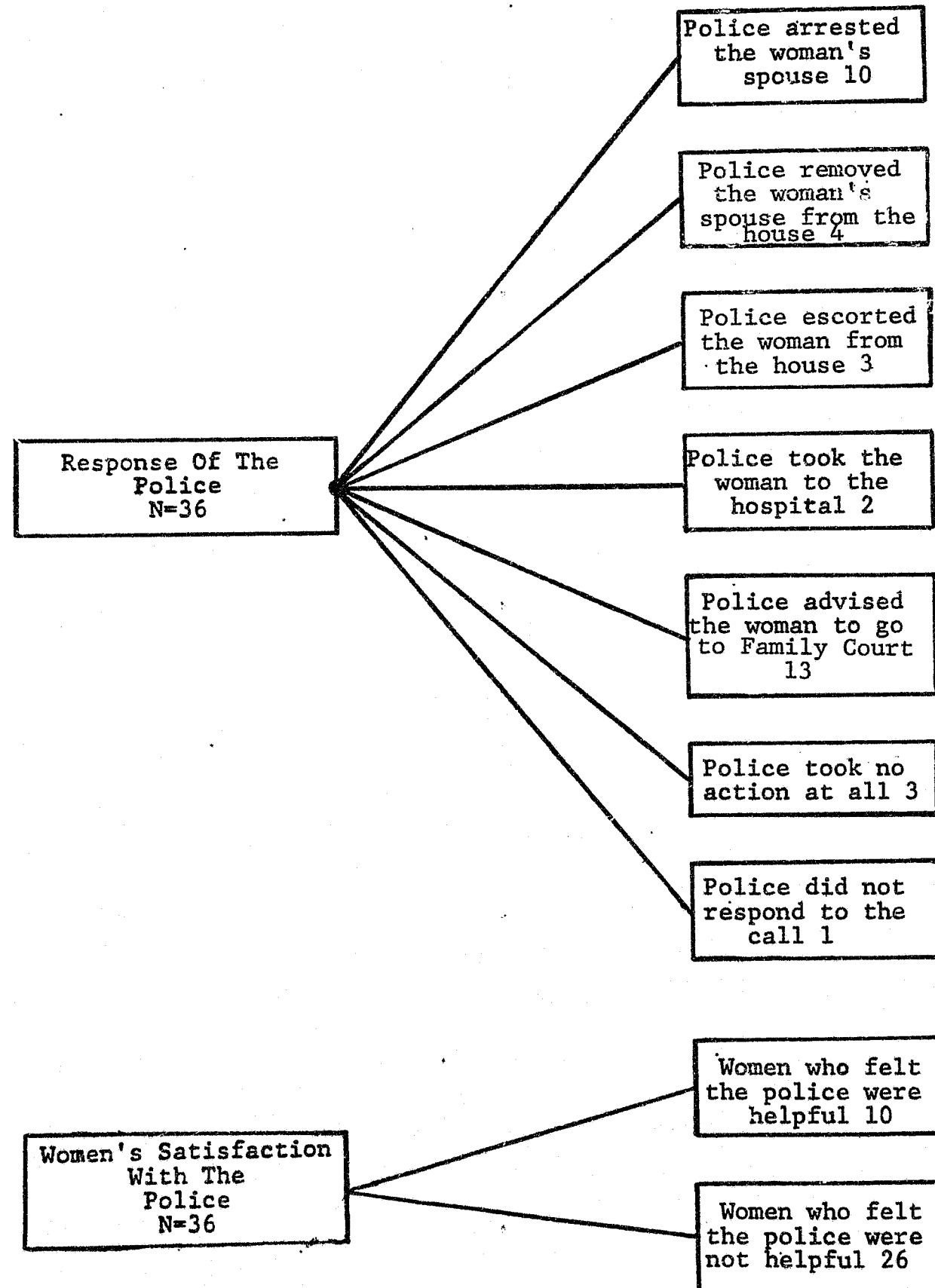
FACTORS RELATED TO THE NUMBER OF TIMES THE POLICE HAD BEEN CALLED

	Percentage Of Women Who Had Called The Police At Least Once	Kendall's Tau C*
1. Ethnicity		
White women (n=40)	80	.31 (p=.001)
Non-white women (n=72)	92	
2. Education		
Women with less than a high school education (n=38)	97	-.27 (p<.005)
Women with at least a high school education (n=74)	82	
3. Spouse's Income		
Women whose spouses earned less than \$10,000 annually (n=46)	93	-.16 (p<.10)
Women whose spouses earned more than \$10,000 annually (n=42)	76	
4. Women's Income		
Women with no personal income (n=82)	91	.13 (p<.01)
Women with some personal income (n=30)	77	
5. Children		
Women who had no children (n=17)	65	.19 (p<.01)
Women who had at least one child (n=95)	92	
6. Medical Attention		
Women who had never sought medical attention (n=34)	76	.25 (p<.001)
Women who had sought medical attention at least once (n=78)	92	

*Although the figures presented in this table dichotomize the sample into women who called the police at least once versus those who never called the police, the Kendall's Taus are computed using the range of calls made to the police--from 0 to 9 or more times.

FIGURE 4.1

SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSE OF THE POLICE AND THE WOMEN'S SATISFACTION WITH THE POLICE RESPONSE



the most recent experience with the police of 36 women not referred to this study through the courts.

in evaluating police response to domestic violence, the data in this study are flawed by the timing of the study, since it covered a period before and after police policy changed regarding the handling of wife abuse cases. This flaw, however, allows a preliminary look at the effectiveness of Operations Order 89, discussed in the background section. The data are first presented aggregated, and then separated according to whether the interaction with the police occurred before or after the issuance of Operations Order #89.

Police have been criticized for giving domestic disturbance calls low priority in response time. In the present study, the time it took the police to respond varied considerably. Of 21 women who themselves had called the police, eight reported that the police had arrived promptly, within 20 minutes. Another eight reported that the police had arrived between 20 minutes and one hour after the call, two reported that it took the police more than one hour to arrive, and one stated that the police had not come at all. (Two respondents could not remember.)

Although most of the women wanted the police to exert some form of authority, this did not always mean that they wanted them to use their power of arrest. In 40 percent of

instances in which police were summoned, the women requested that they arrest their spouses; in 34 percent of the cases, the women requested that the police evict their spouses from the residence, but did not request an arrest; in another 11 percent of the cases, the women requested that the police reprimand their spouses. In one case, the woman asked the assistance of the police to safely escort her and her child from the house. (Three of the women did not make specific requests of the police.)

Police made arrests in 28 percent of the 36 cases. Police were more likely to make an arrest when it was requested by the woman. When requests were made, spouses were arrested 57 percent of the time. In cases where the police did not make an arrest, they removed the woman's spouse from the home (11 percent); escorted her out of the house (8 percent); took her to the hospital (6 percent); advised the woman to resolve the problem by means other than police action (36 percent); or took no action at all (11 percent). In most of the cases in which the police gave advice, they advised the woman to go to family court. Yet in four of the cases in which women were advised to go to family court, the women were neither married to the abuser nor had had children with him, and therefore their cases did not fall under the family court's jurisdiction.

Because not enough is known about the circumstances which police encountered when they arrived at the scenes, it is difficult to judge the appropriateness of their responses. What is clear, however, is that more than two-thirds of the women did not perceive the police as responsive to their needs.

Women were most likely to believe that the police were helpful when an arrest was made. Six of the ten women whose spouses were arrested felt the police response had been helpful and both of the women whose spouses were arrested without their specific request reported this response as helpful. The four women whose spouses were arrested but who were dissatisfied with the police response, did not appear to be dissatisfied with the arrest, but with the attitudes of the arresting officers. According to one of these women, who had had to convince the police to make the arrest, "They [the police] don't want to be bothered. If you don't know the law you won't get anything done." In the remainder of the cases - the 26 in which the police did not make an arrest - the women were largely dissatisfied with the police, even when the police had carried out their requests for the spouses' removal. Only four (15 percent) of these 26 women reported that the police were helpful.

Police were not always responsive to the medical needs of the women. In four (15 percent) of the 26 cases in which a woman reported that she was injured, the police offered to take her to the hospital. One woman reported that she had had to insist before the police took her to the hospital, and another woman said that although she insisted, the police refused to take her to the hospital. In another case the woman reported that the police had never offered to take her to the hospital on the numerous occasions when she had called, "not even when they would see me bleeding."

The interviews suggest that many police officers believe that spouse abuse is not a police or a criminal matter. This attitude is reflected not only by the fact that the police advised more than one-third of the women to resolve the problem by means other than police action, but also by numerous statements which were recounted by the women who were interviewed. One woman, who was advised to go to family court, was told by an officer, "This is not something we handle." Another woman, who had wanted the police to reprimand her husband, was reportedly told, "This is his [her husband's] house. He can do anything he wants to do." Another woman, after being told to go to family court, asked the officer if he intended to leave her in her house to be beaten. According to this woman, the officer responded, "Yes." Another woman reported that the police had come to her door on five occasions. Apparently her neighbors had heard the noise and

called the police, because she herself had never called them. She said, "I did not call. I was afraid to call. I knew he [her husband] would kill me if I called the police. When they came he would meet them at the door and say nothing was wrong and they would go away."

What has been the impact of the Police Department's Operations Order 89, which instructed the police to treat spouse abuse cases as they would treat other criminal matters? Of the eight women who requested an arrest before Operations Order 89 went into effect, only three had their requests filled. In contrast, of the six women who requested an arrest after Operations Order 89 was implemented, five had their requests filled by the police. Although these figures are small, they suggest that Operations Order 89 has improved the Police Department's response to battered women's requests for arrests. Nonetheless, with regard to the other requests that the women made of the police (such as to remove or reprimand their spouses) there was no discernible change in either the response or the attitude of the police. Overall, six (35 percent) of the 17 women who had contact with the police prior to Operations Order 89 felt that the police were helpful in contrast to four (25 percent) of the 16 women who had contact with the police after Operations Order 89 was implemented. This finding is not surprising, however, because the process of changing attitudes is both slow and incremental. It seems possible that as new officers join the police force and as

training of these officers concerning the provisions of Operations Order 89 continues, the response of the police to battered women may improve. Although not documented by the study, the experience of VSA case workers in the field is that increasingly police are responsive to spousal violence.

