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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN A FAITH-BASED SETTING

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

---

by  
Elisa Petra Lee

June 2007

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN A FAITH-BASED SETTING

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A Project  
Presented to the  
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San Bernardino

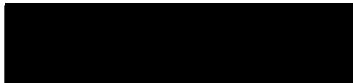
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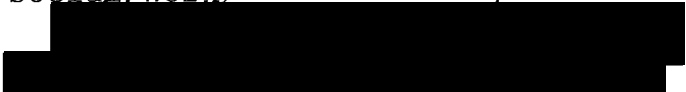
Elisa Petra Lee


June 2007

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## ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was domestic violence in a faith-based setting. The researcher utilized the constructivist approach in building a subjective understanding of the research topic and possible interventions with that topic.

The researcher engaged the gatekeepers and participants using several strategies which required meetings at the data collection site. One major engagement strategy was the construction of the hermeneutic dialectic circle. Initially the researcher began with two participants. As the research progressed, there were eight participants in the circle. The data was analyzed using qualitative coding techniques.

The final joint construction that emerged was that those individuals in leadership positions are unaware of domestic violence happening in the church. The gatekeepers and participants agreed that they must take on an active role in meeting the needs of victims of abuse. The researcher plans an ongoing relationship with the study site through regular church attendance in addition to receiving training focused on how to serve and empower those in domestic violence relationships. The

goal of the researcher is to impact the lives of Christian women and children living in vulnerable and oppressed abusive situations.

## DEDICATION

I want to thank the Lord for giving me the vision and the wisdom to take on a challenge that was controversial and challenging. I want to acknowledge that this research was the biggest challenge yet for me and I could not have accomplished it without the love and support of my precious husband, Steven D. Lee. I want to thank my two best friends Laurel McGregor, for praying for me and reminding me that I was almost done, especially when I felt I couldn't do this anymore. I want to thank my other best friend, and Margie, in Oregon, who gave me the passion to do something about domestic violence among Christian women. I want to thank my son, Steven, for giving me the space and not complaining when I dominated the office space and computer. I want to thank Melody for blessing me with Arielle. I plan to enjoy her now that I am finished. I also want to thank the rest of my family. They are too many to mention, but you know who you are and I love you all. Finally I want to thank my Pastor, Randy and his wife, Jeannette, for making themselves available to me. Last but not least, thank you to my cohort. I love you guys so much.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### ASSESSMENT

#### Introduction

In this chapter the researcher discloses personal expertise in the area of domestic violence. This chapter also explains the use of the constructivist paradigm. The researcher used the constructivist approach because it requires a building of a joint subjective understanding of an issue and possible interventions with that issue. The study took place in a faith-based setting. The setting was Calvary Chapel Upland (CCU), CA.

"In a sense, we are all researchers every day of our lives...Each of us has our own worldview, built on a personal history that guides our approach to our daily research" (Morris, 2006, p. xvii). The researcher agreed with that statement. Therefore, in this research she has applied life skills such as knowledge of the topic of domestic violence, personal experience with physical and emotional domestic abuse, personal convictions based on her Biblical knowledge and the influence of her acquaintances with gatekeepers such as the Pastor and his wife at CCU. The Pastor's wife oversees all the women's

activities including Bible studies and crisis intervention groups; therefore, she is a significant gatekeeper.

Domestic violence is not a new topic of concern. Unfortunately within the church, it is an area that goes unnoticed because of the stigma it carries. The researcher chose the constructivist approach as her research method so that the social phenomenon of domestic violence would be understood. Moreover an opportunity to serve women within the church would be developed. Referencing Old Testament scripture from the book of Exodus (Exodus 3: 7-12), the researcher concurs with Hunter, (2003), founder of Safe Haven, Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence, that victims of domestic violence seeking freedom and safety parallel with the suffering that the Hebrew people experienced as they exited Egypt. Hunter (2003), in a sermon, makes a connection between the Hebrew people and the phenomenon of domestic violence victims seeking freedom and safety. She states,

If you look closely at victims of domestic violence, you will see that their individual journeys to freedom and safety parallel the journey of the

Hebrew people from Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the Promised Land. There is the initial crisis of getting to safety. There is the long, long wandering in the wilderness as victims try to revive their shriveled souls and find themselves and their God again. And there is the entry into the Promised Land, when victims realize that they are not just surviving, but thriving. (p. 5)

#### Research Focus

The researcher brought personal experience with domestic violence to this study. The researcher has now been a Christian for 25 years and survived domestic abuse. The abuser was a Pastor's son and a key individual who introduced her to Christianity. As a newborn Christian the researcher was torn and confused between her faith and the physical, emotional and mental pain that was being inflicted on her. After many years of prayer, spiritual strengthening, Biblical knowledge and forgiveness, the researcher feels restored and understands the dynamics of victimization and restoration. The personal experience of the researcher has embedded within her a passion for Christian women who

are victims of domestic violence. Violence against women is a human phenomenon often misunderstood, overlooked or kept secret within the family. The researcher felt confident in her awareness and perceptions. Therefore the constructivist approach to research was the best paradigm to adopt for this study.

#### Domestic Violence Research Within Calvary Chapel Churches

More than 300 Calvary Chapel churches exist in California. It is unfortunate that so far the only women's shelters and literature found were those not easily accessible or difficult to find or contact. Domestic violence shelters within the Calvary Chapel churches are almost unheard of. The researcher did in fact find one Calvary Chapel that has a women's shelter ministry. Unfortunately the ministry is not in the U.S. The "Casa del Descanso Women's Shelter" is located in Rosarito, Mexico. The shelter accommodates approximately 20 women and their children. The women have daily spiritual devotional, attend church, are equipped to develop independence and receive instruction on managing their future (Calvary Chapel Montebello, 2006, p. 1-2). The women's shelter seems to be well organized; however



the researcher could not understand why this ministry exists in Mexico and not in the United States.

The researcher visited Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, which is the founding and original Calvary Chapel, in search of additional literature, resources or information on domestic violence within the Church. Regrettably there were only three books focusing on domestic violence, but no in-depth information regarding domestic violence or women's shelters were available.

#### "Refuge" A Book Regarding Domestic Violence

Stewart, (2004) who has over 25 years experience handling domestic violence cases, in his book *Refuge* wrote candidly from his personal, professional and Biblical knowledge of the Biblical beliefs of the Christian community. He stated that pastors he had spoken with regarding counseling say that, "In counseling men and women will confide almost anything to them except family violence." The conclusion was that information being kept secret was due to embarrassment, shame, guilt and fear. Stewart believed that if he were able to convince just one church in every state in America of the tremendous need for expanded ministry in the area of domestic abuse and if he could help that church to train

its lay people to meet the need, his book will have made a difference.

"Christian Worker's Handbook"

Another source that was discovered and proved to be invaluable to the researcher was a handbook entitled *The Billy Graham Christian Worker's Handbook*, written by Graham (2005). In his handbook Graham instructed the Christian worker step by step on how to counsel a victim of abuse. Graham began with a basic background on the topic of abuse. He stated that victims are characterized by low self-esteem, depression, feeling trapped, confusion and uncertainty. Graham stated that a battered wife usually requires four months of counseling before she begins to feel emotionally strong enough to open up and share her experiences. The researcher appreciated the bold statement by Graham, (2005) "Once she and the children are in a safe place (where the husband cannot reach them) and she has had time to reflect and sort out her feelings, she may be very angry" (p. 25). It is a misconception that once the victim is away from her abuser all problems are solved. In reality once the tormentor is away from his victim, the victim begins the difficulty associated with the healing process. While

only three literary sources were discovered at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, they were incredibly valuable sources.

#### Faith-based Women's Shelters

After much research some other shelters were found. Some of these other shelters included Shepherd's Gate located in Livermore, California, Lighthouse of Hope located in Los Angeles, (no specific street address available), and the Center for Women and Children in Crisis, located in Utah, no street address available). It is possible that other faith-based shelters exist, but the mere fact that simply discovering these resources has been very time consuming proved that they are not easily accessible. The only women's shelter that is well known among the Calvary Chapel churches is The Sheepfold, which advertises on the Calvary Chapel Christian radio station KWAVE.

The Sheepfold is located in Southern California. The physical address is not available due to confidentiality and protection of the victims. Lundquist (2003), founder of The Sheepfold has written a book entitled *The Sheepfold, A living Memorial to the Living God*. In her book, Lundquist begins with her personal testimony. She candidly shares her life as she was raised with an

abusive and mentally ill mother and older sister. From her book, the reader can develop a real sense of the healing that takes place in a victim. It appears that Christian women need to be cared for physically and spiritually. At The Sheepfold, the women are provided a safe place to temporarily live, all the while they are being built up spiritually. The scripture that Lundquist depended on during her times of heartache and abuse was "My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect [complete, fulfilled] in your weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

#### Financial Support for Women's Shelters

It was possible to find secular domestic violence support, but devoted Christians often tend to seek out faith-based services. Faith-based services also shy away from governmental social and financial support because they desire to serve their community all the while teaching Biblical doctrine. Most of the shelters were tax-exempt, non-profit, financially supported or accountable to various organizations such as the Evangelical Counsel for Financial Accountability. Most of the finances were private donations from local churches, businesses, and individuals.

