A COMMUNITY OF WOMEN: A MODEL INTERVENTION FOR OVERCOMING POVERTY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

by

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Abstract

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Women and Work is an innovative and holistic approach to workforce development that relies on the power of community to deliver the technical and social skills needed for today's competitive job-market. This study explores the impact of the Women and Work Program on survivors of intimate partner violence, their ability to obtain and retain sustainable employment, and their ability to work towards establishing violence-free lives.

Preface

In this dissertation I discuss a program known as Women and Work, which grew out of my personal life experiences and my relationship with Queens College. When I began, I had no idea of what it would become, or the importance it would hold in so many lives. What began as an investigation quickly took on a life of its own and a simple training program to help women attain entry-level jobs became more than a program, it became a community of women.

Queens College was established in 1937 as an institution of higher learning within the City University of New York; its mission includes the provision of affordable access to liberal arts higher education for students from all financial and ethnic backgrounds; the pursuit of teaching effectiveness; support of faculty research; and the special obligation to serve the larger community. After personal hardships caused me to reassess my life, I decided to return to Queens College, where I had attended classes in the 1960s. I was readmitted to the college via its Adult Collegiate Education program (ACE) designed for students over twenty-six years of age.

Starting over is a daunting experience and assuming the role of a student brought daily challenges. As I discovered Women's Studies classes, a new world literally unfolded under the mentorship of Professor Hester Eisenstein. Her insightful and provocative classes were the catalyst for my changing from an Accounting major to a dual major in Women's Studies and Sociology. I began to piece together what I learned in the corporate world with what I was learning in the classroom, I often thought of the life I left behind and the many women I encountered along the way; as I did, ideas about a job-training program for women began to emerge and take a rudimentary form.

In 1997 the Queens Women's Center invited the College's Women's Studies Program to occupy a rent-free satellite office at Fort Totten in Bayside, Queens (New York) joining a

number of other women's organizations serving the Queens community. Since I had been working as a college assistant for the Women's Studies Program, which was then under the direction of Professor Hester Eisenstein, it presented the perfect opportunity to pursue my ideas about job-training and the plight of women in the workforce.

Within eighteen months those ideas, structured by research and shaped by practical lessons learned, became the pilot for the Women and Work program, which was essentially a direct response to problems affecting women, children, families and the larger society. The overwhelming response to the program from local domestic violence service agencies was immediate and prompted me to reserve one-third of the program seats for survivors of intimate partner violence. The pilot program (1998) began by serving seven women, two days a week for six weeks; it focused on increasing self-sufficiency for women by enhancing their job readiness and by providing participants with essential life-management skills. The tragic events of September 11, 2001 caused Fort Totten to be placed on heightened military alert, no longer making it a safe place for Women and Work. The College responded to this situation by providing classroom and computer lab space at its Flushing, Queens campus so that the program would not be forced to close its doors. However after witnessing the success of the program, and the desire to make it accessible to women from all the boroughs, Queens College officials offered the program classroom and office space at its Mid-Manhattan Extension Center located at 25 West 43rd Street in New York City.

The program rapidly expanded from 12 women annually to 40, 60, 80, and finally to its current yearly enrollment of 120 women. As the numbers continued to grow, research continued to play a vital role in understanding the complexities of women's lives and the many challenges they faced regarding the workplace and sustainable labor. As a result of ongoing research in the

form of tracking studies, the Post Program was created in 2002 to ensure a smooth transition from Women and Work's 15-week program to the workplace. The Post Program offers graduates the opportunity to continue their learning experience through advanced computer and technology seminars, humanities workshops, and job-search assistance, as well as providing ongoing relationship with the program through support groups and individual counseling. In 2010, in response to the persistence of the recession and the changing nature of employment in New York City, the Women and Work curriculum was again redesigned to offer participants an even broader learning experience, as well as greater opportunities for success. The staff was reorganized in 2011 to accommodate the changes in the new curriculum and assist with expanding funding opportunities.

In 1937 Queens College opened its doors to the children of the working class and today its in-kind support of Women and Work helps open doors to a very similar population of women seeking a better life for themselves and their families. It would be fair to say that Women and Work is one way the college fulfills its commitment to "embrace its special obligation to serve the larger community" as expressed in its Mission Statement. Furthermore, because Women and Work operates under the aegis of Queens College, there is a mutual benefit to both the college and the program. The college is recognized by the broader community as a committed partner working on behalf of marginalized women and the program is seen as highly credible because of its association with the college. The relationship also affords both program participants and members of the college community numerous opportunities to interact, providing both with new learning experiences. The women often attend cultural and special programming events on campus. They are always welcomed as part of the Queens College community. Because of the partnership between Queens College and Women and Work, the dream of higher education has

become a reality for many women who never thought such an accomplishment was possible. If the relationship between Women and Work and Queens College were to be broken, the losses, though perhaps measured differently by different people, would be deeply felt by all involved since this program has a "human" face. To date Women and Work has assisted over 1,600 women to improve the quality of life for themselves and their families.

Acknowledgements

It has been a long journey to this point and along the way I have encountered many kind, generous, and courageous women; this dissertation would not have been possible without them. I thank the many domestic violence survivors who relived their pain to share their life stories with me in the hope that this research would help to change the future for others.

I am extremely grateful to Professor Hester Eisenstein, the chair of my dissertation committee, for having so diligently guided my intellectual journey from those first days as an undergraduate student at Queens College through the many years of graduate studies. It was in her Women's Studies classes that my feminist spirit was reawakened after having slumbered for many years. Over time she has influenced my academic growth beyond the scope of this dissertation; her encouragement and support helped me through many difficult times and her commitment to me has been instrumental in bringing this work to fruition.

I am also indebted to Professor Natalie Sokoloff, who I first met when I began teaching as an adjunct lecturer at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Over the years we have engaged in endless hours of dialogue that helped to clarify many of the issues and crystallize essential elements of this work. As a graduate student, she pushed me to ask questions in new ways, to challenge established ideas, and to find creative responses that respected the populations I chose to serve. Professor Sokoloff's scholarship in the area of domestic violence, community, and women's labor provided me with a tapestry of knowledge that enriched my research, while helping me to understand the complexities of their interconnectedness.

I thank Professor William Kornblum for serving on my committee and for sharing his expertise on ethnographic studies. His insight and assistance helped me bring the women's stories to life and ensured the voices of these survivors would be heard in this dissertation.

I was born into a family that taught me to follow my dreams no matter how many obstacles blocked my way. They taught me to face challenges, endure hardships and to always keep moving forward toward my goals. I am thankful to my maternal grandmother, Jennie Santora, who lovingly cared for me as I was growing-up and taught me to "stay strong." I am grateful to my mother, Maria Marrone, who passed in 2005 before this work was finished. She believed fervently in my work and in the early days of the program she organized the Women and Work Clothing Closet so that all the women could "dress for success." Most importantly, her constant admonishment that I "could be anything I wanted to if I was willing to work hard" helped me to stay focused on my goals and bring me through many difficult times in my life. I deeply appreciate the support of my aunt, Rose Baio, who has always been like a big-sister to me. I thank her for always supporting my efforts with her kind words, unswerving faith in my abilities, and unconditional love. The many years of hard work were certainly made easier because of my daughter, Taniamarie Nylund, who never gave up on me. I thank her for always believing in me and in the value of my work, for remaining strong no matter how tough things got, and especially for her loyalty through the many dark times in our lives; I could not have arrived at this moment without her love and support.

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Introduction

As discussed below, the Women and Work Program has been running under the auspices of Queens College, CUNY, since 2002. Traditional pathways out of low-wage labor involve either increasing educational attainment or participating in job-specific training programs. In either case, women will need to have the confidence they are capable of change and a support system in place as they move through the process. These basic needs for success are exacerbated for survivors of intimate partner violence. This study will examine the impact of the Women and Work Program on survivors' abilities to move from low-wage labor to sustainable employment. Additionally, it will explore whether the program's Community of Women furnishes the social network and empowerment necessary for survivors to work towards living violent free lives.

This dissertation will present the results from data collected between 2002 and 2008 at the Women and Work program. I will explore whether this complex intervention – computer skills training, creation of an ongoing, close-knit community, and social capital -- assisted women in escaping domestic violence and intense poverty.

It is important to note that this is not an evaluation of the Women and Work Program. Evaluation research is usually undertaken by someone who is detached from the program under study, which this researcher is not; I am both the founder and director of the program. I asked marginalized women to share intimate histories and personal moments in their lives, as well as to reveal their innermost thoughts and feelings on a wide array of topics. By becoming a part of the group, I believe I was able to achieve an intimacy with the women that enriched me both professionally and personally; through this relationship, I was given an entrée into the every-day lived experiences of these survivors.

Chapter 1 - Theoretical Framework

While the theoretical framework of Women and Work is based in-part on well-established sociological concepts regarding social networks, social capital, and community, it also embraces ideas from the well-established Twelve-Step program known as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). While each of these makes important contributions to W&W's theoretical framework, they are best understood as foundation pieces upon which the Women and Work theoretical framework is constructed. Ideas were deconstructed allowing each aspect to be considered for both its individual, as well as its collective, value(s). This process involved re-envisioning the integration of the component pieces, recognizing their symbiotic relationship one to the other, and then processing them into a mindset to be adopted and internalized by program participants. Women and Work's theoretical framework provides a new and innovative way of thinking about empowerment programs for marginalized women.

The Establishment of Social Networks

A social network is a social structure made up of individuals or organizations called nodes, which are tied or connected by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, or common interests. In its simplest form, a social network can be viewed as a map of specified ties between the nodes. The connection between the individual and the nodes are their social contacts. The network can be used to measure social capital or the value that an individual obtains from the social network.

There is extensive sociological literature documenting the significance of personal networks that people draw upon for emotional, social, and financial support, including housing and employment (Granovetter, 1995; Marks and McLanahan, 1993; Hogan et al, 1990). Social

networks strongly affect outcomes for three main reasons: 1) they affect the flow and the quality of information, 2) they are an important source of reward and punishment, and 3) they engender a sense of trust among their members (Granovetter, 2005). Social networks have been evaluated in terms of their potential utility, or social capital (Boisjoly, 1995). However studies have also shown that women's networks differ significantly from those of men's. Women's networks tend to focus on kin and neighbors, while men's networks tend to focus particularly on coworkers, rather than kin. These differences are due to the difference structural locations of women and men in the family and labor market (Moore, 1990). It is at this important juncture that the social network created by Women and Work diverges from the established concepts associated with women's networks.

Women and Work's social network is focused on job-retention and mobility and was developed as a hybrid version of both the more gendered sociological versions described above. In other words, the network strives towards and values the quality of the relationships established between participants as coworkers, while simultaneously maintaining and respecting the powerful kinship ties that are developed as part of the structural and ideological design of the Women and Work program. Maintaining the strength of the network is ultimately about reciprocity; both the program and its members prosper by the exchange of services between them. This network, like most others, exists only as long as the balance – that is the give and take relationship – maintains its beneficence to its members. If disequilibrium occurs, the network would need to reestablish the balance between the parties as this is the essential element in all networks. The balancing act of the W&W social network with its underpinnings in both the practical world of work and the social world of kinship is part of the innovative approach to this

empowerment program for marginalized women and an important part of what makes it meaningful to them.

The Creation of Community

"Community is the container within which our longing to be is fulfilled" (xii) (Block, 2008)

The creation of the Women and Work "Community of Women" is a new way of thinking about communities. It draws upon the classic sociological ideas referring to community, as well as concepts from the twelve-step program known as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). The purpose of W&W's Community of Women is to create a real community for participants that is always shared whether participants are on-site, interacting in chapters or small groups, or isolated and on their own. They must feel deeply connected to the community and that connection needs to provide them with a profound sense of belonging. I would argue that the community attains viability only when its members believe it to be a repository of trust, when its members rely on the fact that the community will always act in their best interest. When this happens, the community becomes far more than a network, it becomes the core, a sort of hub, that supports its members; whether they are near or far, they are connected by the invisible bonds of trust they cultivated and established over time.

Since program participants ultimately move on, and they will not always be bound to the program physically, the Community needs to remain intact while transcending spatial boundaries. In other words, there must be a cohesive membership – a sort of superglue that generates solidarity even in the absence of other members. The Community needs to be participatory and welcoming when the participants are on-site at the program, but it also has to be internalized by individuals for when they are on their own. Instead of being cared for,

participants literally become the custodial caretakers of their own community with a vested interest in its perpetuation.

Thinking Sociologically About Community

Before 1910 there was little social science literature concerning "community" with the first clear sociological definition emerging after 1915. The term was coined by C.J. Galpin in relation to delineating rural communities in terms of the trade and service surrounding a central village (Harper and Dunham, 1959). A number of competing definitions quickly ensued. Some definitions focused on community as a geographical area; some on a group of people living in a particular place; and others which looked to community as an area of common life.

According to Frazer (1999), community can be approached as a value, bringing together a number of elements such as solidarity, commitment, mutuality and trust. Community offers the promise of belonging and calls for us to acknowledge our interdependence. The social fabric of community is formed from an expanding shared sense of belonging, but what makes building a community so complex is that it occurs in an infinite number of small steps. Weaving and strengthening the fabric of a community is a collective effort and starts when we focus our mindset on connectedness.

Community brings together a number of elements, for example, solidarity, commitment, mutuality and trust. It can also be conceived as a descriptive category or set of variables: 1) place (locality), a geographical place where the people have something in common; 2) interest -- an interest that elective communities share, that is, a common characteristic other than place; 3) communion, stemming from a sense of attachment to a place, group or idea; in other words, the "spirit of community," communion's strongest form, which entails a profound meeting or

encounter. “People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning and a referent of their identity” (Cohen, 1985, 118). Community implies both similarity and difference and is marked by its boundaries, which may be tangible or perhaps, something less obvious. The community has a life of its own, as people become free enough to share, and secure enough to get along.

The AA Community

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) was founded in 1935 by Bill Wilson (known as Bill W.) and Dr. Robert Smith (known as Dr. Bob). In post-Prohibition America it was common to think of alcoholism as a moral failing and the medical profession of the time thought it incurable. For those without funds, the only assistance was through State hospitals, The Salvation Army, or other charitable or religious groups.

Wilson and Smith, both long-term alcoholics, were determined to develop a program that would be able to help the worst alcoholics. They believed that alcoholics could not conquer alcoholism by themselves; instead, they thought sober alcoholics could show drinking alcoholics that it was possible to enjoy life without alcohol, thus inspiring a spiritual conversion that would help ensure sobriety.

Eventually, Wilson and Smith formed a nonprofit group called the Alcoholic Foundation. Together they wrote and published a book that shared their personal experiences and what they did to remain sober. The original Six-Steps, which were taken from a religious group the men had once had close ties to, were eventually expanded to Twelve-Steps. The book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (AKA: the Big Book), is the basic text for AA; it is from this book that the group got its name. The fourth edition of the Big Book (published in 2001) left the first part of the book, which deals with the program, virtually unchanged. However, the personal stories contained in

the second part are updated with every edition to reflect current AA membership. Today, according to the group's official website, there are over two million members of Alcoholics Anonymous worldwide.

It would be fair to say that AA could best be viewed both as a program for recovery from alcoholism and as a fellowship for alcoholics. The fellowship is a community held together by a core social practice, the mutual telling of life stories of drinking and recovery. The stories told by members, their autobiographical narratives, create a social structure between themselves and their audience and these stories are the means by which AA members acquire and maintain their identities as recovering alcoholics (Swora, 2001). Finally, it is through the strong feelings that are evoked through storytelling that a kind of intimacy, based on shared emotion, is created.

The significance of building a community through a single identifying factor, namely alcoholism, was a powerful incentive to me as a researcher. The ability of AA to reach across spatial boundaries and to create communities any place its members gathered specifically because they felt connected to the underlying principles established in AA's Twelve-Steps also addressed my vision of the internalized community. Although my interests were far afield from AA, the structural building blocks were the same. I sought to create a program where women, whose identities had been shaped by their powerful life-experiences with poverty and violence, could rebuild their lives. I envisioned creating an ideology for Women and Work that would create a cohesive group based on a shared identity that would become their strength rather than a negative stigma. Much in the same way that the term "recovering alcoholic" implies the power of an individual, rather than their condition; I too wanted the term "survivor" to become an identity that warranted the respect earned by women struggling with domestic violence.

Finally, in much the same way that the autobiographical narratives told at AA meetings are self-reflexive and revelatory, they also serve to establish the group's cohesive membership. At Women and Work, the program's Opening and Closing Circles serve a similar purpose. Every morning and each afternoon, W&W participants share their life stories, their autobiographical narratives, with similar results. They too are unearthing raw emotions, breaking long silences, and accepting responsibility for their lives. By exposing their vulnerabilities to the group, they are establishing bonds of trust, forming group solidarity, and together they are buildiing their own Community of Women.

The Benefits of Social Capital

The concept of social capital, though not labeled as such, has existed ever since small communities formed and humans interacted with the expectation of reciprocity and trust. Social capital lends itself to multiple definitions, interpretations, and uses. It is a sociological concept that refers to connections within and between social networks, and although there are a variety of definitions, all of them share the core idea that social networks (i.e., groups composed of individuals tied by one or more specific types of interdependency such as trust), have value. One of the first occurrences of the term "social capital" in reference to social cohesion and community can be found in L.J. Hanifan's article regarding local support for rural schools. Since that time the term has been approached by all social sciences, but it was popularized by Pierre Bourdieu (1986); James Coleman (1988, 1990); and Robert Putnam (1995).

Bourdieu and Coleman conceptualize social capital at an individual level, believing that it exists between individuals. At this level, social capital is about establishing relationships purposefully, and employing them to generate intangible and tangible benefits over shorter and

longer terms. These benefits can be social, psychological, emotional and economical. In *The Forms of Capital* Pierre Bourdieu makes the distinction between three forms of capital: economic, cultural, and social. He defines social capital as the "aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 248). For Bourdieu, the possession of social capital is an attribute of elites, a means by which particular networks hold onto power and advantage.

James Coleman further develops the notion of social capital by theorizing it in a way that illuminates the processes and experiences of non-elite groups. He argues that those living in marginalized communities or who are members of the working class can also benefit from its possession. Coleman defined social capital by its function. "It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities, having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure" (p. 302, 1990). For Coleman, whether society benefits from social capital depends entirely on the individual uses to which it has been put.

Finally, Putnam focuses on the benefit accruing to the community. For him, social capital "refers to the collective value of all social networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other" (p. 66, 1995). He feels that social capital can be measured by the amount of trust and "reciprocity" in a community or between individuals. Putnam believes that interaction enables people to build communities, to commit themselves to each other, and to knit together the social fabric. He discusses two main components of the concept: bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding refers to the value assigned to social networks between homogeneous groups of people and Bridging refers to that of social networks between

socially heterogeneous groups. According to Putnam, "Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40" (p.23). (Putnam, 2000).

The Women and Work network establishes norms of reciprocity that promote cooperative actions among its members that are used as a resource for mutual benefit. My respondents, as discussed in the Findings section, were convinced that the social capital they acquired through their membership with Women and Work was an important benefit because they profited in many ways, because the women had no associations that were comparable to W&W's network and therefore the benefits it could offer. In other words, the benefits that accrue to a network's members are based upon the credibility and status of the network itself. The W&W network enjoys a position of status in the community because 1) it has a record of success in the advocacy community; and 2) it is recognized as a credible organization because it operates under the aegis of Queens College, a reputable and locally known institution of higher education. Therefore, the women gain status through their association with W&W; this contributes to their social capital they acquire.

In essence, the social capital that flows to the women is an invaluable benefit enjoyed both on the individual level as well as the collective. As individuals whose everyday lives have been marked by struggle and isolation, social capital benefits them by realizing their lives have value and they are entitled to respect. As a collective, they have the benefits of having the support of those who have become their trusted friends through their shared networks, namely Women and Work and the Community of Women.

Survivor Identity

Broadly speaking, identity refers to the overall character personality of an individual or group. Identity is a topic of extensive theory and research for many of the social sciences; however, sociology and psychology have devoted a great deal of attention to this subject. The study of identity forms a critical cornerstone within modern sociological thought.

Sociologists generally define the overall self as consisting of multiple identities tied to the different roles a person plays in the social world. Early twentieth-century sociologists such as Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead emphasized how other people provide reflected appraisals that encourage the understanding and establishment of a sense of identity. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* Erving Goffman brought a dramaturgical approach to social identity. Goffman theorized that people play social roles like actors on a stage, claiming or becoming committed to a particular group identity. Part of this identity includes a public "face" that a person claims and then defends in social interaction. In Goffman's later writings, he discusses a "spoiled" identity, in which a person can be stigmatized as a result of deviant behaviors or personal characteristics.

Contemporary versions of symbolic interactionism examine how a person's identity is affected by the elements of social structure, in particular the social positions or roles that one plays and the meanings and expectations associated with those roles. Role identities may differ in number, salience, and value to an individual. The meaning of a role identity is something each person must determine and negotiate, and as such, it can be affected by the reactions of others. The sociological literature agrees that over time there can be changes in a role, as well as in the identity associated with that role.

The concept of identity is also a crucial feature of Women and Work. I would argue that it is essential to the development of the survivor identity. The experience of my respondents detailed the many roles they played in their day-to-day lives, their lack of status in the lives they lived, and the stigma that attached to them as victims. In-line with the sociological concepts discussed in the literature, the reflected appraisals of self by the respondents were negative, lacking self-worth. In accordance with Goffman's dramaturgical approach, the women tried to maintain a public face of normality, while "backstage," they were struggling to survive. As the findings section indicates, the women in the program faced overwhelming odds and horrific conditions, yet they were consistently stigmatized in accordance with Goffman's concept of "spoiled" identity. However, despite their circumstances, my respondents displayed strength of character and a will to survive. The term "survivor" is most commonly associated with concepts of courage, endurance, and determination – to prevail through changing conditions and misfortune. Considering these attributes, I chose to incorporate the idea of a survivor identity into the Women and Work program. I argue that my respondents' persistent determination is a reflection of their innate survivor identity, which needs to be cultivated and relabeled with a positive stigma. The survivor identity recognizes the resilience survivors display and attaches a positive stigma to the terminology. The survivor identity is another critical and interlocking aspect of the Women and Work ideological infrastructure.

Summary

In sum I would argue that the establishment of a social network, the creation of a community, the benefits of social capital, and the creation of a survivor identity are all critical components of the Women and Work ideology. While each of these is important individually, when they are joined in an interlocking framework they provide an infrastructure capable of

supporting both the goals of the group and the women's individual goals of recreating their lives from the inside out, leaving each more powerful and resilient than when they began.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Women and Wage Labor

As Alice Kessler-Harris so aptly said, "women have been restricted, constrained, manipulated, and discouraged from taking paths that challenged the psychic and social underpinnings of the prevailing family structure…Women's place was in the home. When they strode bravely into the work force, they landed in its lowest places…to most people it seemed totally natural" (Kessler-Harris, 1982). While it can be said that there have been many changes since the advent of the industrial era, it is also true that much has stayed the same regarding women and low-wage labor.

Research indicates that over the past two decades women hold the majority (59 percent) of low-wage jobs (Bernstein, 1999; Bernstein & Hartmann, 2000; Urban Institute, 2000; Swanberg, 2005). The low-wage female workforce is disproportionately young, less educated, and single. Additionally, those working in service occupations, retail trade, agriculture, and personal-service industries are likely to receive low wages, as are women who work part time. The consequence of low-paying employment is often living near, at, or below the poverty level (Kim, 2000).

Despite the fact that New York City's poverty rate declined slightly in 2007, the gap between the rich and poor, already the highest of any state in the nation, grew even more than the year before (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Nearly one in four New Yorkers lives in poverty, with two million New Yorkers needing some form of financial assistance. Of the poor, families headed by women with children under 18 are more than twice as likely to be poor as are all families. In the first half of 2009, the median weekly earnings for full time single mothers in New York City was about half the income needed to cover the most basic expenses for a family

of three (Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement). A recent survey of poor New York City households, even with a full-time worker, revealed the following: 48 percent did not get or postponed needed medical care or prescriptions; 45 percent fell behind in paying their rent; 39 percent had their utilities turned off; and 39 percent relied on meal programs or food pantries (Community Service Society, 2006).

For women whose lives are in crisis, there are no simple answers, and stopgap measures only provide a temporary fix instead of long-term change. The current economic downturn will only serve to exacerbate the problems of poor women and their families. Once unemployed, women tend to be affected more severely. Unemployment insurance in most states is not available to part-time workers, and women make up more than two-thirds of the part-time workforce (Martinez, 2002). According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), only 34 percent of unemployed women in 2000 were eligible to receive unemployment benefits. According to the IWPR, the unemployment rates for female heads of households, which has steadily increased since March 2001, is 8.3 percent. Because women make up 60 percent of low-wage workers living from paycheck to paycheck, many women and their families will be unable to weather the hard times ahead. To achieve economic self-sufficiency and adequately provide for their families, women need jobs that pay a living wage and provide benefits and opportunities for advancement. Women hold the majority of low-wage jobs (59%), and they are still more likely to be low paid than are male workers (Kim, 2000; Bernstein & Hartmann, 2000; and Bernstein, 1999). Additionally, because they are clustered in the lowest-paying jobs, few of these jobs offer access to career paths and advancement; progress is limited to small increments in weekly or hourly pay at best. Opportunities to advance are limited by inadequate skills and educational attainment, limited access to skill development opportunities, and lack of knowledge

of the labor market and the techniques needed to navigate it successfully (Lee & Vinokur, 2007; Jones, 2006; and Brodsky & Ovwigho, 2002).

Intimate Partner Violence and Women's Employment

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is not only a personal tragedy; it is an epidemic in America, as well as a serious crime. IPV is the most frequent cause of serious injury to women, more than car accidents, muggings, and stranger rapes combined. According to the Centers for Disease Control, intimate partner violence is a serious, preventable public health problem affecting more than 32 million Americans, or more than 10 percent of the U.S. population. In 2008, the Human Rights Watch drew attention to a new government report showing huge increases in the incidences of domestic violence, rape, and sexual assault over a two-year period in the U.S. The statistics show a 42 percent increase in reported domestic violence and 25-percent increase in the reported incidence of rape and sexual assault. Intimate partner violence is often a hidden crime, and this report is a stark reminder of how serious and widespread this problem is in our society.

Domestic violence doesn't stay at home when its victims go to work. The consequences of intimate partner violence have major ramifications for the victimized employee (individual-level consequences) and the workplace where the victim is employed (organizational-level consequences). According to Government statistics, there are as many as 40,000 incidents of on-the-job violence in which the victims knew their attackers intimately. More than 70 percent of human resources and security personnel surveyed by the American Bar Association's Commission on Domestic Violence reported an incident of domestic violence in their workplace. These events cost billions of dollars a year by endangering co-workers, disrupting workflow, and leading to vandalism and property damage – not to mention lowering the productivity of female

victims. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that medical care, mental health services, and lost productivity (time away from work) cost of IPV was an estimated $5.8 billion in 1995.[i] These costs included nearly $4.1 billion in the direct costs of medical and mental health care and nearly $1.8 billion in the indirect costs of lost productivity. When updated to 2003 dollars, IPV costs exceeded $8.3 billion, which included $460 million for rape, $6.2 billion for physical assault, $461 million for stalking, and $1.2 billion in the value of lost lives (Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003; Max, Rice, Finkelstein, Bardwell, & Leadbetter, 2004). Victims of IPV lost almost 8 million days of paid work because of the violence perpetrated against them by current or former husbands, boyfriends and dates. This loss is the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs and almost 5.6 million days of household productivity each year.

The first systematic data collection effort specifically undertaken to examine the relationship between abuse and employment was done in 1987 by Friedman and Couper; the study, "The Cost of Domestic Violence: A Preliminary Investigation of the Financial Cost of Domestic Violence," focused on fifty battered working women; it revealed that 56 percent of the interviewees reported having lost at least one job, and 54 percent reported missing an average of three days of work per month due to complications suffered from domestic violence. In a comparable study Shepard and Pence (1988) surveyed battered women in shelters. They concluded that the work performance of 58 percent of the participants (n=71) was seriously compromised by absenteeism and tardiness related to physical abuse (Shepard & Pence, 1988). Exploratory research conducted by Susan Lloyd (1993) also offered evidence to support the notion that women's lives are greatly affected by the violence they experience. She established that beyond the benefits income provided, employment also impacted on the safety concerns

women had in their lives. Sixty percent of the women named male violence and coercion as influencing their lives and labor force participation. In 1997, Lloyd conducted the first random survey of women that related the experience of domestic violence to labor force participation. Her research revealed that women who experienced domestic violence in their adult relationships were "more likely to have experienced unemployment, to have had more jobs, and to report more physical and mental health problems (Lloyd S. , 1997). The short- and long-term physical consequences of intimate partner violence include bruises, broken bones, loss of menstruation, bladder infection, concussions, migraine headaches, memory loss, and difficulty concentrating. Psychological consequences include heightened rates of suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, drug and alcohol abuse, posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety (Campbell J., 2002).