B. Medical Services

Background. The medical profession is another service likely to attend to battered women in crisis. Unlike police, however, medical personnel do not necessarily have to confront the source of the crisis. Much of the medical literature on spouse abuse focuses upon the problem of identifying battered women when they seek medical treatment. A Yale study found that emergency room physicians identified only one in 35 female patients as battered women, whereas the true proportion was one in four (Stark, Flitcraft, and Frazier, 1979). The study also found that certain patterns of injuries were characteristic of spouse abuse cases and suggested that a knowledge of such patterns could serve to alert physicians to the origin of women's injuries.

Most hospitals in New York City have social workers who provide short-term counseling or referrals for in-patients. Yet most battered women are treated in emergency rooms and released, and therefore are much less likely to come in contact with hospital social workers. In 1977 the City of

New York established 24-hour Borough Crisis Centers in the emergency rooms of four municipal hospitals. These Centers, which receive referrals from hospital medical staff and from other social service agencies, provide services to battered women, rape victims, child abuse victims, and patients in other crisis situations. The counseling for battered women is expected to help them examine their situations and options. In addition, battered women may receive, through the Centers' referrals, legal services or assistance in negotiating the welfare system or the criminal justice system. During their first 16 months of operation, 49 percent of 3,299 Borough Crisis Center clients were battered women.

Use of the Service. Seventy percent of the women in the sample had sought medical assistance at least once. Many (46 percent) had sought medical assistance more than once, and 11 percent had been treated nine or more times. Emergency room treatment was the most frequently sought form of medical assistance (used by 62 percent of women in the sample). A smaller percent had had contact with private doctors (24 percent) or clinics (10 percent).

The women in this sample were not reluctant to identify themselves as battered. Seventy-two percent of the women reportedly identified themselves as battered to medical staff (in most instances, the doctor) [1]. Among women who did not identify themselves as battered, the most

frequent reason cited was that the woman was embarrassed or afraid of what her spouse would do if he found out. Another reason was that the woman's spouse had accompanied her to the hospital and she had had no opportunity to inform the medical personnel away from his presence. This finding would suggest that in any case in which medical personnel suspect that a woman has been battered and her spouse is present, attempts should be made to speak with the woman privately.

Even though most women identified themselves as battered to medical staff, many did not get offers of assistance. Of the women who came into contact with medical services, 21 percent reported that medical personnel had spoken with them about obtaining assistance for the battering problem. Among those women who had told medical staff of the abuse, only 29 percent reported receiving offers of assistance or referrals. (This figure may over-represent the proportion of women offered assistance by medical staff. Six of the 16 women in the sample who told staff of the abuse and were offered help were in a sense "self-selected." They were obtained in the sample through a Borough Crisis Center and had therefore by definition been offered assistance.)

The reasons that medical staff do not provide extra-medical assistance and referrals to battered spouses may stem in part from the attitudes of medical staff toward spouse abuse. As part of the study, interviews were conducted

with the director of an emergency room, a physician, and an emergency room nurse. The nurse expressed the opinion that, "...our responsibilities are medical." She also stated that some medical staff perceive battered women to be taking "needed resources from people who need it."

Another reason for the low rate of offers of assistance from medical personnel may be that they simply do not know how to respond to battered women and what services are available to help them. The Governor's Task Force on Domestic Violence (1980) has suggested that an emergency room treatment protocol should be established for battered women in order to insure an appropriate response from medical personnel. The findings of this study support this suggestion. The establishment of such a medical protocol could bridge an important gap between medical and social services.

C. Legal Services

The data on courts indicate that they can be effective in aiding battered women, although there are obstacles that sometimes prevent women from using them. Some battered women do not have a clear idea of what they want from court or are ambivalent about the action that they wish the court to take. Others may change their minds; some women may withdraw their complaints because tempers have cooled or their husbands have apologized, promised to reform, or intimidated

their wives. Even when women do have a clear idea of what they want from the courts they frequently encounter resistance from court officials who believe that domestic violence is a private matter in which the courts should not intervene or who doubt that the women will persist in their complaints.

Criminal Court

Background. In New York State from 1962 until September 1977, cases of assault between married couples were by law heard first by the family court, which could, in limited situations, refer them to criminal court [2]. Under current law a married victim has the option of pursuing an abuse case either through criminal or family court. Common law or unmarried victims have access only to criminal court, unless they have children and the batterer is the father [3].

Once a case is in criminal court, judges may attach conditions to pretrial release so that victims are not forced to live with their assailants pending trial for assault or harassment (Fields, 1978). A Temporary Order of Protection may be granted to victims at arraignment and may be extended at subsequent court dates. The Temporary Order of Protection may order the assailant away from the house, or if the victim has left, may order the assailant to leave the victim alone while the case is pending; it may also (but usually does not) spell out temporary custody and visitation arrangements. In

practice, however, the frequency with which such orders are granted varies greatly from borough to borough. Some prosecutors' offices see a problem in issuing such orders before a finding of guilt since the order imposes conditions on the defendant's behavior. In other boroughs, while the practice is to grant Orders of Protection, if the orders are violated, the court's response is rarely, if ever, to forfeit or alter the conditions of pre-trial release.

Upon conviction of assault in a spouse abuse case, the court may impose a variety of sentences including incarceration. The court may forgo sentencing a defendant and grant a conditional discharge under which a defendant must abide by conditions set by the court (such as staying away from his wife). If a defendant does not abide by the terms of the discharge, it may be revoked and another sentence imposed.

An alternative to prosecution is an Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal (ACD), in which the case against the defendant is dismissed in six months if the defendant has not been re-arrested and has abided by conditions set by the judge. Again these conditions may include an order to stay away from the complainant, to cease harassing her, and so forth. Despite these conditions, in practice it is unusual for judges to restore cases when defendants violate the conditions of a Conditional Discharge or an ACD.

The infrequent use of sanctions against spouse abusers by the courts has been criticized. Parnas reports:

...there is a tendency on the part of those in a position to respond to either ignore them [spouse abuse cases] altogether, or more usually, to respond in such a way as to get rid of such cases as quickly as possible. (Parnas 1973:734)

Critics contend that court officials regard spouse abuse cases as private matters in which the state ought not to intervene (e.g., Bannon, 1975; Smith, 1979), and as a result, sometimes neglect the plight and rights of battered women. Fields (1978) found in Cook County, Illinois, that prosecutors regarded husbands' attacks against wives as less serious than attacks against strangers; that charges brought against husbands were not related to the seriousness of the violence; and that prosecutors failed to engage in legal argument when judges dismissed complaints on the irrelevant grounds that divorce actions were pending.

Defenders of the court system counter that spouse abuse cases are not prosecuted like other cases because that is not what the victims want. Battered women, it is claimed, often change their minds and withdraw complaints after time has passed and perhaps after their spouses have been "taught a lesson." Even those who do not withdraw charges are characterized as not wanting the court to invoke sanctions against their husbands because they may rely on their husbands'

incomes, may feel guilty about being too hard on them, or may fear retaliation. Use of the courts to prosecute in such situations is seen by officials as wasteful at a time when courts are pressed for resources to deal with stranger-to-stranger crime.

Research conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera Institute, 1977) and VSA (Davis, Russell, and Kunreuther, 1980) apart from this study has focused on how criminal courts handle cases in which the defendant and victim have had a prior relationship. The majority of these cases are assaults between intimates: spouses, common-law spouses, ex-spouses, lovers and ex-lovers. This research shows that such victims are more likely to appear in court and more likely to be consulted by the prosecutor on what they want the outcome of the case to be than are victims in stranger-to-stranger cases. The data do support the impression that prior relationship cases are more likely to be dismissed and the defendant less likely to be incarcerated than in stranger-to-stranger cases.

Attitudes toward the prosecution of domestic violence cases are changing. A recent edition of Response to Violence in the Family (1981), published by the Center for Women Policy Studies, listed many jurisdictions which have developed special units or procedures for processing domestic violence cases. Data from the present

study help to shed some light on the issue of the responsiveness of court officials to battered women.

Use of the Service. Forty-five percent of the sample had been complainants against their spouses in criminal court. Compared to the sample as a whole, criminal court complainants were more often members of minority groups, less educated, more likely to have children, and more likely to have sought medical attention (see Table 4.3). Taken together, these findings suggest that battered women who end up in criminal court have fewer resources and more injuries than battered women as a whole.

The view that complainants in spouse abuse cases are likely to withdraw charges was not supported by the study. Among the 61 women whose spouses were arrested and who entered the criminal justice process, only 8 percent did not wish to file complaints. Among the 50 women who filed complaints in criminal court (in 11 cases women whose spouses had been arrested were referred to family court rather than criminal court), only 24 percent reported not following through on their intent to prosecute.

These results should be interpreted with caution. First, as discussed in the introduction, the sample is comprised largely of women who were successful in their efforts to leave their spouses. It is likely that such women would exhibit greater resolve to prosecute than other women. Second,

TABLE 4.3
FACTORS THAT DIFFERENTIATE WOMEN IN THE SAMPLE
WHO USED CRIMINAL COURT

	<u>Percent Who Used Criminal Court</u>	<u>Chi-square*</u>
1. <u>Ethnicity</u>		
White women (n=40)	20%	9.3 ^a
Non-White women (n=72)	51	
2. <u>Education</u>		
Women with less than a high school education (n=38)	66%	14.1 ^a
Women with more than a high school education (n=74)	27	
3. <u>Children</u>		
Women with no children (n=17)	18%	3.2 ^b
Women with children (n=95)	44	
4. <u>Medical Attention</u>		
Women who never sought medical attention (n=34)	21%	6.7 ^a
Women who had sought medical attention at least once (n=78)	49	

*Chi-square statistics computed with Yates' correction.

a. $p < .01$

b. $p < .10$

when criminal court complainants were asked about their persistence, they were not asked specifically whether they had ever failed to attend court or whether they had asked the prosecutor or court to reduce charges or not to impose sanctions on their husbands. If they had been asked such questions, some might have been shown to have been less persistent. Finally, only the perspective of the complainant was sought; court officials may have perceived complainants' intentions or actions differently than complainants portrayed them. Yet the data do suggest that the failure of battered spouses to cooperate in prosecuting their husbands may be overestimated by court officials.