According to Lundquist (2003), "We are acutely aware of our accountability to God for the monies given for the care of the widows and the fatherless," (p. 1). It seems evident that in order for most faith-based shelters and services to keep Christian beliefs as a foundational restoration process, they would rely on personal, business and organizational donations, rather than rely on governmental social and financial support.

#### Physical Accessibility to Services

Researching domestic violence in a faith-based setting was complex compared to researching in a non-faith-based setting. Many of the shelters were functioning underground. As the researcher proceeded utilizing the hermeneutic dialectic circle she felt optimistic that she would encounter other Christian women's shelters, although she would focus on one particular shelter, The Sheepfold.

#### Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm?

Constructivism was the most appropriate paradigm because the researcher desired to build a subjective understanding of domestic violence. Furthermore, it offers the researcher a method for gathering data while researching the topic of domestic violence with the

opportunity and tools for building a ministry. A ministry is an outreach effort, organized action or a support group within the Christian community or churches. Therefore when an individual or a group of people desire to put forth action regarding an issue they begin a ministry. The ministry that the researcher desires to build would serve the Christian women in need of escaping or surviving the abuse. Morris (2006) wrote "the constructivist approach assumes a subjective reality and the observer discovers this reality in partnership with participants in that reality and that data is gathered by means of a hermeneutic dialectic from which a joint construction of a reality unique to time and place evolves" (p. 194, 197). Basically the constructivist approach was user friendly because it facilitates building a joint understanding of an issue and possible interventions that may be implemented to bring awareness to that issue.

This is important because the support of the Senior Pastor and other Church leaders was essential in exploring possible interventions regarding domestic violence within the church. The support of the Senior Pastor and those in the hermeneutic dialectic was

significant because ministries require support by the leaders of the church. The various leaders have the means to put forth the word that a new ministry is beginning. Some of the leaders are Bible study leaders who have direct contact with women through weekly Bible study meetings. The Bible study leader's support is essential because they are the ones who interact with the women when the women are in crisis.

The members of the church respect the Senior Pastor at CCU, and his wife. If the Pastor did not buy into the research or give his full support, it would be literally impossible for the researcher to succeed with the data gathering at this particular site. Although the Pastor has the final say on what transpires at CCU, he first prays for wisdom and seeks a clear direction from God. Once the Pastor bought into the research project it became easier to seek the participation and cooperation from other leaders in the church. Furthermore, in order for the researcher to proceed with data collection at CCU, she was required to provide a written authorization from the Pastor. The researcher met with the Pastor and he willingly provided a written authorization stating his support of the research. This documentation was a

supporting artifact that was utilized by the researcher more than once when a question arose regarding having permission to collect her necessary data.

The constructivist paradigm was definitely the most appropriate research method. The constructivist approach allowed the researcher and the hermeneutic dialect circle to bring awareness to an issue that is a reality in our community, society and in the church alike.

#### Literature Review

In this section of the research project the researcher gives the reader a synopsis of findings regarding domestic violence. The researcher was challenged due to the lack of literature directly related to domestic violence in a faith-based setting. The researcher retrieved several journal articles from the internet. She studied chapters related to crisis intervention and domestic violence from several textbooks. Two main sources the researcher appreciated most were books written by people who had first hand experience with victims of domestic violence.



## National Studies on Domestic Violence

In researching the topic of domestic violence it is apparent that national studies on abuse in Christian homes have not been carried out. Some studies were found interesting and informational but only indirectly related to the topic of this research. An example of an interesting study was the study by the Crime Control Institute of Washington DC. In this national telephone survey by Cohn and Sherman (1986), a survey was conducted in 1986 by police departments in cities with populations over 100,000. It was noted that 46% of the police departments had arresting policies for domestic violence cases. The arresting policies seem to correlate with the amount of arrests because earlier in 1984 and 1985 the amount of police departments that had such policies were lower.

The possible reason for the lower arrests during the 1980s may be because domestic violence was not viewed as serious by law enforcement. It was common for a police officer to arrive at a home that a neighbor reported and excuse the call as just a domestic dispute. Fortunately now an officer must speak with the woman and directly ask her if she is safe or hurt. If the woman reports being

physically injured the husband is immediately arrested. This study showed that if a particular social injustice such as domestic violence was emphasized we would see results (Cohn & Sherman, 1986).

#### Inaccurate Reported Findings on Domestic Violence

In the U.S. and in other countries domestic violence against women has not been accurately reported. According to National Organization for Women (NOW), "The number of women who have been murdered by their intimate partners is greater than the number of soldiers killed in the Vietnam War" (p. 1). NOW also reported that approximately 572,000 assaults by intimate partners are officially reported to federal officials each year. The most conservative estimates indicate two to four million women are battered each year. Approximately 170,000 of those violent incidents require hospitalization, emergency care or a doctor's attention.

#### Social Work Practice with Christians

Researching the topic of domestic violence in a faith-based setting proved to be a challenge. Less literature addressing domestic violence within the church was available in comparison to secular literature regarding the topic. The researcher appreciated the book

review by Loewenberg (1988). In his book review he made the bold comment and observation, "The relevance of religion to the practice of social work is not readily apparent, except on a rather superficial level" (p. 276-277). The researcher agreed with Loewenberg in that social workers should reflect back to the reason they are in their field of expertise. The researcher believes that social workers working with Christians often overlook the spiritual aspect or belief system of the clients. Therefore the social worker lacks a genuine connection with the client. Reflecting on the mission and work of pioneer social worker Jane Adams, it is clear that social work began with a desire to assist vulnerable people in need. Domestic violence victims in a faith-based setting are definitely vulnerable and in need.

It is unfortunate that although social work's roots are faith-based, in an effort to transform from a Good Samaritan to a professional, many social workers distanced themselves from the faith-based aspect of social work.

## Evaluating Faith-based Social Work

The church has been a place of refuge throughout recorded human history. At any give time an individual can go to a church or look up a church's website and see that many humanitarian or charitable ministries are available to serve those in need. Walton (2007) states, "The roots of almost all modern social work services are in religious organizations; hence the church can be considered the "The Mother of Social Work" (p. 171). The article by Walton was very informative in the evaluation of faith-based social work practice. Walton made note that it is important to consider the domestic violence victim's spiritual needs. The researcher agrees with that evaluation. A social worker will work in vain if the victim's religious needs are ignored or not addressed (Walton, 2007).

## Delivery of Service

The researcher found that delivery of service and contact with domestic violence victims is challenging. The article by Gondolf (1998) focused on the challenge of extending services to battered women. Gondolf found that it is very difficult to extend supportive counseling and safe shelter to these women. Gondolf mentioned that most

women in a domestic violence crisis need income, housing, employment, childcare or a safe neighborhood.

#### The Batterer and The Co-dependent

A significant dilemma that the researcher also encountered was the issue of co-dependence on the part of the battered woman. According to Frank and Golden (1987), "Men who assault their partners know that they can" (p. 5). Most battered women are ashamed of their predicament. Frank and Golden (1987) also state that women conceal their partner's inappropriate behavior and thus their spouse believes that their abusive behavior is justified. Unfortunately abusive husbands are not exposed because their spouses do not speak out. The good news is that sometimes the victim may leave her husband depending on the "legal response to this crime within her community, the number of ages of her children, economic factors, availability of shelter and community support, willingness of family and friends to help and her employability" (p. 5-6).

#### Internet Research

Another challenge was evident in researching the internet. Governmental domestic violence websites, shelters, hot-lines and services were in abundance, but a

limited amount of faith-based agencies existed.

Interestingly numerous studies have been published regarding police response to spousal abuse.

#### Annotated Bibliography by Egan

In an annotated bibliography by Egan (2006) there were 113 different studies. The researcher will briefly explain three of the studies.

##### 1. Bower "Ending the Violence"

Bower (1986) pointed out that the victim views calling the police very differently from calling any other public or social service. It appeared that the victim viewed the police officer's intervention with the batterer as authoritarian, directive, and public. This may be interpreted as the victim feeling as though the police officer was routinely doing his/her job by answering the call and showing up, but not really providing the protection and support that the victim needed.

##### 2. Costakos-Andreacchi, "Battered Women in America"

Costakos-Andreacchi, (1991) found that the police don't respond or react quickly to domestic violence because of the way society perceives family sanctity. As

a result the victim is not served appropriately and may feel devalued, denied justice and unprotected by society.

It is possible that law enforcement views domestic violence as a private family issue. However the victim of domestic violence is in danger and should be protected, not ignored.