Exerting control over victim's employment or job opportunities is a form of victimization used by batterers to intimidate their partners (MacMillan & Gartner, 1999). Studies estimate that 36 percent to 75 percent of employed intimate partner violence victims were bothered by their abusive partners while at work (Shepard & Pence, 1988; Swanberg, Logan, & Macke, 2005). The literature identifies two primary categories: work disruption and work-related stalking. Work disruption consists primarily of actions that prevent the victim from reaching the workplace either on time or at all; these actions predominantly take place in the home or off the workplace premises. Batterers use tactics such as hiding clothes, not showing up to care for young children, or beating women prior to work. Work-related stalking behavior by abusive men is commonly grouped within two dimensions: on-the job surveillance and on-the-job harassment. On-the-job surveillance behaviors include perpetrators looking into the window of a workplace, waiting for the victim at the end of the workday, or for a victim along her commuting route. On-the-job

harassment incidents include the perpetrator appearing on the workplace premises or when the perpetrator makes telephone calls to victims, their coworkers, or supervisors.

The consequences of job-interference tactics have significant ramifications for women who are trying to work while experiencing abuse. The literature reviewed suggests that 66 percent to 96 percent of employed victims of partner violence report that employment was disrupted in some way because of partner victimization (Friedman & Couper, 1987; Stanley, 1992; Swanberg, Logan, & Macke, 2005). Thus, while partner violence does interfere with employment, it does not necessarily prevent it. The literature suggests that partner violence does not affect employment status; rather, it affects the victim's ability to sustain consistent employment for long periods of time (Tolman & Raphael, 2000; Danziger, Corcoran, Danziger, & Heflin, 2002).

The inability of women in abusive relationships to sustain employment severely retards the chances of women to accumulate the work credentials needed to obtain better-paying jobs. Job loss as a direct result of domestic violence is reported between 5 to 27 percent (Riger, Raja, & Camacho, 2002; Romero, Chavkin, Wise, & Smith, 2003; Swanberg, Logan, & Macke, 2005). Reasons women leave their jobs include feeling shame associated with their situation, fear for themselves and their children, embarrassment associated with abusers' continued on-the-job harassment, unreliability of child care, children's health issues, or because abusers forced them to resign (Moe & Bell, 2004; Riger, Raja, & Camacho, 2002; Romero, Chavkin, Wise, & Smith, 2003). Sometimes women quit their jobs because the physical injuries sustained from abusers' assaults were too severe to continue working or they feared for their life, and to avoid future victimization, they had to leave their jobs (Moe & Bell, 2004).

Regardless of the reasons, be it termination or resignation, intimate partner violence victims lose their jobs because of the abuse. High job turnover rates may explain the more frequent spells of unemployment experienced by victims. Additionally, the lack of long-standing employment may explain the lower personal income of victims of domestic violence (Lloyd & Taluc, 1999). Regardless of the reason, job loss either by resignation or termination by employers for behaviors related to partner victimization is likely to compromise women's economic security (Allard, Albelda, Collen, & Cosenza, 1997; Tolman & Raphael, 2000; Moe & Bell, 2004). Research has documented the importance of financial independence in overcoming violent relationships (Strube & Barbour, 1984; Shepard & Pence, 1988; Campbell, Rose, Kub, & Nedd, 1998; Moe & Bell, 2004). Economic security ranks high among the factors women consider in deciding whether to leave an abusive relationship.

Intimate partner violence has significant social and economic consequences for victims and the organizations at which they work. The literature suggests that intimate partner violence has a significant effect on employed victims' day-to-day work life. Additionally, IPV also has serious consequences for employers, especially when victims fail to disclose their situation, putting themselves and possibly their co-workers at risk. Finally, one of the greatest risks is when intimate partner violence fails to be recognized as a workplace problem.

Domestic Violence as a Social Problem

> "Domestic violence causes far more pain than the visible marks of bruises and scars. It is devastating to be abused by someone that you love and think loves you in return." – *Senator Dianne Feinstein*

Domestic violence is not only a personal tragedy; it is an epidemic in America, as well as a serious crime. It is the most frequent cause of serious injury to women, more than car accidents, muggings, and stranger rapes combined. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), intimate partner violence is a serious, preventable public health problem affecting more than 32 million Americans, or more than 10 percent of the U.S. population. In 2008, the Human Rights Watch drew attention to a new government report showing huge increases in the incidences of domestic violence, rape, and sexual assault over a two-year period in the U.S. The statistics show a 42 percent increase in reported domestic violence and 25-percent increase in the reported incidence of rape and sexual assault. Intimate partner violence is often a hidden crime, and this report is a stark reminder of how serious and widespread this problem is in our society.

Domestic Violence Policy: A Historical Survey

From the colonial-era into the latter half of the twentieth century, American jurisprudence, religious beliefs, and a patriarchal culture formed a powerful matrix of domination enforcing women's subjugation to men. From the laws of chastisement established under English Common Law to Biblical injunctions investing husbands with the authority to control their wives' actions through violence, women suffered at the hands of men. Over time domestic violence migrated from the private sphere to the public arena and government agencies acknowledged it as a public health issue. Concurrently, the legal system evolved through non-

involvement to mandatory arrest and everything in-between; yet, despite these changes violence against women remains entrenched. In its landmark study on domestic violence, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that "…women are more at risk from violence at home than in the street" (WHO, 2005)

When viewed from a historical perspective, it becomes evident that domestic violence has always been epidemic and is not just symptomatic of a breakdown in a formerly nonviolent family structure. From a sociological perspective the law is a set of codified norms that represent the will of the dominant society; by examining the legal history of the laws associated with violence against women, we can better understand how these abuses became the acceptable norm in the social world. The centuries of oppressive laws has devalued women as individuals and justified the horrific offenses committed against them. The law is a powerful tool; it can validate injuries, redistribute power, and increase the voices that can be heard. Therefore, I would argue that by recognizing this legal history we can perceive it as one stream that has led us to the current impasse regarding violence against women; I further maintain that by reshaping legal policy, we can reshape the social experience.

The history of violence against women dates back to 753 B.C. when Romulus established laws governing domestic relations, conferring authority in the husband as sole head of each household. Under these laws wives were considered the property of their husbands; they had no legal standing as an individual. These laws established a line of thinking, a rationale, for the law of chastisement (Okun, 1986). Because men "needed" to protect themselves from prosecution, they were given the right to use physical punishment to prevent wives from becoming involved in criminal activities. These laws established a tradition perpetuated in English common law (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

Just as Roman law was becoming more liberal in its treatment of women, the rise of Christianity reestablished the traditional patriarchal authority of the husband. From the time of St. Paul, the Church played an ambivalent role regarding wife abuse, vacillating between supporting punishment, on the one hand, and advising moderation on the other. However, the *Rules of Marriage* written in the second half of the fifteenth century by Friar Cherubino of Siena left no doubt about the church's position, as can be seen from the following excerpt:

> When you see your wife commit an offense, don't rush at her with insults and violent blows…Scold her sharply, bully and terrify her. And if this still doesn't work…take up a stick and beat her soundly, for it is better to punish the body and correct the soul…Readily beat her, not in rage but out of charity…for [her] soul, so that the beating will redound to your merit and her good. (Davidson, 1978)

The laws of chastisement were not affected by the advent of Protestantism and its rise in England led to the "golden age of the rod" in its use against women and children. To ensure compliance, women were taught it was their sacred duty to obey their husbands (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Men were legally able to beat their wives well into the nineteenth century. Although some norms were developed against the use of sharp or crushing weapons, violence during pregnancy, and assaults on vital or sensitive organs of the body. Yet, despite these norms, it was a rare occasion when a husband faced a sanction greater than expressions of disapproval (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

The beginning of reforms regarding the treatment of women came towards the latter half of the nineteenth century in England. John Stuart Mill waited eight

years before publishing his essay, *The Subjection of Women,* written in 1861. Though his words stirred controversy in their time, they remain just as relevant today:

> When we consider how vast is the number of men, in any great country, who are little higher than brutes, and that this never prevents them from being able, through the law of marriage, to obtain a victim, the breadth and depth of human misery caused in this shape alone by the abuse of the institution swells to something appalling.
>
> The vilest malefactor has some wretched woman tied to him, against whom he can commit any atrocity except killing her, and if tolerably cautious, can do that without much danger of the legal penalty.

In 1878, Francis Cobbe wrote "Wife Torture in England;" she denounced the brutality of husbands in working class areas such as Liverpool's "kicking-district" She documents 6,000 of the most brutal assaults on women over a three-year period who had been maimed, blinded, trampled, burned and murdered. Cobbe theorized that abuse continues because of the belief that a man's wife is his property. Her concerns were moved forward by male parliamentarians and the Matrimonial Causes Act was passed. The Act allowed victims of violence to obtain a legal separation from the husband; entitled them custody of the children; and to retain earnings and property secured during the separation. Such a separation order could only be obtained if the husband had been convicted of aggravated assault and the court considered her in grave danger. Furthermore, Englishmen could no longer legally keep women under lock and key, nor could they sell their wives and

daughters into prostitution. Centuries of suffering was finally beginning to yield change in England.

Wife-beating was an issue in America as well. The first known reform against domestic violence was written in 1641 in the Massachusetts *Body of Liberties*, one of the earliest sources of individual rights. The *Body of Liberties* mapped out the relationship of the church to the commonwealth, the Commonwealth to the male head of household, and the head of the household to the wife, children, and servants. By formalizing what had previously been a matter of custom and traditions, this early document solidified the social hierarchy and brought it under the purview of law. It was within this context that the first legal prohibition against domestic violence was formulated in the West, dictating that "Every marryed woeman shall be free from bodily correction or stripes by her husband, unless it be in his own defence upon her assault" (Pleck, 1987). However, it is important to understand this law in the socio-political context of the time. The early Puritans believed that women should be subordinate to their husbands, but they also believed family violence threatened the piousness of their town. To ensure that both these issues fundamental to their way of life were maintained, they created a code that defied a husband's blatant use of physical aggression against his wife. However, devoutly religious, family values and cohesiveness took primacy in their lives; therefore, women were rarely able to divorce even in the face of brutal forms of abuse. Ultimately, the law was not created out of a humanitarian concern for women, but to create a way to maintain the family and the familial structure upheld by biblical scripture.

Because nineteenth-century religious beliefs encouraged women's subordination in the household, they contributed to domestic assault. These principles often led husbands to justify their "right" to use violence to control their wives. Furthermore, these ideals created social

tolerance of wife-beating (Hammerton, 1992). The emphasis of religious based subordination suggested that for a woman to be virtuous and serve God, she must follow the lead of her husband. Men, on the other hand, felt they had a God given right to control their wives, including the use of physical correction. As the owner of his wife, a man could do as he pleased with and to his spouse because she lacked the power to control her own actions. These standards of a man's domination over his wife created social acceptance of marital cruelty (Hammerton, 1992).

The first American legal ruling on the subject of "reasonable chastisement" came in 1824 with the case of *Calvin Bradley v. the State* (of Mississippi). The court found Bradley, who was convicted by a lower court of assault and battery against his wife, had gone too far in his chastisement of her; the court noted, "If the defendant now before us could shew from the record, in this case he confined himself within reasonable bounds, when he thought proper to chastise his wife, we would deliberate long before an affirmance of the judgment." While criticizing Bradley for shaming his family, the court ruled:

> Family broils and dissensions cannot be investigated before the tribunals of the country, without casting a shade over the character of those who are unfortunately engaged in the controversy. To screen from public reproach those who may be thus unhappily situated, let the husband be permitted to exercise the right of moderate chastisement in cases of great emergency and use salutary restrains in every case of misbehavior, without being subjected to vexatious prosecutions, resulting in mutual discredit and shame of all parties concerned.

The precedent set by this Mississippi court to allow the corporal punishment of wives by their husbands would continue for four decades.

By the early decades of the nineteenth century women, predominantly from the middle- and upper-classes, sought reforms in many aspects of women's lives. The first women's rights movement inaugurated in 1848 at the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention was the first movement to analyze the husband's right to chastise his wife as a symbol of the political system of male dominance over females. In the *Declaration of Sentiments* (1848), the women objected to the status of married women: "In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master – the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement."

In 1864 a North Carolina High Court's ruling in *State v. Jessse Black* illustrated the assertion of the Seneca Falls women, that upon marriage, husbands became the rulers of their wives. In this case, a man abused his wife after she called him names. In its ruling the court said:

> A husband is responsible for the acts of his wife and he is required to govern his household, and for that purpose the law permits him to use towards his wife such a degree of force as is necessary to control an unruly temper and make her behave herself; and unless some permanent injury be inflicted, or there be an excess of violence, or such a degree of cruelty as shows that it is inflicted to gratify this own bad passions, the law will not invade the domestic forum, or go beyond the curtain.

Just ten years later in 1874, the North Carolina court again expressed concern about excessive abuse but advised against public scrutiny of, or interference in, domestic and marital relationships. In *State v. Richard Oliver*, the court found:

> From motives of public policy and in order to preserve the sanctity of the domestic circle, the Courts will not listen to trivial complaints…if no permanent injury has been inflicted, nor malice, cruelty, nor dangerous violence shown by the husband, it is better to draw the curtain, shut out the public gaze, and leave the parties to forget and forgive.

A change in direction came in the 1871 landmark case, *Fulgham v. State* when the court found that a husband did not have the right to physically abuse his wife, even "moderately" or with "restraint." The court ruled that a married woman deserved protection under the law when it stated:

> A rod which may be drawn through a wedding ring is not now deemed necessary to teach the wife her duty and subjection to the husband. The husband is therefore not justified or allowed by law to use such a weapon, or any other, for her moderate correction. The wife is not to be considered as the husband's slave. And the privilege, ancient though it be, to beat her with a stick, to pull her hair, choke her, spit in her face or kick her about the floor, or to inflict upon her like indignities, is not now acknowledged by our law.

In the same year, the Massachusetts Supreme Court rejected a husband's manslaughter defense that he had a right to chastise his wife for drunkenness by hitting her several times on the cheek and temple. As a result of his blows, she fell, hit her head and died. In *Commonwealth v. McAfee*, the Massachusetts Supreme Court announced that "beating or striking a wife violently with the open hand is not one of the rights conferred on a husband by the marriage, even if the wife be drunk or insolent."

Although both the Alabama and Massachusetts cases declared husbands did not have the right to physically chastise their wives, no criminal penalties were yet attached to physical abuse. In a North Carolina case just three years earlier, *State v. Rhodes,* the North Carolina Supreme Court declared that although a husband's whipping of his wife "would without question have constituted a battery if the subject of it had not been the defendant's wife," they refused to convict him of assault and battery, ruling that if domestic assaults were prosecuted, "the evil of publicity would be greater than the evil involved in the trifles complained of."

The court's refusal to convict wife batterers continued into the early twentieth century. In 1910, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Thompson v. Thompson* that a wife had no cause for action on an assault and battery charge against her husband because it "would open the doors of the courts to accusations of all sorts of one spouse against the other and bring into public notice complaints for assaults, slander and libel." Although court decisions affirmed that a husband could no longer legally beat his wife, in most court cases a battered wife still had no legal recourse against her husband. In fact, any criminal proceedings against a wife batterer had to be initiated by the state; women could not sue their husbands. Instead, the criminal justice system set up a separate court system – the family court – to deal with domestic complaints. In her article, "The Rule of Love," Siegel argues that the creation of these courts in-fact decriminalized the physical abuse of women (Siegel, 1996). Now, instead of punishing batterers, judges and social workers urged couples to reconcile. Domestic violence was seen as the fault of *both* the man and the woman, enforcing an idea that would perpetuate for decades that violence against a wife was nothing more than a marital "misunderstanding." The goal of these courts was not to punish the abuser as a criminal, but to encourage reconciliation in the marriage, in another words, to keep the marriage intact. The courts used their authority to reinforce traditional family

values and morality, while judges and social workers took on the role of providing knowledge and guidance to a happy and harmonious marriage.

Despite the efforts of the well-intended reformers of the 1920s, the issue of woman-abuse did not receive the attention it warranted, seemingly to fade away. During this period, traditional ideas regarding the double-standard and chastisement continued to influence the courts, the cop on the beat, and in the home. Two legal cases exemplify the double standard as it was applied in the courts: the first in Nebraska (1953), the other in Connecticut (1962). In the Nebraska case, a woman sued her husband for depriving her and their children of the basic life-necessities. The judge ruled in favor of the husband, "As long as the home is maintained and the parties are living as husband and wife, it may be said that the husband is legally supporting his wife" (Martin, 1976). In the Connecticut case, a wife decided to refuse her husband domestic service in response to his inadequate support of her; the court ruled that she was obligated:

> …to be his helpmate, to love and care for him…, to afford him her society and her person…and to labor faithfully to advance his interests…[performing] her household and domestic duties without compensation therefore. A husband is entitled to benefit of his wife's industry and economy (Martin, 1976).

In 1962 a landmark case, *Self v. Self,* changed the legal consequences of physically abusing a spouse. In this case, the California Supreme Court agreed with earlier rulings, stating that a spouse's right to sue would "destroy the peace and harmony of the house." However, the court also observed that this outdated assumption was based "on the bald theory that after a husband has beaten his wife there is a state of peace and harmony left to be disturbed;" therefore, "one spouse may maintain an action against the other" for physical abuse. Despite the ruling

enabling victims to seek legal recourse, by 1965 there had been little change as jurisdictions throughout the United States ignored the complaints of battered women. This point is brought to startling clarity by the fact that in that same year in the nation's capital, Washington D.C, 7,400 women filed official complaints and just two hundred warrants were issued.

Although the second-wave of feminism emerges in the 1960s, their initial efforts to oppose violence against women focused on rape and establishing support services for survivors of rape. This effort led to the establishment of rape crisis centers across the United States. However, as victims told their stories in consciousness-raising groups, the story of women-abuse began to crystallize. In 1973, the first battered women's shelter opens in St. Paul, Minnesota. By the mid-1970s, NOW chapters were establishing task-forces on wife assault around the country and by 1976 there were over six hundred shelters for batted women operating in the U.S. (In 1977, EMERGE, the first treatment program for male offenders opened in Boston, Massachusetts). Unfortunately, over time, those engaged in this movement would discover that neither the shelter system, nor batter intervention or treatment programs, would bring an end to this horrific abuse. The laws of chastisement continued to live on *de facto*, though they had been repealed *de jure*, via law enforcement and the judicial system, both of which still preferred not to intervene (Okun, 1986).

The Federal government was beginning to acknowledge domestic violence as a significant issue. In 1978, the Senate, House, and the United States Civil Rights Commission held hearings on battered women; a year later, President Carter established the Office of Domestic Violence. The Federal government began to pay for the training and employment of shelter workers though the Concentrated Employment and Training Act (CETA) and states began to tax marriage licenses to fund shelters (Felter, 1997). Despite these changes, most police

departments were still primarily male and they remained resistant to the idea of intervening into what they still believed to be a "private matter." In 1976, five women filed a class action suit, *Scott v. Hart* against the Oakland, California police department because the police did not respond to their calls for help when they were assaulted by the intimate partners. The police settle in 1979 and agrees to stop training officers to avoid arrest in domestic violence cases, to treat each case on its own merits, to allow the plaintiff's attorney to do weekly squad trainings with the officers, to hand out resource cards to victims, and to donate money to local battered women's shelters (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Lemon, 1996). The settlement of this case led to policy changes including the prompt response to domestic violence calls, arrest if there is probable cause, and the enforcement of Civil Orders of protection.

Although at this time police officers had discretionary arrest powers regarding alleged abusers, most states still required that any abuse had to be witnessed by an officer, or had to be serious enough to be considered a felony, in order for the officer to make an arrest (Buzawa & Buzawa, 1990). Ultimately, if the officer felt the situation was not ideal for arrest, it became the woman's decision whether she wanted to press charges or not. In 1977, the state of Oregon passed a law requiring mandatory arrest in domestic violence cases (Sparks, 1996). As this policy gained acceptance, it also opened the door to other problems, such as dual arrests, increasing incidence, and heightening the lethality risk. These issues soon placed the policy under great scrutiny by social researchers.

Until the 1980s, violence against women was "a dirty little secret" exemplified by the title of Erin Pizzey's groundbreaking book on the topic called *Scream Quietly or the Neighbors Will Hear*, which documented the collusion in covering up domestic violence[ii] (Dutton, 2006). Both the women suffering the abuse, as well as their allies, realized that not only were women

vulnerable in the private sphere, but that part of the vulnerability was created by the lack of accountability from social systems designed to protect citizens in general, and crime victims in particular. However, the decade of the 1980s brought both positive and negative policy changes for domestic violence survivors. The early part of the decade began with President Regan's dismantling of the Office of Domestic Violence, which had been established by President Carter in 1979 as part of the Department of Health and Human Services. Additionally, many bills requesting funds for domestic violence shelters quickly died. Positive policy changes came in 1984: first, with the passage of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act and the Victims of Crime Act, both of which provided monies for shelters and other related services for domestic violence survivors. Second, studies were begun to determine the effects of a criminal justice response to domestic violence.

The 1990s saw the expansion of system reforms that were begun in the 1980s. In June 1990, Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr. introduced the first Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). In 1993, Senator Biden and the majority staff of the Senate Judiciary Committee conclude a three-year investigation into the causes and effects of violence against women. In his introduction to *Violence Against Women p The Response to Rape: Detours on the Road to Equal Justice* report, Senator Biden states,

> Through this process, I have become convinced that violence against women reflects as much a failure of our nation's collective moral imagination as it does the failure of our nation's laws and regulations. We are helpless to change the course of this violence unless, and until, we achieve a national consensus that it deserves our profound public outrage.

The bill had several initiatives and funding components including "Safe Streets for Women," "Safe Homes for Women," and "Equal Justice for Women in the courts Act of 1994." Three years later, after several more revisions, the bill was passed by both the House (226 sponsors) and Senate (68 sponsors), but with the caveat that it be attached to the Crime Bill of 1993. On September 13, 1994, President William Jefferson Clinton signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 into law, with VAWA as Title IV, sec. 40001-40703. It provided $1.6 billion as follows:

- To require a coordinated community response to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking crimes, encouraging jurisdictions to bring together multiple players to share experience and information and to use their distinct roles to improve community-defined responses.
- To strengthen federal penalties for repeat sex offenders and included a federal "rape shield law," which is intended to prevent offenders from using victim's past sexual conduct against them during a rape trial.
- To create full faith and credit provisions requires states and territories to enforce protection orders issued by other states, tribes and territories.
- To create legal relief for battered immigrants that made it more difficult for abusers to use immigration law to prevent victims from calling the police or seeking safety.
- To allow victims to seek civil rights remedies for gender-related crimes.[iii]

The Department of Justice (DOJ), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) grant programs under WAWA 1994 included:

- DOJ: The STOP (Services*Training*Officers*Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Formula Grant program, the Grants to Encourage Arrest Polices Program, the Rural

Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Assistance Grant program and the STOP Violence Against Indian Women Discretionary Program (created from a statutory set-aside of STOP funds for Indian tribal governments).

- HHS: VAWA authorizes funds to establish the National Domestic Violence hotline and to support battered women's shelters, rape prevention education, and coordinated community responses to domestic violence sexual assault and stalking.

The advocacy organizations who had supported Senator Biden as he drafted VAWA -- the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Legal Momentum and the National Organization for Women – described the bill as the "greatest breakthrough in civil rights for women in nearly two decades." (NCRW, 2008)

In January of 1995, The Violence Against Women Grants Office (VAWGO) was created at the Department of Justice to oversee and implement grants programs and funding for victims' services, allowing women to seek civil remedies for gender-related crimes, and to provide training to increase police and court officials' sensitivity. Three months later, in March, President Clinton appointed Bonnie Campbell to head the U.S. Department of Justice's newly created Violence Against Women Policy Office (VAWO). In 1999, the VAO Policy Office merges with VAWGO, creating the Violence Against Women Office (VAWO).

In October 2000, President Clinton signs the Violence Against Women Act of 2000 (VAWA 2000) into law (Division B of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000). VAWA 2000 reauthorized critical grant programs, established new programs and strengthened federal laws. It emphasized assisting immigrant victims, elderly victims, victims with disabilities, and victims of dating violence. In 2002, legislation makes the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) – formerly known as VAWO—a permanent part of the Department of

Justice with a Presidentially-appointed, Senate confirmed Director. In February 2003, President George W. Bush nominated Diane Stuart as the director, and the Senate confirmed her nomination in July of that year. Three years later, he signed VAWA 2005 into law; it authorized numerous new programs with an increased emphasis on violence against Indian women, sexual assault, and youth victims. VAWA will be up for reauthorization in 2011.[iv]

From the earliest efforts to the present, local and national organizing efforts have focused on accountability and advocacy; in the process, many changes have been made and many lives have been saved. The antiquated prerogative of men to beat and subjugate their wives has been significantly curtailed. There has been a proliferation of battered women's shelters, a wealth of research on all aspects of domestic violence, a range of policies to combat the problem, and a broad range of programs to protect and support abused women, as well as to arrest and/or sanction batterers. Yet, despite all of these accomplishments, domestic violence remains deeply embedded in society and we still lack a definition of the problem that permits us to accurately determine its significance in the general population, its duration or dynamics, or whether the provisions we have taken to limit or prevent the problem are working. "The domestic violence movement began with a vision, to provide women worldwide with a safety net that protected them against harm in personal life. Such a net is in place…But long-term protection still eludes us" (Stark, 2007).

Organizing for Change: The Battered Women's Movement

The suffrage movement was the first modern organized resistance to male violence against women; in effect, it could be considered the precursor of the contemporary domestic abuse intervention movement. It focused on institutional change and on eliminating the legal right of men to abuse their wives, rather than focusing on the relationship between a man and the

woman he batters. They supported the temperance movement because it was able to mobilize large numbers of women to strike-back at the saloons that took their husbands' paychecks and then sent them home broke, drunk, and violent. Yet, despite their best efforts, the movement went dormant. The consistent, relentless drive for change would not come until the 1970s with the second-wave of feminism and the women's liberation movement.

When the issue of battered women emerged in the 1970s, it seemed to come out of nowhere, but nothing could have been further from the truth. The sudden "awareness" of the issue was the result of the changing political consciousness and organizing activity of women. The roots of the Battered Women's Movement are in the Anti-Rape Movement of the late 1960s, which had been influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, the Anti-War Movement, and the Women's Movement. In the early 1970s, two branches of feminism had developed: a women's rights group and a women's liberation movement. The primary focus of the women's rights group was on gaining access to the same rights and opportunities as men; those engaged in the women's liberation movement also wanted these rights, but they also wanted to explore the unequal division of labor and the enduring lack of control women had over their bodies and lives. "By claiming that what happened between men and women in the privacy of their home was deeply political, the women's liberation movement set the stage for the battered women's movement" (Schechter, 1982). With the forceful declaration, "We will not be beaten," women organized around the country.

The Battered Women's Movement took form in shelters. In the early 1970s if a woman left a violent relationship she was denied welfare because she was still legally married. If she went to a public shelter, she would more likely be placed with fire victims, alcoholics and the mentally ill. Therefore, many of the early shelter founders saw them as "sanctuaries" or a way to

"save" battered women. As women across the country crowded into shelters and told their stories, the depth and complexities of battering was slowly revealed. Despite a myriad of philosophies articulated by the rapidly emerging programs, they all shared one common belief: battered women faced both brutality from their husbands and indifference from the social institutions. The experiences of battered women gave testament to the extent of the social indifference that existed in regards to the violence they were suffering. The hostile attitude towards battered women was palpable, leading many women to conclude: "I guess I'll have to be dead for them to stop his violence" (Schecter, 1982).

In addition to the problem of public ambivalence towards battered women, counselors were discovered they too had ambivalent feelings towards battered women who expressed their love and desire to return to the men who had harmed them and from whom they had sought refuge. This issue became a profound problem for early shelter workers, because they were there to "save" to "rescue;" instead, they were experiencing internal conflict. They knew the basis of feminist interaction was to listen and to hear women who have often been silenced or unheard in the past; yet, they struggled with their intolerance (Conroy, 1994).

Beyond the internal dynamics, the shelters also struggled with contradictory external pressures. For instance, the media became both a help and a hindrance. While some reporters capitalized on the plight of battered women as "good" new stories, others worked accurately reported on the institutional hostility towards battered women and the lack of much-needed services. On the one hand, the stories that focused on challenging male domination reached a wide audience legitimating the movement and its supporters. On the other hand there were the reporters who sensationalized their stories creating portraits of battered women as foolish and

pathetic. At their worse, some reporters revealed the addresses of shelters putting both the staff and residents in harm's way.

Government and community agencies also were able to direct important resources towards the movement, but the movement had an ambivalent relationship with them as well. Occasionally there would be one or two people, some who embraced feminist ideologies, within an organization that would lend their support to programs that otherwise had neither credibility nor fiscal strength. However, more often than not, shelters found themselves under attack by the bureaucratic welfare offices, zoning boards, and county governments. In the long run, the negative impact of outside agencies far outweighed the positive. Just as in the anti-rape movement, once the issue of battering gained legitimacy and funding was made available, more established organizations took over the issue that grassroots women had worked so hard to raise (Schecter, 1982). The competition over limited dollars exacerbated the struggle between traditional, non-feminist agencies and the battered women and the "grassroots" groups that had begun the movement.