Women who stated that they were resolute in their decision to prosecute differed from women who did not wish to press charges from the outset or who changed their minds later. The "persistent" women were more likely to have been injured repeatedly and to have had their spouses arrested previously (see Table 4.4).

Figure 4.2 suggests a mixed picture of the responsiveness of court officials to the cases of the battered women studied. These women reported lenient treatment of their cases. Ninety-three percent said that the judge had admonished their spouses verbally to stay away from them or not to bother them. (Such warnings are not, however, legally binding). The court seldom imposed sanctions on abusers;

TABLE 4.4

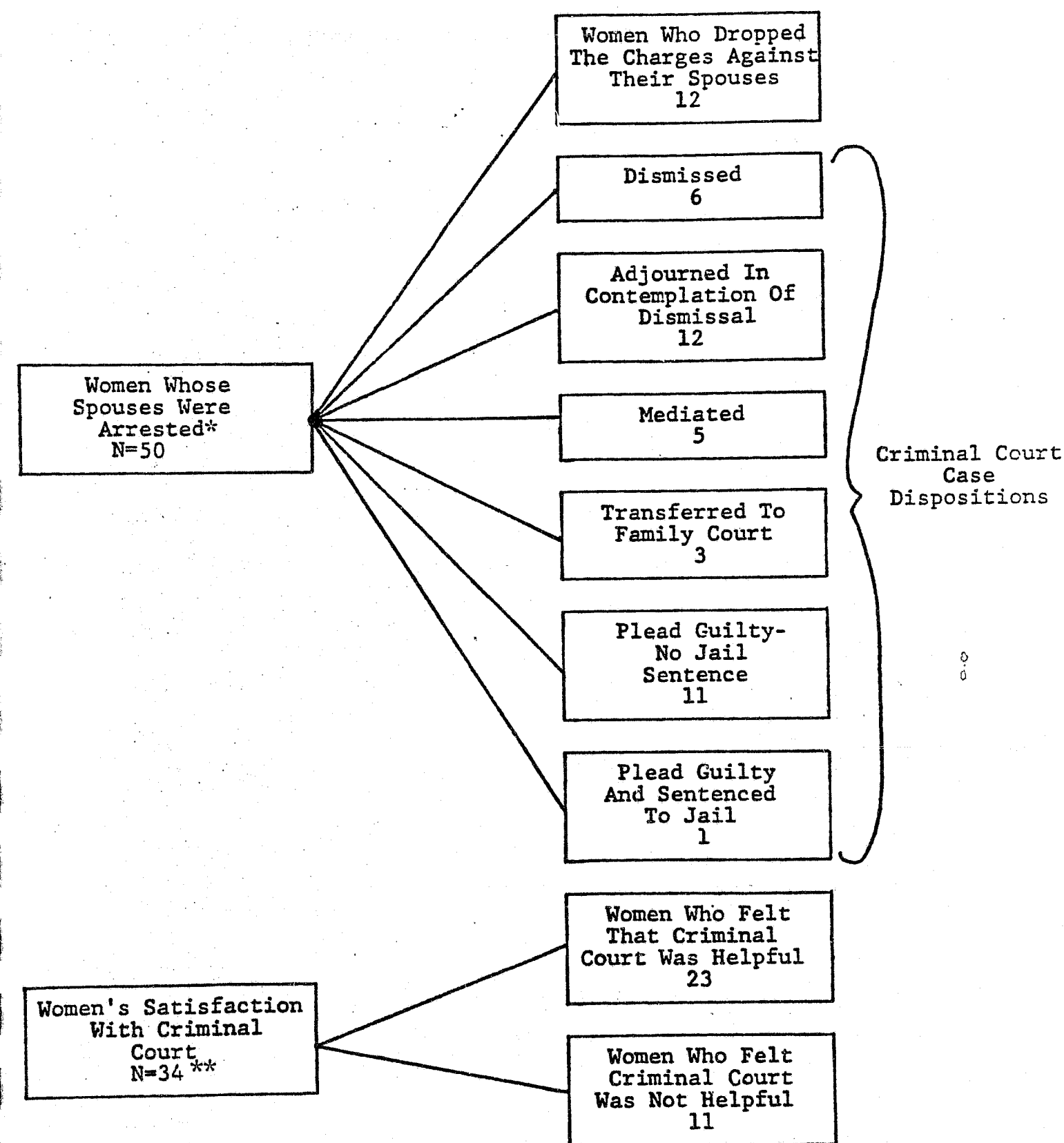
FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH A WOMAN'S DECISION TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH HER CRIMINAL COURT CASE

	Percent Of Women Who Followed Through With Their Criminal Court Cases	Kendall's Tau C
1. Medical Attention		
Women who had never sought medical attention (n=11)	55%	.25* (p=.04)
Women who had sought medical attention at least once (n=39)	82	
2. Number of Times Spouse Was Arrested		
Spouse arrested only once (n=35)	69%	.24** (p=.02)
Spouse arrested more than once (n=15)	93	

* Although the figures presented in this table dichotomize the sample into women who had sought medical attention at least once versus women who had never sought medical attention, the Kendall's Tau was computed using the whole range of number of times that women sought medical attention--from 0 to 9 or more times.

** Although the figures presented here dichotomize the sample into women whose spouses were arrested only once versus those whose spouses were arrested more than once, the Kendall's Tau was computed using the whole range of number of times that the spouses were arrested--from 1 to 9 or more times.

FIGURE 4.2
SUMMARY OF THE CRIMINAL COURT CASE DISPOSITIONS AND THE WOMEN'S SATISFACTION WITH THE COURT



* Excludes those women who pursued Family Court cases after their spouses were arrested.

** Responses of 4 women who followed through with Criminal Court cases were missing.

indeed, only one abuser was reported to have been sentenced to jail.

In part the leniency of the dispositions may reflect a reluctance among court officials to prosecute these cases, as observed by other authors (e.g. Parnas, 1973; Martin, 1976; Fields 1978). This impression was supported by a criminal court judge interviewed for the study, who said: "People involved in the judicial process give these [spouse abuse] cases low priority. Most court staff don't believe that this should be a court matter."

Despite the reluctance of some court officials to treat spouse abuse cases as serious, most of the women who followed through with their cases reported satisfaction with the system:

- 73 percent of the women who spoke to the prosecutor reported that the prosecutor had asked them what they wanted done in their case.
- 80 percent of the women who were asked by the prosecutor what they wanted from cases reported that the prosecutor attempted to get the case outcome they had requested; and 67 percent said the prosecutor succeeded in getting the desired case outcome.
- 73 percent of the women believed that taking their problem to the court had been helpful.

These statistics suggest that court officials were responsive to the women's wishes and that although dispositions in spouse abuse cases appear lenient, prosecutors and judges are not necessarily unresponsive to battered women.

The data suggest that there are many instances in which the courts do not harshly sentence an abusive spouse but nevertheless their intervention improves the situation. Even though an abuser's case is dismissed or he is not incarcerated, the threat of prosecution may cause the abuser to stop his assaults or seek help to control his violence; or the victim may take advantage of the time the assailant is in custody pending arraignment to escape and move to another location. Court officials thus should realize that women who decide to drop charges or are reluctant to have their husbands incarcerated may nonetheless benefit from filing charges in court. For instance, in some cases the woman's court action apparently deterred her spouse from battering her, at least temporarily. Forty-seven percent of the women reported that their spouses did not bother them again after their cases were disposed. Several of the women who reported a cessation of violence expressed the belief that the threat of sanctions was the reason. One woman said, "After spending a day in jail he sees he can get in trouble and pay for it. It taught him that I'll go to the police next time."

It may be, however, that a particular characteristic of this sample explains both why many of these women were not subsequently bothered by their spouses and why many found taking a case to court helpful. Eighty-nine percent of the women who followed through with their cases had moved out. Taking a case to court may be most effective when women have made a decision to sever ties with their spouses; such women may experience less ambivalence about pressing charges, may be taken more seriously by court officials and may be less obvious targets for retaliation by angry spouses.

Despite their efforts through the courts, and even though only 11 percent remained with their spouses, more than half (53 percent) of the 38 women who followed through with criminal court cases were bothered again by their spouses. According to one woman,

It [taking the case to court] made it worse. After he didn't get locked up the first time, he realized they'd never lock him up. The first time he went to court he was scared. After that, when I threatened to call the police he'd laugh and beat me up.

Another woman said,

They told him if he did it again he would go to jail. When we came back again they acted like they had no record of it.

A judge interviewed for the study stated that, "We don't have the kinds of help or services these [spouse abuse] cases need." The data from this study suggest that this judge is, to some extent, correct. An ability to sever the

relationship with the batterer appeared to be an important characteristic of most of those women who successfully pursued criminal court cases. The courts, however, are not designed to help a woman leave her spouse (eg., they do not provide relocation services or civil legal services for custody and support).

The data also suggest, though, that the courts can, and to some extent do, provide an important service to some battered women. The high level of satisfaction with the courts among some women and the abatement of violence in certain cases suggest that the criminal courts can be effective in deterring violence without invoking harsh penalties. The challenge is to determine for which women and under which conditions this is true.

Family Court

Background. The New York State family court system was created in 1962 to deal with several types of situations, one of which is "family offense" proceedings. Among the purposes of family offense proceedings is to provide "practical help" to wives and other family members who suffer from family offenses. In order to initiate a family offense proceeding the woman involved must be married to the batterer. Only civil procedures apply and

all records of family court proceedings are sealed.