### 3. Cutrer, "The Silent Epidemic"

Cutrer, (2004) quoted Sgt. Don Stewart's findings. According to Cutrer, Sgt. Stewart stated "One out of every four Christian couples experiences at least one episode of physical abuse within their marriage. In fact, battering is the single largest cause of injury to women- more than auto accidents, muggings, and rapes combined" (p. 68). Cutrer reported that according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists 3 to 4 million women are beaten at home on a yearly basis, and, according to the Department of Justice, approximately 2,000 women are murdered every year by their partner.

### Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical orientation that the researcher applied to the study was a systems theory with an emphasis on spirituality and affiliation with a

faith-based community. Domestic violence victims are beaten down physically and emotionally by the time they seek help. The researcher acknowledges that the woman may need a variety of services. It is possible that she may need housing, financial support, health care, childcare and spiritual counseling. Systems theory offers the worker a variety of treatment modalities to utilize in order to affect change in the victim (Andreae, 1996). The researcher also acknowledges that the victim's support system, if she has one, should not be overlooked, but viewed as a strength. Application of systems theory combined with an emphasis on spirituality offers the victim affirmation that there is hope after the abuse.

#### False and or Inaccurate Information

The study educated the researcher about the dynamics of domestic violence. Some of the dynamics include the phenomenon of false or inaccurate information. For example according to Tong (2000,) "Accusing a man of spousal abuse in 2000 America is the new weapon of choice both in juvenile and family court" (¶ 3). Tong infers that some women falsely accused their husband of abuse in order to receive more sympathy in court. False



accusations are extremely harmful to the integrity of the research; nonetheless, they are possible.

Another dynamic that was a factor was the lack of support for gathering data. The assumption that domestic violence does not exist in the church makes it difficult for victims to admit instances of abuse. In a study conducted by two researchers, Ringel and Bina, (2007), from the School of Social Work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, it was noted that little research on intimate partner violence (IPV) in faith-based communities was retrievable. In their interviews, the researchers found that their participants did not seek help for their domestic situation due to barriers of their religious beliefs and social values.

#### Potential Contribution of Study to Micro and/or Macro Social Work Practice

This research project can serve as a learning tool and an opportunity to apply both micro and macro principals collectively in a generalist model. At the micro practice level the researcher engaged face to face with participants and the vulnerable, oppressed and women living in abusive situations. The researcher developed cultural competence and social diversity within a

faith-based culture. Domestic violence is not an epidemic exclusively within certain cultures or groups.

Graham (2001) reminded us in his *Christian Worker's Handbook* that "The abused spouse or friend can be found at all socioeconomic levels, and in all educational, racial and age groups. Not even the Christians are immune" (p. 25). The assumption that domestic violence does not exist in the Christian home was challenged. Concrete knowledge of the dynamics and the awareness of domestic violence within a Christian relationship required the researcher to become versed in the "Social Worker's Ethical Responsibilities to Clients." This knowledge enabled the researcher to do a better job and become more compassionate toward the oppressed (MSW Student Handbook, 2004, p. 36).

#### Summary

In this chapter the researcher disclosed personal experience with domestic violence, which confirmed that the constructivism approach was the most appropriate paradigm because it offered the researcher a method for gathering data while researching the topic of domestic violence with a scientific methodology. The research was

challenged because of the nature of the study being so personal. Morris (2006) reminded us that "In a sense, we are all researchers every day of our lives...Each of us has our own worldview, built on a personal history that guides our approach to our daily research" (p. xvii). The researcher built on personal history. Application of life skills, over 25 years of being a Christian, Biblical knowledge, social work academia and the professional input from participants dealing with domestic violence victims were integrated into this study..

This study required a long-term commitment to researching the epidemic and constructing an intervention plan in conjunction with the gatekeeper. The site of research was at Calvary Chapel of Upland. The researcher was enormously motivated because she saw a need and opportunity for developing a ministry to women dealing with domestic violence. It is unfortunate that so far the only faith-based women's shelters are those not easily accessible or difficult to find or contact.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ENGAGEMENT

#### Introduction

This chapter explains how the gatekeepers and participants were engaged. The strategies for the various stages of the study are also discussed. Other areas that are covered in this chapter include self-preparation, diversity, are ethical and political issues associated with the engagement of the gatekeepers and participants.

#### Research Site and Study Participants

The research site was a church in Upland, California, Calvary Chapel of Upland, is also known as CCU. The church is affiliated with Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, which was founded by Senior Pastor and Christian author, Chuck Smith. The membership of CCU fluctuates between 500 to 600 members on a weekly basis. Socio-economically the church is made up of middle class Caucasians, Hispanics, Asians, African-Americans and others. The members range between the ages of 1 month to 80 years of age. The majority of the members are between the ages of 30 and 50. Many ministries (services) exist in order to serve or engage the members. However, a

ministry to serve victims of domestic violence does not currently exist and would be beneficial to women in such situations.

### Engagement Strategies for Each Stage of Study

#### Five Steps to Engaging

Step One. First an initial meeting with the Pastor, CCU, served as a focus meeting. In this focus meeting the research topic was discussed in order to explore and learn the Pastor's opinions and positions regarding domestic violence within the church.

Step Two. A meeting was held with the leader of the Women's Ministry. The purpose of this meeting was once again to amplify knowledge and understanding of the topic. Furthermore, entrée to the sub-leaders of the Women's Ministry was attained.

Step Three. The internet linked the researcher to such agencies as The Sheepfold, which is a Christian women's shelter located in Southern California.

Step Four. The Department of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino, served as a network source of information and linkage to professors

and professionals specializing in women's issues related to domestic violence.

Step Five. Finally, another way that the participants engaged was through personal interviews and survey questionnaires with former victims of domestic violence.

In order to engage the gatekeepers and participants, it was necessary for the researcher to meet individually and jointly with them several times. Engagement of the participants also required identification and communication with the various stakeholders, which linked the domestic violence victims to supportive outreach programs within the local geographical area. This information was gathered by collaborating with various individuals.

#### Engagement of Gatekeepers

The significant individuals that were included in the engagement process of the study were the church Pastor, his wife and their governing Board members. The researcher engaged these individuals by meeting with them individually and as a group, and presenting the project proposal.

### Engaging the First Gatekeeper

The researcher engaged the Church Pastor by meeting and presenting her proposal to him. After the meeting, the Pastor accepted the proposal. The researcher was confident that the Pastor would be receptive because she is a member of the church and the Pastor has known her for approximately 15 years. During the past 15 years, the Pastor has developed an awareness of the researcher's compassion toward service in her community, family church and especially toward women. These were important factors because the researcher was well aware that as the Pastor of a growing church, the Pastor is very protective of his sheep (church members). Therefore he would partake or buy into an opportunity to better serve his members. In this case the members that would be better served would be oppressed women in domestic violence relationships.

### Engaging of Second Gatekeeper

The second gatekeeper that the researcher engaged was the Pastor's wife. At a meeting with her, the Pastor's wife asked if the researcher would prepare a proposal addressing the reasons for the researcher selecting the topic. The researcher prepared her statement explaining in detail how she had a passion for

women in domestic violent situations and desired to build a ministry serving that particular population.

The Pastor's wife was engaged in the topic and scheduled a second meeting with the researcher. The next meeting would include her Board. The researcher concluded the meeting and prepared for the following meeting. Once again, after the meeting, the researcher again analyzed the data and entered more reflections, based on her thoughts about the meeting, into her journal.

#### Engaging the Board

The next engagement strategy was a meeting with the Board members. This meeting was held at CCU immediately following the last service. At this point the Pastor and his wife were both engaged in the project and now the researcher was presenting her proposal to the Board members.

The meeting with the Board took place on June 4, 2006. Those in attendance included the Pastor's wife and some of her Board members. The researcher presented her proposal focusing on the reasons for choosing the topic of domestic violence, the logistics of the research, the research site and the participants. The gatekeepers had an opportunity to ask questions, seek clarification and



decide if the research project was something in which they would be interested in participating. The researcher stated she would meet with the gatekeepers as a group as the data was gathered and analyzed.

#### Preparing to Engage the Participants

The researcher's next step in the engagement phase was to engage the participants. In the meeting the researcher and the gatekeepers explored possible ways that the researcher might engage some of the women. The researcher communicated to the Pastor's wife and her Board members that the data collection phase would require a commitment from the gatekeepers and participants.

#### Engaging the Participants

The researcher anticipated there were going to be several phases to collecting the research data. The researcher met with the gatekeepers and proposed her plan for data collection. The researcher welcomed suggestions from the gatekeepers. Suggestions that the researcher proposed was for her to make a presentation, hold a group meeting, or conduct a workshop at the annual Women's Retreat. The attendance at the CCU Women's Retreats is usually 150 Christian women. The women's retreats are

always very spirit filled. The women that attend are usually very excited to be among other women who love the Lord and just want to fellowship. Most women go to the retreat expecting to find answers, to relieve certain burdens or to renew their spiritual relationship with their Lord. The researcher believed that the retreat would be an excellent place to introduce the delicate subject of domestic violence in the Church. Furthermore the retreat would begin the various phases of data collection.