As funding became more available, shelters planned more extensive programming and the question of staffing and growth became important issues. However, larger questions arose over what positions should be salaried and who should be hired? Who should be given priority: volunteers, professional, or former battered women? Women with differing political views as well as personal motivations found themselves working together. Essentially, they were divided into three categories: feminists, professionals, and grassroots women. While each had their focus, they all remained committed to helping victims by addressing the immediate needs of battered women and by searching for ways to ending violence against women.

According to Ann Jones, the battered women's movement was "one of the most astonishing social reform movements in the history of this or any other country," and "it started with women helping women" (Jones, Next Time She'll Be Dead, 1994). Since 1974, women working in local communities established shelters, emergency hotlines to provide sanctuary, information and advocacy for battered women. They went on to pressure many states into enacting more comprehensive laws regarding the prevention of domestic abuse. Groups of battered women borough class action suits against police departments and court officials, compelling them to arrest and prosecute batterers. They lobbied Congress pressuring them to hold hearings on domestic violence, pass legislation, and allocate funds to combat it. They pressured the attorney general and the National Association of Chiefs of Police to change recommended law enforcement policy from mediation to arrest (Jones, Next Time She'll Be Dead, 1994).

Furthermore, the movement established support and educational groups for battered women and provided advocates to help them navigate the complex bureaucratic processes of social service applications and court procedures. They devised education and training programs for police, prosecutors, judges, and other public officials. They introduced domestic violence awareness programs to be presented in schools both as a way of preventing violence and to assist children already suffering from abuse in their homes[v]. In the course of working with children who were physically and/or sexually abused, hospitals and child protective services established advocacy programs for mothers who were unable, for a multitude of reasons, to protect their children.

The battered movement was responsible for campaigns directed at removing incompetent public officials and judges whose refusal to incarcerate batterers crimes of assault left them free

to not only continue their abusive behavior, but in some cases, led to murder. They developed legal strategies for battered women who injured or killed their abusers in the process of defending themselves. Additionally, they established support groups for battered women who were imprisoned for crimes committed under coercion, in other words, to avoid being beaten.

A huge number of studies on battering were produced by the movement: historical, sociological, psychological, political, and legal. Their nationwide organizing produced programs, developed policies, and evaluated accomplishments. In short, they used whatever means they could to cause "the system" to be accountable; by one means or another, they literally effected changes that resonated over decades.

"There have been many movements for reform in this country, but never in American history has there been such an organization of crime victims, denied redress, establishing a *de facto* system of protection for themselves and other victims" (Jones, Next Time She'll Be Dead, 1994). Women resorted to whatever means they could, including an underground railroad system that secreted away battered women and their children, hiding them, sometimes forever, from their abusers. The parallel in American history is the underground railroad that delivered slaves from their "masters" who held them in bondage. It is not my intention to equate slavery and battering, but only to point out their fundamental link, both the slave and the battered woman, sought their freedom by whatever means possible.

Because of the battered women's movement, we now know that to eliminate violence against women we need to eradicate sexism, while simultaneously promote gender equity. Furthermore, the movement taught us that social institutions – faith houses, schools, hospitals, mental health facilities, social services, and the criminal justice system -- must act in concert to

reduce violence. Most importantly it taught us that not only could communities use imaginative programming to protect women and children from domestic assault, and they did so with greater economic efficiency. In other words, by addressing the myriad aspects of assault and child abuse and putting an end to it, rather than having to address the social and economic disaster that results from it.

The battered women's movement rose out of a need and was created by women who cared passionately about what was happening, many of whom were victims themselves. When policy makers finally got involved, it was more often not about seeking justice for battered women, but rather on how the issues would affect politics and economics. The situation is best summed by an excerpt from the book *Next Time She'll Be Dead:*

> It is no longer enough to offer some victimized women safety and sympathy, any more than it would have been enough to offer Rosa parks that seat at the front of the bus without granting the principle of social equality behind it. Grant the principle and all the rest falls into place. For women in the United States, that principle has not yet been recognized (Jones, Next Time She'll Be Dead, 1994).

Emerging Ideological Rift

Much has changed since the first battered women's shelter opened in the 1970s. The age-old prerogative of men to beat their wives has been significantly curtailed.

> It is hard to exaggerate the importance of the domestic violence revolution. Unlike my grandmother, mother, and even my sister, our children understand that if a partner uses violence to hurt or control them, our community will treat this as

> a criminal act rather than as their prerogative. If we can, we will protect them…No other cohort of women in history could say this (Stark, 2007).

The U.S. legal system has been reformed in response to the domestic violence revolution. It now extends the definition of rape to wives, has removed discretionary arrest policies in relation to assault between intimates, a wide array of victim-protection services has been instituted, and specialized and integrated domestic violence courts and evidence-based prosecution approaches have been established. Hundreds of thousands of women and children are alive today because of these changes; yet the question remains, are women, as a group, any safer today than they were thirty years ago?

In the U.S, the issue of "safety" is determined in large part by data captured in reports from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and population surveys. In 2005, the DOJ announced that family violence, mirroring the overall drop in violence, had also declined by half (Durose, Harlow, & Langan, 2005). Many social researchers, organizations, and journalists attributed these results to the many changes sustained by the battered women's movement. However, this raises an important issue regarding the source of the data itself. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting System (UCR) captures approximately 92% of all homicides; however, they classify "boyfriends" or "girlfriends" as "nonfamily members." Because of the DOJ's classification method, abuse-related deaths caused by unmarried partners are excluded from family violence data (Greenfeld, Rand, & Craven, 1998; Stark, 2007). As for nonfatal partner assaults, the best source of federal data comes from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which relies entirely on self-reporting by victims. While the NCVS does capture incidents not reported to police, there are several issues of serious concern. For instance, prior to 1992 there were no specific questions about intimate partner violence were

included. Additionally, the survey is administered by phone and instructs respondents to report only the most serious crime they have suffered; furthermore, the NCVS classifies reports of six or more incidents in a year as one incident (Campbell J. , 2000; Campbell, Martin, Moracco, Manganello, & Macy, 2006). This approach not only minimizes the number of persons who acknowledge their abuse, but also misrepresents those who suffer multiple attacks over a short period of time (Durose, Harlow, & Langan, 2005).

Because of the limitations of federal data, researchers are forced to rely on the only other major source available to them, the National Family Violence Survey (NFVS). The NFVS uses a Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) to measure the types of violence exerted against family members use to resolve family disputes. The results are then aggregated to produce prevalence rates of family violence broken down by gender and family status that has been committed over the past year. The CTS or a modified version is the most widely used measure in domestic violence research; however, it too has been the subject of many critiques. The CTS has been criticized for the following reasons: 1) it ranks behaviours in a linear fashion, from least serious to most serious; by so doing, it incorrectly assumes that psychological abuse and the first three violence items are automatically less injurious than the items in the severe violence index; 2) the ideological basis of the CTS presumes sees violence as family-based, rather than as male violence directed towards women; 3) the CTS asks about several specific types of abuse, while not asking about many others; 4) the methodology of the CTS is only to count the raw number of violent acts committed without telling us why they use violence; and 5) the CTS situates violence as the means to settle conflicts or disputes, it ignores the large number assaults that do not have their origin in conflict or dispute (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998). The outcome of the many critiques of the CTS and the CTS2 have basically established that while it adequately

captures data on nonlethal male-to-female assaults, but it ignores the contexts, meanings, and motives of abuse. Domestic violence is a complex problem and it warrants the use of multiple measures, as well as measures that ask about the specific context, meanings, and motives of respondents.

Over the past three decades there has been a decline in all types of homicides in the United States, largely because of demographic changes; however, the prevalence of violence against women has not changed significantly in thirty years. Despite the huge sum of public dollars that have been spent to measure the many facets of intimate partner violence, a comprehensive definition of the problem is still lacking and many questions remain unanswered. The size and multidimensional complexities of the problem remain obscured in much the same way they were thirty years ago. So as Evan Stark says in *Coercive Control,* "Lost beneath a mountain of words is the vision of empowerment that initially motivated thousands of volunteers – many former victims of abuse – to construct one of the most extensive and successful movements for change in history." The domestic violence revolution began with a vision to provide women with a safety net that would protect them from harm in their personal life. At present, most countries in the world embrace the idea, but long-term protection remains elusive.

It is this persistence of violence against women over decades that has caused many of those engaged in addressing this violence to begin to look for an alternative approach, seeing the existing model as incapable of producing the long-sought after end to domestic violence. However, as Stark points out,

> Challenging the prevailing approach is difficult because it is tied to a vast institutional network that supports thousands of careers and is the basis on which

> foundations distribute research funds, journals identify what will be published, universities grant promotion, politicians garner support, and service providers attract clients and their fees. Only when its internal contradictions escalate to the point of challenging the very legitimacy of a model that dominates a field is the stage set to mold anomalous evidence into an alternative way of seeing the problem…The domestic violence field is on the brink of such a sea change (Stark, 2007).

This "sea change," as Stark calls it, has challenged many professionals, practitioners, and advocates causing them to rethink long-held views.

Three decades of theories and practices have witnessed the social problem of domestic violence grow into an epidemic of violence against women, which has led to an ideological rift. For those who cling to the traditional ideas, their fields/professions have been dominated by the persistence of a process of shaping victims to fit the images of their problems. I position my work with those who have aggressively sought new models that recognize how survivors exercise their agency in coping with their life circumstances. This type of thinking stands as a polar opposite to the long-established and deeply entrenched images of survivors as incapable, weak, and in part, responsible for their situation, rather than giving survivors credit for the strength they display on a day-to-day basis. These women have been defined as victims, rather than as survivors recognizing them for determination to fight their batterers, be accepted by society, and have a voice in their future. In my work, I reject the long-standing institutionalized stigmatization attached to being a victim and focus instead on the multidimensional aspects of the everyday lived experiences of survivors; in so doing, I accept them as

experts on intimate partner violence, recognize the coping skills they developed in relation to their circumstances, and respect the courage they display while struggling to survive.

Theories of Violence

Many theories have evolved over time, each attempting to understand the reasons for violence in our society. The analysis of violence ranges from the macro, such as wars and government repression, to the acts between intimates and individuals. An effort to define intimate partner violence, regardless of their perspective, continues to reveal the complexities in investigating this multi-dimensional phenomenon.

Psychological Theory

When the battered women's movement began in the 1970s, the prevailing theory was based on psychopathology. According to this theory, abusive men and the women who remained with them were both thought to be mentally ill and they could be cured through medication or psychiatric treatment. However, this theory proved to be inadequate because psychological tests did not support the theory that violence was caused by mental illness, with many batterers and their victims testing "normal." Furthermore, people who suffer from mental illness do not limit their violence to their intimate partners, a behaviour manifested by abusive men.

Learned Behaviour Theory

Learned behaviour theory was the next to emerge, which argued that men learned to batter and women learned to accept abuse because it is the behaviour they experience within their families. Although there is a statistical correlation between children who witness violence in their homes, a causal relationship has not been proven. A more comprehensive explanation for

the relationship between battering and witnessing is that it is only one of many sources of information men and women receive and that anything learned can be unlearned.

"Loss of Control" Theory (AKA: Biopsychosocial Theory)

Closely related to the theory of learned behaviour were the theories that described violence as the result of a loss of control. For example, many believed that men became abusive when they drank alcohol, because the alcohol caused them to lose control. Others explained men's violence because they were unable to control their anger and frustration. These theorists maintained that gendered societal expectations prevented men from expressing anger and frustration; with time, these feelings would build up until the man lost control and released his feelings through the use of violence. However, this theory is contradicted by the behaviour of batterers whose violence is targeted to certain people at certain times. In other words, batterers choose who to hit and when, no matter how angry or out of control they become.

Learned Helplessness

This theory was advanced by the American psychologist Lenore Walker who studied the behaviour of women who remained in violent relationships. She hypothesized that women stay in abusive relationships because their constant exposure to abuse leaves them without the will to leave. However, the theory of learned helplessness did not account for the many reasons that a woman might choose to stay: social, economic, or cultural. Women often have reasons for staying, for instance, they may fear retaliation by the abuser, being ostracized by their family or community, or they may be unable to support themselves or their children. Furthermore, this theory does not account for the many women who attempt to leave on numerous occasions, who actively try to minimize the abuse they suffer and to protect their children.

Battered women do not live their lives in a state of "learned helplessness;" on the contrary, they more often engage in a process of staying, leaving, and returning. Additionally, the learned helplessness theory was based on perceived characteristics that were supposedly shared by all battered women. In reality, many of these perceived "characteristics" might be the physical and psychological effects of abuse. Finally, this theory presents a static view and does not account for the many changes women make over time.

The "Cycle of Violence" Theory

The "Cycle of Violence" theory of domestic violence was first introduced in the 1970's by researcher and feminist Lenore Walker and was based on the belief that men did not express their frustration and anger because they had been taught not to show their feelings. The goal of the Cycle of Violence theory was to describe and predict the pattern that violent relationships often fall into. Walker identified three phases that these relationships tended to cycle through:

Honeymoon phase: This is where violent relationships often begin. The abuser is charming, caring, gentle and affectionate, often presenting his victim with gifts, doing nice things for them, and generally making their victims feel accepted and loved.

Tension building phase: Acts of violence are generally preceded by periods of growing unrest within the relationship. The abuser may become increasingly jealous, short tempered or paranoid. The victim will often try to protect themselves by placating the abuser. Unfortunately, this tactic is note effective since an abusive person's anger cannot be reasonably calmed. In most abusive relationships, the victim is unable to avoid upsetting their partner.

Acting out phase: This is when things come to a head and the abuser becomes violent. In addition to physical attacks, a batter might use threats, intimidating behavior and emotional

abuse to keep his or her victim in line. During this phase, victims are often too frightened to seek out the help they need.

The cycle of violence theory was not consistent with the lived experiences of battered women. Many women never experienced a honeymoon phase. Others reported that there was no gradual build-up of tension; instead, there were random episodes of battering. Finally, this theory never explained why batterers directed their rage only against their intimate partners.

The Feminist Perspective

The feminist discourse that emerged early on characterized violence against women as a form of misogyny for the purpose of subjugating women and to which the State was complicit. Both feminist scholars and advocates identified the patriarchy as the source of violence against women because it placed women at risk simply because of they were born women in a society where male-privilege was, and to a great extent still is, the norm.

The feminist framework for addressing domestic violence focused on two concepts: challenging patriarchy and demanding legal parity within the criminal justice system. It was the conceptualization of domestic violence as a crime against women that paved the way for criminal prosecution of abusers. Scholars and advocates believed by bringing the power of the State to bear, women could begin to dismantle the male hierarchy and the subordination of women inherent in the patriarchal culture.

The Concept of Intersectionality

While the feminist framework dispelled the earlier sociological and psychological theories regarding domestic violence, it still focused exclusively on gender inequality. Many scholars, survivors, and activists felt that gender inequality was not the only factor in domestic violence

(Sokoloff, 2005). Lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered women question the legitimacy of gender inequality as the primary factor since in these circumstances both abuser and victim are women. According to the intersectionality perspective, "the trauma of domestic violence is amplified by further victimization outside the intimate relationship, including racism, heterosexism, and class oppression" (Sokoloff, 2005). Intersectionality stresses the point that domestic violence impacts differently on different families and that it is not the only factor shaping family life. This perspective is inclusive and gives voice to women who have historically been further marginalized by race, class, and/or sexuality.

Defining Components

The Power of Words: "Talking Terms"

> The term "domestic violence" is a "euphemistic abstraction that keeps us at a dispassionate distance, far removed from the repugnant spectacle of human beings in pain" (Jones, NextTime, She'll Be Dead, 1994).

Once we used words such as "wife beating" or "wife torture," which more accurately portrayed the violence women suffered at the hands of their husbands. Behind closed doors and protected by the mantle of the "family," they went largely unpunished until the rise of the women's movement in the 1970s. While feminists moved abuse into the public discourse, they also introduced such terms as "spouse abuse," "conjugal violence," and "marital aggression" as they sought to broaden the scope of the violence and to find funding for battered women. Perhaps this problem with "terms" is a reflection of the difficulty the public has in acknowledging the sexism behind this social phenomenon, as Psychiatry Professor Judith Lewis Herman observed:

> Most women do not in fact recognize the degree of male hostility toward them, preferring to view the relations of the sexes as more benign than they are in fact. Similarly, women like to believe that they have greater freedom and higher status than they do in reality. (Herman, 1992).

However, the problem with terms such as "battered woman" or "domestic violence victim" is that they emphasize a woman's situation and in so doing, they obscure a woman's subjectivity and actions. The majority of women who have survived years of abuse have done so by exercising an extraordinary amount of self-discipline and a daily expenditure of strength in finding a way to cope until they could free themselves from their batterers.

Intimate Partner Violence and Women's Employment

The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.[vi]" Other terms for intimate partner violence include domestic violence, wife beating, battering, relation violence, or spousal abuse. IPV can take several forms including: physical, sexual, emotional, or economic.

- PHYSICAL ABUSE: The intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing injury, harm, disability, or death. This includes scratching, pushing, shoving, throwing, grabbing, pinching, biting, hair-pulling, shaking, slapping, punching, kicking, burning, use of a weapon, and use of restraints or one's body, size, or strength against another person. Physical abuse also includes denying a partner medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use.

- SEXUAL ABUSE: Coercing or attempting to coerce any sexual contact or behavior without consent. Sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to marital rape, attacks on sexual parts of the body, forcing sex after physical violence has occurred, or treating one in a sexually demeaning manner.
- PSYCHOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL ABUSE: Undermining an individual's sense of self-worth and/or self-esteem. This may include, but is not limited to constant criticism, humiliating the victim, causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm to self, partner, children, or partner's family or friends; destruction of pets and property; and forcing isolation from family, friends, or school and/or work.
- ECONOMIC ABUSE: Making or attempting to make an individual financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, withholding one's access to money, or forbidding one's attendance at school or employment.

Intimate partner violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. IPV affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels; it occurs in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships and can happen to intimate partners who are married, cohabitating, or dating. Research affirms that intimate partner violence is not due to the abuser's loss of control over his behavior, but is a deliberate choice made by the abuser in order to maintain control over his partner. Many IPV survivors must leave work in order to protect themselves, their families and their coworkers. In a 2003 survey conducted by the National Employment Law Project, ninety six percent of survivors stated that the violence in their lives interfered with their ability to work, ranging from harassing phone calls to missing days at work because of injuries or attempts to seek legal remedies to being attacked by the

abuser at the workplace. Living under these conditions locks survivors into low-wage labor, with each incident eroding their hope for change even further.

For women who experience intimate partner violence, the challenges to move from low-wage labor to sustainable employment are even more complicated. IPV impacts the economic well-being of women because is restricts access to household resources (Raphael, 2000), batterer-generated barriers to employment and educational opportunities (Raphael & Tolman, 1997) and reduced physical and mental well-being (Tolman & Rosen, 2001). The mechanisms through which abuse traps women in poverty by obstructing work are complex, and so are the realities of women's individual circumstances (Brush, 2004; 2003; Browne, Salomon, & Bassuk, 1999; and Lloyd & Taluc, 1999).

Women experiencing intimate partner violence need a job-training program that takes into account the multitude of challenges that are a part of their lives. Traditional job-training programs most often focus exclusively on hard-skills and do not include "soft-skills," nor do they concern themselves with the social capital necessary for IPV survivors to attain long term success in the workplace, as well as in their personal lives (Bernick, 2005; O'Leary, Straits, & Wadner, 2004; and Negrey, Um'rani, Golin, & Gault, 2000).

Chapter 3 - Methodology

In this chapter I will discuss how the sample was drawn, the methodological approach used in the study, and detail the instruments used for data collection. I will then go on to discuss the ideology that acts as the infrastructure for the structural design of the Women and Work Program, as well as how the program measures success, as well as the benefits available to women who graduate in good standing.

Sample

Women and Work participants were drawn from New York City's five boroughs including Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and the Bronx. Women in the program had household incomes at or below the federal poverty level. Participants were required to be a minimum of eighteen years old with no maximum or cut-off age imposed. They included single mothers, immigrants, survivors of domestic/family violence, displaced homemakers, downsized and low-wage workers. Women living in violent relationships and those referred by domestic violence shelters and related agencies were given a priority status for admission. To be considered for admission to the program, participants were required to have a high school diploma or GED, a working knowledge of the English language, and be legally authorized to work in the United States. Although most of the women had an erratic work history of low-wage jobs, none were employed while attending the program.

The sample of women selected for this study was purposeful and deliberate. This method is consistent with grounded-theory analysis, which permits the purposeful selection of a sample based on an interest in developing theory rather than choosing a more random sample upo9n which an overall generalization to the broader population could be made. See Glaser and Strauss, *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research.* Chicago: Aldine, 1967.

They were drawn from the larger group of women who attended the Women and Work program between 2002 and 2008. Participation in the study was voluntary and no monetary compensation or special privileges were provided to those who joined the study group. The sample selection was made with deliberation and was open only to participants who met the following criteria:

1. They were all participants of the Women and Work program between 2002 and 2008
2. They self-identified as a battered woman, domestic violence victim, had a history of violence in their intimate adult relationships or they had been subject to physical, emotional, sexual, or economic abuse by a spouse, live-in partner, or boyfriend.
3. They were referred by a domestic violence shelter or other agency or organization working with domestic violence victims/survivors.
4. They read and signed the Informed Consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board of Queens College of the City University of New York.

The women in the study group represent 34 percent (N=257) of the total population of Women and Work during the six years (2002-2008) captured by the study. While the larger body of participants ranged in age from eighteen to seventy-five; the ages of the women in the study group was from 18-62, with the greatest representation being the 30 - 39 year old age group, followed by the 40 – 49. At the time of the research, the women were mothers to 543 minor children. Of this group, 43 percent were foreign born representing twenty-three countries spanning five continents. Racial diversity was represented as follows: Asian - 17%, Black - 37%, Caucasian - 21%, and Latina - 25%. All of the women in the study lived at or below the federal poverty level. The highest educational level for 98% of the group was high school graduate, with 2% having some college (< 12 credits).

A majority of the participants (62%) were in their most recent abusive relationship with a male live-in partner, 6% reported abuse by a dating partner, with the remaining participants (32%) having left their abuser within 6-12 months prior to starting the program. Participants reported being involved in 2 to 11 prior abusive relationships. In terms of their current abusive relationship, the median length of the relationships examined in this study was 5 years; the shortest relationship was 9 months and the longest was 27 years.

Methods

Feminist Action Research

In any gender-dichotomized society, the fact that we are born biologically female or male means that our environments will be different, that we will live different lives, and have different experiences (Lorber, 1997). These differences determine differential exposure to risk, access to a variety of resources, and the realization of rights. Social inequalities for women must be understood within their everyday lived experiences. Feminist action research provides the researcher with a conceptual and methodological framework that typically uses qualitative research methods to generate in-depth understandings of women's experiences and puts diversity at the center of the analysis by employing research strategies that seek to be inclusive, participatory, and collaborative. Feminist action research seeks to better understand the factors that perpetuate women's poverty, to appreciate the diverse and often disparate ways that women negotiate their lives, and to respond to social injustices through advocating collective action and social change (Reid, 2004; Rheinharz, 1992).

Participatory researchers work with the researched and break-down the distinction between researchers and the researched while legitimizing the knowledge people are capable of

producing. They attempt to involve participants in the entire research process and present people as researchers themselves in pursuit of answers to questions of daily struggle and survival. At Women and Work, the researcher and the participants strove to increase their knowledge and understanding of the problems associated with the phenomenon of intimate partner violence and took the action necessary to change the situation. In this they were jointly working to find results. This differs from the traditional "objective" view of research as carried out, as it were, on all the subjects rather than with them.

The researcher recognizes feminist action research as a way of building knowledge to change the conditions of women's lives, both individually and collectively, while reconstructing conceptions of power. The following are the guiding principles of feminist action research:

1. Inclusion – Feminist action researchers contend there are no social practices or activities that should be excluded as improper subjects for public discussion, expression, or collective choice (Morris, 1982).
2. Participation – Feminist action researchers are committed to making women's voices more audible and facilitating women's empowerment through "ordinary talk" (Maguire, 2001).
3. Individual and Collective Action – Action is seen as a dynamic process that can occur at both the individual and collective levels.
4. Social Change – The purpose of feminist action research is to create new relationships, better laws, and improved institutions (Reinharz, 1992). Social change can be envisioned as the outcome of deliberate individual or collective actions.
5. Researcher Reflexivity – Feminist action researchers advocate high standards of reflexivity, openness, and transparency about the choices made throughout any empirical

> study (Coleman & Rippin, 2000). Reflexivity is the capacity to locate one's research activity in the same social world as the phenomena being studied; furthermore, the researcher needs to explain the nature of research within the same framework as is used to theorize about the objects of study (Reason, 1994). At the core of reflexivity is the subject of power; a researcher's power to perceive, interpret, and communicate about Others.

In accordance with these principles, as a feminist researcher it was my goal to listen to the voices of the women in the study group and to recognize them as co-researchers with the goal of understanding their lived experiences, identifying their problems, and empowering them to create solutions to those problems. Mindful of the power imbalances that exist in the research structure, I worked to become a part of the community formed by the study group. Furthermore, as a participant observer, I was aware of the silences within the group and responsible for maintaining an inclusive and safe environment for every woman who participated in the study. I present the results in the spirit of this set of principles. Obviously, I make no claim that the results can be taken as reliable or verifiable in the traditional sense of these words. But I would claim that the results are meaningful and significant, and useful for further research. I will say more about this in the Conclusion.

Data Collection

Women and Work collected data from participants, staff, and associated external sources, such as internship supervisors and employers. Data collection included the following methods: quantitative data was captured in basic cross-tabulations, while qualitative data was captured through a variety of means including life histories, personal journals, narrative essays, discussion groups, and interviews.

Quantitative data included cross-tabular analyses showing the extent to which survivors needs, concerns, outcomes and other experiences differed across a number of variables, including race/ethnicity, age, whether the survivor had children, the number of minor children, and their living arrangements. Basic frequencies provide descriptions of the survivors, the extent of help they feel they received, their assessment of staff respect and attention to their needs, and the problems they experienced as they worked through the program, post-program, and the two years that followed.

Qualitative Research adds an important dimension to the research on abuse, as well as providing insight into the multitude of problems challenging survivors as they try to establish a stable work life. There are seldom clear-cut answers to their problems; data analysis needs to be capable of discerning and interpreting nuances and change related to the complex decisions women make about violent partners and employment. The study seeks to capture the women's feelings, while giving voice to their life-experiences.

Each participant's relationship history is examined to understand how she described and deals/dealt with the violence, including its impact on her ability to work. By comparing these experiences, a theoretical structure is developed that describes the essential process or experience of domestic violence. From this data, a picture emerges that describes how many of these survivors cycled in and out of violent relationships and how their ability to work was affected.

Life Histories

The life-history method of interviewing is particularly helpful in gathering information about uncomfortable or difficult circumstances in subjects' lives. (Ritchie, 1996; Rossman, 1989). The interviews consist of open-ended questions within which subjects can discuss stigmatizing and difficult circumstances in their lives, while providing the researcher with an

opportunity to learn more about their subjects' thoughts, feelings, and opinions, as well as the meaning they assign to their life experiences.[vii]

The life-history interviews at Women and Work were conducted within the first week of the 15-week program with the goal of understanding the complex interactions of events and the ongoing social process associated with battered women. Life-history interviews rendered not only a wealth of rich contextual data, but also the more nuanced moments of lives illuminating the key elements and factors that emerged into thematic categories. Although this method of interviewing can be emotionally arduous for the subject, as well as for the researcher, it allowed subjects to explore and expose what they described as shameful and intimate experiences of their lives in ways that made sense to them. It is in the telling, in the breaking of silence, that subjects, through their tears and anger, give meaning and expression to their lives.

In addition to the life-history interviews, three personal versions of personal narratives are written by the women as a means of further explicating what they have discussed in their life-history interviews. The narratives are sequenced as follows: 1) *My Story* – written in week 3 of the program; 2) *My Story Revisited* –in week 6; and *A Letter to My Younger Self* – written in week 9. In the *My Story* narrative, women are asked to write the story of their lives in a stream-of-consciousness style. They are asked only to include as much or as little as they think are important to their story; six weeks later, they are asked to repeat the task with *My Story Revisited*. Once completed, they are asked to compare the two narratives for similarities and differences, which they place into lists. Over time, the narrative provides another means for the women to give voice to their lives and to accept ownership over them. In week 9 of the program, they are asked to write a letter to their younger selves; the *Letter to My Younger Self* provides a vehicle for forgiveness and acceptance, both of which contribute to re-establishing their self-

esteem. Data collected in this way rendered a more nuanced, composite picture crafted through the women's own words, rather than relying solely on statistics or by focusing on a particular characteristic or by taking a unidimensional view. Writing assignments such as *My Story*, *My Story Revisited*, and a *Letter to My Younger Self* encouraged self-reflection, and thus formed part of the process of recovery for the women.

Limitations of the Study

The strength of qualitative research is the in-depth information it provides about the lives of the women/participants. Most self-reporting methods of data-collection raise issues related to validity and reliability, and this may be especially true when exploring sensitive topics, such as violence, intimate relationships, and criminal behaviour. Self-reports are often considered problematic due to errors in memory and unconscious distortions. However, it has been generally accepted that due to the shame domestic violence survivors often feel with being labeled as a victim of abuse, they often minimize the violence rather than exaggerate its extent. (Arias & Beach, 1987 2(2); Ritchie, 1996). While this consideration may pose a concern, it needs to be balanced against the rich contextual and multi-dimensional data that emerges from this method.