The family court system contains two components: the Probation Department and the family court. The functions of probation include: 1) determining which clients do not belong under the family court jurisdiction; 2) explaining the process of family court; and 3) in some cases, counseling the parties. Family court rules authorize probation to attempt through conciliation and agreement to "adjust" a case before a petition for a hearing before a family court judge is filed.

Among the family court's powers is the issuance of Orders of Protection that provide that one spouse shall not assault, attempt to assault, menace, recklessly endanger or harass the other (Woods, 1978). In addition, it can award custody of the children; order support payments for children; work out arrangements for visitation with children; or order the abuser to move out of the house, to participate in educational programs (such as counseling), and to stay away from the home, the victim, or the children. An Order of Protection can be granted after a hearing before a family court judge and last for up to one year. (As in criminal court, these provisions may also be contained in a Temporary Order of Protection, which can be granted in the absence of the woman's spouse until the time of the hearing.)

Use of the Service. Sixty-one of the 112 women in the sample had been to family court at least once in an effort to end the violence in their relationships. The women using family court had more resources, better education, and spouses with higher salaries than women using the criminal court. But like other women who used services (compared to those who did not), they were more likely to be minorities and to have children living with them. Not surprisingly, 90 percent of the women who had had cases in the family court reported being legally married to the batterers.

Three-fourths of the 61 women who had had experiences with the family court had been there more than once. A previous study of the Manhattan Family Court found that 30 percent of the women studied had been in court for at least one prior case (Leeds, 1978).

When a battered woman goes to family court for an Order of Protection, typically she first goes to a clerk's office so that the court can determine the nature of any past contacts she has had with family court. Next, she is interviewed by a probation officer. Legally, a battered woman has the right to bypass probation although she may not be aware of this right. If it is determined that her case will be handled by probation, the probation officer may schedule an appointment with her husband or refer her to counseling. If she decides to bypass probation she proceeds to the petition

There are several dispositional alternatives available to judges who preside over family court hearings. These include dismissing the petition if the allegations are not established, suspending judgment (for up to six months), placing the offender on probation (for up to one year), and issuing an Order of Protection. The court may order a batterer to participate in an educational program as a condition of probation or in connection with an Order of Protection. The predominant response of judges for cases in the study was to issue an Order of Protection; 83 percent of the women who appeared on their court date received Orders of Protection. Although a judge interviewed for the study stated, "It is good to use the court and counseling together because the court has the power to enforce that which counseling recommends," none of the cases in the study was referred to counseling.

Fifty-nine percent of the women reported violations of their Orders of Protection. The rate of violations in family court was roughly comparable to the 53 percent rate reported for criminal court cases. As in criminal court, family court proceedings appeared to deter further violence by the threat of future court actions. For example, one woman said, "He was afraid of being arrested and put in jail." Another woman stated, "Before the Order of Protection he acted worse. Now he's afraid of the Order of Protection." Of course, the Order of Protection was not always effective in

ending violence. One woman reported, "he stopped for a while but then started up." Another woman reported, "He still hit me, and he was very smug because family court wouldn't do anything." As was true of women involved in criminal court cases, women with family court cases who lived apart from the abuser were least likely to experience continued difficulties. Six of seven women who were living with their spouses when they had cases in family court reported that their Orders of Protection were violated. Among the 32 women who did not live with their spouses, 16 reported violations. Thus, taking a case to either family or criminal court appeared to be most effective when the woman was not living with her spouse.

Legal Services for Divorce or Permanent Separation

Battered women legally married to their spouses who want to permanently separate from or divorce them should seek the assistance of lawyers. Twenty of the women in the sample had contacted lawyers. In 15 of the cases, women had sought low cost or free legal help through South Brooklyn Legal Services or Mobilization for Youth. Satisfaction with legal services was high; 77 percent of women who used them reported that the service was helpful.

One woman in the sample used legal services in a particularly creative way. The woman, who was hit by her husband approximately once every four months for eleven years,

sought help from a lawyer to draw up a contract. The agreement, signed by both the woman and her husband, stated that she would perform household duties as long as he did not hit her. If he hit her, she and the children would leave. Although her husband verbally abused her, he did not hit her after the contract was signed.

D. Counseling

Background. Battered women may seek professional counseling to serve one of several purposes. They may seek short-term, or "crisis" counseling when they have decided to leave their spouses in order to get psychological support during the period of separation and to find out about programs to help them reconstruct their lives. They may go with their spouses to a marriage counselor to find more constructive ways in which to relate to each other and to reduce the violence. Or they may seek therapy on a long-term basis to resolve problems that led to or stem from the abuse.

Use of the Service. People often turn to friends and relatives to receive the types of assistance available through counseling. As documented in Section 3, 78 percent of the women in the sample who had discussed the battering problems with others had spoken with friends or relatives. This figure may have been higher than the true frequency with which battered women consult friends and relatives because women who

agreed to be interviewed for this study may be less inhibited about discussing the battering problem than battered women in general. Although the majority (72 percent) found it helpful to discuss the problem with another party, friends and relatives were not always responsive to the women's problems. A few women reported that when they tried to discuss the problem, their confidant did not believe they were being hit. Others received advice concerning how to avoid "provoking" their spouse. Several women also reported that their friends and relatives grew weary of hearing about their problems.

Taken together, these findings suggest that professional counseling can be useful to battered women in several ways: the availability of an unbiased third party can encourage a woman who is too embarrassed to discuss the problem with friends or relatives to speak out; a hotline that advertises its services for battered women can reassure a woman that her story will be believed and that she is not the only one with such a problem; and a professional counselor can provide a woman with a perspective different from that of her friends and relatives, who may be too involved in the situation to provide useful advice. There are other advantages beyond those suggested by the findings; counselors can refer women or their husbands to services, let women know what options they have, and negotiate with services for them -- skills which most friends and relatives cannot provide. In addition, counselors

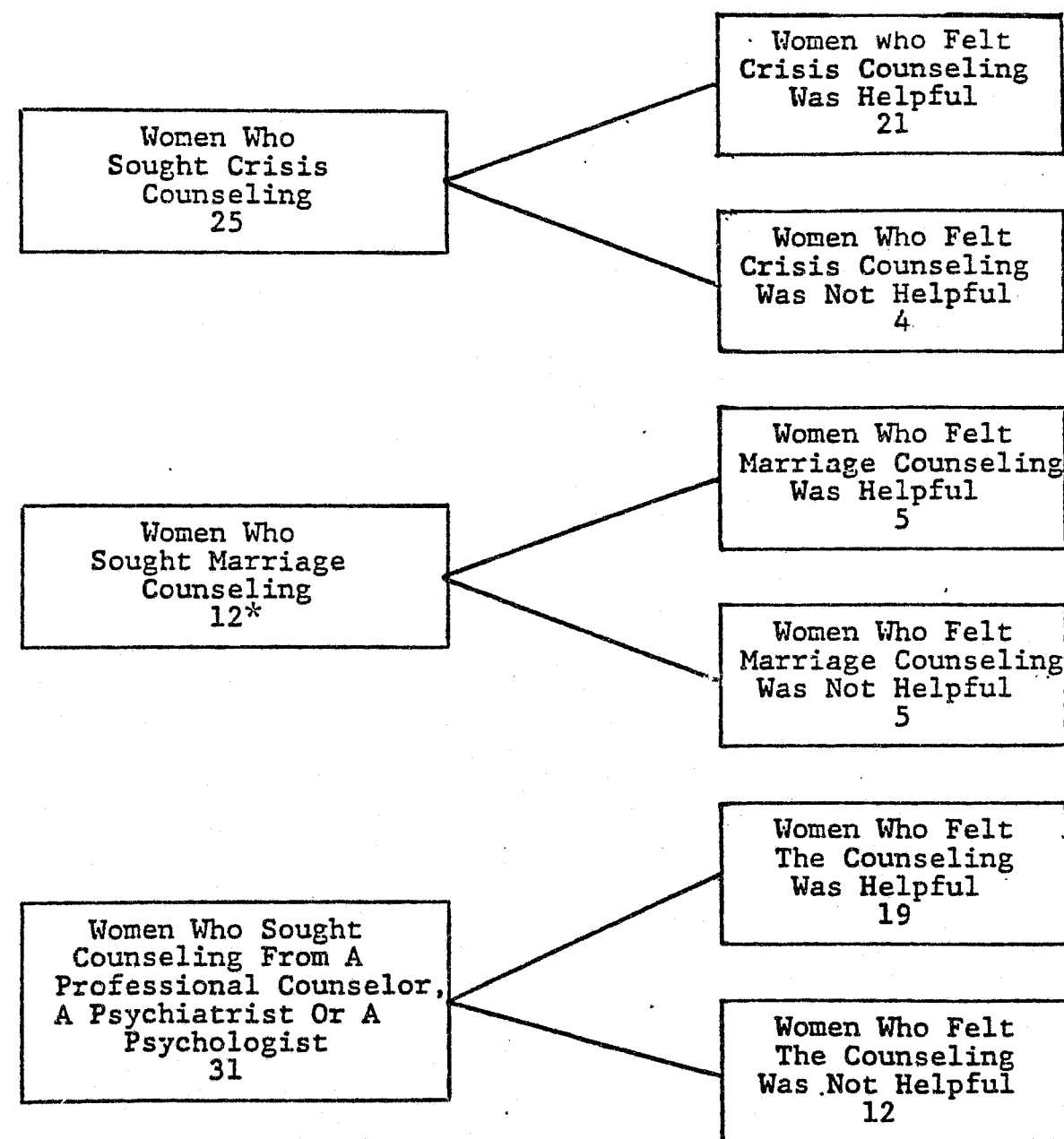
can assist women in achieving a better understanding of their problems.

Of the women interviewed, 12 (18 percent) had contacted VSA's hotline for crime victims; 8 (12 percent) had contacted Abused Women's Aid in Crisis (AWAIC); 3 (4 percent) had contacted the Brooklyn Women's Center; and 2 (3 percent) had contacted the Staten Island Women's Center. As shown in Figure 4.4, satisfaction with the programs was high; 21 (84 percent) reported that the programs had been helpful.