#### Gatekeepers Assist in Engagement Process

After meeting with the Women's Ministry leadership Board, it was determined that due to the nature of the research, it was not a good idea to conduct a workshop focusing on domestic violence at the retreat. The Board was concerned that the women would feel labeled or ashamed. The Board decided to include an announcement with information and a short questionnaire for all the women to participate if they chose to. The decision of the Board opened up the lines of communication and brought awareness to a problem that exists in the local and global church. The researcher was delighted to learn of the mutual interest on the topic of domestic violence.

### Engagement at the Women's Retreat

Another engagement strategy that the researcher utilized to engage the participants was attendance at the annual Women's Retreat. The Women's Retreat took place in July at the Calvary Chapel Marietta Conference Center located in the city of Marietta, CA. Approximately 100-150 women attended the weekend retreat. The atmosphere of the retreat was relaxing, motivating and very empowering.

### Engaging the Participants

As the women enjoyed their retreat, the researcher was able to empathize with the participants. There were no pens or notebooks; the researcher herself was the tool. Her authenticity, passion and her desire to serve the women was evident as she explained the study to any woman who inquired. The women were assured of their confidentiality in addition to being presented with an informed consent should they desire to become a participant.

After the retreat, in order for the researcher to collect quality data and gain the trust of the participants, the researcher met with the Pastor's wife, a Bible study leader and the coordinator of the retreat.

In this meeting the researcher and those in attendance discussed some of the responses to the questionnaire. This meeting served as an opportunity for the gatekeeper to receive feedback regarding what the women's opinions were regarding domestic violence.

### Self Preparation

Domestic violence within the church is an issue of concern, which necessitated sensitivity and respect toward the participants and the people who assisted the researcher in the study. The utmost degree of integrity was applied to all the information that was shared by the participants; furthermore, the victims were treated with dignity. The researcher recognized and identified with the participants regarding their Biblical beliefs.

According to Lundquist (2003), "Some churches emphasize passages in Ephesians 5 on wives being submissive to their husbands as unto the Lord, but neglect those passages that instruct husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it" (p. 3).

In order for the researcher to have clearly considered the perspectives and values of the

participants, the researcher had to incessantly apply Biblical knowledge in addition to keeping the Biblical scriptures within their proper context along with utilizing various manuscript versions of the Holy Bible. Biblical knowledge, compassion toward victimization issues and a desire to serve were key factors in this research. Biblical knowledge proved beneficial when interacting with the participants because most participants for this research based their values and beliefs on the Biblical scriptures. Compassion toward humanity was also crucial, because women who had been victimized had a need for compassion and understanding. The researcher felt confident that she was extremely compassionate toward issues of victimization.

#### Diversity Issues

Calvary Chapel churches are generally very diverse in ethnicity, gender, age and socioeconomic levels. All these factors were considered, but the researcher allocated special attention to language and vocabulary. The reason for the particular attention to language and vocabulary was because Christian people communicate using their own terminology. For example a Christian may use

the words "rededication," "grown," "edified" and "Holy Spirit" in the following manner: "*Since my rededication, I have grown in the Lord and feel edified by the Holy Spirit.*" The secular interpretation of this statement is, "Since I returned to my foundational Christian beliefs, I have matured in my knowledge of what I believe, and feel strengthened by my higher power." Having a clear understanding of how many Christians use certain vocabulary is beneficial to the reader.

#### Ethical Issues

In gathering the data for this study the researcher faced certain ethical issues. The researcher adhered to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics standards in conducting herself and pursuing the study. A social worker's primary responsibility is to promote the well being of the client, but the researcher also respected the right of the client's decision for self-determination (MSW Student Handbook, NASW, 2004, p. 36). If a participant chose to not divulge certain information, the researcher respected the participant's decision and retreated from the topic or discussion. It is the social worker's responsibility to abide by the

ethical standards within the NASW Code of Ethics. The researcher limited the participant's right to self-determination if the researcher had reason to believe that the participant posed a serious risk or harm to self or others. Another sensitive ethical issue was the stigma that domestic violence has in the church.

#### Political Issues

The political issues in the study were introduced in the initial meeting with the stakeholders, gatekeepers and informants. Such issues included the sharing of power and the partnership between the researcher and all the participants. A commitment of honesty and the development of a partnership dynamics served a vital role. The approach of the study was not to rectify a problem or disagreement. Rather the approach was to address the issue of domestic violence as allies, therefore exploring solutions or constructing a plan to improve the situation.

In the various phases of the research the Pastor was noted as the head of the church. Therefore his concerns, opinions and Biblical knowledge regarding domestic violence was communicated. He served as a participant and

gatekeeper or stakeholder and was respected for his leadership position, but it was noted that the focus was on the women and their need for service and protection. Due to the traditional elements of a faith-based setting, spiritual beliefs were continually discussed. In order for the participants to not perceive a powerless fear, or that the Pastor or the researcher's agenda was the focus, the purpose of the research was repeatedly communicated. A continual reminder of the focus hopefully eliminated a barrier that might have existed, providing an open discussion of such a private topic as domestic violence in the church. Other political issues were addressed. The researcher proceeded in contacting other influential or powerful stakeholders who might have access to additional resources.

The husband's role in domestic violence was also addressed. Often the abusive husband is very manipulative in attempting to convince people around him that everything is fine between he and his wife or that the wife is the one with a problem. In order for the batterer to gain credibility within his community, family or church, he will conform his personality to fit what he believes is expected of him. The abuser gains the trust



and confidence of others around him while discrediting the victim. Stewart (2004) states "The batterer grows stronger and the victim grows weaker" (p. 51). The researcher considered the role of the husband in cases where the husband has been falsely accused of domestic violence.

#### Summary

In chapter two the plan of engagement was discussed. The research site and the study participants at CCU were introduced. The researcher shared the plan for self-preparation. Some other factors that were looked at were diversity, ethical issues and political issues that may be involved in domestic violence.

## CHAPTER THREE

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### Introduction

##### The Hermeneutic Dialectic Circle

Initially the researcher introduced the hermeneutic dialectic diagram and discussed in detail the possible constructions with gatekeepers. Those key informants were encouraged to add or delete and voice their suggestions regarding the constructions. Visually the diagram began with the researcher's initial construction. Then there were connections toward the Pastor, his wife and the other leaders (see Figure 1).

A hermeneutic dialectic circle was constructed to gather data from stakeholders and participants. The participants were purposely selected and through personal interviews, observations and realistic experiences, they provided the construction valuable insights. Various phases of data collection took place. The constructivist paradigm was laborious and often repetitive; however the repetitious phases were necessary. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic the researcher did not utilize any form of data recording mechanism.

The hermeneutic dialectic circle served as a tool for linking the participants and possible resources to the topic of domestic violence in a faith-based setting.

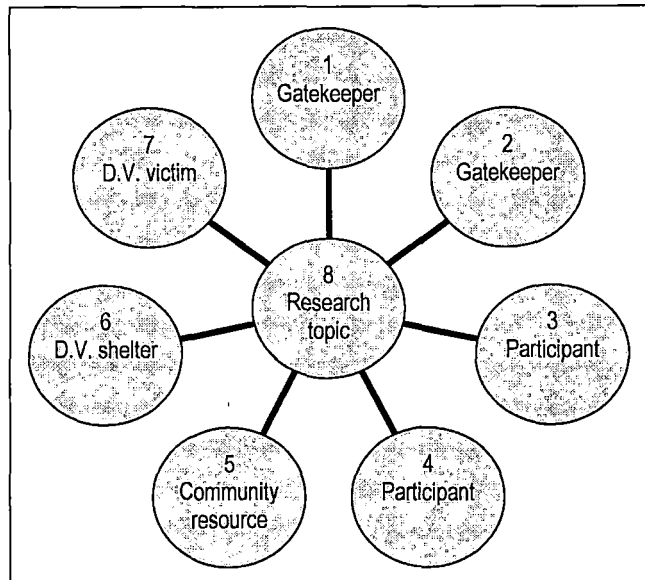


Figure 1. Hermeneutic Dialectic Circle

The hermeneutic dialectic contained eight key players. The circles represent the various key players. The center circle represents the research topic (domestic violence). The circle linked directly above it represents the Pastor. The circle to the right of the Pastor is his wife, who is equally as important as the Pastor since she oversees all the women's activities in the Church. The next circle is a Board member. Board members are key because they are women who the Pastor's wife confides in

and trusts. Therefore they serve as influential key members. The next circle is a Bible study leader. Bible study leaders have direct contact with the women in the Church on a daily basis. The next circle represents a women's shelter. The women's shelter that is represented is The Sheepfold because it is a well-known Christian Women's shelter that many of the women attending the research site are familiar with. The next circle represents community resources that assist women in crisis and the final circle represents a domestic violence victim.