Instruments

Additional data is gathered through several types of self-administered surveys; some were standardized, others were created by the researcher. The standardized instruments include the Abusive Behavior Inventory (ABI), the adaption of certain sections of the Social Capital Assessment Tool (SOCAT), and the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (SES). The surveys created

for the Women and Work program by the researcher included: the Entrance Survey, Weekly Satisfaction Survey, Internship Survey, Exit Survey for the Humanities, Exit Survey for Computer & Technology, Post Program Survey 1, Post Program Survey 2, and Post Program Survey 3. (Please see appendix for these instruments).

The Abusive Behavior Inventory (ABI)

The Abusive Behavior Inventory was first developed by Melanie Shepard in 1984 to evaluate the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, a highly influential program in the field of domestic violence. Items for the instrument were drawn from the program's internationally known Power and Control Wheel, which was based on the experiences of battered women. In 1992, Shepard and James Campbell published a study documenting evidence of the instrument's reliability and validity. It has subsequently been used in many domestic violence studies. The Abusive Behavior Inventory is noted for its incorporation of both physical and psychological abuse items and the use of power and control, rather than family conflict, as a framework for measuring domestic violence.

The Abusive Behavior Inventory is based upon a feminist perspective whereby battering is interpreted as involving the use of a range of controlling tactics, including physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, to achieve and maintain dominance in intimate relationships. The instrument is a 30-item self-report questionnaire consisting of two separately scored subscales: psychological and physical abuse. The psychological abuse subscale consists of items drawn from the subcategories of emotional abuse, isolation, intimidation, threats, use of male privilege, and economic abuse. The physical abuse subscale consists of 10 items involving

physical acts (e.g., hitting and choking) and sexual abuse (e.g., forced or pressured to engage in unwanted sexual acts).

The Social Capital Assessment Tool (SOCAT)

The Social Capital Assessment Tool (SOCAT) is a survey that measures individuals and groups' opportunities and constraints by focusing on the social assets and networks that determine their access to resources. Analysis of social networks leads to an understanding of the transaction costs associated with acquiring information (e.g., price levels, production innovation), and actions by members to overcome imperfect markets through social sanctions or mutual support. SOCAT is useful for estimating likely changes in productive behavior at the household and community level in response to policy change. It allows analysts to identify how networks and norms affect this behavioral response. It can be tailored to specific policy domains and used to give depth to other methods of data gathering and analysis. SOCAT uses qualitative and quantitative instruments, including household surveys, community questionnaires, and organizational interviews. Questions were drawn from SOCAT's community questionnaires.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES)

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was designed by Morris Rosenberg in 1965. It is a ten item Likert scale with items answered on a four point scale from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. The original sample for which the scale was developed consisted of 5,024 High School Juniors and Seniors from ten randomly selected schools in New York State. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is an attempt to achieve a unidimensional measure of global self-esteem. The scale has been translated into over fifty languages and has been validated across a large and diverse number of sample groups. It is considered one of the most widely used instruments to measure self-esteem by both psychologists and sociologists.

Surveys Created for the Women and Work Program

The various instruments created by the researcher for participants of Women and Work were designed to capture a range of data spanning their life-experiences prior to the program, during their attendance, and two years post-program. The instruments include: the Entrance Survey, the Internship Report Survey, the Weekly Satisfaction Survey, the Exit Survey for the Humanities, the Exit Survey for Computer & Technology, and Post-Program Surveys 1, 2, & 3 (Attachments 1-8 respectively). Each of these instruments is a self-administered questionnaire. They are constructed with both open and closed questions; they also contain ordinal level measures (income related) and differential scales (attitudinal dimension).

The Entrance Survey opens with neutral demographic questions and proceeds to more sensitive questions regarding the respondents' experiences with violence from childhood into their adult lives. These questions are followed by those pertaining to their experiences with illegal acts either as a perpetrator and/or victim. The survey closes with three open-ended questions that prompt the respondent to be self-reflexive. The Participant's Internship Survey is given weekly and asks participants to rate their performance as Interns. The internship component consists of an 8-hour workday once a week for thirteen-weeks of the program. The internship is intended to provide real-world work experience for participants creating the opportunity for them to identify their strengths and weaknesses before they complete the basic program. The survey covers questions pertaining to performance, behavior, and attitude. The answers from this survey are compared against a weekly performance assessment completed by internship supervisors. The Weekly Satisfaction Survey is focused on participants' day-to-day experiences in the program. These surveys capture a participant's overall satisfaction with the program as a whole, its various components, curriculum, teachers, and staff. Upon completion of

the program, participants complete two Exit Surveys: one that relates to the Humanities training and the other applies to Computer and Technology classes. Each of the various surveys contains questions relating to personal development and empowerment. Post Program Surveys track the progress of program graduates for two-years from the date of their graduation; they are scheduled as follows: Post Program Survey 1 at six-months, Post Program Survey 2 at one-year, and Post Program Survey 3 at two-years.

Program Ideology

Before detailing the structural design of Women and Work, I will discuss the ideology of the program, which acts as its infrastructure. By this I mean the ideological framework of the program creates an intellectual and psychological scaffolding for the participants' emotional well-being. The program's holistic approach to helping women rebuild their lives through personal empowerment depends upon the participants and the W&W staff establishing a trusting relationship built on mutual respect. Building these relationships is essential to the work that lies ahead. Unlike most programs, at Women and Work participants are told not to 'leave their baggage at the door;' instead, they are encouraged to bring it inside. The program suggest that by looking at their lives in its entirety, they can begin to learn to take ownership over those lived experiences and begin to compartmentalize them, rather than to have them remain as stumbling blocks to their future plans. The program refers to this process as being the "architect of your life." To clarify the process for participants, the women's lives are analogized to an architect's objectives: to understand the space in which a building is to be erected and then to draft a building that suits the user's needs so they can inhabit it in comfort. The program also provides the tools needed for the women to erect their structure, their lives. Additionally, by acting as

their social network, Women and Work provides an infrastructure of support and places an array of services at the women's disposal.

To successfully meet the many challenges that will have to be overcome academically, technologically, and in their personal lives, the women are asked to accept a Women and Work axiom, which is "life is a negotiation." Therefore, to fare well in life participants must learn critical thinking skills and the ability to negotiate on their own behalf. The first step in this process is adapting Women and Work's 3-Cs philosophy, which are 1) courage, 2) consistency, and 3) commitment. As for the first "C"—courage--the program asks the women to recognize the courage they have already displayed in their lives by finding a way to make it from one day to the next and reminds them they will need to access that courage as they move forward. The second "C"—consistency—will be needed to meet the everyday demands both in the program and the outside world. The final "C"—commitment—refers to the promises the women make to themselves as they set their short-, mid-, and long-range goals. Managing W&W's 3-Cs is part of the elemental foundation skills that provide the means for women to think critically about how they will negotiate their life plans. In addition to the 3Cs is the FACE rule, which the women are asked to learn to apply as freely to themselves as they have so often done for others. The FACE rule is as follows: F is for forgiveness; A is for acceptance; C is for compassion; and E is for every day. Forgiveness, acceptance, and compassion are key components of self-esteem, which is something survivors are sorely lacking. By practicing the FACE rule on an every day basis, they are taking significant steps in building a psychological and material infrastructure of their own.

The Women and Work ideology is woven into the participants' learning experience as they apply their newly acquired life-management skills as work to create a survivor identity.

W&W uses the term 'survivor identity' to describe a woman who is actively engaged and acting on her own behalf to maintain her health and well-being. The survivor identity is the polar opposite of the victim identity that generates a vision of pathetic, helpless women who either enjoy being abused or are in some way responsible. To survive women must be able to identify 'toxic relationships' or 'energy vampires,' terms the program uses to categorize relationships that are counter-productive to building and sustaining healthy relationships. The Women and Work survivor identity encourages participants to discover their own strengths and weaknesses, commit to their goals, and then draft a workable, yet flexible, plan to reach their goals. In essence a survivor is one that can take the long-view and understand that success and happiness are on-going life-projects that require negotiation, flexibility, perseverance, and vigilance.

Women and Work's ideology embraces three concepts that are interwoven in all aspects of the program namely, partnerships, networking, and community. The Partnership for Empowerment is realized with time through the establishment of a trusted and equally balanced partnership between the W&W staff and the participants; it is realized through each partner fulfilling their roles in accordance with each one's stated goals. For the W&W staff that means fulfilling their obligation to deliver the promised tools/skills to the participants via the program's various classes, seminars, and activities that constitute the W&W curriculum. As for the women, their obligation is fulfilled by following the W&W guidelines and remaining committed to the goals they established for themselves. True partnerships are built upon understanding the roles that each actor will play, and then following through with committed actions. Empowerment is achieved when women are able to accept responsibility for their life-decisions; then and only then, are they able to take ownership over their lives. The goal of this process is to provide the tools for each woman to chart her own course, rather than to follow one that has been constructed

for her. As the women internalize these concepts, it empowers them to build their own Community of Women, a community that is maintained solely by the women's actions. The strength of the community depends upon each woman's individual commitment.

Each of these concepts is embedded in a language specific to the Women and Work program, to provide descriptive terms that express the issues and speak to the multidimensionality and complexity of the women's lives and the futures they are working to create. The ideology of Women and Work is essential to the actualization of the programs services and should be considered an integral part of the program's delivery system. (A Glossary of Terms is attached at the end of this dissertation.)

Structural Program Design

Before proceeding to the findings, I want to describe the Women and Work (W&W) program in greater detail. W&W employs an innovative approach to economic empowerment and life-management training. The program is offered free to low-income women in New York City and reaches across all races, ethnicities, ages, religions, and sexualities. The program accepts women with modest educational attainment and little or erratic work experience through community outreach and institutional referrals. The underserved population is comprised of victims of domestic/family violence, single mothers, immigrants, displaced homemakers and downsized workers. Regardless of the issues they bring into the program, Women and Work always remains focused on economic independence, because once attained, it literally becomes a stable platform from which the women can operate. One can think of financial stability as a sort of release valve; it takes the pressure off and avoids disaster. Without this option, things often get worse, and with each spiral downward, the way up is harder to find. However, change will not occur because of well-intentioned teachers or a well-rounded curriculum, these types of life-

altering changes also require the women/participants to be fully engaged as equal partners every step of the way through the program and beyond. It is for this reason that Women and Work appends the tag line, "A Partnership for Empowerment."

The program's partnership approach and supportive environment enhances self-esteem by giving participants a voice in shaping their learning experience, investing them with social capital, and establishing a social network. (I will say more about these concepts in the findings section.) The areas of focus are: personal and professional development; literacy and humanities; computer and technology; job-readiness, retention, and mobility. The curriculum is delivered via a highly structured, multi-tiered program that stresses critical thinking and conceptual learning. Women and Work provides the tools for women to rebuild their lives, creating an infrastructure capable of generating economic stability and supporting long-term change.

Recruitment Process

Participants are recruited to Women and Work through community outreach and agency referrals. The program holds eight Open House events; four are held at Queens College's main campus in Flushing, Queens and the other four are conducted at the program's midtown Manhattan office. Flyers detailing the specifics of the Open House events are circulated via e-mail and fax to non-profit organizations, community groups, and agencies throughout New York City. Additionally, several newspapers and radio stations carry the Open House information as a community service announcement. Newspapers carrying the community announcements of Open Houses include:

Amsterdam News

Brooklyn Community News

Brooklyn Daily Eagle

El Diario

Greek News

India Tribune

Irish Echo

Morrisania Gazette

New York Daily News

New York Post

News India-Times

Newsday

Queens Chronicle

Queens Courier

Queens Neighborhood Newspapers

Russian Bazaar

The Caribbean Voice

The Queens Tribune

The Western Queens Gazette

Times-Ledger

Village Voice

World Journal

Radio stations include:

WABC

WGBB

WLIB

WNYC

WOR

Dates, times, and locations of Open House events are also included in the telephone greeting of both the Queens and Manhattan offices of Women and Work. The program maintains extensive outreach to equalize access and to ensure that it reaches its target population.

At the Open House events, Women and Work staff members use a PowerPoint presentation to explain the program in its entirety. They discuss the broad range of the curriculum, as well as the challenges that participants might face. Since the W&W teachers are graduates of the program, they can speak comfortably and with confidence, about all aspects of the program, as well as the range of emotions women experience as they attempt to rebuild their lives. The presenter stresses the holistic nature of W&W's intervention approach to job- and life-skills training. While they do not go into great detail, they carefully explain that W&W has a research component they will be asked to participate in should they be accepted into the program. Their refusal to participate as a human subject will not prevent them from participating in the educational and personal development portion of the program. Applicants are furnished with Women and Work's Program Guidelines in writing, providing them with an opportunity to review how the program is structured and what will be expected of them, as well as the possible consequences for repeated noncompliance. The presentation is followed by a Q&A session ensuring applicants' questions are answered to their satisfaction. Interested applicants are provided with an application and Women and Work staff members remain in the room to assist applicants with any questions or concerns that might arise. The seven-page application requests a wide range of information regarding demographic data, educational background, work history, family relations, and household income. Questions also cover possible support systems, such as nonprofit organizations, agencies, or faith houses. There are also personal questions regarding any experiences applicants may have had with domestic/family violence. Open-ended questions

provide applicants with the opportunity to convey information they feel is important to share with the program. The application concludes with the Women and Work Disclosure Agreement, which outlines the partnership agreement between Women and Work and applicants. The disclosure agreement outlines how the program will fulfill its commitment to participants and also details what is expected of them as well.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of Women and Work is to equip its graduates with job- and life-strategizing skills and increased self-esteem, empowering them to attain economic and personal stability. Women and Work has identified the following objectives toward the realization of this goal:

1. Help participants to evaluate their life situations through on site counseling and needs assessment.
2. Increase reading competency skills to a college entry level.
3. Ensure participants master basic writing and mathematical skills.
4. Provide computer literacy and technology skills, including MS Professional Office Suite 2010, Windows 7, and the Internet.
5. Develop personal presentation and verbal skills.
6. Advance English language skills through specially designed ESL classes.
7. Empower participants with conflict resolution and time-management skills.
8. Address family/personal needs that may interfere with the transition to the workplace.
9. Educate participants in financial matters including:

- Budgeting
- Balancing a checkbook
- Taking a financial inventory
- Developing financial goals
- Building good credit/Reestablishing credit
- Maintaining the safety and confidentiality of financial records
- Protecting against financial loss
- Understanding predatory lending and managing debt

10. Provide personal health and wellness training.

11. Facilitate access to legal counsel and other needed referral services.

12. Guide participants in proper workplace attire and general appearance.

13. Mentor participants through job search and initial employment phase.

14. Focus on job retention and mobility with post-program support.

15. Advance graduates' computer skills through post-program seminars.

16. Address life-changes for newly employed graduates through post program humanities workshops.

17. Network with organizations that share W&W's goals.

18. Track measurable program impact on job performance, retention, and advancement.

Women and Work recognizes the special needs of domestic violence survivors and the challenges they face in moving their lives forward. For this reason, the program emphasizes the following additional objectives in its service to victims of violence:

- Assist survivors in building their emotional stability and self-esteem.
- Help women to recognize victimization tactics and the impact of abuse on their children.
- Provide support groups and counseling sessions addressing the problems that arise as they make the transition to violence-free lives.

Women and Work Program

Overview

The Women and Work program is divided into four levels: The Introductory Level (weeks 1-3, five days/week); the Intermediate Level (weeks 4-8, four days/week); the Advanced Level (weeks 9-13, four days/week) and the Professional Level (weeks 14-15, four days/week). The curriculum includes two Community Days – Wednesday and Friday when all participants are on-site. Wednesday is dedicated to W&W, Inc.; Advanced Learning Seminars; ESL classes; and individual counseling sessions and support groups. Friday is dedicated to weekly assessments, progress evaluations, and the practical application of job-skills. Finally, Internships at friendly companies are included as part of the curriculum. A friendly company is one that hosts a woman at their work site, providing her with real-world work experience. The eight-hour unpaid work assignments begin in week 3 and conclude at the end of the program. Participants must be on-site by 8:45am and classes conclude at 4:00pm. There are two 15-minute breaks (mid-morning and mid-afternoon) and a 45-minute lunch break. The program is divided into three main areas of study as follows:

1. Computer and Technology
    - Infrastructure, Programs, and Practical Application
2. The Humanities
    - Comprehensive Language Skills
    - English as a Second Language (ESL)
    - Math Skills
    - Advanced Learning Seminars
3. Job Preparation
    - Job Readiness, Retention, and Mobility

Computer and Technology (C&T)

Computer and Technology (C&T) Training includes a Computer and Technology Primer (Computer Basics/System Fundamentals); CTL: Computer as a Third Language (Talking Technology); Software training: Microsoft (MS) programs (2010 version): Word (Word Processing), Access (Database), Excel (Spreadsheet), PowerPoint (Presentation), and Outlook (E-mail and Calendar); Learning Your Way Around the Internet; and Computer Projects (including teacher supervised, self-directed and group projects) that vary by program. The Computer &Technology curriculum undergoes constant evaluation to ensure that it keeps pace with job market needs.

Literacy and Humanities Training

Literacy and Humanities training covers the following areas: vocabulary development and grammar, reading comprehension, writing skills, basic math skills (mathematical operators, ratios, percentages, word problems, and equations), as well as personal empowerment (such as creating a budget, reading a bank statement, and reconciling a checkbook).

Advanced Learning Seminars

The Advanced Learning Seminars take the basic building blocks taught in the basic Humanities classes to the next level; they include:

- Writing for Business: This class is dedicated to teaching participants the succinct writing style used in the workplace including appropriate formatting, language, and stylistic guidelines.
- Women in the Media: Women's Lives in Film and Literature addresses overall literacy (vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing skills) through an understanding of film and literature. This is an interactive and writing-intensive class that uses popular culture to convey the importance of language and the written word.
- Creative Writing: Designed to teach participants how to write effectively, while encouraging them to use writing as another way of reflecting on their own lives, as well as exploring new directions and future goals.
- English as a Second Language (ESL): Specifically designed for participants who need to improve their English language skills enabling them to feel comfortable within an English speaking work environment.

Community Days

Overview

The program incorporates two Community Days (CDs): Wednesday and Friday. Community Days are intended for the participants' voices to be heard and for them to take an active part in shaping their program experience. Additionally, CDs provide the opportunity to convert classroom knowledge into practical application. The W&W staff guides participants

through a process that brings the group to a point where they coalesce into their own Community of Women challenging their ability to think critically, resolve internal conflicts and produce quality work on a timely basis.

Community Day 1: Wednesday

Women And Work, Inc. (W&W, Inc.) operates on Wednesday and is a practical application of what is learned in both the Humanities and Computer & Technology classes. W&W Inc. allows participants to experience the challenges and rewards of working within a structured environment that depends on teamwork, as is the case in the business world. W&W Inc. emulates a corporate structure and has three divisions: Business, Publications, and HeartMark Productions.

The Business Division

The Business Division is composed of a small group of participants, who are responsible for the day-to-day business aspect of the program. Additionally, they are also responsible for all W&W activities related to the fight to end violence against women. This division is intended to teach participants how small groups can organize for change; the importance of focusing a team's efforts; and the ability to work through unplanned obstacles, as well as those that were expected, in order to meet your goals. The Business Division incorporates the following:

- W&W Referral Service – This service provides callers with access to referral services or to the appropriate agency or organization that could provide the caller with the information they need. This service was created as a response to the large volume of calls received by the program for assistance.

- Business Reports — Reports are furnished on an as-needs basis for the Community or as directed by either the deputy or executive directors.

- Women &Work Domestic Violence Task Force (W&WDVTF) — The W&WDVTF is a member of the Queens Task Force Against Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Elder Abuse, and Child Maltreatment and attends regular monthly meetings at Queens Borough Hall. The W&WDVTF is involved with education, advocacy, and community outreach citywide.

- Public Relations (PR) — The PR group responds to requests for information pertaining to the program, maintains communication with alums, and generates information that is of interest to the general public.

- The Women and Work Activity Board (AB) — The Activity Board is intended as in Information Hub for participants. The three main areas of the AB are: In the News, Cultural Corner, and the Knowledge Nook.

The Publications Division

The Publications Division is intended to give participants the opportunity to work as part of a team responsible for producing publications that represent the various aspects of women's lives. This division's publications include:

- *The Chrysalis* — The W&W newsletter contains articles of interest to women and their families, as well as the events that took place over the course of the semester. The newsletter also is a venue for participants' poetry and favorite recipes. It is published semi-annually.

- *SOS: Save Our Sisters* -- This publication is a compilation of emergency and nonemergency services that are available to women. Information is provided for each of New York City's five-boroughs (updated annually).

- *Women's Lives in Poetry and Prose* — A literary collection that explores the multidimensional world of women.

- *A Women's Guide to Health and Wellness* -- Designed in a workbook format this publication focuses on the overall health and well-being of women, encouraging them to establish their personal roadmap to better living.

- *Directory to Free GED Services in NYC* -- This directory categorizes the free GED programs by each of New York City's five boroughs (updated annually).

HeartMark Production Division

The HeartMark Production Division is intended to teach participants the many integrated elements that are required to bring ideas from their design stage to the marketplace. The production items are assembled on a production line format and sold at the semi-annual W&W Fundraiser, which is held at Queens College's main campus in Flushing. Upon completion of the W&W website, the items will be made available on the W&W Online Storefront. The HeartMark Production Division has three components:

- HeartEmpowered (Cards, Posters, & Booklets)
- HeartsAfire (Handmade crystal and sterling silver jewelry)
- HeartsDesire (Handcrafted Gifts)
- Color Us Enterprising (CUE) (New) – The W&W co-operative evolved from the every-day lived experiences of operating W&W, Inc. In fact, it appeared as a logical

next step, moving what had been a temporary company into full-time operation. The W&W Co-op will operate as a turn-key operation for the women to market their goods and services to the general public. Business cards will be printed in-house by participants/graduates and a dedicated phone number has been assigned to the co-op. Women working with CUE will be able to access their messages via a remote access mailbox. Women who choose to be members of the co-op will be guided in their entrepreneurial endeavor while they continue to benefit from the Women and Work community to create their own supplemental income.

Applying To Women and Work, Inc.

Women and Work participants submit a job application to Women and Work, Inc. indicating their first, second, and third choices for employment within its three divisions: Business, Publications, or HeartMark Production. The applications are reviewed by the Executive Director, Assistant Director, and Program Manager; together they determine the job-placement for each applicant. Additionally, two women from each division are hired in a supervisory capacity. Women and Work, Inc. emulates the workplace in all respects; therefore, maintaining a chain-of-command and accountability is critical to job-development skills. Highly structured reporting is maintained with the Business Division reporting to the Executive Director, Publications to the Assistant Director, and HeartMark Production to the Program Manager. Each group has an advisor to ensure that any necessary skills, soft or hard, are furnished as needed. Soft skills are personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance and career prospects. Unlike hard skills, which are about a person's skill set and

ability to perform a certain type of task or activity, soft skills are interpersonal and broadly applicable.

W&W staff's participation in W&W, Inc. evolves from initial guidance to removed supervision toward the middle of the semester as each division moves their projects towards a timely completion. By the end of the Advanced Level, each participant takes pride in their accomplishment, and in a sense of ownership for her division's accomplishments. Upon completion groups meet to discuss their experiences and evaluate their performance individually and collectively.

Community Day 2: Friday

Weekly Assessments

- Weekly Assessments of class materials are given to ensure an accurate measure of each participant's grasp of the lessons. Assessment outcomes are discussed at the weekly staff meeting to determine how to address various needs as they arise.

Progress Evaluations

- Progress Evaluations are essential for each participant to overcome individual problems or issues that have had long-standing dominance in their lives. Any indication of *Needs Improvement* on a Progress Report necessitates a meeting bringing together the participant, the teacher who assigned the evaluation, and either the Executive Director, Assistant Director, or Program Manager.

Putting Classroom Skills to Work

- Putting Classroom Skills to Work gives participants the opportunity to apply classroom knowledge to workplace problems and tasks. These assignments are given on an individual, small group (2-3 women), and team levels.

Mock Job Interviews

- Mock job interviews are practiced until they become second nature to participants; this process may include videotaped sessions so that participants can see what they look like from the interviewer's perspective.

Job Retention Training

- Job Retention Training focuses on self-confidence and life-management skills. Topics address: domestic and/or family violence, rape and sexual assault, personal enhancement, family/personal needs, child care assessment, time management, conflict resolution, interpersonal skills and proper attire.

Personal Portfolio

- The Personal Portfolio is developed over the course of the semester. It provides the participant with an organized method and daily plan for job-searching, as well as a letter of introduction, resume, contact list of references, and samples of both Thank You notes and a personal business card. The Personal Portfolio maintains a participant's focus and ensures they are always at their best for and ready for an interview.

Project Development Package

- The Project Development Package is a semester-long project that challenges the participant to draw upon the various areas of their learning experience at W&W. The project requires

participants to create a presentation package for a new business; it includes a complete business plan, a letter of introduction, a proposed operating budget on an Excel Spreadsheet, and a PowerPoint presentation. Participants are guided in the development of this plan by information provided from W&W classes, the Small Business Administration (SBA), and other business professionals.

Measuring Success at Women and Work

Just as in the real world, there are measures of success at W&W. To ensure that participants gather the skills needed for success in the workplace each participant's performance in the program is measured on a weekly basis by the staff and Progress Reports are issued every three weeks. Participants are rated on the following items:

- Attitude
- Attendance
- Timeliness to and from classes and breaks
- Individual achievement
- Group interaction
- Classroom performance and participation
- Homework, including special assignments
- Weekly assessments
- Project Development Package
- Personal Portfolio

Benefits of Successful Program Completion

Participants who successfully complete the program qualify for the following:

Certificate of Completion

- To receive a Certificate of Completion at a formal graduation ceremony at Queens College. The Certificate carries the seal of Queens College; it is signed by both the Chief Operating Officer of the College and the Executive Director of Women and Work.

Post Program Classes & Seminars

- Entry into tuition-free Post-Program classes, which include:
    - Advanced computer seminars and self-directed computer projects, humanities workshops, support groups and personal counseling
    - Participation in the Job Registry – The Job Registry aligns employer requests with available graduates from the W&W Job Registry database. Graduates may have their database record updated by submitting a formal request to the W&W office.
    - Assistance with job-searching, coaching for interviews, and transitioning into the workplace

Letter of Recommendation

- A letter of recommendation is provided for each participant who completes the program in good standing, which means they have completed all aspects of the program satisfactorily.

The W&W Employee Guarantee

- The Employee Guarantee offers employers a practical incentive for hiring W&W graduates by guaranteeing the quality of the graduates' services, as well as providing two-years of technical and/or personal guidance free-of-charge to support a W&W graduate regarding their retention or mobility within the workforce.

Post Program

The Post Program (PP) is open to all W&W graduates. The components are designed to further educational enhancement, as well as to assist graduates with personal issues that may pose problems for them as they work towards improving their life circumstances. PP offerings are as follows:

Job Registry

- The Job Registry (JR) transitions graduates through the job-search phase, aligning W&W graduates' individual skills with employment opportunities, as well as assisting graduates who are seeking advancement.

Post-Program Counseling

- Post Program counseling includes pre- and post-interview coaching; support groups; and special interest groups.

Advanced Computer Seminars

- The Advanced Computer Seminars are intended to advance graduates' computer skills in MS Word, Access, Excel, and PowerPoint; and to introduce new programs such as Intuit's QuickBooks and MS Publisher.

Advanced Humanities Workshops

- Advanced Humanities Workshops are intended to advance graduates' humanities skills with such workshops as: Writing for the Workplace; Climbing to the Next Step: Advancing in the Workplace; Balancing Work and Family; Working within the Corporate World: Confronting Difficulties in the Workplace; Professional

Development: Understanding the Script; Networking and Beyond; New Resumes for New Jobs.

Beyond the Post Program

The nature of the relationship between the Program and participant/graduates is shaped by the women themselves. The frequency of their contact and the nature of that contact are determined by their response to W&W's ongoing outreach to them, as much as by the contact they initiate independently. Each woman connects to the program in a different way, because each has had her own unique experience.

Chapter 4 – Findings Emerge Through the Participants' Journey

In this chapter I will discuss the findings disclosed by the participants of the study group through their life stories, personal narratives, journals, reflexive essays, group discussions, and interviews as they progressed through the Women and Work Program and beyond. I will present the participants' thoughts and feelings in their own words as they moved from being strangers on orientation day through their process of coalescing into a community. The chapter concludes with the participants' discussion of how they reconstructed their lives and found personal empowerment.

Overview of the Findings by Program Levels

As discussed earlier in chapter three, the Women and Work Program is a fifteen-week program that operates on a hierarchical structure and emulates the workplace in every way possible. From the participants' first days in the program they are made aware that a great deal of their success is based on their contributions they make on their behalf. In other words, as equal partners with the W&W staff, their commitment to the program is in fact a commitment to themselves. However, despite their desire to succeed, each semester some women are unable to complete the program; they are included in this discussion. This chapter covers an examination of Women and Work's composite pieces; they are: 1) a demographic portrait of the women, 2) the disintegrative effects of domestic violence, 3) the creation of an effective social network, 4) the establishment of a community, and 5) attaining empowerment.