For example, one woman who sought help from the Staten Island Women's Center was placed in contact with a child welfare agency to assist her daughter who was also being beaten. The mother received help in obtaining an Order of Protection from family court. She left her spouse and subsequently began receiving public assistance payments, was placed in a shelter, and contacted a lawyer to begin separation proceedings. According to this woman, the staff of the Women's Center were "terrific...If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have gotten out."

Another form of counseling sought by 12 (11 percent) of the women in the sample was marriage counseling. Most of the women who had been to marriage counseling reported having gone only a few times because their spouses were reluctant to go and most women came away feeling that "things

FIGURE 4.4
WOMEN'S SATISFACTION WITH VARIOUS FORMS OF COUNSELING



*The responses of two women were not available.

never really got better," "he'd never change," or "no one can help." These women's experiences suggest that marriage counseling was not highly successful.

Thirty-one of the women in the sample had gone to a professional counselor, psychologist or psychiatrist. Sixty-one percent of these women reported that counseling had been helpful. As one respondent put it, going to counseling "gave me a chance to express myself and understand myself."

E. Shelters

Background. The idea of shelters for battered wives was conceived by Erin Pizzy in England in the early 1970's and subsequently took root in this country. Shelters are residences that give battered women a place to stay for up to a few months. Shelters offer women a secure living situation in a place where it is difficult for their husbands to track them down, the support of other women in like circumstances, and psychological and vocational counseling to assist them in establishing themselves on their own.

Battered women, when they leave their spouses, often turn to friends or relatives for a place to stay. As reported earlier, most of the women in this sample had left home several times and on those occasions found someone willing to put them up for a short period. But staying with friends or

relatives poses difficulties. It makes it easy for husbands to find the women, and therefore exposes not only the battered women but also their hosts to the danger of their spouses' violence. Several women who were interviewed reported that their spouses had sought them out and attacked them after they had moved out. In addition, few people have the living space or the desire to share their residences with a woman and children for long. Moreover, some women may not have anyone they can ask to stay with or they may be embarrassed to let acquaintances know that they have been abused. (Experience at VSA shows that about 60 percent of crime victims looking for temporary shelter can find a friend or family who can shelter them on a temporary basis.) Among the women in the sample who left their spouses and then later returned, the most frequent reason cited for returning (cited by 44 percent of the women) was that they had nowhere else to go or that the apartment they had shared with their spouse was theirs.

When the study was conducted, there were three shelters operating in New York City. One, operated by the City's Human Resources Administration, housed up to 65 women and children for up to three months. Two privately-run residences, Women's Survival Space and the Henry Street Shelter, housed 12 and 18 families, respectively. In addition, a Brooklyn organization that uses a variation of the shelter concept called Safe Homes places battered women in private homes of volunteer families for up to three days.

Two new shelters have recently opened, one sponsored by Project Return Foundation in the Bronx and the other one by Gustave Hartman YMHA in Far Rockaway. It is estimated that the 70 new beds will accommodate up to 28 families.

Use of the Service. Eight (7 percent) of the women in the sample reported that they had been to a shelter. Besides security, shelter served a variety of purposes for battered women. For example, one woman who left her spouse and went to Women's Survival Space saw a counselor and went to family court to seek an Order of Protection. She had been to family court for the same purpose before but had been unsuccessful. This time, however, accompanied by a counselor from the shelter, she received an Order of Protection. Reflecting on the differences between her first and second court experience, the woman noted that saying she was in shelter proved to be a "magic word" with family court officials.

The word "shelter" also seemed to work magic with welfare staff. A year earlier, after the woman had left her husband to stay with friends, she had applied for welfare but had been denied; welfare workers had told her that her spouse could support her even though they were living apart. While at the shelter, she applied again and this time got emergency assistance within two days [5]. According to her, welfare workers were able to expedite her claim because living

in a shelter was sufficient proof that she was a battered woman and living on her own.

After living at the shelter for three months, this woman moved into an apartment of her own. She did not return to her husband nor was she bothered by him again. The woman praised the shelter; she said that her experience had been "very good," the staff "supportive," and shelters are a "necessary" aid to helping battered women "get [their lives] together."

The small number of women in the sample who used shelters most likely reflects the lack of shelter space in New York City.

F. Public Assistance

Background. The emergency provisions of the public assistance or welfare system in New York City were not originally tailored to the problems of battered women. Within the past several years, however, changes have occurred within the public assistance system aimed at making procedures more responsive to battered women. Regulations governing Income Maintenance were modified so that emergency funds are available for people in immediate need of food, clothing and shelter. The Emergency Assistance Unit provides people in crisis immediate help (such as funding for food and shelter) at night and on weekends.

Procedures were also made in order to give priority to victims of spouse abuse in the application process, thus making it possible for the waiting time for receiving aid to be reduced to within 48 hours. Thus battered women are now eligible for faster application procedures as well as emergency assistance.

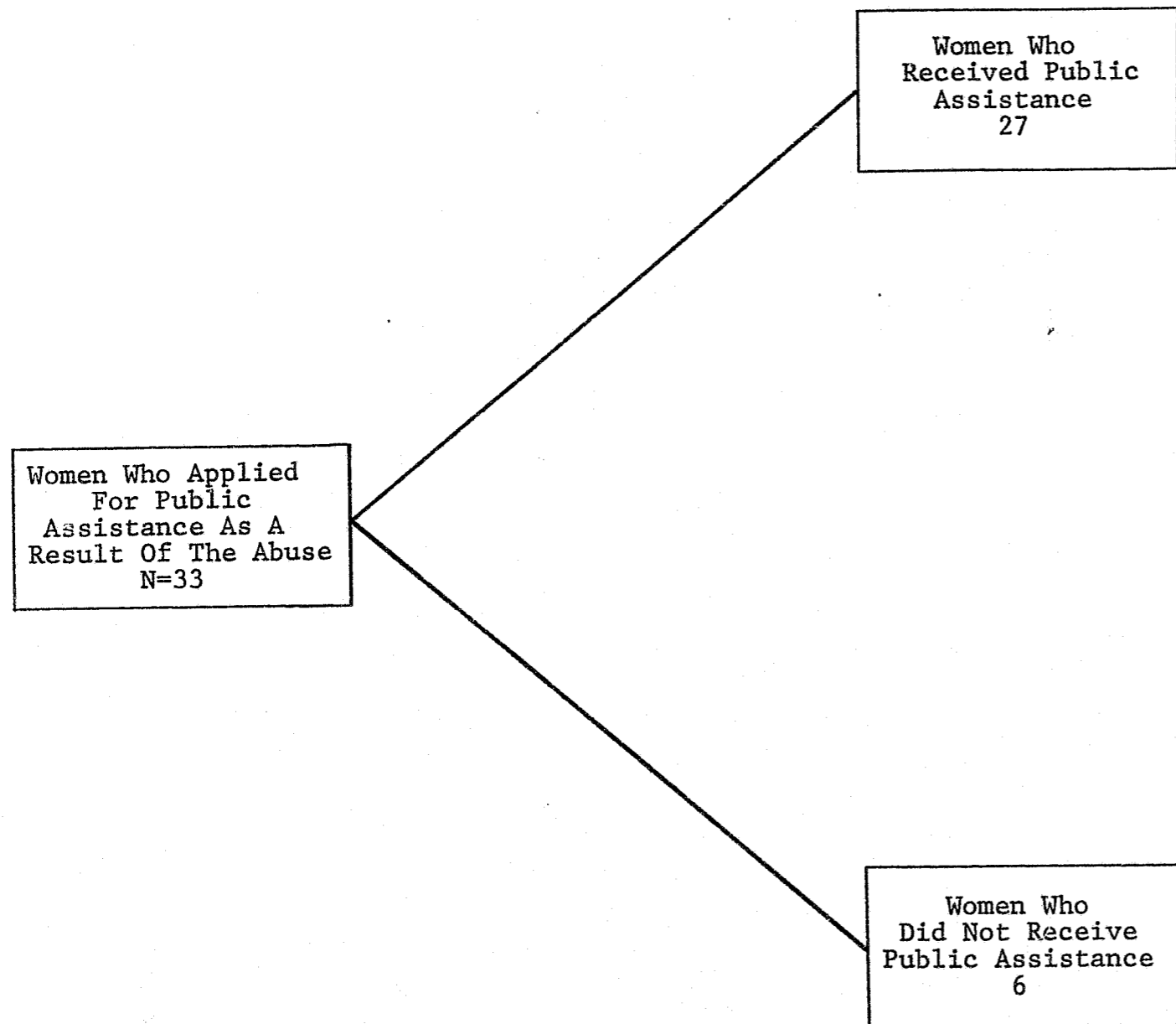
Since this study was conducted, the Human Resources Administration has tried to further facilitate the application process. Social service agencies that provide services to victims of battering can now be given the authority by the Human Resources Administration to make the initial determination and verification of whether a client is a victim of battering. The reasoning behind this decision is that agencies that have had previous contact with these women are in a better position to assess the women's circumstances than staff at the Income Maintenance Center. If a woman receives such certification, her financial eligibility is then determined and verified by the Income Maintenance Center. Although this study does not provide information regarding the effectiveness of this innovation, the experiences of battered women with public assistance suggest that it is an important improvement.

Use of the Service. About half (49%) of the women in the sample were receiving public assistance at the time of the first interview. A smaller number (33) reported that they had applied for welfare because they had left their spouses, and consequently were without a source of income. These 33 women were questioned about their experiences with the welfare system in an effort to determine how the system responds to their needs. Their experiences are summarized in Figure 4.5.

A high proportion (82 percent) of the women who applied for assistance did get aid (the remainder were determined ineligible for various reasons). Yet the process of obtaining assistance was not always easy. Eighteen percent of the women determined eligible for welfare received assistance within two weeks of applying, but the other 82 percent had to wait longer than two weeks -- in one case three months. Seventy-five percent of women who applied reported difficulties in the application process. The problems they reported included too much red tape and poor treatment by welfare workers. One woman said, "They kept me running back and forth. I never had the right information. I got sick of it. I had to go back to him [her spouse]."