#### Data Gathering

The hermeneutic dialect circle was utilized for the collection of the data for this study. As the researcher met with key players and collected data, the researcher reflected on the data, analyzed it and explored other possible constructions that could be formed from them. The data gathering appeared repetitious, however as the hermeneutic dialectic developed the study progressed. The researcher continuously referred back to her expertise in domestic violence. She considered her literature review in order to remain focused on the topic. The researcher

met with such gatekeepers as the Pastor, his wife and her Board members. All these individuals were viewed as key participants with their own constructions.

### Participants

The participants for this study were 7 females and one male. Christian women between the ages of 20 and 55 made up the majority of the researcher's participation. The only man who directly participated was the Pastor. However two other men indirectly participated, but it was unlikely that men were going to play a major role as study participants. The reason men did not participate is because as the researcher discussed the topic with men, the men viewed the topic as intimidating. One male shared that his ex-wife had falsely accused him of domestic violence and he felt unjustly labeled as an abuser.

### Contacting Participants

The researcher contacted the participants through word of mouth advertisement, through Bible study group leaders and referrals from the Pastor and his wife through a church announcement. The researcher expected to engage most of the participants through the Bible study group leaders.

## Hermeneutic Dialectic Changing

The initial hermeneutic dialectic circle included the researcher, the Pastor, some women in leadership roles and possibly CSUSB, Department of Social Work. As the research developed and obstacles were met, the researcher made adjustments. The researcher believed the hermeneutic dialectic circle would begin small, possibly with 2 or 3 constructions. Toward the end of the research, the hermeneutic dialectic circle included the researcher, the Pastor, the women's leader, the Bible study leaders, CSUSB, and a social service agency. As the study progressed some circles were added and some were deleted. The Pastor connected to the various women's ministries and the Bible study leaders were linked to the leader of all women's ministries. The victims of domestic violence were connected to the Pastor or Bible study leaders.

One of the challenges that the researcher encountered during the selection of participants was finding domestic violence victims who would participate. There were several women who originally agreed to participate, and at the time of signing a written consent, all refused to participate except for one who

agreed. The researcher respected the decisions of all the women who declined to participate and continued the data collection.

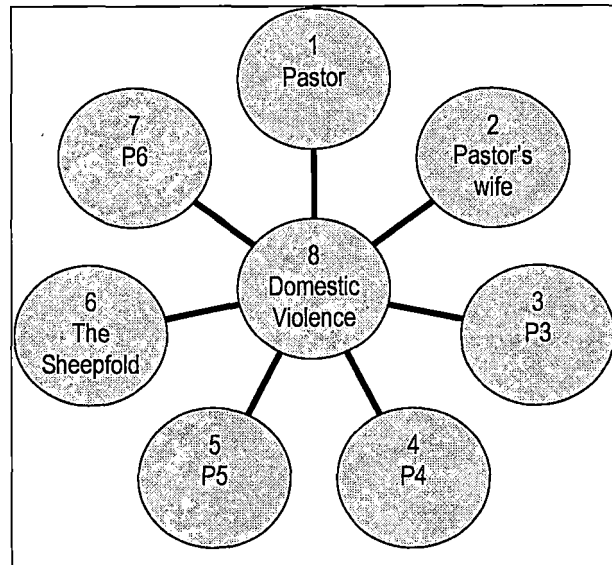


Figure 2. Hermeneutic Dialectic

### Victim's Self-determination

The researcher had to be persistent yet sensitive to self-determination factors. Some participants committed to participating in the study and then chose to leave the study. The researcher respected the rights and decision of these individuals. Ultimately the researcher adhered to the NASW Code of Ethics stating that an individual has the right to exercise freedom of choice in making decisions. Fortunately the research site was the

researcher's place of worship and a relationship had already been developed between the researcher and the Pastor. The Pastor was aware of the researcher's desire to contribute her expertise and service to the place and people she calls her church family.

#### Member-checking Meeting #1

A member-checking meeting took place at CCU. The meeting was held in private in a classroom. Those in attendance were the Pastor, his wife, a Board member, a Bible study leader, P6 (a victim of domestic violence) and the researcher. This meeting lasted one hour and a half. The researcher provided all the attendees with a brief summary explaining the various data collection strategies that were utilized. The meeting served as an opportunity to update all those involved in the research project.

#### Member-checking Meeting Dialogue

As the data was collected and individual constructions by the various participants were reviewed, the researcher produced a rough draft containing the group's joint construction. This information was shared with all those individuals partaking in the research. According to Morris, (2006) this type of meeting is



called a membership-checking meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to ensure the "credibility", "dependability" and "confirmability" of the shared construction (p. 219-220).

The meeting identified claims, concerns and issues, for example, areas of agreement, areas of disagreements and issues to be addressed and acted upon (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The hope of the researcher was that all the gatekeepers and participants would welcome the study and the final outcome of the research findings. The researcher was pleased to have the support from the participants, so much that the researcher identified them as her team. The participants took ownership of the research. They candidly shared their views and opinions regarding domestic violence in their Church or in the global church.

#### Shared Construction Meeting #2

After all the data were collected and the first member-checking meeting was held the researcher requested another meeting. This next meeting was the shared construction meeting. This meeting took place at the Church in private, in the Director of Children's Ministry office, due to lack of space in another private room.

Those who attended this meeting were the Pastor, his wife, a Board member, the Women's Brunch Coordinator, a Bible study leader, P6 and the researcher. This meeting was two hours long and all the attendees participated in the dialogue.

#### Shared Construction Meeting Dialogue

At the shared construction meeting the researcher presented the gathered data, brief insights from various journal entries, personal interviews, themes and categories. Some of the categories discussed at this meeting were what is the definition of domestic violence, women's ministries, are other people involved, are some people unaware of domestic violence in the church, negative feelings, people's perception of domestic violence and what about the Christian home?

#### Selection of Participants

The process of selecting participants required communication. The Pastor, his wife and the other key players assisted by informing people of the research project and the need for participants. In selecting the participants, they were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they were required to be fluent in

the English language. Some of the participants were selected through referrals. Other participants were selected through word of mouth and finally other participants independently volunteered to participate after reading an announcement in the women's retreat program.

#### Voluntary Participation

All the selected participants shared power equally and they chose to participate in the research voluntarily. The participants were expected to make a commitment to utilize integrity. The participants understood the importance of speaking honestly. This was sometimes especially challenging for those participants who are felt vulnerable and insecure. Considering the nature of the research and the vulnerable state that the victims are in, the researcher believed this was one of the most challenging obstacles she experienced in the study.

#### Competent Participants

In selecting the participants the researcher considered whether the participants were capable of comprehending the information and concepts associated with domestic violence. Most importantly the participants

had to be able to verbally communicate in English. The researcher is bilingual and was able to communicate with Spanish-speaking participants; therefore some Spanish-speaking participants would have been able to participate, although all the participants did in fact speak English. The decision to have limited English participants was left to the researcher and her availability to translate. Participants with severe emotional, physical and mental disabilities were not selected.

#### Power is Shared Equally

As emphasized earlier all the participants did share power equally. Although the researcher and the participants respect the positions of the leaders in the church, within the study they were viewed as equals. The sharing of power and the equal status of each individual was crucial because each gatekeeper and participant has an individual construction and is an asset to the hermeneutic dialectic. Each participant and gatekeeper was encouraged to voice his or her expertise, opinions, beliefs, experiences or whatever they considered important. The researcher communicated to the participants that disagreements in philosophies or

beliefs were acceptable and valuable to the construction of the study.

#### Data Collection at Women's Shelters

Due to the nature of the services provided to the victims, many faith-based shelters were accessible through a website or by telephone, but often a physical address was withheld. The secrecy was necessary. Graham (2005) stated that, "You are not capable to reach the abused women until she is separated from her tormentor and she and her children are in a safe place where the husband is not able to physically get to her" (p. 25). While the shelters were difficult to find, the researcher understood it would require her to do some creative research. The researcher had been in contact with The Sheepfold through email and was asked to call the corporate office to set up an appointment with the shelter. With effort it seemed possible to learn of various locations, but due to the nature of the research the physical geographical locations would not be revealed unless the shelters granted their permission.

## Phases of Data Collection

Phases of data collection required several meetings with the hermeneutic dialectic circle. The process was repetitive and time consuming. The researcher kept the participants informed of what phase the study was in and what to expect next. At this point the hermeneutic dialect circles were significant because it made it clear who the key players and participants were going to be.

### First Meeting "Intent to Gather Data"

In this meeting the researcher informed the attendees that the next step was "Intent to Gather Data." In this phase they would have the opportunity to participate in an interview and ask questions. Finally the researcher and the Pastor had an opportunity to identify any other relevant or important contributions to the joint constructions (Morris, 2006). After the meeting concluded the researcher immediately analyzed the outcome of the meeting and wrote in her journal. The journal was helpful to the researcher's reflections on thoughts, facts and possible future constructions.