The Introductory Level (Weeks 1-3)

The Introductory Level was a difficult time for the women as each new day brought another challenge they needed to overcome such as, timeliness to the program, adhering to the

W&W guidelines, mastering academic and technical classes, and learning new sets of job-skills; all of which must be accomplished while they balanced the many other problems in their lives. It is often in these opening weeks when women will leave the program, and in most cases, it is due to an irreconcilable problem, such as child care or illness.

Child care is certainly an issue for all women, especially for women with little or no resources, but for women living in domestic violence shelters it is especially problematic because they often rely on each other for child care. Since their personal situations are not stable even inside the shelter, problems with childcare do arise and they often leave the participant without a viable alternative. In these cases withdrawal from the program is especially painful for the participant and is felt deeply by the newly formed community that identifies so closely with the situation.

In the cases where illness literally precludes a participant's continued participation in the program, there are no other choices. Every semester there are always cancer survivors in the group and they immediately form a strong bond among themselves. When there is a reoccurrence or someone is going through treatment, the group rallies to her side to lend their support through email, letters/cards, and even home or hospital visits.

There are also those one or two women that find the program more difficult or demanding than they had imagined, despite an accurate portrayal of W&W through the Open House presentation and orientation process. These women are encouraged to stay and the W&W staff makes a point to reach-out to them to assure them they will have support, but the simple truth is that not every woman is ready, either physically or emotionally, for the rigors of this program. Despite the participants' best intentions and the staff's efforts, these women fall away.

When women leave later in the program it is most commonly due to either major illness with themselves or someone who is dependent upon them for care. Regardless of how or why a women leaves the program, it is always felt by the newly formed community as a loss and for this reason it is open to discussion during the Opening Circle or as part of a community meeting.

One of the major challenges came as they struggled with being part of an extraordinarily diverse group of women, whom they initially saw as strangers not friends or allies, as can be evidenced from the following excerpts.

> No offense to any of these other women, but unless they've walked in my shoes, I don't see how my "sharing" (quoting a W&W teacher) is helpful to me or anybody else. I live in a shelter, I struggle for every damn thing I get and I'm sick of hearing from everyone about what a loser I am…You guys (referring to W&W staff) not included (African-American, 24)

> I am very happy to see other Chinese women here…I live in the Chinese community…people do not speak about their family secrets (Asian, 22).

> I'm happy to be here, but I don't think I'm interested in telling my life story to a bunch of women who are in the same boat as me. How can they help me? And why would they? They have their own problems to worry about…that's why they're here (Caucasian, 49).

> I don't care who hears my story as I long as I get some help, but I don't think of anyone here as my friends…I have friends and family who I can't trust…why should I trust a bunch of strangers…no offense, but I'm keeping my walls up until I see some reason to maybe lower them…and that will take a lot (Latina, 28).

With each Opening Circle and discussion group, slowly, the "walls" (Latina, 28) began to come down. Some women were more reticent than others to open-up to the group. There was a consensus among the women that trust is something that has to be earned; the women did not give it to each other or to the W&W staff until they determined it was safe to do so.

> It's hard to believe that I have only been here two weeks. In ten days I feel closer to some women I met here than people I've known my whole life…it's hard to trust people when the ones that were supposed to look out for you were the ones who treated you like garbage…I never thought there were really women like the teachers here…I believe they really care…it scares me a little bit that I am starting to believe that I can trust them (African-American, 52)

> I have been taught all my life not to speak outside the family…Now I am being asked to trust strangers and in my heart I am starting to believe I can (Asian, 34).

> I never thought I would be making friends with so many different types of women…I never had friends who weren't white, but then I never thought I'd ever be in a program like this or in the situation I'm in. I actually thought I had people I could trust, I was wrong. Now, I'm starting over with nothing, the scary part is I really believe I'm better off…In ten short days, I'm talking to people, really talking, and they're actually listening…I wouldn't have ever thought I would have these feelings…It's a little scary…No, it's a lot scary…(Caucasian, 49)

Within the first three-weeks of the program, the data revealed that the highest rate of violence occurred among African-American women, followed by Latinas, Caucasians and then Asians. It is important to note that within the first three years of the study (2002-2005), no

Asian women presented as victims of violence; however, as the number of Asian women grew within the overall population of the program, survivors began to come forward. Added to this factor, was the outreach by W&W to the community organizations within the Asian community. As the rapport between these groups and W&W grew, it was reflected in the level of confidence displayed by Asian participants. The other issue which became clear was that a racial divide existed between the American born white-women and the women of color, and in particular those that were foreign born. (See section that follows on Mitigating the Racial Divide).

The Intermediate Level (Weeks 4-8)

The Intermediate Level heightened the levels of accountability for the women to timeliness, absenteeism, and academic performance, as the program became less forgiving regarding these issues, as would be the case in the workplace. As the work grew more demanding, challenges arose and, whether out of necessity or by choice, the women started to make some friends among the group; however, friendships came slowly and cautiously.

> I'm making friends I can trust…I'm going at it slow and I'm trying not to get angry when someone says something I don't like…I'm working hard to learn everything they teach here and hold my own. We need to be friends and help each other. Then the more you talk to each other the more you realize how good it can be to have real friends. I'm trying to "go through my baggage" like they say here in the program…It's hurtful, but this is the first time I've been told that I have to make peace with my past before I can have a future…some of these women are going to be a part of the life I'm trying to build here…they're going to be a part of the future (African- American, 43)

> I have made many new Asian friends, but I have made other friends too. We talk about how we are different…our families and especially our food (laughter) food is very important…I will keep trying…this is a very hard program with much homework and classwork…things are hard for me because my language is Mandarin…English is very hard and it is hard to talk to other women…to make them understand me, but they encourage me all the time…they are very patient (Asian, 45)

> Things are getting easier every day as far as making friends, but the work is getting harder and harder…the women get together and help each other. Some are good at one thing and some at others…we tried to figure it out with the help of each other…it feels really good to figure things out on your own…it feels really good to have friends and not to feel stupid (Caucasian, 52)

> I didn't make good grades in school and now I'm having to relive all that stuff I hated…with the help of my friends here I discovered I'm not near as stupid as everybody told me I was. I'm doing all sorts of schoolwork, going on the class trips…I'm learning something new every day…it's like a whole new world. I look forward to coming here every day and seeing my friends and learning together (Latina, 39).

The large group of participants was divided into four subgroups, with each having a leader and a co-leader acting as facilitators for their group. These smaller groups rapidly developed a sense of autonomy, with each woman having a voice in how her group interacted in relation to the larger group and with the W&W staff. The subgroups also made the learning

process a team effort with the group taking a protective role towards its members. Subgroups also experienced a healthy sense of competition amongst themselves, vying for excellence in various projects and/or community service project assignments. Taking ownership over projects in this way affirms the participants' sense of self-esteem, as well as their ability to think critically and design an effective plan.

As classes advanced and the work grew more complex, old fears and anxieties about the ability to succeed, or lack thereof, surfaced. For the women who were not native English speakers, the challenges were compounded. The W&W staff, sensitive to all these issues, provided support through tutoring, conversation, or just a shoulder to cry on. They also reminded the women that the program was more than the average job-training program; instead, it was committed to acting in concert with the women, forming a partnership for empowerment. While the teachers were able to quiet some fears, it was the support from other women that appeared to bring them the most comfort. When a woman faltered, the group rallied to her side. With each event, the borders created by difference softened. As women took comfort in their camaraderie a community of women was being formed. When frustrations overflowed into tearful outbursts, comfort came from a friend's encouraging words or gentle embrace. As bonds among the women grew, secrets began to be shared; they were opened to discussion and solutions were explored, not just by individuals, but by the group as a whole. By bringing their life experiences to the table, they were becoming a powerful cohort capable of more than they had imagined possible.

As the Intermediate Level grew to a close, individual women talked about the "what ifs" as they began to see their own potential and plan for a better future. At the same time, the group was also growing stronger as a community and the women took pride in this. They focused intensely on mastering the many skills needed to successfully complete the program, and had

become real partners in ensuring this would happen. At their weekly community meetings, which were held every Wednesday, they evaluated the progress of the group and made recommendations to the staff. Signs of their bonding as a community were evidenced in the fact that they took great pains to consider women within the group who were struggling either with classwork or personal problems. They assessed the needs of individual women and brought those to the attention of their staff advisor. This type of advocacy on behalf of community members attests to their recognition of the benefits of acting in unison as a network.

The Advanced Level (Weeks 9-13)

The Advanced Level presented new challenges for participants as the classwork grew in complexity; the difference being they felt more self-assured than they did earlier in the program when their fear of failure was palpable. Once again, the staff stressed that even though the program was drawing to a close that did not necessitate the end of the relationship between the women and the program. Over time, the women had come to see the program as a true support system from which their own stability was drawn. New anxieties about life beyond the program arose; they included such concerns as whether they would be able to find jobs and how quickly that would happen. However, at this juncture they drew comfort from their own self-assurance, rather than being solely dependent upon the program. Their levels of self-confidence and their ability to self-manage had been cultivated over the time spent in the program. While they believed the program would continue to advocate on their behalf, they now they saw the program as an ally, rather than as a watchful parent. They transitioned from participant to partner by exercising their agency, a life-management skill they had been working on throughout the program. They looked forward to accepting responsibility for the decisions that would affect

their short- and long-term goals, and while the program would assist them, they would be the primary actors.

The Professional Level (Weeks 14-15)

The Professional Level was a difficult time for participants as the end of the program drew ever nearer, but the levels of trust in the W&W staff had been firmly established by this time. Also helpful was the fact that by this time, the women also identified the women they saw as leaders in the program. While each woman was stronger as an individual, they were immensely powerful as a group, which provided them with some comfort as they entered the Professional Level, which was generally accepted as the final push. They saw this level as the last chance for them to put all the pieces in place before graduation day. Daily assessments were given to ensure each participant would have the skills needed to obtain a good paying job. By determining individual strengths and weaknesses, special programming was tailored to meet the specific needs of each participant. This type of individual investment bolstered the women's courage and assured them of the program's commitment to their ongoing success.

What had become most apparent by now, and was often stressed by participants, was the level of trust they had come to place in the program; how each teacher brought something special into their lives. The women often discussed how when they arrived at the program and heard the teachers refer to Women and Work's Community of Women and the Partnership for Empowerment, it didn't really mean anything to them. As one participant said, "they were just empty words…they didn't make any sense to me, but once you start living the program they take-on a real meaning" (African-American, 28). Trust in the program was earned on a day-to-day basis by a caring staff that felt invested in the lives of the participants and saw them as part of their own growing community of women.

In their discussion groups participants often expressed the importance of "staying connected" and "keeping to the ordered life" they had learned in the program. All of the women reported how techniques and new behaviors they had learned in the program had helped them in their personal lives, and while they were far from ideal, the consensus was they had improved significantly. Classes in anger-management and conflict-resolution offered them an array of viable alternatives. The decision to act rather than react became as one participant said "one of the most valuable skills" (Latina, 33) learned at the program. According to the women and their past experiences, whether it was an abusive employer, coworker, or an intimate partner, the same skill-set still applied. Many women went on to discuss how differently they handled situations now; prior to the program these same types of situations always ended disastrously. This was not supposition on their part; it was history and it had been repeated many times. Participants agreed that the program had provided them with new tools, new ways of thinking about things, and a community to bring their problems to; it was these things that made the difference in their lives. So, while their imminent graduation was a time of great excitement, there was also a sense of trepidation. They needed to be reminded of the Post Program and that it was they, not the program, who would choose how they moved forward. As W&W alumna, they would be guaranteed access to services and assistance as they saw fit regardless of their level of post-program interaction.

Chapter 5: A Demographic Portrait

Most importantly the study revealed that violence suffered at the hands of intimate partners carried particularly serious and potentially long-lasting consequences, as it tended to be repetitive and accompanied by psychological, sexual, and financial violence as well. Women in the study did not experience domestic violence in identical ways; instead various groups experienced domestic violence at disproportionate rates. However, some impacts of violence were consistent across race and ethnicity, such as health problems, low self-esteem, feelings of isolation, and fear of seeking assistance. Other concerns shared cross-culturally were custodial issues and a deep concern about whether they would actually be able to support themselves (and their children) independent of their abusers.

The Women at Women and Work

The Women and Work population was diverse across race/ethnicity, religion, age, and sexual orientation; the women were comprised of single mothers, survivors of domestic and/or family violence, immigrants, low-wage and downsized workers. The study group were all residents of one of New York City's five boroughs, with the majority (73 percent) representing the borough of Queens. In part this may be due to the program's association with Queens College of the City University of New York, which is well recognized throughout the Queens community. (The program had its origins in Queens and had built a solid reputation through its work with women referred by local agencies and organizations.) The study group also reflected the rich diversity of New York City; women represented twenty-three countries. It might be said that collectively they formed a truly global community. The diversity of the study group's age and race is reported in the following table:

Table 1: Study Group by Age and Race (N=257)

Age Group	Asian	Black	Latina	Caucasian	Totals
18 – 29	10	22	11	6	**49**
30 – 39	11	26	17	14	**68**
40 – 49	12	19	15	18	**64**
50 – 59	8	17	10	12	**47**
60+	3	11	10	5	**29**
Totals	**44**	**95**	**63**	**55**	**257**

Table 2: Race and Ethnicity by Percentage

Race and Ethnicity	Percentage
Black	37
Latina	25
Caucasian	21
Asian	17

The study group shared some characteristics with the broader Women and Work population such as their financial conditions, educational backgrounds, and the desire to change their lives for the better. These conditions were simply a reflection of the program's admission criteria; however, they also shared other commonalities. They talked openly about their fears, as well as dreams. The following excerpts are taken from the women's first days at the program.

It's hard for some folks to understand what it's like when everything is hard…with no education you don't have much of a chance to make your life better, no matter how much you want it. You watch other people buy things for their kids and it hurts. You try to tell yourself its okay, but it's not and it never seems to get any better. One day turns into another and before you know it, you feel like you're out of time. Your kids are all grown-up and left home and you're on your own again. It seems like it all happened in the blink of an eye. Sometimes I think on it and wonder how it happened, like I was sleep walking through life. Now, all of you tell me it's not too late, there's still time to start over. I really want to believe that's possible. I have to believe it or else I'll never make it through this thing. I'll grow old getting by on whatever job I can find. Dear Jesus, I hope I can make it…I know I'm going to give it all I've got. This is my last chance…my very last. I've lived through some hard times, I got to tell myself every day, I'll live through this…I'll come out the other side…you'll see…one thing I'm not and that's a quitter. (African American, 59)

I will study hard, follow all the rules…I want to be a success for myself, but most important I want my children to see that if you work hard, you can have good things in this country. My big trouble is with my English. I am very worried about this. Sometimes when I try to talk I cannot find the words…some people get angry…they have no patience…some laugh at me and say mean things. I will learn to speak better here…You will see, I will be a very good student. When the

program is over, I will have a better life. I will have a new family here that cares for me and I will make them very, very proud of all I will do. (Asian, 28)

Finding this program has been like a dream come true. I still can't believe it. When my social worker told me about it I asked her "what's the catch?" She just laughed and said there is none. Women and Work is really free, they really care, and they want the women to be successful. At first, it's hard to believe. In fact, I didn't believe it. I wanted to believe it, but you have to know it's hard. I have been played so many times I keep waiting for someone to, you know, pull the carpet out. I have no family…I grew up in the system and it wasn't good to me. I'm never going to get another chance like this one. I know I'm rough. I've been in other programs; they could care less. You're just a number...They take the money from the state and then they throw you on your own. How can your life get better when the people who are supposed to help you don't give a damn? This place is different…these teachers they care…the other women in the program actually care. All different types of women here and they're all trying to be friends to one another—right from day one. I'm almost afraid to say it out loud, but I want this to work for me, I know I can do it…for the first time I really believe things can change for me…my life really can be better. (Caucasian, 21)

Once upon a time I hoped to go to college, but I had to work to help my family so that didn't happen. Then I thought I'll go to college when they don't need me to help anymore, but that didn't happen either. You know…I met the man of my

dreams…I married him. Before I knew it I was having babies…one on top of the other – four babies, I was always tired. Don't misunderstand me, I love my kids, but he never helped me. He took money for his beer and drugs that always came first and when I asked him for money for the kids he would get angry at me. He said it was my fault we had them, like he had nothing to do with it and it was all me. One day he went to work and never came home…he just left us. I got four little kids, no education, and no one to help me. But I was happy he was gone. He went from being the man of my dreams to my worst nightmare. If it wasn't for my kids, I don't know what would have happened…I try not to think about it. Him leaving…it was the best thing he ever did for me. This place is the best chance I'm ever going to get…I can't believe these teachers…they're the best. The work is very hard, but these teachers they are really patient...but tough. I have to be strong…I have to make it through this program…for me and for my kids. They say maybe I can still go to college…I still want to go with all my heart. (Latina, 26)

These excerpts are representative of hundreds of such narratives reporting similar experiences regarding fears, hopes, and trust. The common thread that ran through all these stories were the coping skills they brought to bear in their everyday lives. Although their life chances offered a disheartening array of choices, they strove to maintain as much normalcy in their life as possible. Despite the many obstacles that persisted over time, they persevered. They struggled to survive as they fought to control whatever parts of their lives they could. How they responded to everyday situations reflected the moment in time. They quickly assessed their situation and they resisted proportionately,

while attempting to maintain their safety. At every turn, they exercised their agency within a situation they did not totally control. Survivors needed to rely on their assessment of a situation in the moment to determine the best course of resistance. Sometimes that meant being silent or trying to avoid the abuser all together, but in some instances, they had to resist by defending themselves physically. Other times, the challenge came by fighting back depression and the urge to end the pain through suicide, but instead, they reached out to whomever they thought could help them. This role of active resistance, though different for each woman, was a defining characteristic of their identities as survivors.

While there were similarities, there were also differences. For instance, some women eked out a marginal existence for years through multiple low-wage, part-time jobs, others had only worked through temp agencies, and still others had virtually no work history. Some of the older women had once held decent jobs, but left them to raise families, only to be left behind by adult children or abandoned by life-mates who had once forbidden them to work. The range of time that the women had been unemployed ranged from one to fifteen years, with the greatest number of women being out of work between 18 and 24 months. For those women at the extreme of this range, the thought of returning to work was described as "terrifying."

> There has never been a time when I haven't worked hard. I've done just about every type of work there is. When I was a girl in Georgia I worked in a sewing factory…it was hotter than hell…I can still remember the smells, the sweat, being called a "stupid nigger"…I was fourteen. I came North when I was twenty…different factories, different kind of hate…but I kept believing times would have to change and my chance would come…I never got married, never

had no children. Oh, don't misunderstand me, there were men, but they weren't the marrying kind. I never was able to find a good man…some part of that was on me, but I never could figure it out except to think that I had stored up a whole lot of anger and when I was pushed, I pushed back—real hard. Uh…you know I got beaten up regular, black eyes, broken bones, fat lips…I just gave up and decided it was better if I just got along by myself. When you've lived through as much as I have you know when you found someone you can trust…you all are good folks, the best kind…I can't explain it to you…no matter what happens, you all have given me so much already…in just a few days you gave me back my self-respect. I can't wait to see where we go from here. (African American, 62)

I don't remember a time when I didn't work. I grew up in my parent's restaurant. It wasn't anything fancy, just a take-out place with a few tables. What I remember most was the heat and the work…I dreamt about going to college and being a nurse…it never happened. (Asian, 38)

The last time I worked was fifteen-years ago, I was a bookkeeper. Now everything is computers and I don't have a clue. I was busy taking care of my children and my husband – raising a family. Now they're all grown and moved away, they don't have time for me…that's just how it is, they have problems of their own. My daughter's husband is worse to her than her father ever was…I didn't even think that was possible. He was mean, and when he drank, we just tried to stay out of his way because he got even meaner. He never wanted me to

work, not because he was a nice guy but because he wanted me to always be at his beck and call. He died last year…cancer. I know it's a terrible thing to say, but I thought finally I'm free of him. Then, I find out I have nothing…I have to go to work…I'm scared to death. I don't want charity…I want to pay my way…I want to feel like a real person again. I don't care if I have to live in a furnished room, just so it's mine. But every time I think about going to work, I think it's like being transported to an alien planet. Everywhere I've gone to look for work is the same…I go in and the person interviewing me is young enough to be my kid. You know, they don't say it, but you can see it on their faces…I have no skills…I'm just some frumpy old lady. Hell, I feel old. I have to learn about more than just computers and programs, as if that's not scary enough. I have to learn about all the other stuff that helps you get a job…all the stuff that no one talks about…how to dress, how to talk, how to fit-in. That's why this place is like a miracle for me…and now I have a place to come to, to learn, and people who care about me…I'm telling you…it's a miracle. (Caucasian, 58)

I have worked at every fast food joint in the city. I have no real education, I'm lucky I made it through high school. I went straight to work, but I can't keep a job. Sometimes it's my fault I get angry and say things I shouldn't say and I get fired. Sometimes, I can't get to the job because I got bruises and I don't want people to ask questions and cause me more trouble. I had "friends" tell me I could make more money on my back…you understand? But I don't want none of that, I just want a decent job…I just want to be a real person. (Latina, 24)

In general, the roadway to better-paying jobs and steady employment held many stumbling blocks. The difference between the broader W&W population and those in the study group regarding employment was directly linked to their experiences as survivors of intimate partner violence. For survivors, the normal challenges that already existed for women were further exacerbated by the many issues related to living with an abuser or trying to live beyond his reach.

The Disintegrative Effects of Domestic Violence: Active Resistance and Perseverance

The intake data indicated that the women's experiences with intimate partner violence had a profound impact on their ability to lead happy and productive lives. However, while their experiences were traumatizing in many ways, it did not deter the women's perseverance in the face of adversity or their determination to survive. Together with the W&W staff they explored their experiences and feelings, which elicited these responses:

> I don't think about being happy, I just think about if I can get through the day without him killing me…or me him…I haven't thought about what it would take to be happy for a really long time…Starting over that would make me happy…that's why I'm here…I just want a chance, a real chance with people who care. I really hope this is going to work out…that it's not going to be just a lot of talk. (African-American, 37)

> I was taught that *only* [respondent's emphasis] my husband's happiness matters, but he has no kindness in him, no love…how can this be my life. If it cannot change I have no future, no life. (South Asian, 26)

> I'm really scared about being here because I'm not so sure I can learn. No matter what I try to do, it doesn't turn out so good. My dad always told me how stupid I was, so I never tried in school. I got married and now my husband tells me the same thing, I'm hoping you tell me it's not true…I'm really hoping. (Caucasian, 42)

> Being at work was the best part of my day because I could pretend I'm normal…you know, like in a family where people like each other and do things together…you know, where they feel…well, safe. Everybody here has been talking about "safe spaces"…I want this to be one…we'll see. I'll get back to you on that. (Latina, 22)

In addition to the interviews, numerous forms, surveys, and assessments were part of orientation day. Since most of the participants were referred from domestic violence shelters and/or agencies, they were familiar with this type of intake procedure. Although they responded politely, their general demeanor could be described as "guarded." They tended to answer questions with a minimal amount of details; however, when probative questions were asked by the researcher, they furnished more than enough details to fill in the gaps in their stories. They were quick to express their willingness to cooperate, but also wanted the researcher to understand that, regardless of whether the incident was very recent or long in the past, recalling the memories was always painful; yet, despite their discomfort, they were extremely forthcoming as can be seen in the excerpts that follow.

> There's no way to understand why he beat me. I thought he was my hero. My daddy was a son-of-a bitch. He beat my mama to death. When they put him in prison I was glad. My boyfriend told me not to worry that was going to be my

man, he'd take care of me…I just turned 18, and he was 32. He kept telling me how his kindness kept me off the street and all I had to do was keep him happy. I really thought everything he told me was right. When he drank, he wanted what he wanted. There was no way to figure it out...He could come home happy and hit or come home miserable and hit – go figure? I gave up trying to figure it out because I started to think he's just like my daddy…he's going to beat me to death. Sometimes he beat me so bad I couldn't go out until the swelling went down. When he got tired of using his fists, he'd pick up things and hit me with whatever he could put his hands on. Once he hit me with the phone so hard he broke it in half, then he really got angry. I don't remember it too well, I passed out from the beating…when I woke up I couldn't believe I was still alive. I knew I had to get out, now I'm out and I got to figure out a way to take care of myself…scary, that's what it is, just plain scary (African American, 20)

My husband controls everything. He makes all of the decisions about everything, no exceptions. He tells me what time I will wake-up, what I will do all day, what I will wear, what I will eat, and when I will go to sleep. He says he brought me to this country and I am lucky that he still wants me. He put the knife to my throat and told me if I complain they will not be able to send me back to my country because I will be dead. I want to stay in the United States, but I do not want to stay with my husband. One day, his friend's wife who knew how he treated me came and took me to the shelter and they helped me to come here. I am going to work very hard to be a good student…but I am afraid he will come for me…I am very afraid of him, I try not to think about what he will do if he finds me. I have this paper, the stay-

away, but I know this will not mean anything to him…Still, more than anything I want to be free. (Asian, 22)

I've been called every dirty, disgusting name there is. I've been made to do things that still make me cry when I think about them. When I could get a job, I could never keep it because he would come around the job and say terrible things...scare people. My boss wanted to call the police, but I was afraid it would make things worse. He'd call my job twenty or thirty times a day. He'd tear up my work clothes…take my metro card and cut it up…It was like he'd just think up ways to hurt me but he didn't want me to leave. It was like he enjoyed having me there under his thumb so he could torture me. He'd always say, if you leave that's the last thing you'll ever do…I had a little cat that I really, really loved. One day I came home and she was hanging by her neck…the note said "this could be you"…All I could think about was how scared she must have been and that I wasn't there to try and save her. I hope he didn't make her suffer…poor little thing. She was all I had that loved me…He took her away…He took everything from me. He made me feel like I was going crazy, like there was something wrong with me. He used to tell me I was nuts that I wasn't right in the head. Every minute of my life with him was torture, when I could sleep I had nightmares, when I woke up it was worse because I realized the nightmares were real. After three years of him beating me, calling me names, making me think I was crazy, forcing me to things I still can't talk about, I started drinking. I just didn't want to feel anything anymore. I'd drink until I passed out. That worked for a few more years…I was too drunk to know or feel anything so I guess that wasn't fun for him anymore…I guess he got

bored with me because he threw me out on the street. That was the best thing he ever did for me. A lot of stuff happened in between…a lot of trouble. It has been a very long hard road to recovery, but I'm still here…now, I want to try to be a person again…I hope I can learn how. I'm running on as close to empty as anyone can. (Caucasian, 39)

I thought I married Prince Charming. He was nothing like my father, I watched him beat my mother until he got tired of us, until there was no more fun in it for him, then one day he just left and didn't come back. Welfare and food stamps is how we got by. But my Prince Charming was always there for me. He arranged his work schedule so he could drive me to work and pick me up, even though I only lived ten-minutes from my job. My mother tried to tell me he was no good for me that she could see things in him, but I thought she was jealous of me. Now, I feel so stupid for the things I said to her. As soon as we got married he started showing his real self. He told me who I could talk to and who I couldn't. He told me where I could go and when. He was the keeper and I was like some kind of caged animal. I kept trying all the time to make him happy, but nothing I ever did was good enough. My kids were small when I got breast cancer. I was 24 when they took my breast. Then I had chemotherapy and lost all my hair. When I came home from the hospital he laughed at me and told me I looked like a freakin' alien. He told me to stay away from him and keep myself covered up because I disgusted him…two weeks after I was home from the hospital he hit me so hard that he knocked me to the ground and I was too weak to get up again. My son was 8 at the time, he tried to protect me. My husband picked my son up over his head

> and slammed him to the ground. I thought he killed him. My son was so still…he didn't move and then I saw that he was breathing. I threw myself over him to try and protect him. My husband just laughed at me and left. I took my son and I went to my brother and he called the police. They came and took us to the hospital where we met the social worker that's been helping us. Now we are trying to start all over again. My son doesn't trust anyone…he doesn't talk much…he never asks about his father…it's like a wound that just keeps bleeding…sometimes it's like it'll never stop... But we're alive and I'm going to do everything I can to see to it that it stays that way. (Latina, 33)

In addition to the personal stories, the women completed surveys that measured danger and risk assessment, as well as self-esteem. The "Self-Assessment: Abusive Behavior Inventory (ABI)" yielded data about the types and frequency of the violence that the study group had experienced or was ongoing at the time of their participation in the program. All of the study participants reported a complexity of abuse suffered during their relationships with a violent intimate partner. Of the 257 women who participated in the study group, 100 percent reported emotional abuse, 94 percent reported physical abuse, 82 percent reported sexual abuse, and 97 percent reported financial abuse; 92 percent of those with children reported their children were emotionally harmed and 67 percent were physically harmed. Within the study group, 57 percent were threatened with a weapon, 52 percent had been choked, 79 percent had been kicked or thrown, 54 percent had been cut seriously, and 78 percent had been forced to perform sexual acts. The following excerpts detail some of their experiences:

> I had no phone, no money, and no one to go to for help. He would tell me if I left the house he would know 'because he had people watching me…friends who

would tell him things…so I better not talk to anybody. One day the Jehovah's came to the door and left me a little book. When he came home and found it he was really angry. He dragged me by my hair and tied me to the bed. He did things to me with stuff. He burned me with his cigarette. He got a big knife from the kitchen and put it down there inside me just so I could feel it cut me a little bit…I could feel the warm blood on my legs. Then he got on top of me and pushed into me. He told me I was lucky he still wanted me after I messed with him. I never answered the door again when he was gone. I never went outside without permission…The only reason I got saved from him was because one night he was beating me so bad…bouncing me off the walls that stuff was falling in the next apartment and they called the police. When the police came and saw the blood everywhere they arrested him. They took me to the hospital and then I went different places…kind of place to place trying to get better…now I'm here…I like the people here but I always wear long sleeves and high necks so no one will see the scars from where he hurt me…the other scars…the ones on the inside…I don't know about those healing or if they can. I have to start all over to learn how to take care of myself…how to get back in the world…It's like being back at that door again and now I have to find the courage to go through…I don't know, sometimes I just don't know if I can do it but then I remember I stayed alive all that time…that's something isn't it? (African American, 31)

My family lives in Korea and here I have my husband's family. They say I am not a very good wife. I make many mistakes. To punish me they lock me in the closet. I have no light or food or water. If I cry my husband's mother beats me with the

stick. I am not permitted to speak because I am not a good wife. I want to stay in this country so I try to be better all the time. They do not want me anymore. I am not sure what will happen to me…now the place where I am says I have been saved but I am all alone and very frightened. (Asian, 22)

When I hear people talk about terrorists I always think about my ex. He could give classes on how to be a terrorist. He terrorized me for years. I was just a girl when I met him, and I thought he was my knight in shining armor…you know, like in the fairy tales. Well, he was no knight that's for sure. But you make the best of things. When you get married it's for better or worse, well I guess I got the worse. At first it was yelling, then it was pushing, and then came hitting. One day I hit him back and he walked out. I was pretty proud of myself. That night I felt something poking me. I opened my eyes and he was kneeling next to the bed with gun to my head…he pulled the trigger and it made a clicking sound. "The very next time you do something to make me angry that will be your last day on earth." That's all he said and I believed him. After that night I lived another 14-years in hell with him. He had a stroke and he's paralyzed now, can you believe it? And now I'm finally free...I don't even know how to make sense of it all…at least not yet…I have a lot of work to do on myself. (Caucasian, 53)

My husband's friends, they would always hang-out in the apartment and when I came home from work he would tell me to cook for them, get them beers, you know whatever they wanted. One night I was in a lot of pain, I was having a lot of health problems, female kinds of problems and these really bad headaches…I felt really sick and I just didn't think that I could walk to the bodega to get them what

> they wanted so I said no. He put me on the floor in front of them and he got on top of me and started choking me…I could hear them laughing, then I must have passed out. When I woke up I was tied to the chair like a dog, my mouth was taped shut and I was naked…I could see my son looking at me…he was small yet…I can't tell you the rest right now…maybe another time. (Latina, 36)

This level of abuse caused an array of both physical and emotional problems that ranged from short- to long-term. The most common physical injuries reported were to the head, face, neck, breasts, and abdomen. Seven women from the study group reported being abused during a pregnancy[viii]. They concurred that the abuse worsened as the pregnancy progressed with the abuser directing his blows to the belly. Within this group, there had been three miscarriages and one newborn was delivered with fetal fractures and bruising. Among them, these seven women had twenty-three live births; all of their children are under eighteen years of age. Of the study group, only 52 percent sought medical attention, even when they sustained significant wounding (cuts and burns). They "butterflied" their own wounds by using duct tape to hold them together. They treated burns by pouring hydrogen peroxide on the affected area and covering it with over-the-counter (OCT) ointments. They also reported using alcohol to numb the pain.