The high proportion of women supported by welfare speaks to its importance for battered women. Welfare is virtually the only service in New York City which addresses the problem of battered women's financial dependence upon their

FIGURE 4.5
THE OUTCOMES OF WOMEN'S REQUESTS
FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE



spouses. Welfare, however, does not provide an attractive standard of living. It seems possible that some battered women remain with their spouses because they do not view welfare as an acceptable alternative. Many of the women in the sample who were supported by welfare appeared to want to achieve economic self-sufficiency; 56 percent reported that they wanted to find employment within the next six months. As reported in Chapter 3, however, few of the women had the job skills or training to secure employment at a high income level.

FOOTNOTES - Chapter IV

1. This proportion may be much higher than the true frequency with which battered women identify themselves to medical personnel, due to the self-selection of women in the sample. It seems likely that women who did not want to tell medical personnel about the battering would also be reluctant to be interviewed for a study such as this.
2. The family court was authorized by statute to transfer a family offense proceeding to criminal court if it deemed the processes of family court to be "inappropriate" in the situation at hand. In general, case law supported such a finding where, based on the facts and circumstances surrounding a given case, there was no reasonable possibility for a reconciliation between the parties.
3. Common-law or unmarried victims may not initiate a family offense proceeding on their own behalf. However, if they have minor children in common with the batterer the court may issue an Order of Protection in connection with a paternity petition, a child support petition, or a child protective petition.
4. As of August 6, 1981, a woman seeking an emergency Temporary Order of Protection from family court has a statutory right to file a petition without delay on the same day that she first goes to the family court. A hearing before a judge on that request must be held on the same day or the next day that family court is open.
5. Certification of battering is necessary in order for a woman to receive public assistance immediately. The issuance of IM 64/77 in 1977, which allowed staff of three designated shelters to certify battering (in addition to income maintenance staff) might have facilitated the process for this woman. In 1979, income maintenance procedures were further modified to allow additional private social services and legal organizations to certify that a woman was battered (IM6/79). VSA is one of these Approved Assisting Organizations (AAO).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The profile of a battered woman that emerged from this study is one of a rational person who, caught in a difficult situation, had made a deliberate choice. The 112 women interviewed were seeking a tolerable life for themselves and their children. In general the women did not appear to have stayed in an abusive relationship because of self-destructive impulses, excessively low self-esteem, or other psychological characteristics suggesting emotional disturbance or deviance.

A particular concern of the study was exploring why women stay in violent homes. The data suggest that an important element was a woman's economic potential and resources, women who had resources, either because of their own financial assets or ability to earn money or because they did not have children, escaped from the battering relationship sooner than women without independent income or women with children. Although economics was not the sole motivating factor for staying in an abusive relationship, many of the women were trapped in a dilemma of either staying with a man who batters on occasion but promises to stop, or leaving to go on welfare. Given this choice, it seemed rational for the women to stay in a violent home. For many women in the sample,

the likelihood that the battering might stop or abate was less remote than the likelihood of becoming financially independent.

In general, the women interviewed took advantage and benefited from the services available to them. Although these women were generally successful in negotiating help from governmental agencies, many types of help were not sufficiently accessible and others simply did not exist.

In considering recommendations for programs and policies suggested by the results, we were guided by what we saw as the underlying theme of the findings: battered women are capable of making choices about how to improve their situation. To do this, however, there must be services available and the women must be aware of their options and how to obtain the services they need.

Police Services

The data from the 88 women in the sample who had contact with police officers suggested that the police response to victims of domestic violence was improving. These findings suggest that police training could help ensure that the police respond consistently to the needs of battered women. Training might most effectively focus on: 1) The appropriateness of arrest in cases of spousal violence when a felony has been committed. 2) The value of an arrest even in

cases that do not end up with a conviction and prison sentence; and 3) The availability of services for battered women and the methods for referrals. This would help ensure that women take advantage of what is available and would reduce police officers' feelings of helplessness in dealing with the social needs of battered women. It should be noted that the Police Department has also begun to explore the possibility of increasing police services to include escorting women who have had to take refuge in temporary shelter back to their homes to pick up their belongings; and is investigating reports of improper conduct by police officers.

An experiment tried in other jurisdictions in which social service counselors or advocates work in teams with police to intervene and provide counseling to violent families should be tested in New York.

Medical Services

The study's findings concerning the treatment accorded battered women in hospital emergency rooms indicated that although the women's physical injuries were attended to, medical personnel rarely referred women to follow-up social services. It would seem good preventive practice to refer a woman who has been battered to other services (such as courts, police, or counseling) in an effort to intervene before the battering recurs. In some instances,

battered women did not identify themselves as battered, and they were not identified as such by emergency room staff. In some instances, the woman's husband accompanied her during treatment, precluding an opportunity for her to give the nurse or doctor a true account of the source of her injury. These findings suggest the need for training of hospital personnel and the development of a protocol for dealing with women when they report they have been battered or when it is suspected that they have been beaten by their spouses.

Among the topics to be covered in such training would be how to identify battered women; availability of services and methods of referral; a practice when women are accompanied by their mate of excluding the husband at some time during the examination; and procedures for the preservation of evidence which might include photographs and envelopes for ripped clothing to be used in court cases.

The Borough Crisis Centers administered by the City's Human Resources Administration are models for domestic violence programs in hospitals. In the face of fiscal constraints precluding such centers at each hospital, training of emergency room staff appears a valuable alternative.

Criminal Court

The role of criminal court in dealing with battered women has undergone significant changes during the past five years. The women in this study were among the first users of the revised system which allowed wives to pursue cases in either criminal or family court. (Common-law wives under most circumstances have not had the option of using family court.) This choice means that the criminal court plays a somewhat different role in spouse abuse cases than in other assault cases.

The response of criminal court officials to battered spouse cases was to take stronger account of the victim's desires about the case than in cases in which victim and defendant were strangers. As a result, satisfaction with the court was relatively high. However, the problem remains that some district attorneys treat spouse abuse less seriously than other assaults because it occurs between spouses or because they believe that battered women may not follow through on the case. One possible response would be training for district attorneys and judges. Included in the training could be a discussion of the value of the arrest and court process even in those cases when a woman does not follow through. As data in this study showed, the court may have been successful even in cases which were dropped by having treated the cases seriously at the time of arrest and arraignment; some men were apparently

deterred from further violence by their fear of the pending criminal prosecution.

Family Court

Battered women who choose family court also face some of the problems encountered in criminal court. Court officials who have seen women change their minds about taking their husbands to court or not appear at scheduled court hearings, may consider it a waste of time to treat such cases rigorously. Our findings suggested that as with criminal court, some women did not persist in court because the beatings had stopped. It would be useful for programs working with battered women, including the Victim Services Agency, to provide follow-up data to the court on cases in which battered women did not appear for subsequent hearings.

Counseling Services

The data suggest that counseling at times of crisis was helpful. Of particular importance was informing a woman that she had choices and what they were.

The interviews also suggested that it would be useful to have more counseling available because it might encourage a woman to develop a strategy for dealing with the battering before the situation becomes so violent that she

feels she has no choice but to resort to police, shelters, and hospital emergency rooms. If a woman sought counseling when her life was not in crisis, the counselor could explain the alternatives and she could prepare for the next, and perhaps more violent incident, by arranging to stay with a friend.

The data in the study were insufficient to assess the usefulness of marriage and psychiatric counseling for domestic violence.

Shelter Services

The need for more shelter space in New York City has been consistently reported by battered women counselors. The data from this study indicate that only 7 percent used shelters; the study did not address the question of how many women needed shelter but were denied it because of lack of space. The women who used the shelters were satisfied with them and found them a good entry into other services. This would suggest that there is a need for systems to be developed to guarantee that battered women not in shelters have access to other services. The Human Resources Administration's development of special procedures which allow programs that serve battered woman to prescreen them for welfare eligibility is a useful step in this direction.

Public Assistance

The women interviewed about public assistance indicated that the revised procedures (Order IM 64/77) have facilitated the process of obtaining both emergency and long-term assistance. While the welfare system seems to work in crisis situations, there is a need for a long-term approach such as developing alternatives to public assistance so that women need not face a decision between staying with a batterer or becoming dependent on welfare.

New Services

An examination of the existing services suggests that most are making efforts to be more accessible and sensitive to the needs of battered women. However, the analysis also highlighted those services which were needed but were not available to the 112 women interviewed:

- Services and day care for children of violent families need to be developed. Both in the shelters and in other service agencies, there have been few programs tailored to children of battered women [1]. Children living with mothers who have recently abandoned their homes need counseling and support. The goals of such intervention would be to prevent the risk of foster care and child abuse and to help children better cope with the violence in their homes with long range goals of reducing the risk of their becoming violent. Short-term day care for children would also help the mothers by freeing them for a few hours each day of the burden of caring for their children. The women could take care of their practical needs: going to court; finding a new apartment; attending job training; or looking for a job.

- Services for batterers need to be developed. Often, the woman, the man, or the court, would like to see the abuser get help to reduce his abusive behavior. The Family Court Law was changed in 1980 to allow judges to include an educational program as part of a finding in family offense cases. Interviews with judges and prosecutors reveal that they too would like to have the option of including couple counseling, peer counseling and support groups as part of a sentence. Models exist in other jurisdictions, and while such programs are just beginning in New York City, there need to be many more such programs and their availability needs to be publicized.
- Vocational services need to be developed. Women who do not have incomes or means to earn wages are often in a bind between welfare and staying in an abusive relationship. This suggests that vocational training, job placement, and supported work programs should be tested to determine if such programs would help a woman leave earlier, reduce the violence, or reduce the welfare rolls [2].
- Services for working women need to be developed. One serious flaw in the shelter and public assistance system is the limitation on services for working women. If a woman has some assets or earnings -- even a low paying job -- she is unlikely to qualify for public assistance and, thus, for shelter. She may find it more difficult than a public assistance recipient to relocate because she does not qualify for city housing; and free medical services also may be unavailable. Procedures need to be modified in order to make services available to working women.
- Preventive services need to be developed and tested. Domestic violence prevention programs, similar to drug and sex education programs, could be instituted in the schools. In addition, methods need to be developed to identify families at high risk of domestic violence so that family counseling and other services could be made available before the violence escalates.