### Second Meeting

The second meeting took place on May 21, 2006 with the Pastor's wife. The researcher got the impression that

the Pastor's wife was very protective of the women or participants who would be involved in the research study. The researcher assured her of the data collection guidelines. Some of the guidelines that were presented to her were the project description, participant recruitment process, confidentiality of data and risks and benefits.

#### Commitment to the Process of Data Collection

The commitment to address the social phenomena of domestic violence would be a long-term commitment to researching the problem and constructing an intervention plan in addition to working with the gatekeepers. Furthermore awareness about domestic violence within the church has been long overdue. There are a limited amount of Christian women's shelters that can be utilized as models in establishing a shelter. This study has a faith-based foundation, although some of the modeling has been sparingly adopted from secular or county-based agencies. There are also individual Church members who have the expertise, resources and the willingness to assist in implementing an intervention geared to ministering to Christian women who are dealing with domestic violence in their marriage.

## Data Recording

In order to gather data the researcher did not utilize video equipment. Due to the nature of the research, it was not possible for the research data to be audio taped. Domestic violence is a very delicate subject and the researcher assumed the vulnerability of the victims. The participants were informed of the various processes of data gathering or data recording. Most participants did not want to be video taped or audio taped. Any victims who expressed concern were immediately comforted and assured that their decision to not participate in any form of data recording would be respected. Since the researcher was not allowed to audiotape meetings or conversations, the researcher relied on note taking, journaling and her recollection of pertinent incidences, facts or critical information. The researcher utilized journal techniques learned from Social Work 612, Social Work Research.

## Summary

The researcher learned that there is a limited amount of literature available on the topic of domestic violence in a faith-based setting. The few shelters that



were available were difficult to access. According to the limited amount of literature, shelters and protection, the researcher came to the conclusion that public information about domestic violence in a faith-based setting is lacking. Christian women and their children are in danger and are not being served adequately. The researcher learned that domestic violence is not considered a priority within the universal church.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVALUATION

#### Introduction

##### Data Analysis

The data collection was time consuming and repetitive. However in order to ensure the validity of the project the researcher followed various steps in obtaining and analyzing research data. Several interviews were conducted and meetings were held to collect data, reflect on and analyze it. The researcher recorded some personal reflections regarding the information. The reflections assisted the researcher in personally processing the outcomes of the data, analyzing her feelings and building other constructions from the data.

##### Analyzing Retreat Data Collection

The researcher viewed the retreat opportunity as a way to engage and collect valuable data. The researcher was able to learn if the women and the gatekeeper were in one accord regarding the topic of domestic violence. Ironically it benefited the integrity of the research at times when some of the participants or retreat attendees differed in opinions and beliefs. The researcher prepared

some questions that were presented. According to Morris (2006), the interviewee's responses were also included.

#### Experience/Behavior Questions

- What is your experience with domestic violence?

Some of the women may have experienced domestic violence and some may not have any personal experience, but may know someone who has.

#### Opinion/Values Questions

- What do you think is happening here at CCU with regards to domestic violence?

Some of the women may respond knowing that domestic violence exists at Church but comment such as "does the Pastor really know what goes on in people's houses."

- What is your opinion about all this (domestic violence)?

Domestic violence is happening and they would be supportive of seeing a ministry where Christian women and their children can be served.

- Do you desire to minister to domestic violence victims?

The women and children will probably agree they would like to see women and children ministered to. I acknowledge that we lack resources and knowledge of how you would go about implementing a program or shelter for domestic violence victims.

- How do you think its best to minister to domestic violence victims?

The women would hold on to their Biblical foundational principals and would ask for clarification of any misconceptions of the scriptures. The lesson from Ephesians 5, stating that the wife is to submit to her husband, would be kept in proper context.

#### Feeling Questions

- How do you feel about domestic violence in the global or local church?

The participants indicated they were probably aware of the epidemic of domestic violence existing in the global and local church.

#### Knowledge Questions

- How are you currently ministering or reaching out to domestic violence victims?

Domestic violence is probably not something the church members think about often, unless they are being affected by it. Therefore the domestic violence victims are not being reached.

While the researcher remained focused on the logistics of collecting data, it was important for her to remain flexible. The researcher was aware that many changes would possibly occur, Morris (2006).

#### Open Code Analysis

The researcher utilized "open coding" in order to analyze the data. A portion of the narrative was taken from the interviews and left for potential interpretation. Some of the questions consisted of defining domestic violence, having experience with domestic violence or knowing someone who is currently in a domestic violence situation. Since some of the participants requested not to be identified the interviewees are fictitiously identified as the Pastor, his wife, P3, P4, P5, and P6.

#### Women's Perception of Domestic Violence

Some of the women that the researcher interviewed shared their personal experiences about domestic violence. Some women shared they didn't want to shame

their husband among the people that attend the same place of worship. One woman said she had received counseling in the past and was told to "maintain a gentle spirit and that would change her husband." And so the perception among some of these women is that they have some control or hold some responsibility for their husband's inappropriate behavior.

#### Physical Violence

Domestic violence was defined as physical violence against a spouse or children. The definition of domestic violence was similar among the interviewees. They all included the words "physical" and "violence." One of the interviewees is currently in a domestic violent marriage and shared her definition. P6's definition of domestic violence was "when parents and children are involved in ugly/nasty arguments and fighting physically almost on a daily basis. They put each other down to the point of damaging the family's self esteem."

#### The Calvary Chapel Upland Church

The Church was defined as a safe place, but also a place where domestic violence is happening. P3 stated, "Domestic violence is currently happening in the church universally and a safe place is needed for those living

in domestic violent situations." P4 was aware of The Sheepfold and stated the Church was a safe haven for women in domestic violent situations.

#### Other People Involved

"Other people involved" was defined as people other than the victim, who are implicated, caught up or affected by the domestic violence that is happening. The researcher asked the participants if they thought other people were involved. P3 stated that children are dramatically affected by the violence and that the cycle of violence repeats itself over and over again. Some of the participants stated that extended family members and friends are sometimes involved or affected by the abuse.

#### Experience with Domestic Violence

The researcher asked the participants what their experience with domestic violence was. The participants defined experience with domestic violence as, "someone currently in a domestic violent situation or someone having prior personal experience with domestic violence." P5 stated in her interview that her father was abusive towards her and her mother. P6 had personal experience with domestic violence. For example, she stated her experience consisted of, "verbal abuse, seeing my husband

hitting the children, breaking things all the time." P6 also stated "My eldest sister is in a domestic violent marriage."

#### It's Happening in The Church

The question "Is it happening in the church (CCU)" is defined by the participants as, "domestic violence is happening in the church in general and not specifically at the data collection site." The majority of the interviewees responded with similar answers. For example the Pastor's wife stated, "I'm sure it's happening but we are not being made aware." She went on to ask, "How can we know who is being violated against?" The researcher stated that the Bible study leaders would be the individuals most likely to hear about the abuse before anyone else. The consensus was that those in leadership in the Church are unaware of the domestic violence that is happening in the Church. The reason for this is possibly because the women in the relationships are ashamed of their situation and furthermore they do not want to expose their husbands.

#### Interviewee's Opinion of Domestic Violence

The question "What is your opinion of domestic violence?" was asked by the researcher in order to direct



the interviewee to possibly a broader interpretation of domestic violence. The overall definition by the participants was that, "domestic violence is physically violent and an area of concern." Some interviewees stated that it's happening in the Church. However the perception is that domestic violence is not likely to happen in Christian homes. The inaccurate perception was a major concern to the Pastor, his wife and the participants. P6 stated, "It's destructive to those involved. If we don't seek Christ or professional help it can drive a person to commit suicide."

#### Women's Ministries for Domestic Violence

The participants defined "Women's Ministries for domestic violence" as "outreach services set up for victims of domestic abuse. The participants stated, "Women's ministries may include but are not limited to shelters, Christian counseling, housing and child care." The participants expressed a desire to minister to the women and children in domestic violent situations. The question was asked "How can we help right now?"

#### How Can We Help The Women?

The interviewees viewed or defined the question "How can we help the women?" as "What can we do to reach these

women; how do we minister to them; what are their particular needs, and do we have people who can minister to them?" The two concerns regarding this question were that those in leadership are unaware of domestic violence and that more information regarding domestic violence is needed in the Church. Five out of the six interviewees mentioned that more information on educating the women about safe places such as The Sheepfold should be made openly available. For example; P5 stated that, "If I were in a domestic violent situation, I would go to my Pastor for help and then move to a women's shelter."

#### Domestic Violence in The Local and Global Church

The participants defined the "global and local church" as the church worldwide and their specific place of worship. An area that seemed to concern the interviewees is their belief that domestic violence is happening in their local Church as well as in the church worldwide. For example some participants mentioned that domestic violence is happening in Christian homes as well as in non-Christian homes.