> I remember one time he had burned me all over my breasts and I was in agony. I got some aspirins and dissolved them in a basin of water. I used cheesecloth to make cold compresses and put them on my chest. Then I just drank myself to sleep and prayed he had enough fun for one night. (Caucasian, 59)

All of the women in the study group reported having chronic health problems such as chronic pain, especially headaches and back pain.

> I get these blinding headaches. I feel like my head is exploding…like it's coming apart. Have you ever heard the expression "white heat?" That's supposed to be the hottest. Well it's like white heat burning through my eyes from the inside. Then comes the vomiting and I'd keep throwing up until there's nothing left. I can't hold anything down; not even a cup of tea. All I can do is wait for it to be over and pray it doesn't happen again tomorrow (Latina, 61).

A small percentage (2 percent) of the group were on prescription medications for seizures; whether these were a direct result of blows to the head or repeated loss of consciousness due to incomplete strangulation was unknown. However, there is an abundance of medical literature that supports this probability.

> I wasn't sick when I married my husband…he made me sick day by day, week by week, year by year. I feel like one of those prize fighters…a little punchy. I really believe I just got hit in the head once too often. Now I have these seizures…All he ever gave me was misery and sickness (Caucasian, 55).

Women also reported diagnoses that included eating disorders, chronic irritable bowel syndrome, hypertension, and suppression of the immune system. Other physical ailments included gynecological problems including: sexually-transmitted diseases, vaginal bleeding or infection, fibroids, decreased sexual desire, genital irritation, painful intercourse, urinary tract infections, and chronic pelvic pain.[ix] Because women in the study group have reported incidents of forced sex, it is probable, that some of these illnesses, such as STDs would be linked to sexual abuse by intimate partners having unprotected sex with other partners.

Depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) were the most common mental health issues suffered by the study group. Some of the women within the group (38 percent) had been diagnosed with chronic depression, which they felt was exacerbated by living in a violent relationship.

> I haven't seen or spoken to my ex-husband in over five-years, but I can't seem to escape him. He haunts my dreams. Sometimes on the street I think I see him and I duck into a store…I can still hear every hurtful word he ever said to me…the names he called me. Every time I remember my heart pounds, my stomach turns, and the tears come and they won't stop. Just when I think I'm turning the corner on it, I remember how worthless he made me feel…like a stick of furniture. Sometimes he made me feel invisible. He once went six whole weeks without looking at me. He just acted like I wasn't even there. If I spoke to him, he didn't look at me or answer. With time my broken bones, cuts, and bruises healed, now if I could just figure out a way to erase my memories (Asian, 37).

Depression is associated with suicidal tendencies and places sufferers at increased risk for a variety of physical conditions. For a significant number of women in this study, the psychological abuse and its consequences have left them in a struggle with long-term depression; however, only 22 percent of the women medically diagnosed were receiving professional care.

Post-traumatic stress disorder has been described as a "normal reaction to abnormal events" (Huges & Jones, 2000). When questioned about the more common symptoms of PTSD such as: lowered trust in others, persistent sadness, self-blame, difficulty concentrating,

emotional detachment, flashbacks, difficulty sleeping, nightmares, anger, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and revenge, the study group affirmed they had experienced all of these. Both revenge and suicidal thoughts were considered by only 4 percent of the group, while anxiety and lowered trust was experienced by 94 percent of the women. Flashbacks were reported by 89 percent of the women and were often triggered by events, sounds, or smells that served as reminders of the abuse.

> The sound of a beer can being opened or the smell of someone drinking brings it all back. I don't like to be touched or closed in…I like to have my own space and keep my back to the wall this way I can at least see what's coming at me. (Latina, 43).

Although a high percentage of the women expressed symptoms of PTSD, only 4 percent had an actual diagnosis and were receiving, or had been, receiving treatment. This may be due to a marginalization of PTSD with respect to intimate partner violence. Yet, despite all these issues, the common theme that ran throughout all their stories was the overwhelming drive to survive in the moment. Despite all they had suffered, they persevered.

Self-Esteem was the one issue all of the women discussed at great lengths from their first day in the program. They saw it as "one of the most important things they had to salvage and to rebuild."

> When you don't have any self-esteem you don't even think of yourself as a person. There were times when I cried so hard I could hardly breathe and I kept saying my name over and over again. I was afraid that if I stopped saying it I would disappear forever (African American, 51)

Respect is a very important part of Asian culture. If you cannot respect yourself then no one else can respect you. It is hard to understand how you can lose pieces of yourself until there is nothing left. It is like watching bits and pieces circle in the drain until they disappear (Asian, 29).

Without self-esteem you have nothing because it means you don't believe in yourself. I know it is the most important thing for me because it is the first thing he worked so hard to take away from me and he worked even harder to make sure I didn't get it back. No matter what I did, he would always tell me what a loser I was. If I worked I was a flunky. If I lost my job it was because I was stupid. He said I didn't have friends because there was nothing about me to like, but that wasn't true. I had friends when I met him. Then, one by one, they stopped coming by because he was nasty to them. Then he would tell me he didn't want any of my trashy friends in his house…little by little my friends stopped coming over. One night I thought I would cook a nice dinner to surprise him. When he saw it he started yelling and screaming at me. Then he just swept his arms across the table and all the dishes and the food was on the floor in a big mess. He told me to get on my knees where I belonged and while I was down there I should lick it up. He told me to stick to simple things that I could get my head around and not to try anything like that again. I never did. (Caucasian, 49)

It's a lot easier than most people think it is to lose your self-respect because it doesn't happen right away. It starts with little things…name calling and you make all sorts of excuses for him because you love him but every day it just gets worse. It's like each hurt puts a weight on your back until it weighs so heavy on you your

> feel bent and broken with pain. You can't remember how to get up again. All you see is the ground coming up and you going down (Latina, 29)

Of the many topics covered in various aspects of the program, self-esteem was the one the women felt was most essential to their well-being. As one participant said, "having self-esteem is the most important tool to me for rebuilding my life, because for me self-esteem is where everything begins…without, you have nothing" (Asian, 43).

The responses of the study group conveyed the totality of the disintegrative effects intimate partner violence had on every aspect of their lives. From their personal encounters with family and friends to the workplace, batterers coercively took control of the women's lives and denied them even the most basic personal freedoms. They were subjected to physical, psychological, and sexual harm affecting their general health and mental well-being. They were robbed of any financial security, which exacerbated their already tenuous circumstances. Finally, abusive partners attempted to strip them of their identities by depriving them of their self-esteem. Through their personal narratives, interviews, and discussions, the women in the study group agreed that intimate partner violence would never be entirely left behind.

Chapter 6: Network, Community, and Empowerment

The Creation of an Effective Social Network: Social Capital

In this section, I discuss a central element in the process undergone by the women in the sample: the creation of a social network. In the literature the existence of a social network is credited with the power to increase self-esteem. (See chapter 2, Literature Review, for discussion of this issue.)The capacity to develop healthy confidence and respect for oneself is necessary for a person to see themselves as worthy of happiness something survivors have lacked in their lives. Here I document how the creation of such a network was a crucial element in the progress made by respondents.

A social network is a social structure made up of individuals that are connected by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, common interest, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge, or prestige. They are personal communities that can influence the development of social identity as well as provide comfort and security. Social networks can be used to measure social capital – the value that an individual gets from the social network. This concept is built into the structural organization of Women and Work; the idea being that social networks can play a critical role in promoting a survivor's safety and well-being.

The discussion of social networks was included in the opening discussions between the W&W staff and participants to ensure that participants had a clear understanding of the different ways social networks could be formed such as, family, friends, the shelter system, or religious groups. Intake data indicated that the women were severely lacking in the kinds of social networks that could have eased their transition out of a violent situation. The evidence is of enormous isolation and a sense of helplessness: participants reported a lack of resources in terms

of friend, family or even social agencies. As a participants made clear, "when assistance was available it came at a price…they ask for your 'cooperation,' but what they really mean is do it my way or else" (Latina, 39). The following excerpt from a participant's statement captures gives an example of how she felt in a similar situation:

> Right from day one they made me feel like I was the one who had done something wrong even though they kept saying it wasn't my fault, but the words didn't match up with how they acted towards me. Always, just beneath the surface, there was something there. I never felt like they were really on my side, like they really believed in me. They were just doing a job, that's all I was to them…not like here, here these ladies, the W&W teachers, they care. I feel it. (African-American, 42).

Although the study group was diverse in racial/ethnic composition, the women shared many of the same issues; among them, they consistently reported the loss of personal freedom or social isolation as one of the greatest hardships of their experiences with violence. In deference to these discussions, I have included their experiences with aloneness in this discussion of social networks, because participants agreed that their lack of attachment to someone or something, a social network, heightened their feelings of fear and isolation, while minimizing the likelihood of change.

> People who live regular lives don't understand what it means to be alone…I'm not talking about being lonely or alone for a little while. I'm talking about when it doesn't matter where you are or how many people are standing around you…you are ALONE [respondent's emphasis]…It's like all the air got sucked out of you at once and you can't breathe and no one can see you're dying (African, 37)

> The worst part was not being able to make my own decisions about anything. It's like being a prisoner…no freedom, none…I couldn't even pick out my own clothes. That's the hard part comes when you realize you really don't have any say in anything...it's like you're invisible to everyone except the one person in your life who treats you like shit, but you can't find the door. (African American, 29).

> It's hard for anyone who hasn't experienced domestic violence to understand how it happens. I lived through it and even I don't really understand how it happened. I know why I did exactly as he told me to…one word – fear. It was the way he said things…I never doubted for a minute that he would make good on his threats. So I while other people lived in the world doing things, I felt like I was just an observer. He made every decision for me. He decided what I did, when I did it and who I could do it with. The hardest part was being treated like a child with no control over my life. I waited for his instructions, but I was always thinking in the background, my time will come. In the meantime, I would just dream about walking out, doing anything I wanted…all on my own. (Caucasian, 45)

Abusers employ coercive techniques to limit the activities of daily life, from food shopping to doctor's visits to spending time with friends and family. Several women reported their abusers controlled their meals. The abusive partner would determine what, when, and how much they could eat. In one instance, a survivor shared with the group that her abuser kept a lock on the refrigerator and pantry closet, putting him in absolute control over her body, as well as her health and wellness. By being denied the most basic rights, survivors are further isolated in ways that are difficult for the "average" person to comprehend. The most important reason why

women comply according to the data collected is survival. Being able to get by means having someone you can depend on and most of the women reported they did not have anyone dependable in their lives. South Asian women in particular strongly believed their community leaders preferred to keep the abuse of women in their neighborhoods quiet so that dominant males could continue to rule as they saw fit. Even when women had family members, whether due to cultural edicts or out of fear of retribution by the abuser, they chose not to render assistance. In some cases, families blamed the women for their situations, attributing the abuser's behavior to the women's failure to be a good wife. Other family members simply advised the women to try harder. In some instances, families were unable to help because their internal problems rivaled those of the survivor. The end result as the women saw it was simple and straightforward; they were on their own.

Without a social network to intervene on their behalf, or to have allies they could count on in time of trouble, they maintained their lives as best they could. Often that meant juggling allowances so the most important needs could be addressed, such as providing the necessities for children and fulfilling other essential obligations. Regardless of their determination to work things out, they often reported feeling stuck and unable to move their lives forward; still, they hung on. Among the greatest concerns were the most basic issues of survival as expressed in the following excerpts from a reflexive writing assignment entitled "My Story."

> If you've never been in my situation you can't know what it's like trying to keep your kids safe, trying to stay alive because you're all they've got and you just know way down deep that even though it seems impossible now, I know things will change…they have to (African-American, 31)

> People don't understand you cannot just leave your husband when you have children…you have to be able to give them a real home…a place filled with love and respect so they will grow the way they should. I do not want my son to be as his father is…so I wait until something will change (South Asian, 27)

> People think it's so easy. They say things like "you must like the way he treats you, otherwise you'd leave him. Why don't you go to a shelter or something?" They don't get it. I have no skills, no job, no one wants us. How will I live? How will I feed my children? Going to a shelter is just temporary help…Unless I could get some real skills and someone willing to help me, I'll wind up having to go back to him and things will be much worse. I know, been there done that. Until I can find a way to take care of me and my children, it's better for us to stay where we are than move to temporary safety and then be on the street… NO, I have to be sure that we can make it together. I need someone to be in my corner, to be there for me until I'm really able to make it on my own. (Caucasian, 29)

> I watched my mama get beat down all her life…I swore no man would beat me, but it didn't happen that way. I have five kids with two different fathers, not because I was stupid but because I didn't have any choice…I have to keep trying to stay alive and keep it together…I don't want my daughters to grow up to be me…No matter what they did to me, I stayed strong for my girls…for a better life for them (Latina, 23).

The progress of the program in creating a social network can be measured by the statements indicating a growing sense of connection among the participants. Midway

through the program, the women began to discuss the program as the most positive training they had ever been involved with because it was not limited exclusively to academic or job-training skills; instead, participants reported that the program stepped into their lives and took-on the problems they could not find solutions to on their own. Using methods they learned at the program, they held weekly discussion groups at which they would focus on a particular set of problems they felt were most important to them. As the weeks progressed, social cohesiveness among the group increased and as solutions to long-standing problems started to take shape, participants reported feeling empowered by their participation. This new found feeling of empowerment contributed to the group's heightened level of confidence in themselves as individuals, trust in the group, and the belief that "W&W would always be on their side, an advocate that would never abandon them" (Latina, 47).

> I have gone full-circle in the program. I've gone from totally not believing any of it to being a true believer. I've learned more than I thought I could…I've made friends with women I would've never spoken to before and I don't think they would've spoken to me for a lot of different reasons, mostly because I was so angry. The program has really helped me with anger management…I've learned how to talk to people in a way that makes them want to help me instead of walking away. I've learned to check my attitude, my facial expressions, my body language. I learned it's not what you say but how you say it that makes all the difference. W&W has taught me how to "present myself"…I love it! It has changed everything. At the program I found the confidence to take my life back…to believe that I'm worth knowing and I should have friends. I have

worked side-by-side with the women here to build our own community. It wasn't easy. We talked about everything, things I never thought I would ever talk about with anybody…we cried together, laughed together, and learned to solve our own problems. On top of all that I have Women and Work…the program is my strongest ally and the best advocate any woman could ever have. I know they will always be there for me no matter when I call for help…I know there will still be rough times, but the difference now is that I can stand up to them. I have myself, my community, and my network…it's my holy trinity (African-American, 58).

When I came here I was unable to speak…I have lived inside my silent thoughts for many years. Women and Work has given me a chance at life because they have taught me how to listen to my own voice…to understand that my thoughts and feelings are important. I have also learned new job skills, which is important for me to find a good job. I have also learned how to live in a healthy relationship with the people around me. Now for the first time I am part of a community of women who are all trying to make their lives better…all different types of women…Women and Work is a miracle for me…it has given me the POWER [respondent's emphasis] to change my life. I know it will not be easy, but my community and the program will always be there to help me on my way (Asian, 33).

I can't remember a time when there wasn't violence in my life…I learned it just like you learn anything else, and then I just couldn't seem to get away from it; it seemed to follow me into every part of my life…things went from bad to worse. From a rotten father to a bastard of a husband…Drugs and alcohol helped for a

while but, well…I hit bottom…no family, no friends then I saw this flyer talking about this place. I didn't expect much but I had nothing to lose so what the hell…Now, I can't believe it. Women and Work has just stepped into my life and become such a big part of it. I'm learning all the great job skills, but I'm learning about the other stuff that is just as important, no, maybe it's more important. I learned about "toxic relationships" and "energy vampires" and I learned how to recognize them so they can't take me down again. I understand now what empowerment really means…it means being able to take ownership over your life and being responsible for it, it means being part of a real community, and having a network you know you can count on…The teachers here say that when you graduate you become an ambassador for the program; I'm going to be one of the best…It's not as a payback to everyone here, it's because I am a true believer (Caucasian, 34).

My whole world fell apart when they took my kids away from me. They said I didn't protect them…I got beaten-up and everything got to be my fault. Since I've been here the older ladies they've been teaching me a lot about how to be a better mom for when I get my kids back. The program has hooked me up with an organization to help me get my kids back as soon as I can show them that I can provide for them. I want to get them out of foster care as soon as I can…The program is teaching me a lot about myself and how to build a better life. For the first time I have real friends, I have a place to bring my problems where people actually care, and most important, I have people who are actually happy to see me and talk about, well, the little things, the everyday things…life (Latina, 22).

The Establishment of a Community

As explained in the literature, community offers the promise of belonging and calls for us to acknowledge our interdependence. [See Literature Review, above, for further discussion.] Building a community is complex and depends upon an infinite number of small steps, but the social fabric of community is formed from an expanding shared sense of belonging. Weaving and strengthening the fabric of a community is a collective effort and starts when we focus our mindset on connectedness; in other words, it does not happen without effort or cause. At Women and Work, the desire to build a community arises out of the belief that participants share the same values and their participation will benefit them in some way; there will be reciprocity. As discussed earlier, survivors of intimate partner violence experienced social isolation and did not feel connected to a community of any sort; furthermore, they commonly lacked the ability to trust. Now, they would need to act as a cohesive group and have to find a way to trust one another, as well as the staff of Women and Work.

The intake process was the staff's first step in establishing their own relationship with the women, rather than being an extension of the referring agency or organization. They listened as women told their stories, gave voice to their feelings, and commiserated with others. While the process brought greater clarity to each woman's situation, it also made clear that gaining the participants' trust had to be earned over time. By the fourth week of programming, the group bonded as far as wanting to be supportive to each other; this was especially apparent during group discussions or the reading of personal narratives. These sessions often became emotional; in some instances, trembling voices broke into tears that had been suppressed for too long. As the women worked through their life stories, they slowly revealed their secrets and the deeply guarded emotions attached to them began to be lifted. What emerged from these group sessions

were the depth of fear and shame they felt, of the moments when they doubted their sanity, believed they were alone in the world, or of being so angry they were afraid to think what they might do next. The excerpts below capture some of their thoughts:

> There are times when I watched him sleep -- passed out drunk and I thought it would be so easy to end it all…I should just kill him now, but I never did, 'because my life would be over too and my kids would be all alone…but I thought about it, I surely did. (African American, 47)

> I did not want to tell anyone, to bring shame on my family that I was such a poor wife. (Asian, 24)

> When the beatings were over, the bruises healed, but then I asked myself what's the matter with me. I'd get so angry for not fighting back, but the reason I didn't was my kids. We had nowhere to go, no one to help us. Sometimes, you just have to find the strength to hold on. (Caucasian, 33)

> I really thought I was nuts. I had trouble remembering things. I'd stay awake all night thinking about the mean things he said to me. He never hit me, he didn't have to. His words hurt all the way through to my soul. I stayed because I thought it was the right thing to do. My kids are grown and gone, they don't visit anymore. I'm alone with him and he's as mean as ever. (Latina, age 51)

Out of their conversations together they realized their lives had more in common than they originally thought at the outset of the program; they referred to these similarities as their common threads. Their shared experiences became the building blocks of a community; however, they were still challenged by the presence of a cultural divide. To

overcome this obstacle, they had to examine the many stereotypes they had learned over time and come to accept as fact. The greatest challenge came from the American born white women who resisted the inclusiveness needed for community building. Many of their biases were built upon racist ideas, preconceived notions that had been supported by white privilege. To a far lesser degree, but still palpable, was the self-imposed segregation among the large population of Chinese women and the very small group of Koreans. These differences required each of the two groups educating the W&W staff as to why they were stand-offish with each other. With time the differences, whether they grew out of racial prejudices or cultural biases, were ameliorated as the women decided they wanted to be included in the community that was rapidly forming around them. As the women continued to share their stories, they realized how similar their life experiences had been. The themes that emerged included the deprivation of personal freedom, isolation from family and friends, and the pain suffered from emotional cruelty as exemplified by the following excerpts:

> Sometimes when I feel scared that's when I hear it the most. I hear his voice. I hear him screaming and cursing…calling me names, but the most horrible thing is being called stupid. Being told you're so dumb you shouldn't be allowed to speak because no one should have to listen to a crazy woman. (African American, 45)

> To live in silence, to be invisible, these are the greatest harms a person can inflict upon another. I have known a life without love, without compassion. I have always worked, but I have never made much money. Sometimes they keep my wages or do not pay what is owed. When the Center [Respondent is referring to a domestic violence center for Korean women] sent me here I cried from fear about

> many things, especially my English is not very good. Now I go to special ESL classes at Women and Work…I learn how to present myself…how to walk and talk and dress. This is such an amazing place. I have made friends with so many different types of women…the teachers listen to what is important to me. For the first time in my life, I matter to someone…I am more than visible…I am a woman I can be proud of (Asian, 34).
>
> …broken bones heal, but the poison he filled my mind with from things he said to me, cruel things, those are burned into my memory…every day I have to remind myself just because he said it for so long that doesn't make it true, but some days it's really hard, harder than you can ever know or understand. (Caucasian, 57)
>
> The worst part about someone being really cruel to you is that no one sees you bleeding…all the bleeding is on the inside. So they can't see how hurt you are. I think it would have been better if he had hit me, broken bones, bruises…they get better with time. But when it's quiet in the night, I think I hear him whispering those terrible things in my ear. Sometimes, I jump up and put the light on to make sure he's not there. I look all around, but it's worse than that, he's in my head. (Latina, 41).

Often these problems cascaded and opened the door to discussions about health problems, including the struggle with depression and anxiety. Some women revealed how they self-medicated with alcohol, while others were forced into addiction by their abusers. As they began to feel more secure with each other, they began to understand the benefits accruing to them both individually and collectively.

By week seven women reported an improved sense of self-esteem; as they grew more self-confident, they became more interested in problem-solving as a group, rather than keeping things to themselves or handing them off to their case workers or W&W program facilitators. As the group became more self-directed, the women applauded the courage they saw in each other as they discussed their future plans. With time, they began to see that courage in themselves as well. The bond among the study group continued to deepen as was demonstrated by both their observable behaviour and their survey responses. Participants consistently rated their membership in the group as most important to rebuilding their lives.

> Two months ago I didn't really believe I could make the changes that I have. I can't believe. I feel like it's a dream and I'm going to wake-up and it will all be gone, but every day I come back and you're all still here. I have friends for the first time in such a long time. I have people who care about me…I have a place, I belong and with your help I know I can make it. I've learned so much, it's hard to know where to begin, and I can't imagine how much I will learn by the time it's over. But the most important things I've learned here is to love and respect myself and to demand that others do the same…no more "toxic" relationships of ANY kind for me. (African-American, 49).

> This program has helped me to find my way through a very difficult time in my life. The readings in the Open and Closing Circles encourage each of us to speak from our hearts…for many of us it may be the first time we have broken the long silence. All the women are so supportive…when we first met, all we saw was how different we were…With time Women and Work helps us to respect our

differences, be open to others, and to always trust ourselves. Women and Work doesn't look at just one part of a woman's life, it looks at everything and then helps you to find a way to put everything in its proper place (South Asian, 42).

When I get worried about the class work, or I have a problem, all the women in my group try and help me. I love the Opening and Closing Circles when we have the readings and talk about what they mean. Even when women cry, now I know it's a sign of frustration and release. I learned the most important things here…how to recognize what troubles me, accept my decisions, forgive errors, and let go so I can move on. (Caucasian, 58).

When I first came here and saw all the different types of women there were in the program, I couldn't believe it. The first thing I did was to see how many women here spoke Spanish. Now, that seems so silly because those other women are my friends now…When I tell people about how special this program is…how they teach you EVERYTHING [respondent's emphasis]…things you would never think of…When they say they're going to help you rebuild your life, they really mean it. There's not any part of your life that they won't help you with…Between my community and Women and Work, I have everything [sic] I need to rebuild my life into one I've only ever dreamt about…soon it will be a reality! (Latina, 27).

In the early weeks of the program the women reported their concerns about the differences among them. American born women were concerned with the large number of women who were not native English speakers, and how this might slow the classes

down. Other concerns included worries over racial, cultural, and ethnic differences. As the program progressed, the group reported their shift in attitude was not due to one specific thing, but rather to the multitude of things they were experiencing directly and indirectly through the program.

By week twelve the participants had overcome their differences and coalesced into a genuine community of women. They brought their experiences with domestic violence agencies and support groups to their new community and promised to always treat each other with respect. The women agreed that well-intentioned professionals often made them feel like children, speaking to them in a condescending manner. The consensus was they needed to comply if they wanted their lives to improve. Although there was no doubt in their minds that most service providers they encountered genuinely wanted to help them, a majority of the women reported feeling pressured to conform for fear of losing services. In forming their community at W&W the women reported being deeply satisfied in having developed a strong sense of empowerment; from this, came the ability to take ownership of their lives. They rated this ability as a major accomplishment and attributed their success to the personal development tools provided through the program.

This explanation of how the women formed their community and what it means to them was corroborated by all of the women in the study group. They often talked about how their lives were bound together in ways that others could not understand. Their ties to each other, just like the community they had created, transcended geographical space. It was not bound or defined purely by physical space, but by the emotional connections they had forged over time. Their community without borders was simply headquartered

from time to time at a physical address, but the true community was something they had internalized; it would be theirs always as can be seen from the following excerpt:

> Being part of a community wasn't on the top of my list when I came here. I just wanted to learn computer skills and whatever would help me get a better paying job. So I thought I would just sit and get through all of the other stuff I wasn't interested in, but little by little it started making sense to me and more and more I wanted to really be a part of it. It's funny I really fought against it, but it's like a tug you can't ignore. The more you listen, the more it makes perfect sense. Maybe it's different for different woman, but hate and prejudice is the same no matter what color your skin is, or what you believe in, or the language you speak…The scary part was looking at myself and figuring out that I was one of them. I started finding out what flipped my switch…we all have fears…Women and Work can't make them go away, but they've taught me how to manage them…understanding the difference is everything (African-American, 44).