These recommendations stemmed from findings of this sample of women -- a sample of women willing to identify themselves as battered and sufficiently in control of their lives to seek help. The constraints of the research study prohibited us from reaching out to a representative sample of

all battered women. Such a sample might have generated a different picture: a picture of women, ashamed of the battering, isolated from family and friends, unaware of available services. For such women, public education addressed to both men and women about the prevalence of battering and programs that respond to it would be a necessary first step toward intervening in and improving their lives.



FOOTNOTES - Chapter V

1. Henry Street Settlement will be developing a special services program starting in September, 1981.
2. Manhattan College has just started a vocational guidance program, but such efforts need to be expanded, elaborated, and tested.

APPENDIX A:

METHODOLOGY

by Deborah Grayson

Research on battered women is still a relatively new endeavor, and at the time this study was done (1979) there had been few large scale, longitudinal research efforts. The number and diversity of studies on abuse is increasing and consequently it occurred to us that it would be useful to devote some detail to the methodological difficulties we encountered in the hope that research in the future could be designed to avoid or reduce these problems. If a reader wants more detail, they may contact the Research Department, Victim Services Agency, 2 Lafayette Street, New York, New York 10007.

1. Research Design

The design of the study called for 250 victims of spouse abuse to be interviewed twice, first between February and March 1979, and then again, in a follow-up interview six months later. It was anticipated that the six month interval would allow for the observation of a change in the participants' situations.

The sample was limited to women because male victims of spouse abuse rarely use the courts and social service agencies; consequently to build a sample of even 50 would have taken more time than the study allowed.

Participants had to be 17 years of age or older. As an incentive for participation, \$5 was offered for completion of the initial interview and \$15 for the follow-up.

2. Intake - Initial Stage

Intake was begun at four points known to serve a large number of battered women: Brooklyn Criminal Court, two Borough Crisis Centers located in municipal hospital emergency rooms in Queens and Kings County [1], and Brooklyn Family Court.

Intake for Brooklyn Criminal Court cases was done in the Complaint Room, the stage in the criminal justice process when the District Attorney's office first becomes involved in a case. The Complaint Room is in operation 24 hours a day. Because of the cost of placing research intake personnel there on a full-time basis, intake at this location was done by regular VSA Complaint Room staff.

VSA Complaint Room personnel were oriented to the purpose of the study and the method for scheduling women, and were given a "pitch" designed to encourage participation [2].

The same intake procedure was followed at the hospitals, which also function on a round-the-clock basis. Staff from the Crisis Centers were requested to attend training sessions. These were organized by a VSA social worker/trainer and were designed to 1) explain the purpose of the study and intake methodology, 2) acquaint the crisis center staff with research staff, 3) discuss the justification for the research, and 4) elicit attitudes about various aspects of spouse abuse and the currently established methods for dealing with the problem. Interviews scheduled by the Crisis Center staff were administered in a room near the Crisis Center in the hospital.

In Brooklyn Family Court, intake was done by research staff. An interviewer sat at a desk (in the room where petitioners wait to see the probation officer at the first step in the Family Court process) and distributed flyers to interested women. These flyers (in English and Spanish) asked women to participate in the study and offered the \$20 incentive. If a woman showed interest in the flyer, the person at the desk would explain the study and schedule the woman for an interview, to be conducted in Family Court a few days later.

3. Timing of the Interviews

The initial plan was to schedule the first interview as soon as possible after intake, the same day or evening. However, this timing proved infeasible.

First, women in both the hospital emergency rooms and in Family Court were often too involved with the procedures required by those institutions to spare time for an additional research interview. Many women were distraught, exhausted and in need of medical attention. In most cases, they already had repeated their stories to a number of officials. These factors contributed to an unwillingness to submit immediately to more, and from their perspective unnecessary, questioning.

In addition, there were legal problems with administering the interview immediately after intake. For women in the sample with open cases in Criminal Court, the District Attorney's Bureau Chief felt that information elicited on the questionnaire could be subpoenaed by the defense for use against the state's case. Hence, it was felt that it was better to conduct the research interview after arraignment (24-36 hours after Complaint Room case processing) so that researchers would know which women would have continuing court cases for which the interview material would be problematic. However, rather than interviewing only those women whose cases

had been disposed, which might skew the sample too much towards those with less serious cases, we decided to interview all the women, but to use an abbreviated interview form for those with continuing cases. This form excluded items that could potentially be used against the victim in court, such as references to the battering relationship. The abbreviated interview was also used for women in the Family Court sample scheduled to return to court at a later date, since they faced the same issue in their hearings. (See section 8 for a discussion of the abbreviated interview.)

4. Efforts to Increase the Sample Size

The original proposal had called for 250 participants, a rate of approximately 40 interviews per week. By the fourth week, however, only 13 interviews had been completed, and at the six-week point -- the intended cut-off date -- the number of completed interviews was 22.

There were several reasons for this low response rate. First, intake proceeded more slowly than anticipated at the two Borough Crisis Centers. At Queens Hospital Center, approval of the research study was delayed because of the need for the study to be approved by a Human Subjects Review Committee, the necessity of which was not known to the researchers before the study. It was not until three months after the initial contact had been made with the

administration that the committee met and gave its approval [3].

At Kings County Borough Crisis Center, the sample pool -- the number of abused women using the service during the study period -- was low. In addition, staff were reluctant to encourage women to participate in the study because they felt that many were too traumatized. Furthermore, staff felt that their focus should be on counseling and the resolution of problems rather than research.

Most importantly, the low response rate reflected the attitudes of the women. Many were under severe stress. With unresolved problems, often a court process ahead of them, and the necessity of repeating their story to many officials, participation in a research study where they would have to answer still more questions was of low priority. Many appeared reluctant even to take the step of talking to the researchers for intake. In Family Court, for example, women usually did not approach the research intake table.

Even among the few women who agreed to return for the interview, a large proportion failed to meet their appointments. It is likely that since the interview was scheduled for the same setting as intake -- such as Family Court or the Criminal Court Complaint Room -- some women were unwilling to return because of the painful associations of the

setting. It is also likely that members of the research staff were mistaken for employees of the agency where intake occurred. If a woman's contact with the agency's personnel had been unsatisfactory and she believed that the interviewer also worked for this agency, she would not want to appear for an interview.

In an effort to increase the sample, modifications were made in the methodology. A first effort to increase participation involved changing the incentive payment schedule from \$5 for the initial interview and \$15 for the follow-up, to \$10 for each interview. This 25/75 split had been selected on the basis of past research which indicated that a high attrition rate was likely during the six-month interim period. It became evident, however, that the initial \$5.00 was insufficient. The results were encouraging: the number of women who signed up, as well as the number who appeared for the interview, increased.

In addition, efforts were made to involve staff at the intake centers more with the project. VSA staff made a second round of site visits. At Queens County Borough Crisis Center this was particularly important since there had been a three month lapse between first contact and the final approval to begin intake.

In Family Court, two new techniques were adopted. Probation officers agreed to distribute flyers describing the study and the timing of appointments was changed. Instead of scheduling interviews for a later date, staff conducted them during the court's lunch recess. The drawback to this method was that women interviewed at this time had open court cases and had to be given the shorter interview. The advantages of having an available population, however, outweighed this drawback.

5. New Sources -- Successful Attempts

Despite modifications in methodology, the intake rate did not increase sufficiently. After the first month during which staff had experienced considerable difficulty in attracting women in crisis to participate, we decided to expand the number of sources and to include women not currently in crisis. The new sample was limited to women who had been beaten since September 1, 1977 (approximately one and a half years earlier). This deadline was used because on that date married women were given the option in New York State of pursuing cases in either family court or criminal court. It was necessary to restrict the sample to women who had been beaten relatively recently so as to obtain information on services currently available in New York City.

Several new recruitment sources were also tried. VSA has a notification unit which retains information on all complainants who have had cases in the Brooklyn Criminal Court. To gather a sample, cases which had been disposed within the last six months were examined. If the case involved assault on a woman by a man and the relationship was given as either married, common-law, or girlfriend/boyfriend, a letter was sent to the complainant, explaining the study and requesting that she call for an appointment.

South Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation (SBLs) and Mobilization for Youth Legal Services (MFY) are two non-profit legal agencies handling many cases including divorces. In the state of New York, battering is grounds for divorce. Both legal agencies agreed to allow the spouse abuse study to contact their former clients -- ones whose cases had been closed within the last 6 months -- provided that it was clear to the women that participation was voluntary, and that VSA was not part of the legal service.

Letters were sent to clients of both agencies. They contained two parts: 1) an explanation by the legal service agency of how the woman's name had been selected, and 2) an explanation of the study with a request that the woman contact VSA if interested in participating. SBLs staff were concerned about maintaining the confidentiality for their clients. Making it the responsibility of the woman, if she was

sites, even though the total number of women using them is small. Unfortunately, however, many of the respondents from these centers had been out of crisis situations for more than one year and consequently were not eligible for the study.

6. New Sources - Unsuccessful Attempts

In addition to the five successful measures used to expand the sample size, several other techniques were either unsuccessfully employed or considered and dismissed. Staff considered using the recently established VSA reception center in the Bronx Criminal Court, but the District Attorney's Office was averse to VSA obtaining information from spouse abuse victims who had pending court cases.

Five local radio stations were approached about public service announcements. While all were willing to receive copies of the notice, none would guarantee airtime (and none aired the announcement).

When it became apparent that the proposed sample of 250 would not be achieved, methods of supplementing the existing interview with self-administered questionnaires were considered. The questionnaires would have asked for demographic data about the abused and the abuser, information

on changes in the woman's behavior due to abuse, and information on which agencies (police, courts, counselors) had been useful.