#### Do You Know What To Do?

The interviewees defined this question or interpreted this question as, "What would you do if you

knew someone was in a domestic violent situation?" All the interviewees stated that a safe place was necessary for protecting the victim and her children. Most participants mentioned the Church as a place of safety and a resource. For example P6 stated, "Seek professional help; speak to the Pastor in church, friends and relatives."

After the interviews, the researcher thanked the participants and assured them that their data would be kept confidential. The researcher concluded by informing the participants that she was building a joint construction and valued their involvement. Some participants expressed a desire to extend their insights on the topic. For example, P6 stated she and her husband are currently in counseling and would be interested in resources for both her as a victim and her husband as a batterer. The researcher provided the participant some information and the phone numbers to several shelters and resources.

#### Joint Construction

At the membership checking meeting the researcher summarized the findings for the participants by

reiterating that the majority of interviewees defined domestic violence as a physically violent act against women and children. Interviewees did not include males in their responses. However, most interviewees included children and the way that domestic violence affects children. Most interviewees believed that those in leadership positions in the church are unaware of domestic violence happening in the church. For example P3, P4 and P6 mentioned that they believe church members are unaware of domestic violence happening among their fellow church friends. The participants agreed that domestic violence affects people other than the victim. Some of the interviewees expressed a desire to minister to domestic violence victims if they ever have the opportunity. This joint construction is expanded in more detailed below.

#### Researcher Chose the Right Site

The researcher interpreted the Pastor's compassion as having a heart for his sheep (people attending his church). At one point during the engagement phase of the research, the Pastor and the researcher were casually conversing. The Pastor stated, "I do not have a problem having the abuser locked up." Furthermore, his first

concern was that the victim and children be protected. He said "I don't mind ministering to the husband behind bars but my concern is that his wife and children are safe." At this point the researcher knew that she had made the right decision in choosing CCU as the research site.

#### The Pastor Supports the Research

The researcher felt motivated and encouraged about the input that the Pastor provided. The suggestion for the researcher to meet with his wife early in the data collection phase, demonstrated to the researcher that the Pastor supported the research effort. Throughout the study, the researcher maintained the idea that some of the Board members, interviewees or participants were very protective of the women in the church. The care and concern for the women was appreciated.

#### The Stigma of Being Labeled

Some interviewees were concerned that their identity would be revealed. The researcher repeatedly reminded the participants that their identity would be held confidential. The researcher interpreted this concern as possibly the women were fearful of being labeled. During a prior meeting with the Board members and the researcher, the Board members expressed a similar

concern. The Board members did not want the women to feel as though their participation caused them to be labeled as victims. This concern led the researcher to believe that the stigmatization of being labeled as a victim of abuse, is negative or shameful. This concern expressed from the participants during the retreat and through personal interviews, also confirms that the Pastor and his wife are genuinely making a connection with the women in their church.

#### Data Interpretation

The researcher's interpretation of the data collected was that the Pastor was very receptive. He seemed to have a desire to reach out to women in domestic violent situations. The Pastor was very careful to not include the psychological aspects of domestic violence into his definition. In his interview he welcomed the opportunity to learn and explore ways that the Church could be more available to minister and serve women suffering in the midst of a domestic violent situation.

## Implications of Findings for Micro and/or Macro Practice

The researcher experienced certain limitations in doing her research. Some limitations and implications included dealing with the sensitive topic of domestic violence within a population that is perceived as a non-violent population, limited research regarding domestic violence in the church, the unwillingness of the victim to come forth to expose her spouse of the act of abuse and the lack of Christian women's shelters/resources.

The researcher's advise to any social worker interested in researching the topic of domestic violence or working with the hermeneutic dialectic is to maintain ethical standards at all times, even if it requires for you to change your plan of action.

It is also important for social workers to be mindful of the fact that the relevance of religion in social work is not always apparent. In his book review of *"Religion And Social Work Practice In Contemporary American Society,"* Moseley (2001) explained how the relationship between social workers and religious clients can be very complex (p. 276).

Research data regarding domestic violence in a faith-based setting is limited; however, it is clear that victims of domestic violence are not openly seeking assistance. It would be very wise for medical social workers or health professionals to be more assertive when they suspect abuse. It has been reported that domestic violence intensifies during pregnancy and many women who are living in abusive households have preschool age children. The researcher recommends that health care professional investigate any suspicion, (Frost, 1999).

General research regarding domestic violence is more available. However research regarding domestic violence in a faith-based setting is more challenging to find. Ringel and Bina (2007) conducted a study and submitted their findings entitled "Understanding Causes Of and Responses To Intimate Partner Violence in a Jewish Orthodox Community: Survivors' and Leaders Perspectives." According to these researchers their small study has limited generalizability in that it is not representative of the entire ultra-Orthodox community in the United States or elsewhere, or even the local community in which it took place, (Ringel & Bina, 2007).



## Summary

This chapter of the study included data analysis in which the researcher gave a synopsis of the participants' responses to the interviews. The researcher also briefly interpreted the findings and shared some of the limitations that were encountered. One of the limitations focused on was the lack of physical accessibility to a women's shelter. The researcher determined that this research project can serve as a learning tool. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to apply both micro and macro fundamentals together in a generalist model.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

#### Introduction

The focus of this research was domestic violence in a faith-based setting. The question asked was "How can we serve women living in a domestic violent situation without them feeling as though they have to compromise their faith?" In this final segment of the research the researcher shared her daily processes as she reached conclusions from her data gathering, journal entries and findings.

#### Communicating Findings to Study Site and Study Participants

After interviewing all the participants individually and analyzing all the data, a "Member Checking" meeting took place. After that meeting all the information and responses were analyzed. Finally a "Shared Construction" meeting with intent to terminate the data collection phase of the research project, was held. Those in attendance were the Pastor, his wife, P3, P6, and the researcher. The meeting took place on Sunday, October 15, 2006, immediately following third service at CCU.

The meeting began with the Pastor praying for wisdom, direction and that the researcher would be able to clearly convey the information to the participants present. The researcher then began by summarizing the research process and reiterating the focus of the research and stating that this meeting was the termination phase of the research project. The researcher stated that the main question within the research was "How do we minister to Christian women who are in domestic violent situations, without them perceiving that they are compromising their Biblical beliefs?" The researcher also handed the attendees a copy of the "Joint Construction results" and a blank "Questionnaire" which they had completed during their individual interview. As the meeting progressed the attendees referred back to the Joint Construction results hand-out and the Questionnaire hand-out.

#### Shared Construction Meeting with Intent to Terminate

As the meeting progressed the researcher shared with the group the results of the interviews. The researcher shared that the areas that most of the interviewees seemed to voice concern about were that domestic violence

is a violent act involving others, other than the abuser and the victim. The researcher also shared that most interviewees believed that it is possible that domestic violence is happening within the home. Physical violence was a major factor and safety was a shared concern. The researcher shared that some of the interviewees felt those in leadership were unaware of domestic violence existing in the church.

The Pastor stated that he didn't really like the word "perception" because perception can be misinterpreted differently depending on the individual in the domestic violent situation. The group discussed this and agreed that another word might fit better.

The majority of participants interviewed expressed a desire to minister to those living in domestic violent homes, but felt unequipped to minister to women in domestic violent situations. Some of the interviewees stated they lacked knowledge of information regarding a safe place. The Sheepfold was mentioned as a well-known resource. The majority of participants expressed that they believe the church can play a major role in the batterer's life. They stated the belief is that there is hope for change.

The Pastor stated, "The Lord cannot change an individual if the individual does not submit to being changed. Change depends on the batterers' choice. Man cannot change, but if he submits to the Lord, the Lord with the help of the Holy Spirit can help him change."

The Pastor's wife also mentioned that she had difficulty with the word empowerment, but the Pastor stated that it is necessary to empower women in these domestic violent relationships since they have been beaten down for such a long time.

#### Termination of Study

In the termination process a request was made for the researcher to provide information about various resources for the women in the Church. The researcher was also asked by the Pastor's wife if the researcher would prepare a step-by-step guide stating what women should do if they are in a domestic violence situation. Another request was made to include specific hot-line phone numbers and what a domestic violence victim should expect when the police become involved. The researcher agreed to provide the requested information. The researcher also provided additional information which included

intervention techniques used by telephone hot-lines and battered women's shelters. The researcher also offered important tips for the victim in case of a crisis.

The Pastor and his wife were very appreciative and stated they would make the information available to the body of believers and possibly meet with the Bible study leaders to educate them on domestic violence. The researcher once again stated that this meeting terminated the data collection phase and now the responsibility lay on them to move forward and utilize the information to better serve the women in the Church. The researcher thanked the group and concluded.

#### Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants

The research model adopted by the researcher provided an opportunity to bring awareness of a social problem existing in our society including the local Church. The researcher has provided in-depth information, research and resources to the leaders of CCU. Her ongoing relationship with the stakeholders, gatekeepers and the participants has now shifted to co-advocate.