> I come from a community of South Asians, but it is not like the community I am building here. In my home community no one feels that I am important or that anything I have to say is truly important. No one helped me when they saw my suffering…so they are not a REAL community like the one I am building with the other women here. It hasn't been easy…we have fought, said angry words to each other, but slowly, we learned to understand our anger and fears…we have fought through many things together…so it is very strange in a way that the community that has no neighborhood of its own is the best and strongest community of all (South Asian, 27).

> When I came to this country I was grateful for the kindness I was shown, but I never felt I belonged. I found others from my country, but they felt I had done wrong leaving my husband even though I tried to explain that he would have killed me in time. When I first came to W&W I was very scared -- there were only a few veiled Muslim women in the program, but still the women welcomed me—all different types of women and as I got to know them, they helped me to find the courage to keep going...to keep coming back every day. Today I am stronger than I thought I could be, even though I have more work to do. I know this community of women goes with me forever in my heart and I believe that if I reach out, if I call to them they will answer. (Egyptian, 23)

> People think that communities are about streets and places, neighborhoods with names, like Bed-Stuy or Harlem, but here I learned about community in a different way. Communities are really about the people, the ideas they share, and the lives they build together --they're about helping to make each of us stronger, then, together everyone does better. In hard times, real communities pull together not apart. Our community of women may not have streets and buildings, but it's just as real. We are the community. It lives or dies by what we do, by the power we give it. Everything is up to us. (Latina, 29)

The community built by the women was their way of increasing social justice, individual well-being and reduce negative impacts of otherwise disconnected individuals. Establishing the community of women at Women and Work was a complex process that involved bringing individuals together and forming a cohesive group that established trust and a deep sense of connection.

Bridging the Divides: Mitigating Differences

Women and Work welcomed a diverse population of women; they came from different races, ethnicities, ages, and religions. Despite their difference, most welcomed the opportunity to meet new women; however, others felt challenged by the immersion into such a global mix of women. At the outset of the program, a sense of separateness existed among the Asian women with each preferring to stay within their own ethnic group. The largest population (92 percent) was Chinese, with the remainder being comprised of South Asian (5 percent), Korean (2 percent), and Japanese (1 percent) women respectively. However, by the third week of the program, this situation was ameliorated through group discussions that enabled the women to bridge their concerns and form a cohesive group that advocated for themselves as a unit.

> We are very different…many see us as "Asians" but we do not see ourselves that way. We are different in every way…everything that makes us who we are, but we have learned to understand each other better and to respect each other's differences…it is not easy to change, but we are learning that change can be good for all of us (Chinese, 38).

> We have a long history and it is not a good one…certain ideas that keep our worlds apart, we have learned to see each other differently…to speak with each other and to respect our differences…difference does not mean that we can not work together to become stronger together (Korean, 29)

> It is the mingling of worlds to become one so that we can speak for ourselves and for other women who have no found their way yet. We are very different, but we

> are also the same…we are learning from each other how to heal and be whole again. (South Asian, 30)
>
> I feel very alone and am worried all of the time that they will not accept me…the W&W staff give me courage and every day I see the others try to be my friend…I must learn new ways…it is good to be a part of what is happening here (Japanese, 24).

Bridging the cultural divide among the Asian women stood in sharp contrast to the chasm that was erected by the American born White women and the other women, particularly the foreign born women. The White women consistently displayed a kind of quiet resistance to being, as one participant said, "lumped-in with those other women." The following excerpts from participants expressed these feelings:

> I just want you to understand that we're different from those women. My problem isn't because I'm a woman, it's because my husband is an alcoholic and whenever he drinks he gets crazy. He gets angry at someone on the job or his favorite team loses and he starts drinking and he doesn't stop. He gets a few too many drinks in him and then it starts. But those women they come from countries where they kill women just because they're women…it's crazy…it's their culture…or their religion…I don't know, but it's totally not the same and I don't really think it's a good idea to lump us in together like we have the same problem…we don't. (Caucasian, 42).

Even though they self-identified as domestic violence victims, and many were referred from the same agencies, the White women somehow wanted the circumstances of their situations to be

defined differently. Although they accepted that they, along with the other women in the program, were subjected to violence at the hands of their intimate partners the two were not the same. My interpretation of this barrier is that their identity as White women had been socially constructed over their life course; it was all they possessed that still had value and cache in the world in which they lived their everyday lives. Regardless of the fact that they admitted to sharing the same experiences and emotions as other women in the program, the White women clung to their separateness. They clung to their race as the only positive status they could claim as their own.

The issue of white privilege reflected in the group mirrored the sense of racial entitlement entrenched in the broader society. The women of color and/or foreign born women often raised this issue of difference in group discussions and wrote about it in their essays, personal narratives, and journals, which they sometimes chose to share. Among the many points they made was the sense of exclusion they so often felt, especially when they tried to receive services.

> I grew up with racism, and although there have been a lot of really positive changes, I still feel I am treated a certain way because I'm Black and for no other reason. A lot of people have ideas and they just can't move past them. They have ideas about what Blacks are about. It's the same people who think all Muslims are terrorists; they have certain ideas and they don't even know they're being racists, but they are. It can be very frustrating when your experience is dismissed because "everybody knows Blacks are like that." I just want to have a good life, but I don't think I should have to settle for being a second class citizen in the country I was born in. I've never been to Africa, this is my home. I just want a little respect and a chance to change my life like all other women here. I don't want any more

> or any less. Why is that so hard for people to understand? I go in to get help and I can read their faces, I'm one more poor Black woman who likes to get beaten up, is having too many kids, and living with a loser and all I'm after is a free ride. NO! That's not it. I've worked ever since I was fourteen for real money at crap jobs. I had a mother who loved me and whose life was worse than mine. I never knew my father and according to my mother that was a blessing. None of this is my fault…I'm just trying to get a break just like these all these other women…but everything I've ever known has been about the same old story about Black and White. (African American, 52)

White privilege remains a significant issue in general, but more specifically, in the pursuit of social justice and services for survivors of intimate partner violence. (Morrison, 2006). As a way to deal with this issue, many women turned to culturally sensitive programs. However because these programs are quite small and have limited services, they often partner with organizations like Women and Work so they are better able to provide the services their clients so desperately need. As for the women who turned to these culturally sensitive programs, they were quick to point out there were no guarantees.

> I went to Sakhi[x] for help because I thought they would understand how much I want to preserve my values and beliefs. I want to still be able to live in my neighborhood with stores that sell foods I like and people who speak my language and understand me. Why can't I keep what is important to me? Americans look at me like I am the enemy…I love this country but I can't be a white woman. (South Asian, 30).

> When the agency told me I could come to this program I did not expect such kindness from the teachers, and I see the other women try but they hold themselves separate. I know we are different…I dress differently than you do and I am a devout Muslim, but I am the same as you…I wish you could understand we are not as different as you think. (Egyptian, 28).

In the end the racial divide was mitigated not by the demands of the program, but by the women themselves. Mitigation came as a by-product of building their community of women, which required trust in each other and the belief that the benefits outweighed the costs (reciprocity). Their decision that they were stronger together than they were apart was made at the individual level and is captured in the following excerpts:

> It sounds strange but in the program we learned about cost benefit analysis and critical thinking…these are the tools that we used to try and understand our situations…It's hard at first, everything at the program is so different than what I was used to. All different types of women, so many different languages and beliefs, and even the foods...It made us (white women) feel really uncomfortable at first, but the more we talked, the more we learned about each other. When we came into the program they said we would have an opportunity to "see with new eyes and listen with new hears." The first time I heard that I just laughed, but I'm not laughing anymore…As part of our program we volunteered together on community projects…sometimes we went out together as a group and I saw how some people looked at us…like I once looked at the women I know think of as my sisters. (Caucasian, 39)

All of the Women and Work participants engaged in a community outreach project. The experience in itself brings into play many of the skills essential to the program. Beyond the practical application of these skills, the participants' interaction across the cultural or racial divide provided an opportunity for greater understanding among the women. With time, the women became more focused on their projects and how to move them forward then on the differences among them. They began to listen to each other, and as they did, the fear and anxiety that supported the divide began to dissipate. This change happens slowly and is shaped by trust, a commodity of great value to the women. However, when the group ventures into the community, their cohesiveness is palpable. They are sensitive to those in their group who, in their eyes, needed the most protection. Now the same White women who wished for separation as a way to maintain the status afforded them by white privilege now encouraged the others by advising them to "stand tall and be proud of who they are" (Caucasian, 36).

Empowerment: Ownership and Independence

Empowerment is about women being able to rebuild their lives as they envisioned them. It is a complex process that provides the tools for women to be able to take ownership over their lives, to no longer be imprisoned by the obstacles that have blocked their way. The by-product of their ownership is their long-sought and highly-valued independence. The process of empowerment is ongoing and, like all skills, improves with practice.

The Post Program component of the program was an exciting time as the graduates began to exert their empowerment through the decisions that would shape their new lives as they sought to enter the workplace. Most of the women resolved their major stumbling blocks while

attending their regular programming classes, but for some, the challenges continued. A small group of women (17 percent) were plagued by partners who continued to stalk them, while others (23 percent) battled over issues of visitation, custody, and child support.

These types of incidents were disruptive to the women and caused them added anguish just as they were beginning to move their lives forward. Women regularly commented on the fact that abusers were more interested in making their lives as miserable as possible. The goal of abusive men, according to the women, was not to win their women back but rather to destroy them emotionally so they had no future. The w omen agreed overwhelmingly that until the W&W intervention, they believed they were powerless against their abusers as expressed in the following excerpts:

> As soon as I left, he started acting like I was everything to him, but this time I knew it was a lie. I've left him before, a couple of times, but I always went back because he convinced me that he really loved me. This time when I said NO and stuck to it, he got mad and when he gets mad, he gets REALLY mean. He started following me and showing up everywhere I went. He'd start up with me; it didn't matter where I was. Then one night he went too far, he tried to run me down with his car, but I got away. He tried to make my life miserable, but I turned it back on him. He couldn't believe it. I called the police and pressed charges…I'm the only one says what happens when it comes to my life. I stood toe-to-toe with him and I won. (African American, 42)

> He made me believe I was nothing. He made me feel worthless and stupid, but no more. I am proud of what I have accomplished here. I will still have to struggle

for some time to come, but I am free to go where I want, when I want. I can even make mistakes and still I am proud of me. (Asian, 27).

Every day I wished I could find the strength to leave him. But it's not easy…How do I support myself and my children when I've never had a job where I earned more than minimum wage. He used to tell me I was a joke and I believed he was right. How could I take care of us with what I earned, I couldn't. I stayed with him because I believed I had no choice. When I heard about this program, it sounded too good to be true. Every day I waited for them to ask me for money I didn't have, but it never happened. They did everything they promised they would and they expected me to do the same. They expected me to be accountable for my actions. The whole idea was frightening, but I was committed. It's like a miracle…I am a new woman. I have learned valuable skills, had a complete make-over not just on the outside, but on the inside too. I found out that my mind is sound and my heart is strong…I have to set reasonable goals and then work to make them happen. For the first time in my life I am proud of who I am. (Caucasian, 34)

He made my life a living hell and I lost my children because of him. It has been two years and with the help of the community and my friends at W&W my children are coming home. I have a good job with benefits and a nice apartment. It has been a long journey, but finally we have a real chance at happiness. We will be a real family not one that lives in terror. (Latina, 26)

Within six months, 25 percent of the women were employed and within eighteen-months the remaining women joined them. At this point, the women had successfully moved out of poverty and into a stable lifestyle. Nineteen of the 257 women, or seven percent, went on to vocational training, including non-traditional work for women. Additionally, two women obtained their Chemical and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) certification, one became a Domestic Abuse Counselor and five others were admitted to college. Within three years post program, salaries reached sustainable employment and retention levels remained high for this group (94 percent). Feeling empowered by their newly acquired job- and life-management skills, four women decided to begin life anew by accepting jobs outside of New York. One woman moved to Florida and three others moved to California. The majority of women (98 percent) in the study group remained in communication, whether by email or phone, with the program for the duration of the study years. Communication within the first year post-program ranged from weekly contact, for women who were still working to resolve a variety of legal issues (28 percent), to monthly for those who had greater stability and fewer issues. Contact lessened in frequency as women asserted their independence from the program, though they remained in contact over time. A large majority (72 percent) of the women remained connected to the program due to their involvement as volunteers or because of their commitment to one of the program's community outreach projects. Five of the women (2 percent) became involved in other violent relationships, but were eventually able to extricate themselves from those relationships with assistance from W&W and its allies. The remaining women (91 percent) reported being able to recognize what W&W refers to as "the recipe for disaster" and backed away from those men before a toxic relationship could develop. The women attributed their

rather bumpy, but successful road to violent-free lives to the life-management skills taught in the program. The thoughts and feelings are expressed in the following excerpts:

> To take ownership over your life means to be responsible for yourself. Fifteen weeks ago I wouldn't have thought it was possible. Today, I know I can live on my own and that with the help of the W&W Community and the skills I learned there, I am able to provide a home for me and my children…Whenever I thought about leaving him before, I knew I couldn't do it…I knew I couldn't make it on my own. I am really proud of what I've accomplished here and I believe this is only the beginning. With careful planning and support from the program, I will continue to advance my skills. My children will have a better chance in life…so much has changed in three months…it's really like some kind of a miracle. It doesn't even seem like it should be possible. I am so lucky to have made it into this program, to have met these women, to have become a member of the Community of Women…how do I thank you for giving me a chance at this partnership...I know there will be some tough times ahead, but I have the tools now to handle things as they come. I also know I'm not alone. (Caucasian, 43)

> I wish I could let every woman who was ever abused know about this program. To shout it from the tallest building…You can be FREE! There needs to be a lot more programs like this one. From my very first day here, the first hour even, the teachers were asking me what I thought about this or that and I thought why do they keep asking me for my opinion, like it really matters. But every day they kept asking me and little by little I started telling them what I thought. Instead of talking AT me, they spoke WITH me. They made me feel like what I said really

> mattered. Soon, I felt like I really did have something to contribute. Then later in the program, in our group meetings we (the women) actually started helping each other, making suggestions and giving advice. It was really amazing between all of us we had so many experiences we actually knew more than we realized about how to get things done. We started working things out together. When I was upset about my husband having unsupervised visitation rights with my children, my group helped me get them changed to supervised visits. It was such a relief to me because he always threatened to take my kids and leave the country with them. He said by the time I found out it would be too late. That was the one thing I was most terrified of…It was just another way for him to torture me…Now, I have my own place…there's no screaming or fighting…no violence. Every time I put the key in the door I don't have to worry is this the night he goes too far and there is no tomorrow for me? Finally, we have a place of our own where we don't have to live, or worse, die in fear. (Latina, 29)

Summary

The women arrive at the program concerned only about their own issues and how the program might help them. Their personal experiences and the problems they have had with the system have reinforced their lack of trust, which has been eroded over their lifetimes. They move from self-doubt and disbelief in the program to improved self-esteem and confidence that Women and Work will advocate on their behalf.

The composite pieces detailed the complexities of the women's lives and the many structural challenges they faced on a daily basis. Through individual reflection and group discussions the women were able to confront their fears and anxieties, as well as to see how this

exacerbated their already volatile lives. As their confidence grew they were better able to face their personal challenges, and as they did, they saw the value in being part of the social network of Women and Work. Over time, they negotiated their way through their own biases allowing them to construct their own community of women, in which they felt deeply invested. The aggregate effect of these efforts leads them to take ownership over their lives resulting in their personal empowerment.

Chapter 7 -- Conclusions and Recommendations

> The most important thing to know is that you are not alone, that other women have experienced what you have, and that you're normal. You're not stupid or pathetic, and most important that you deserve respect, love, and kindness. Realizing this is the first step to building a new beginning that can change everything forever. (Afghani, 42)

Violence against women impairs and nullifies the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women. While it is perpetuated by traditional practices that accord women lower status in the family, workplace, community and society, there is no monolithic cause or unidimensional solution to violence against women exactly because it is a complex, multi-dimensional problem affecting society as a whole. In other words, it is not simply a problem for the women who are most directly affected, but for the society at large.

The immensity of the problem is evidenced by the fact that only about one-third of all domestic violence incidents are reported to law enforcement making it one of the most underreported crimes in the United States. Violence against women is a tragic epidemic in American contemporary society, as well as a global pandemic; it manifests as physical, emotional/psychological, sexual, and/or financial abuse. While IPV may not be experienced by different groups even-handedly, it does affect women of all socio-economic classes, races, ethnicities, cultures, religions, ages, and sexual orientations. Despite a wealth of data produced by decades of research assaults on women by their intimate partners continues unabated. Furthermore the legal system, upon which domestic

violence survivors depend, has not proven to be the panacea that had been hoped for, especially for women of color. Even though the legal system has a particularly negative impact on women of color, the system currently fails not only them but white battered women as well; it holds all women back in their efforts to transition from victim to survivor. The process of transitioning from victim to survivor is only the first step in assisting women to move from a position of powerlessness to purposive power. To attain this objective several things need to happen: 1) women need to be provided with a wide array of tools capable of addressing the multidimensional and complex problems that are part of the intimate partner violence experience; 2) survivors need to be acknowledged as uniquely positioned partners capable of effecting social change; 3) the broader society needs to be educated to recognize and respond to IPV as a public health issue; and 4) communities or social networks need to be organized that can invest survivors with social capital.

The collective stories of the women in this study explored common themes woven across their socio-cultural differences to produce a more inclusive, integrative discourse of domestic violence. Women, regardless of the demographics that define them, are capable of transitioning from victim to survivor if they can acquire the tools/skills needed for change and a social network that will support them as they make the transition. The components for successful change will need to include: the creation of a survivor identity (personal power), the ability to attain financial stability (economic independence), and to establish a social network (community of women) from which they will derive social capital (empowerment). These components have the potential to counter the untold chaos

created in women's lives by abusive intimate partners who inflict emotional trauma, physical injury, sexual degradation, and social isolation.

Women in the study were not abused because they were poor, out of work, women of color, or foreign born. Although any of these factors can increase the risk of partner violence, they are not causal factors. Unlike the images of domestic violence victims portrayed in popular culture and the media, the women in this study did not stay with their partners because they liked the abuse or because their status as victims filled some need for attention. They were abused because their partners chose to commit horrific crimes and unspeakable acts against them and they were without the resources to stop them. As the women shared the most intimate details of their lives with the researcher, their stories revealed they were women caught in bad situations, who made the best choices they could in the moment. Perhaps the lack of choices available to survivors speaks to the refusal of the broader society to provide adequate resources and opportunities for women to improve their lives not in the moment but for the long-term, which will affect intergenerational violence as well, moving us closer to a violence-free society. The intervention provided by Women and Work has demonstrated a viable alternative vision in the form of a holistic, women-centered partnership for empowerment focused on financial stability and life management skills. The outcomes of the study group affirm that empowering survivors to chart their own roadmap to a better life is best accomplished when they take an active role in shaping their learning experience. However, long-term change happens not solely by completing the program, but rather by internalizing a series of life-management adaptations into their everyday lives. These changes cannot occur in a vacuum; they require a supportive environment. In essence,

help must be there when women are ready and able to actualize their empowerment on their terms. While there are many shared commonalities at the intersections, there is no cookie-cutter mold or one-size fits all solution for women to overcome male violence. However, when the W&W intervention presented women with the opportunity and the tools to take control of their lives, they consistently rose to the challenge.

Social Networks

Women and Work provides a powerful social network for survivors as they rebuild their lives and prepare to enter the workforce. Like all social networks, W&W is made up of individuals, which are tied together by one or more specific types of interdependency. I suggest that a sense of belonging and the concrete experience of social networks, as well as the relationships of trust that are involved, can bring significant benefits to survivors. The extent of the benefits that extend to participants are directly related to their level of attachment to the program, because it provides the support they need in the moment they need it.

Understanding the impact of empowerment in the lives of survivors can greatly assist in shaping future programming. Both the literature and the lived experiences of those in the study group affirm that women in abusive relationships often lack support systems that can mitigate their circumstances. Because W&W recognizes the women as equal partners, each of the parties is deeply invested in their social network; sociologically speaking, their attachment is strong. Furthermore, the social support afforded survivors via the W&W network directly affects many of the issues they report as significant obstacles to their leaving and/or rebuilding their lives. Issues survivors need to address would be mental health and well-being, the reluctance to disclose their abuse, and the disbelief that help would be forthcoming if they did ask. When

creating intimate partner violence interventions important considerations should include: how social networks are built, whether they create nonthreatening environments, are they empowering, do they give voice to the lived experiences of women, and how are they mobilized to assist women in resisting male violence.

The Power of Community

The complexities of this global phenomenon force us to realize there are no monolithic responses to intimate partner violence and to reconsider the tendency to view the causes of IPV as purely cultural or structural. While the lived experiences of the study group makes clear there are no simplistic answers to the problem of violence against women, it also elucidates the significance that coming together played in their lives and to the power that a community can provide to survivors as they work towards change.

Over time communities have been defined in a variety of ways, as geographical areas established by physical borders, by the people who occupy a particular space, or as an area of common life. They can also be viewed as a way to bring together a number of elements such as, solidarity, commitment, mutuality, and trust. These elements were brought together to form the community of women established by survivors at the Women and Work program. The establishment of a community is the product of a group's decision to act both on an individual and collective level. The community of women forged at the program by its participants could be considered an 'elective' community because the women share a common characteristic as survivors rather than a geographical space. Because the group is elective, the community built is 'intentional' (Hoggett, 1997). These types of communities are a key feature in contemporary society;

examples of such communities might include for example, a cyber-community or the LGBT community. Each of these communities conveys an identity to the broader society; it sends a message about what links them together.

In the same way, Women and Work creates the opportunity for women to create a community that conveys an identity as a community of strong women who are survivors of intimate partner violence focused on rebuilding their lives; instead of as weak and helpless victims in need of being rescued. The W&W community is sustained by group solidarity, the ties or social relations that bind each of the members one to the other. Community plays a crucial role in generating people's sense of belonging, which is exactly what survivors need to establish. "The reality of community lies in its members'…People construct community symbolically by making it a resource and repository of meaning, a referent of their identity" (Cohen, 1985).

The qualities associated with communal life include: tolerance, reciprocity, and trust. Tolerance is marked by "an openness to others;…perhaps even respect, a willingness to listen and learn" (Walzer, 1997). While tolerance is built into the structural design of W&W, only participants can choose to embrace this quality incorporating it into their individual identities as well as into the formation of their community. Much in the way that the study group accrued benefits over time, the concept of reciprocity has similar capacities. It is less about immediate gratification, and more about having the confidence that there will be a return down the road. This resonates with survivors who have struggled with surviving in the moment without the promise of a better future. However, because the benefits of the program can be seen and felt early on, the merits of reciprocity are quickly recognized by survivors. Finally, the most challenging element for

any community to flourish is trust or more accurately trustworthiness (reliability). Trust in other people allows the women to cooperate and further develop their community. It is important to note that trusting others does not entail suspending our critical judgment. This is especially important to survivors whose life experiences have significantly impaired their willingness, not their ability, to trust. "Our minds have been built by selfish genes, but they have been built to be social, trustworthy, and cooperative" (Ridley, 1997). Therefore, survivors are encouraged to recognize the possibilities and apply their critical thinking skills to assess whether someone should be trusted or not, and then act accordingly.

In the broader society, the disintegration of community has been viewed by sociologists as a key cause of social disintegration and the emergence of many harmful behaviors. At Women and Work the value of community building reverses that effect offering survivors an opportunity to establish a community as a means to increase social justice, individual and collective well-being, and reduce negative impacts for women who have been marginalized by the society-at-large.

Social Capital

"Social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2000). In other words, interaction enables people to build communities, to commit themselves to each other, and to knit the social fabric; this is at the core of Women and Work. Yet, while the program holds-out the promised of something better, the decision to trust and commit is controlled exclusively by survivors.

The bonds formed with Women and Work happen over time; they develop out of the day-to-day experiences women have at the program and their interaction with the W&W staff. While it is the bond between the women and the program is of great importance in defining the relationship between the two partners, it is the depth of the women's commitment to themselves and the changes they want to make that determines how, and to what degree, they will benefit. The range of benefits (social capital) for women spans both hard- and soft-skills; it includes: computer and technology skills, interpersonal-communication and life-management skills. When this is coupled with improved self-esteem and the support of their social network (W&W/Community of Women), it gives these women an advantage that has previously eluded them. Their partnership for empowerment that began when they first entered the program continues and is enhanced by their ongoing relationship.

From Victim to Survivor

For women who have experienced IPV, starting over begins with lifting the stigma of being labeled a victim. The victimization stigma attaches to the survivor defining her in the pejorative, rather than to the batterer who is the perpetrator of the violence. Even the term battered woman defines the woman as if she had chosen the mantle of abuse, rather than having it forced upon her. Abusive relationships develop slowly over time and when women realize how dangerous their situations are the way out of the relationship has usually been carefully obscured by the well-practiced and perfected coercive tactics of abusers. This study indicated that most survivors benefited from negotiating the rebuilding experience in the company of other survivors. By sharing stories and exchanging ideas, they were able to pool a remarkable wealth of knowledge earned through many painful experiences into workable solutions to problems

confronting most survivors. Giving voice to their experiences is the first step in the process of rebuilding. As Bell Hooks says in "Talking Back,"

> …moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is the act of "talking back," that is no mere gesture of empty words that is the expression of our movement from object to subject… (cited in Smith, 1993)

Giving voice to women, particularly those from diverse cultural backgrounds is essential in facilitating the transition from victim to survivor while also considering the issues of ethnocentrism, racism, and heterosexism that have dominated the domestic violence discourse. It also provides an insight into the coping skills of women, and contradicts the popular culture portrayal of survivors as passive, helpless victims. Instead, we need to recognize how survivors actively engage in resistance on a daily basis through such means as silence, avoidance, hiding, nonviolent confrontation, physically fighting back, manipulating finances, resisting suicide, and seeking assistance from both informal and formal organizations.

Alternative Visions

Traditional job-training programs focus on a narrow or specific set of job-skills commonly referred to as hard-skills. In general, their focus is not on the women as individuals, but rather on the satisfactory completion of a course. These programs are structured on a teacher/student model, which is based on a relationship where the nexus of power always resides with the teacher. For a population that has been deprived of personal autonomy, this model

perpetuates the exact type of power relations that marginalized are struggling to overcome. This is not to imply that this population of women is not capable of participating in traditional style classroom learning; however, rebuilding their lives will require something far greater. Women need to learn life-management skills, as well as learning to strategize for themselves.

Women and Work recognizes the many challenges that survivors face on a daily basis such as workplace disruption, lower incomes when they are working, poverty, ongoing court cases/dates, accessing social services, and complications from physical and mental health issues. For them to overcome problems of this magnitude they need to have an array of skills they can use to effect the life-altering changes needed for long-term change. The goal of this alternative vision is not to simply act on behalf of the women in the moment, but to provide survivors with the skills needed to begin the process of learning how to advocate for themselves on their own behalf

The process to achieve personal empowerment, as well as financial and emotional stability requires women to do several things: they need to establish control over their lives, learn to negotiate a complex social system, have access to a network committed to assisting them as needed, and become valued members in their own supportive community. Women and Work provides each of these needed pieces and more. Women and Work, unlike other programs, sees the women it serves not only as partners, but recognizes them as experts on the subject of abuse. The program considers their lived experiences as valuable to the process of change and through their exchange with one another they benefit from what could be explained as a variation on a theme. By bringing survivors together in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect they build the self-confidence they need to have to move to financial and emotional stability.

A community based approach is at the core of Women and Work's structural design and the ideology that acts as its infrastructure. In addition to building the internal W&W community, the program also works to build its external community by reaching out to other groups and organizations that are committed to ending violence against women. The community approach needs to be inclusive, rather than exclusive, so all cultural groups, races, and ethnicities are respected. By providing an eclectic means of support to women as they need it over time, they can develop the survivor identity that frees them to act on their own behalf.

Earlier in this work, I discussed the emerging ideological rift between those who had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo regarding the way domestic violence is viewed and those who have a broader vision, which I have embraced through my work with survivors at Women and Work. Instead of recognizing violence against women as a public health issue affecting everyone, society is still wedded to the model of domestic violence victims/survivors as somehow deficient, unwilling or unable to change their lives for the better. We rely on the power of the state to criminalize the act, but the prevailing attitude in the dominant society still places the blame squarely on the victim/survivor instead of looking for the structural shortcomings that are so deeply embedded in our society, such as racism, classism, and homophobia.

While law enforcement should not be the first or only solution to this problem, when they are called upon they need to maintain a respectful attitude towards those who have enlisted their aid. Many immigrant women are fearful of the police because their abusers have convinced them they will be deported if they make a complaint. Some are undocumented and will not ask for assistance. In some cases English is not their first language and they feel they cannot accurately relate the details of the incident, so no police report is made despite the fact that translators are available if they ask; but how are they to know?