Two possible methods for collecting these data were considered. First, it was suggested that a one-page questionnaire applying to both battered and non-battered women be distributed to all women entering an office building in the morning. In the course of the day, the women could deposit the completed questionnaires in a box in the lobby. An alternate method suggested was to distribute the same questionnaire accompanied by a pre-stamped envelope to women in suburban shopping centers, major mid-Manhattan department stores and large transit centers such as Grand Central and Pennsylvania Stations.

Ultimately, both these ideas were rejected. It was believed that it would be difficult to secure permission to disseminate questionnaires in an office building and that the second method might not be cost effective. In addition, the demographic data obtained by either method would still not have enabled the study to make inferences to the general population. It was decided, instead, to develop a more detailed supplemental questionnaire, to be administered to a small group of women, thereby supplying qualitative data. This form is discussed in the next section.

7. Entrance Interview (Type I)

The original interview took approximately one hour to administer and was comprised of 12 sections, with both pre-coded (multiple choice) and open-ended questions. Interviews were in English and Spanish. The form was designed to be answered by women drawn from one of three locations (Family Court, Criminal Court, and hospital emergency rooms). Since a woman's presence at any one of these three sites indicated that the woman was currently in a crisis the questions were designed to be answered as they applied to the woman's current situation.

Topics covered in the interview were: 1) the incident of abuse which brought the woman to the intake point; 2) the history of the woman's relationship with the batterer including, the frequency of abuse, the number of times the woman had left, and whether they had children; 3) experiences with the police; 4) experiences with the Criminal Court; 5) experiences with the Family Court; 6) injuries and medical services used; 7) demographic characteristics of both parties, and the division of money within the household; 8) the woman's family of origin, including demographic characteristics and whether abuse of adults or children occurred; 9) the spouse's family of origin; 10) the woman's support systems - friends, relatives, and counseling experiences; 11) the woman's goals; and 12) a pre-standardized measure of self-esteem [4].

With the exception of the self-esteem measure, the interviewer both read the questions and recorded the answers. For the self-esteem section, the respondent was given an answer sheet pre-printed with a true-false option for each question. The interviewer read each question aloud and instructed the respondent to circle the appropriate box.

As the sampling method changed and the composition of the women in the study shifted from those currently in crisis to those who had resolved their problems, questions relating to the battering incident and services were reworded from present to past tense.

8. Abbreviated Interviews (Type II)

As previously mentioned, an abbreviated form was devised that eliminated mention of the battering relationship for women still involved in legal actions. The resulting instrument asked about demographic characteristics of both parties, their family backgrounds, and included the standardized measure of self-esteem. Edited sections on the relationship and the respondent's outside supports were also included (topics 7,8,9, 12 and some of 2 and 10 in the Type I interview).

9. Follow-Up (Type I)

The follow-up interview was constructed to measure changes in the respondents that occurred in the six-month period between the two interviews. Since the initial design had relied upon a sample of women some of whom were taking steps towards resolving their problems, it was hoped that by the follow-up they would have used services and would report which had been helpful. Therefore, the final interview restated many questions to determine whether changes had occurred. Goals that had been mentioned by the woman during the entrance interview also were mentioned to determine whether they had been attained.

As a result of early analysis, two new sections were added to the interview. One covered women's experiences with public assistance [5]. The other measured women's fear of their spouses. This was included because many women who had been beaten with relative infrequency, said that their lives had been significantly altered by fear engendered by the abuse. Some women who responded to the advertisements and flyers still considered themselves battered even though they had not been hit for more than a year, or had never been hit but had been threatened [6]. For these women, their spouses' verbal threats kept them in a consistently high level of fear regardless of whether violence was coupled with the threats.

To measure fear, the women were provided with 18 statements regarding fear and asked if the statements were applicable to them. As with the self-esteem measure, the women were given a pre-printed sheet and asked to record their own responses.

10. Follow-up (Type II)

The Type II follow-up contained all of the elements previously mentioned for the Type I follow-up, as well as most of the questions omitted on the entrance form, because the women had been involved in a court case at the earlier point.

11. Modified Interview

To supplement the sample, a modified interview was developed. This was a Type I entrance interview, with the public assistance and fear sections added. The modified form was given once to all eligible women who responded to the outreach after the May 15 cut-off date.

12. Interviewers

Nine female part-time interviewers were employed in the study. Since the interviews were sensitive and since useful information could be collected only if the participants were relaxed and candid, interviewers were hired primarily on

the basis of their past experiences working with people, either in counseling or hospital environments.

13. Training

Two eight-hour days were devoted to training the interviewers. Since staff were chosen primarily for their empathetic qualities and were not necessarily knowledgeable about the criminal justice system, a large part of the training was devoted to acquainting the interviewers with the nature of the services, particularly legal services that the women in the sample had encountered. This was especially important because past research (Davis, Russell, and Kunreuther, 1980) has shown that many complaining witnesses progress through the criminal justice system either without understanding it or with a misconception of both the process and the outcome. One goal of the training was to ensure that the interviewers were familiar enough with the system to interpret the women's answers and to probe for more detailed accounts when necessary.

An important issue discussed during the training was "Why Research?" This was particularly significant because many of the staff had had experience counseling people in crisis, and their proclivity was to offer assistance. (In fact, some potential interviewers declined the job when it became apparent that the purpose of the project was only research.) Due to the nature of the design (a six month

follow-up), it was not possible to allow the interviewer to offer assistance during the initial interview. Such an intervention would have had the potential to alter the behavior of the participant during the subsequent months before the follow-up interview. This would have made it impossible to determine what changes the woman would have undergone and what resources she would have contacted without the intervention of the interviewer. Therefore, unless the interviewer perceived a crisis situation in which the woman's life might be in danger if help were not offered, no intervention was offered. Interviewers were, however, instructed to give the VSA telephone Hotline number to any participants who asked for help.

Most of training was devoted to practice in administering the 44 page interview. For each ten page segment of the interview, there was first a discussion of the content and the purpose of each question in the section. This was followed by a demonstration role-play by the training leaders. After questions, the interviewers broke into groups of three, and two people role-played the section while a third observed and made comments. A trainer sat with each group. This was repeated until everyone had administered the interview.

The final segment of the training was devoted to familiarizing interviewers with the series of forms to be completed for each participant in the study. The interviewer was responsible for the completion of several forms during the course of the interview. In sequence of administration, they were: the consent statement, interview, contact sheet, postcards and receipt of payment.

To be sure that the respondent understood the nature of the study and that participation was voluntary, there was a requirement that a consent statement be signed by each woman in the study. It stated that information gathered was completely confidential and that all questions had been answered freely. The form was completed in duplicate. One copy was given to the respondent and one was retained by the study.

Two instruments were used as means of maintaining contact with the respondent during the six month period between interviews. These were 1) contact sheets and 2) post-cards. The contact sheet was filled out by the interviewer upon completion of the interview. It contained two addresses and at least one telephone number where the woman felt that it was safe for her to be contacted. This sheet also included: intake point, interviewer, interview type, date, and amount paid. When follow-up began, all attempts to reach the woman were recorded.

Postcards addressed to VSA were pre-printed in both English and Spanish. They asked the respondent for current contact information and informed her that, upon receipt of the postcard, \$1.00 would be sent to her. At the time of the interview, the interviewer wrote a date two months in the future on the postcard and asked the woman to complete it and mail it to VSA when that date arrived. Upon receipt of the card, a new post card, identical to the first, was mailed to the respondent, with the \$1.00 and a letter both thanking her and explaining that the second card should be handled in the same manner as the first. If a postcard was not received after two and a half months, a reminder letter was sent, along with a new post card.

This method of maintaining contact with the sample was moderately successful. Of the 100 women who were eligible for the follow-up, 31 returned their cards at the appropriate time and 31 others returned the cards sent with their reminder letter. These people accounted for the majority of the follow-up interviews. a few interviews were obtained with the remainder of the non-responding sample by telephoning to schedule follow-up interviews.

To verify that each woman was paid a stipend at the completion of the interview, she was required to sign a receipt of payment.

14. Interviews with Program Staff

Informal interviews with directors and staff of programs which serve battered women were conducted. These interviews were approximately 30 minutes long and were designed to ascertain how the programs function. Information was elicited on the number of staff, who does intake, what the criteria are for offering assistance, and on the duration of time the client uses the resources.

Interviews were conducted with a doctor and nurse who treat emergency room clients and the director of an emergency room; a Brooklyn Criminal Court judge; a Brooklyn Family Court judge; the head of intake at Brooklyn Family Court; a New York City Police official; a Legal Aid attorney specializing in divorces; and 3 project directors of women's centers that provide services for battered women. The information obtained from these sessions was integrated with data drawn from the respondent interviews.

FOOTNOTES - APPENDIX

1. The Borough Crisis Centers were started in 1977 by the New York City Mayor's Task Force on Rape. Their purpose was threefold: 1) to aid in the processing and evidence-preservation of rape cases; 2) to offer counseling to victims of rape, child abuse, and spouse abuse; and 3) to provide referrals and services to clients needing relocation, court assistance, etc.
2. Since this part of the Brooklyn Complaint Room is run by VSA and has been studied in depth, members of the staff were familiar with research methodology.
3. Hospitals are a fertile ground for experimentation with new drugs, many of which may have unknown or harmful side effects. The board primarily reviews these types of requests. Unfortunately, the spouse abuse study fell within the same framework of "research" and was, therefore, required to be reviewed.
4. Self-Esteem Scale (Welling, 1977; Wetter, 1975) from Berzins, J., Welling, M.E., and Wetter, R.E. "A New Measure of Psychological Androgeny Based on the Personality Research Form." Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology. 1978, 1, 126-138.
5. At the time of the entrance interview, approximately half of the women reported they were living on public assistance.
6. These women did not meet the study's criteria for participation and, therefore, were not interviewed. Still, their mention of fear was noteworthy.

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