Victims of domestic violence need strong advocates to speak out for them when they are vulnerable and

oppressed. The researcher has equipped the various individuals in the hermeneutic dialectic circle, with the facts and data, to build a ministry to reach out to or advocate for the women and children living in domestic violent situations. Morris (2006) states, "The rigor of the constructivist process, with its commitment to authenticity, makes a strong case for suggesting that facts are being gathered and built into knowledge that is known to be true in this kind of research" (p. 237). At this final phase of research, the data, facts and suggestions have been conformed to genuine knowledge that we are overdue for a ministry that serves domestic violence victims in a faith-based setting.

#### Summary

The focus of this research was domestic violence in a faith-based setting. The question asked was "How can we serve women living in a domestic violent situation without them feeling as though they have to compromise their faith?" After interviewing all the participants individually, analyzing all the data, several meetings were held. Once all the meetings and all the information and responses were analyzed a "Shared Construction"

meeting with intent to terminate was held. The researcher concluded by summing up her findings with a challenge and statement, suggesting that a ministry for women living in domestic violence situations is needed at CCU.



APPENDIX A  
DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT(S)

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION.**

The research focus is domestic violence in a faith-based setting, specifically asking the question “How do we serve Christian women who are victims of domestic violence, without them feeling as though they are compromising their Biblical beliefs?” The researcher has chosen the constructivist approach as her research method; in hope that the social phenomena of domestic violence will be analyzed and possibly an opportunity to serve women within the church will be the result. The researcher will interact with gatekeepers, informants, participants and other individuals beneficial for the study. Most if not all the data will be collected at Calvary Chapel in Upland (CCU) and the data collection will not exceed 10 months. The assumption is clear that the hermeneutic dialectic circle will serve as a major tool leading to more sources.

## **PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT.**

All the potential participants will be adult women and possibly some men. The ethnicity of the participants will be diverse. They will be from various socio-economic backgrounds and educational levels, although all participants will be literate in English. Some of the participants will be selected through referral by a group leader or by the Pastor and his wife. Other participants may be selected through word of mouth. All participants will be screened to ensure they are mentally, physically and emotionally capable of participating in this study.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA.**

The researcher will not be utilizing video or audio equipment. Domestic violence is a very delicate subject and the researcher must assume the vulnerability of the victims. The participants will be informed of their participation being totally voluntary and they may choose to exit the study at any time. Any victims expressing concern of their anonymity will be asked to identify themselves with fictitious names. The researcher will rely on note taking, journaling and her recollection of pertinent incidences. Confidentially, informed consents and debriefing statements will all be included in the research. The data collected will be securely kept in a lock box. The data will be shredded after the researcher has completed her study which will not exceed one year.

## **RISKS AND BENEFITS.**

The researcher does not anticipate any risk or harm to any participants. This information being kept confidential is to protect the privacy of the participants and to eliminate any possibility of embarrassment, shame, guilt and fear that the participants may be feeling. The precautions that will be taken in order to eliminate any fears, embarrassments or shame will include referrals to individual counseling or protective women’s shelters. This research will benefit participants and society in fulfilling a need and introducing an opportunity for developing a ministry for women dealing with domestic violence. The study may empower participants and benefit the church with a greater awareness about domestic violence.

APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INTERVIEW

## **Questionnaire For Interviews**

The researcher further prepared herself to serve the participants, church and community of women by first meeting with the gatekeepers and discussing several questions. The questions served as a gage to learn if the researcher and the gatekeepers were in one accord regarding the topic of domestic violence. Some of the questions that were asked were;

### **Experience/Behavior Questions:**

- What is your experience with domestic violence?

### **Opinion/Values Questions:**

- What do you think is happening here at CCU with regards to domestic violence?
- What is your opinion about all this (domestic violence)?
- Do you desire to minister to domestic violence victims?
- How do you think its best to minister to domestic violence victims?

### **Feeling Questions**

- How do you feel about domestic violence in the global or local church?

### **Knowledge Questions**

- How are you currently ministering or reaching out to the domestic violence victims? (Morris, (2006).

APPENDIX C  
WHY THE TOPIC?

### **Researcher's reason for Choosing Topic**

During the engagement phase of data collection the Pastor's wife asked the researcher why she had chosen the topic of domestic violence. The following is a personal response that the researcher presented to the Pastor's wife.

*"The reason for my topic being "Domestic Violence in a faith-based setting" is because I have prayed and waited on the Lord for His confirmation to do my master thesis on this delicate subject. The Lord has revealed to me that I should use my knowledge, education and passion for helping women in a way that would glorify HIM. In researching such a delicate topic I would benefit those I fellowship with and I would give back to the community I love."*

(personal statement by Lee, May.22.2006).

APPENDIX D  
INFORMED CONSENT

## INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are being asked to participate in is designed to investigate “**Domestic violence in a faith-based setting.**” This study is being conducted by Elisa P. Lee under the supervision of Dr. Tom Davis & Dr. Teresa Morris, PROFESSORS OF Department of Masters of Social Work. This study has been approved by the Department of Social Work sub-committee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study you will be asked to respond to several questions in an interview. One of the questions will be “How do we serve Christian women who are victims of domestic violence, without them feeling as though they are compromising their Biblical beliefs? The interviews should take approximately 1 hour to complete. All of your responses will be held in the strictest of confidence by the researcher. Your name will not be reported with your responses. Your answers will be combined with other participants so your identity will not be revealed. You may receive the results of this study upon the completion of the study, at the following location: California State University, San Bernardino, Library.

Your participation in this study is totally voluntary. You are free not to answer any questions and withdraw at any time during this interview without penalty. When you have completed the interview, you will receive a debriefing statement describing the study in more detail.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Teresa Morris or Dr. Tom Davis at (909) 537-3839 or (909) 537-5561.

By placing a check mark in the box below, I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and that I understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate. I also acknowledge that I am at least AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE.

Place a check mark here

Today's date: \_\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX E  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

## **DEBRIEFING STATEMENT**

This study is designed to investigate domestic violence in a faith-based (church) setting. In this study the researcher is asking the question “How do we serve Christian women who are victims of domestic violence, without them feeling as though they are compromising their Biblical beliefs?” The study findings will serve as an opportunity to understand domestic violence within the church locally and globally. The researcher is particularly interested in constructing a service to Christian women who are victims of domestic violence.

Thank you for your participation and for not discussing the contents of the research with other participants. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact **DR. TERESA MORRIS** or **DR. TOM DAVIS** at **(909) 537-3839** or **(909) 537-5561**. If you would like to obtain a copy of the results of this study, they will be available in the library at California State University, San Bernardino.

After you have participated in this study and you feel a need for counseling, the researcher will provide you with a counseling referral through the Women’s Ministry, Calvary Chapel in Upland, CA. (909) 931-3286. The researcher does not anticipate any risks or discomforts to the participants.

APPENDIX F  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCES

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCES

National Domestic Violence P.O. Box 161810 Austin, TX. 78716-3074	-	(800) 799-7233	Info & referral made available from a nation wide data base.
Domestic Violence Help-line	-	(800) 978-3600 (888) 944-7575	Serves anyone nation wide. Provide local referrals.
The Sheepfold P.O. Box 4487 Orange, CA., 92863	-	(877) 743-3736 (714) 237-1444	Christian, requires church attendance, Serves O.C & Riverside County.
The House of Ruth P.O. Box 459 Claremont, CA. 91711	-	(909) 623- 4364 (909) 988-5559	Serves L.A, S.B. Riv. Counties., serves battered women and children.
Domestic Violence Hot-line	-	(909) 381-3471	Serves women and children.
<b>Option House</b> P.O. Box 970 San Bernardino, CA. 92401		(909) 383-1602	San Bernardino & nearby locations.
Shelter From the Storm P.O. Box 12395 EastPalm Desert, CA. 922555	-	(760) 328-7233 (800) 775-6055	Serves women and children in Riverside County
Free Spirit Shelter P.O. Box 23309 Los Angeles, CA. 90023	-	(323) 937-1312	For women and children. No teenage boys accepted. Spanish spoken, serves so-Cal.

APPENDIX G  
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND TIPS

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND TIPS**

The following are some tips made available according to Roberts & Roberts (2000) for those interested in learning how to respond to women in domestic violence situations.

- Women usually call late in the evening or on weekends, holidays.
- Do not put the woman on HOLD.
- Distinguish between a “crisis call” (a call in which the woman is in imminent danger or has just been physically beaten) and other types of calls in which the woman is not in imminent danger but is anxious or “distressed” and is seeking counsel.
- Do not attempt to go to the women without first contacting local officials (police, pastor)

To determine whether the call is a crisis call or a distress call you may ask such questions as:

Are you or your children in danger now?

Is your (husband, partner, boyfriend, abuser)  
there now?

Do you want me to call the police?

Do you want to leave, and can you leave safely?

Do you or your children need medical attention?

(p. 192-199).

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