Law enforcement has also done poorly regarding violence between same-sex couples. In the case of lesbian women, many have reported being ridiculed by police. In some instances, the police have refused to take the complaint seriously or not at all, they simply walk away leaving a victim at even greater risk. Police officers have a sworn responsibility to protect and serve citizens; they should not choose who or under what circumstances they will honor that oath. It remains evident that despite ongoing efforts, the New York Police Department needs to improve its training regarding domestic violence, its victims and perpetrators.

Rethinking domestic violence means trying to understand it in all of its complexities: as a public health and safety issue, its sociocultural aspects, and the compounding factors of heterosexism, racism, and classism. In order to combat these issues, we would best be served by acting in concert rather than in opposition to each other, whether we are activists, advocates, survivors, or part of the criminal-justice system. While police intervention might be necessary at some point, communities also need to be respected for seeking to heal themselves. Within certain cultural groups there are customs and traditions that could carry more weight than incarceration, such as shunning, which can be a powerful motivator within certain communities. In other situations if those who occupy positions of power or status voice their disapproval, this is often more significant than legal intervention. I am not arguing that abusers should not be punished, quite the opposite. As a researcher I have documented many cases where abusers were more inclined to change because the punishment meted out by the community was more painful to them than the threat of arrest. Also, in some circumstances, communities brought so much pressure to bear that abusers were left with only two decisions: change or leave. There are alternatives to incarceration and if the community sees them as viable, they need to be

considered. Invading a community and disrupting its infrastructure does not produce solutions, but rather adds to the existing problems.

To effect long-term change for women whose lives have been shattered by domestic violence we need to move from the antiquated unidimensional view to one that is more expansive. We need to allow communities to take responsibility for the people who call them home and ensure that laws will be respected. On the other hand, laws need to adequately represent and protect all of the people, not a select and powerful few. If women are going to overcome histories of abuse, domestic/family violence, and social isolation and to live physically, emotionally, and financially stable lives than we need to abandon the ideas that have sustained decades of abuse and entrenched violence against women as a norm both legally and socially in America.

Future Research

At the core of this work is the issue of empowerment for women, especially those who have been marginalized by mainstream society. Much has been learned from these survivors regarding the many roles they play, their amazing resilience, and the ways in which they exercise their agency while recognizing their constraints. Future research will continue to pursue a better understanding of the complex ways that race, class, sexuality, cultural edicts, and community impact survivors. Understanding these factors will provide the researcher with the opportunity to explore not only the individual and personal changes made by survivors, but also to find out if there is an intergenerational impact from the Women and Work program. A longitudinal study would provide insight into how life opportunities are altered, not in the moment, but for the long-term. The researcher will continue to explore the ways in which the concept of community can be applied, understood, and reshaped to better serve those who live on the margins of our

society. Finally, I will continue to explore the many ways in which the Women and Work nomenclature "survivor identity" can be understood. By opening ourselves up to the possibility that we are all survivors in one way or another, whether we are survivors, abusers, children, families, communities, and the broader society, what changes would that bring? If we were to move closer to the experience of survivors, to acknowledge their experiences, rather than pathologize them, what would change? And for whom would it change? Would it move them closer to the mainstream? Make them less alienated? Better understood? Or would mainstream society's overwhelming fear of being that close to the margin sustain the social myth that domestic violence victims/survivors are somehow different, less than, not the same as you and me? Only time, research, and the willingness of survivors to break their silence will give us the answers we seek if we are truly to have social justice for all.

Appendix

Surveys Created for Women and Work

The surveys created for Women and Work participants by the researcher include the following:

- Entrance Survey
- Weekly Satisfaction Survey
- Exit Survey for the Humanities
- Exit Survey for the Computer & Technology
- Post Program Survey 1
- Post Program Survey 2
- Post Program Survey 3

Coded ID
_____

Women and Work Entrance Survey

"A Partnership for Empowerment"

Queens College, City University of New York

This survey is intended to gather information about the lives of Women and Work participants so that we might better serve their needs.

Instructions:

Do not write your name on the survey; instead, please use the coded ID assigned to you. You may skip any question that you do not want to answer. Thank You

---

1. Race Black [ ] Asian [ ] Caucasian [ ] Hispanic [ ]
   Other [ ] Specify_____
2. Age 18-24 [ ] 25-30 [ ] 31-34 [ ] 35-40 [ ] 61-+ [ ]
   40-44 [ ] 45-50 [ ] 51-54 [ ] 55-60 [ ]
3. Do you live in one of the five boroughs of NYC Yes [ ] No [ ]

   If you answered YES to question 3, answer questions 3a and 3b; if you answered NO to question 3, go to 3c

   3a. Write in your city or town of residence

   _____

   3b. Check your borough: Bronx [ ] Brooklyn [ ] Queens [ ] Staten Island [ ]
   Manhattan [ ]

   3c. What is the state and county of your residence_____

4. Where do you live? House [ ] Apartment [ ] Shelter [ ] Write in the name of the shelter

_____

5. Do you own [ ] rent [ ] other [ ]

Explain_____

6. Do you receive any kind of assistance from the City of New York Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 6, answer the following questions:

6a. What kind of assistance do you

receive?_____

6b. What is the dollar amount of the assistance you receive? $_____

6c. How long have you been receiving assistance? _____

7. Household Income: Household income is any Income that is shared with you. Check only one box.

$0-$10,000 [ ] Less than $20,000 [ ] $20,001-$30,000 [ ] $30,001-$40,000

$40,001-$50,000 Over $50,000

8. How many people are in your family? How many adults? _____(Include yourself) How many children? _____

8a. How old are the children that live with you?_____

9. Were you born in the United States? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered NO to question 9, answer the following questions:

9a. What is your country of origin (where were you born?)_____

9b. How long have you lived in the United States?_____years _____months

9c. What is your first language?_____

9d. Are you an alien resident (do you have a green card?) Yes [ ] No [ ]

9e. Are you a United States citizen? Yes [ ] No [ ]

10. What is the highest level (grade) of education that you have completed?_____

11. Were you educated in the United States? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered NO to question 11, go to question 11a

11a. In what country did you receive your education? _____

12. When you were a child, did you see any violent behaviour in your immediate family, such as punching, slapping, biting, kicking, burning screaming, or the use of any type of weapons?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 12, answer questions 12a - 12d; if you answered NO go to question 13.

12a. Who acted violently in your family?_____

12b. Who were they violent towards?_____

12c. For how long did you see this violence?_____

12d. What types of violence did you see _____

_____

_____

13. When you were a child, did you see any violent behaviour in your extended family, such as punching, slapping, biting, kicking, burning, screaming, or the use of any type of weapons? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 13, answer questions 13a-13d; if you answered NO go to question 14.

13a. Who acted violently in your family?_____

13b. Who were they violent towards?_____

13c. For how long did you see this violence?_____

13d. What types of violence did you see _____

_____

_____

14. When you were a child, were you ever the victim of any type of violence (verbal/emotional, or physical)? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 14, answer questions 14a-14c; if you answered NO to question 14, go to question 15.

14a. Who was violent with you?_____

14b. What types of violence did you experience?_____

_____

14c. How long did this violence go on? ____weeks ____months ___years

15. As an adult, have you ever been physically abused? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 15, go to question 15a; if you answered NO to question 15, go to question 16.

15a. Who has abused

you?_____

15b. Have you ever been Punched [ ] Slapped [ ] Kicked [ ] Bit [ ] Burned [ ]

Stabbed [ ] Shot [ ]

15c. How often were you abused? Daily [ ] Weekly [ ] Monthly [ ]

Every few weeks [ ] Every few months [ ] Rarely [ ]

Other [ ] (please explain) _____

15d. Are you still being abused? Yes [ ] No [ ]

15e. If you answered YES to question 15d, how long has this person been abusing you?

_____

16. Have you ever been abused while you were pregnant? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 16, answer the following questions.

16a. How have you been abused? (Check all that apply)

Slapped [ ] Punched [ ] Kicked [ ] Bit [ ] Burned [ ] Stabbed [ ] Shot [ ]

16b. How often were you abused? Daily [ ] Weekly [ ] Montlhy [ ]

Other [ ]_____

16c. Did the abuse grow worse as the pregnancy progressed? Yes [ ] No [ ]

16d. Was your abuser using any type of drugs? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 16d, how often did your abuser use drugs?

_____

16e. Was your abuser using alcohol? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 16e, how often did your abuser use alcohol?

_____

16f. Were you able to carry the baby full term? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered NO to question 16f, please

explain_____

_____

_____

_____

16g. Who abused you while you were

pregnant?_____

17. As an adult, have you ever been verbally abused? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 17, answer questions 17a-17e; if you answered NO to question 17, go to question 18.

17a. Who verbally abused you? _____

17b. Have you been screamed at? Yes [ ] No [ ]

17c. Have you been called names? Yes [ ] No [ ]

17d. Have you been cursed at? Yes [ ] No [ ]

17e. Are you being verbally abused now? Yes [ ] No [ ]

18. Are you currently living in an abusive relationship? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 18, answer questions 18a-18e; if you answered NO to question 18, go to question 19.

18a. Who is abusing you? _____

18b. How long have you lived in this relationship?_____

18c. Do you have children? Yes [ ] No [ ]

18d. What are the age(s) and sex(es) of your children?

_____

_____

18e. Are your child(ren) being abused? Yes [ ] No [ ]

19. Have you ever tried to leave your abuser? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 19, answer questions 19a and 19b; if you answered NO to question 19, go to question 20.

19a. How many times have you tried to leave your abuser? _____

19b. What would it take for you to leave your abuser?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. Have you ever been sexually assaulted? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 20, answer questions 20a-20j; if you answered NO to question 20, go to question 21.

20a. How long has it been since your assault?_____

20b. Was your assailant arrested? Yes [ ] No [ ]

20c. Did your assailant go to jail? Yes [ ] No [ ]

20d. Did you know your assailant? Yes [ ] No [ ]

20e. Was your assailant related to you? Yes [ ] No [ ]

20f. Was your assailant related to you? Yes [ ] No [ ]

20g. Was your assailant an immediate relative? Yes [ ] No [ ]

20h. Have you been sexually molested more than once? Yes [ ] No [ ]

20i. How many times have you been sexually assaulted?_____

20j. How long ago did the assault(s) take place?_____

21. Have you ever been violent with your child(ren)? Yes [ ] No [ ] NA [ ]

22. Has attending Women and Work given you an improved sense of self-esteem / self-worth?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

23. Do you think attending Women and Work will change your life? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 23, please explain below; if you answered NO to question 23, go to question 24.

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24. Would financial independence change your life? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered YES to question 24, please write your explanation below.

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Thank you for your cooperation.

Women and Work Weekly Satisfaction Survey

"A Partnership for Empowerment"

Queens College, City University of New York

Last Name: _____ **First Name:**_____

Date: _____**/**_____**/20**___

Questions 1-10—Check YES or NO for each question

1. Do you feel that you are part of a community when you are at Women and Work? Yes [ ] No [ ]

2. Does the facilitator/instructor greet you warmly each morning in the Opening Circle? Yes [ ] No [ ]

3. Are you comfortable asking questions in the classroom? Yes [ ] No [ ]

4. Are computer lessons presented clearly? Yes [ ] No [ ]

5. Are Math& English lessons presented clearly? Yes [ ] No [ ]

6. Are Advanced Learning Seminars presented clearly? Yes [ ] No [ ]

7 When you ask a question in computer class is it answered to your satisfaction? Yes [ ] No [ ]

8. When you ask a question in English & Math class is it answered to your satisfaction? Yes [ ] No [ ]

9. When you ask a question in Advanced Learning Seminars is it answered to your satisfaction?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

10. Do you feel that there is a staff member with whom you could speak freely about personal issues?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

11. Do you find the Closing Circle a satisfactory way to end the day's activities? Yes [ ] No [ ]

12. In general, do you feel that the staff is helpful when you approach them with a problem or issue?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

13. Do you feel your classmates are following the rules and regulations of the program? Yes [ ] No [ ]

14. Do you feel you learn something new every day at Women Rising? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If you answered "NO" to any of the above questions,

please write in the question number and a brief explanation.

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15. I believe that coming to Women and Work was a good decision for me. Yes [ ] No [ ]

16. Explain why you answered YES or NO to question 15.

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Thank you for your cooperation

Women and Work Exit Survey for Computer & Technology Classes

"A Partnership for Empowerment"

Directions: *Please do not leave any questions unanswered.*

Coded ID:_____ **(Circle one): Fall 20__ Spring 20__**

Questions 1-10—Check YES or NO for each question

1. Do you feel satisfied that you have mastered the necessary elements of MS Word? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 1, please write-in the elements of MS Word that you feel still need work—Be Specific

_____

_____

_____

2. Do you feel satisfied that you have mastered the necessary elements of MS Access? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 2, please write-in the elements of MS Access that you feel still need work—Be Specific.

_____

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3. Do you feel satisfied that you have mastered the necessary elements of MS Excel? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 3, please write-in the elements of MS Excel that you feel still need work—Be Specific.

_____

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4. Do you feel satisfied that you have mastered the necessary elements of MS PowerPoint?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 4, please write-in the elements of MS PowerPoint that you feel still need work—Be Specific.

_____

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_____

5. Do you feel satisfied that you have mastered an understanding of technical language? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 5, please write-in your thoughts—Be Specific.

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_____

6. Did the computer teacher fulfill your expectations? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 6, please explain—Be Specific.

_____

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7. Were your questions answered to your satisfaction? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 7, please explain—Be Specific.

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8. Were your questions answered to your satisfaction? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 7, please explain—Be Specific

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9. Were your questions answered to your satisfaction? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 9, please explain—Be Specific.

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1O. Do you have more computer skills now than when you entered the program? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 10, please explain—Be Specific.

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11. Please share with us any recommendations you have to improve the quality of our computer and technology training.

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Thank you for your cooperation.

Women and Work Exit Survey for the Humanities

"A Partnership for Empowerment"

Queens College, City University of New York

Last Name:_____ **First Name:**_____

Circle One: Fall 20__ Spring 20__

Directions: Check YES or NO for each question

1. Did you feel that you were part of a "Community of Women" when you were at Women and Work? YES [ ] NO [ ]

2. Did the facilitator/teacher greet you warmly each morning in the Opening Circle? YES [ ] NO [ ]

3. Were you comfortable asking questions in the humanities classroom? YES [ ] NO [ ]

4. Were the Humanities lessons presented clearly? YES [ ] NO [ ]

5 When you asked a question in the Humanities classroom, was it answered to your satisfaction? YES [ ] NO [ ]

6. Did you feel that there was a staff member with whom you could speak freely about personal issues? YES [ ] NO [ ]

7. Did you find the Closing Circle a satisfactory way to end the day's activities? YES [ ] NO [ ]

8. In general, did you feel that the staff was helpful when you approached them with a problem or issue? YES [ ] NO [ ]

9. Did you find the humanities program and empowering experience? YES [ ] NO [ ]

10. Did the “Architecture of Language” class expand your thinking? YES [ ] NO [ ]

11. Was Community Day helpful in applying classroom lessons to practical experience? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered “NO” to any of the above questions,

please write in the question number and a brief explanation

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions 12-14--Check one category box for each question

	CATEGORY BOXES			
	ALL OF THE TIME	**MOST OF THE TIME**	**SOME OF THE TIME**	**NONE OF THE TIME**
12. I learned something new in humanities class	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
13. I enjoyed Opening Circle	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
14. I enjoyed Closing Circle	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
15. I enjoyed Community Day	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

16. I believe that coming to Women and Work was a good decision for me YES [ ] NO [ ]

Please use the back of this sheet to explain why you answered YES or NO to question 16.

Thank you for your cooperation

Women and Work Post Program Survey 1

"A Partnership for Empowerment"

Queens College, City University of New York

Last Name: _____ **First Name:**_____

Date:___/___/20__

Semester: Fall Spring Year of your Graduation:_____

This survey is intended to help us determine how your experience at Women and Work is benefitting you. Your answers will help us to evaluate and improve the Core Program, as well as to shape Post Program classes. You may skip any question you do not want to answer.

1. While attending W&W, did you feel that you were part of a community? YES [ ] No [ ]

2. Have you attended Post Program classes? YES [ ] NO [ ]

3. Are you presently attending Post Program classes? YES [ ] NO [ ]

4. Do you find the Post Program classes in Computer and Technology helpful? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 4, please explain_____

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5. Do you find the Post Program classes in the Humanities helpful? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 5, please explain_____

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6. Have you made appointments with any W&W staff members since graduating from the program?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered YES to question 6, answer the following questions:

6a. Was the staff member cooperative in setting-up the appointment YES [ ] NO [ ]

6b.Was the staff member helpful in resolving your concerns? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to either question 6a or 6b, please explain:_____

_____

7. Are you presently employed? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered YES to question 7, are you employed FULL TIME [ ] or PART TIME [ ]

8. Do you feel that W&W has been a positive experience for you? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 8, please explain:_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Do you feel that there is a staff member with whom you could speak freely about personal issues?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

10. Do you feel more confident knowing that the W&W staff is still here for you? YES [ ] NO [ ]

11. In general, do you feel that W&W will be helpful in your obtaining a better paying job?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

12. Have you experienced any violence in your life since leaving the program? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered YES to question 12, please explain the circumstances.

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13. Please share with us any ideas that you think could better improve our services to you:

_____

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Thank you for your cooperation.

Women and Work Post Program Survey 2

"A Partnership for Empowerment"

Queens College, City University of New York

POST PROGRAM SURVEY 2

Last Name: _____ **First Name:**_____

Date:___/___/20__

Semester (Circle one): Fall Spring Year of Graduation:_____

This survey is intended to help us determine how your experience at Women and Work is benefitting you. Your answers will help us to evaluate and improve the Core Program, as well as to shape Post Program classes. You may skip any question you do not want to answer.

1. Do you still feel a part of the W&W community? YES [ ] No [ ]

If you answered NO to question 1, please explain:_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Have you attended Post Program classes? YES [ ] NO [ ]

3. Are you presently attending Post Program classes? YES [ ] NO [ ]

4. Do you find the Post Program classes in Computer and Technology helpful? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 4, please explain. _____

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5. Do you find the Post Program classes in the Humanities helpful? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 5, please explain. _____

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6. Have you made appointments with any W&W staff members since graduating from the program?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered YES to question 6, answer the following questions:

6a. Was the staff member cooperative in setting-up the appointment? YES [ ] NO [ ]

6b. Was the staff member helpful in resolving your concerns? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to either question 6a or 6b, please explain. _____

_____

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_____

7. Are you presently employed? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered YES to question 7, are you employed FULL TIME [ ] or PART TIME [ ]

If you answered NO to question 7, answer questions 7a-7c.

7a. Are you actively seeking employment? YES [ ] NO [ ]

7b. What methods of job searching are you using?_____

_____

_____

7c. Have you contacted a W&W staff member for assistance? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 7c, please explain. _____

_____

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8. Do you feel that W&W training has been helpful in interviewing for jobs? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 8, please explain. _____

_____

_____

9. Do you feel that W&W training has been helpful in your obtaining employment? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 9, please explain. _____

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_____

10. Do you feel that there is a staff member with whom you could speak freely about personal issues?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

11. Do you feel more confident knowing that the W&W staff is still here for you? YES [ ] NO [ ]

12. In general, do you feel that W&W has made you feel more confident about being in the workplace?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 12, please explain. _____

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_____

13. Are you encountering any problems in the workplace that were not discussed in your W&W classes?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered YES to question 13, please explain. _____

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14. Have you experienced any violence in your life since leaving the program? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered YES to question 14, please explain the circumstances. _____

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15. Please share with us any ideas that you think could better improve our services to you.

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Thank you for your cooperation.

Women and Work Post Program Survey 3

"A Partnership for Empowerment"

Queens College, City University of New York

POST PROGRAM SURVEY 3

Last Name: _____ **First Name:**_____

Date:___/___/20__

Semester (Circle one): Fall Spring Year of Graduation:_____

This survey is intended to help us determine how your experience at Women and Work is benefitting you. Your answers will help us to evaluate and improve the Core Program, as well as to shape Post Program classes. You may skip any question you do not want to answer.

1. Do you still feel a part of the W&W community? YES [ ] No [ ]

If you answered NO to question 1, please explain:_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Have you attended Post Program classes? YES [ ] NO [ ]

3. Are you presently attending Post Program classes? YES [ ] NO [ ]

4. Do you find the Post Program classes in Computer and Technology helpful? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 4, please explain_____

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5. Do you find the Post Program classes in the Humanities helpful? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 5, please expain. _____

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6. Have you made appointments with any W&W staff members since graduating from the program?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered YES to question 6, answer the following questions.

6a. Was the staff member cooperative in setting-up the appointment? YES [ ] NO [ ]

6b. Was the staff member helpful in resolving your concerns? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to either question 6a or 6b, please explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

7. Are you presently employed? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered YES to question 7, are you employed FULL TIME [ ] or PART TIME [ ]

If you answered NO to question 7, answer questions 7a-7c.

7a. Are you actively seeking employment? YES [ ] NO [ ]

7b. What methods of job searching are you using?_____

_____

_____

7c. Have you contacted a W&W staff member for assistance? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 7c, please explain. _____

_____

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8. Do you feel that W&W training has been helpful in interviewing for jobs? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 8, please explain. _____

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9. Do you feel that W&W training has been helpful in your obtaining employment? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 9, please explain. _____

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10. Do you feel that there is a staff member with whom you could speak freely about personal issues?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

11. Do you feel more confident knowing that the W&W staff is still here for you? YES [ ] NO [ ]

12. Do you feel that W&W training will help you to advance in the workplace? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 12, please explain. _____

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13. Do you feel that W&W training has equipped you to handle conflict in the workplace?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 13, please explain. _____

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14. Are you encountering any problems in the workplace that were not discussed in your W&W classes?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered YES to question 14, please explain. _____

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15. Have you experienced any violence in your life since leaving Women and Work?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered YES to question 15, please explain the circumstances. _____

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16. Please share with us any ideas that you think could better improve our services to you.

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17. Would you recommend W&W to someone you know who needs to attain financial independence?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 17, please explain. _____

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18. Would you recommend W&W to someone you know who needs to improve their sense of self-esteem/self-worth? YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered NO to question 18, please explain. _____

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19. Overall, do you think W&W was a good decision for you? YES [ ] NO [ ]

Please explain. _____

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Thank you for your cooperation.

Glossary of Women and Work Terminology

About the Glossary

The terminology or phrases described below were specifically created for the Women and Work program by the researcher. While the words may be familiar, the way in which they are used or applied at the program is unique to W&W. It is important to note that it is made very clear to participants that the program always asks them to accept responsibility for their lives, it in no way is meant to imply that every decision or circumstance is within their control. The purpose or goal is to empower them to manage their live circumstances in the moment so they can continue to move their lives forward.

Glossary

Architect of your Life	The idea behind the drawing of a blueprint to establish the structural integrity of a building is analogized to the building of a life. W&W participants are taught to think of themselves as the architects of their lives; in that capacity, their decisions determine the structural integrity of the lives they build.
Community of Women	The community is created and maintained by Women and Work participants; it grows with each new group of women that move through the program. Over time participants begin to recognize the community as a powerful social network able to provide them with advantages they could

	not attain on their own. Furthermore, the community defies spatial boundaries as individuals internalize the group's strength and make it their own; they essentially incorporate it into their survivor identity.
Life is a Negotiation	This term is used to allow participants to understand that every decision, from the mundane to the momentous, is based upon a negotiation. Sometimes these negotiations are an internal dialogue and sometimes they are external; either way, we make the best deal we can at that moment in time. Once the negotiation is concluded, we accept it and move on. responsibility for your life and what happens in it. your life
Mindscape	Participants are asked to imagine themselves or their lives as they want them to be. This visualization process is a mental exercise in which participants see themselves living-out the days of their new lives; they create a "mindscape" – a portrait of their own creation. This empowers participants to mentally practice for the real thing. When the mental exercise becomes more than a desire, that is the first step in its transformation from thought to action or into an obtainable goal.
Survivor Identity	Survivor identity is not exclusive to the survivors of intimate partner or family violence; instead, W&W uses the

	term to refer to the identity that is created when participants employ the life-management techniques taught at the program. These techinqes include recognizing fear and doubts as constants in everyday that must be managed not eliminated. By establishing that both of these powerful aspects of life can be managed moves women onto the track of self-determination and understanding that life is not a constant, but rather a process that needs to be managed from moment-to-moment. This life-management skill, like all the others taught at W&W, is incorporated into their ecveryday lives as part of their daily assessment.
Three Cs	The Three Cs consist of Commitment, Courage, and Consistency. The term was designed to provide participants with a daily reminder of what is needed to successfully complete the W&W program. Once adapted into their mindscape, the Three Cs goes on to serve them well in their everyday lives as well.
Toxic Relationship	Participants are engaged in learning about health and wellness as part of reclaiming ownership over their lives. Their emotional/psychological/physical wellness depends on their being able to discriminate between relationships that further their goals and those that endanger them. The term “toxic relationship” conveys a visual cue that when

such a person is in your proximity, you are at risk because they create a toxic environment.

Endnotes

[i] According to CDC economist, Phaedra Corso, the estimates using the 1995 data are conservative because many cases of domestic violence are not reported. "In today's dollars, the health care and productivity costs are likely to be much greater. Ultimately, the economic burden of domestic violence impacts all of society. Hospitals, workplaces, and communities must devote and be able to provide resources to treating and assisting victims, while the criminal justice system, mental health providers, employers and the community must bear a variety of other costs."

[ii] Erin Pizzey founded the first women's shelter in England in 1971 for women fleeing abusive relationships. She ran afoul of the shelter movement with the publication of her book, *Prone to Violence*, wherein she argued that repeat victims of abuse develop a sort of addiction to being battered. The Women's Movement viewed this as victim-blaming and shunned Pizzey, a self-avowed antifeminist, from that point.

[iii] The U.S. Supreme Court, in *United States v. Morrison*, 529 U.S. 598 (2000), held this provision unconstitutional.

[iv] Introduced in the United States Senate on 31 October 2007 by then Senator Joseph Biden, currently U.S. Vice President, and Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), the *International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA)* would, for the first time, integrate efforts to prevent gender-based violence into foreign assistance programs. I-VAWA would apply the force of U.S. diplomacy and provide $1 billion over five years to institute measures to prevent the abuse and exploitation that affects so many women worldwide. I-VAWA applies the United nations Secretary General's definition to of violence against women and girls: "any act of gender based violence against women or girls committed because of their gender that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life."

[v] In the early stages of the battered women's movement, key issues beyond the women themselves also emerged. One of these issues was children, who normally comprised two-thirds of shelter residents. It became increasingly evident that children who were living in homes where their mothers were being brutalized by their fathers created in these children intense feelings of guilt, confusion, and fear. Children quickly became recognized as secondary victims or silent witnesses to horrific violence.

[vi] See United Nations (2006) *Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women* (A/61/122/Add.1)

[vii] In Beth Richie's book, *Compelled to Crime: The Gender Entrapment of Battered Black Women*, she discussed the effectiveness of using the life-history interview method in her work with women incarcerated at the Rose M. Singer Center on New York's Riker's Island Correctional Facility. In her review of the sociological literature, she referenced several studies that conveyed the power of this methodology. Ritchie examined Joyce Ladner's landmark study of the life of Black adolescent girls, Carol Stack's *All Our Kin*, Judith Rollin's *Between Women.* and Elanor Miller's *Street Women.* (Ritchie, 17). While none of these studies exactly matched Ritchie's population, the in-depth interviews and analysis according to themes from the literature, convinced Ritchie to use the life-history method.

[viii] The Centers for Disease Control found that pregnant women are 61 percent more likely to be beaten than women who are not pregnant. Violence is cited as a pregnancy complication more often than diabetes, hypertension, or any other serious complication ("Battering and Pregnancy" *Midwifery Today* 19:1998). The physical effects of violence during pregnancy includes: insufficient weight gain; vaginal/cervical/kidney infections; vaginal bleeding; abdominal trauma; hemorrhage; exacerbation of chronic illnesses; complications during labour; delayed prenatal care; miscarriage; low birth weight; ruptured membranes; abruption placenta; uterine infection; fetal bruising, fractures and hematomas; and death ("Abuse of Pregnant Women and Adverse Birth Outcome" *Journal of the American Medical Association* 267: 1992)..

[ix] Medical studies document a wide array of health risks suffered by domestic violence survivors from intimate partner abuse. Though not discussed in this paper, there are a number of studies that discuss the physical illnesses that result from forced sex such as, high levels of stress and depression, suppressed immune system, vaginal, anal, and urethral damage. See The Lancet, Vol. 359, April 13, 2002; Ann L. Coker; Paige H. Smith, et al. Physical Health Consequences of Physical and Psychological Intimate Partner Violence (2000); Physical and Mental Health Effects of IPV for Men and Women, American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 24(4), 260-268.

[x] Sakhi for South Asian Women is a community-based organization in the New York metropolitan area committed to ending violence against women of South Asian origin. Recognizing oppression based on class, immigration status, religion, and sexual orientation, we work to empower women, particularly survivors of domestic violence. Sakhi strives to create a voice and safe environment for all South Asian women through outreach, advocacy, leadership development, and organizing.

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