
Retrospective Theses and Dissertations

1986

Battered Women: An Analysis of the Services Offered at Abuse Shelters

Deborah McMillon
University of Central Florida

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/rtd>
University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Masters Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Retrospective Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

STARS Citation

McMillon, Deborah, "Battered Women: An Analysis of the Services Offered at Abuse Shelters" (1986). *Retrospective Theses and Dissertations*. 4882.
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/rtd/4882>

BATTERED WOMEN: AN ANALYSIS OF THE
SERVICES OFFERED AT ABUSE SHELTERS

BY

DEBORAH MCMILLON
B.S., Bethane Cookman College, 1981

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Science degree in Clinical Psychology
in the Graduate Studies Program
of the College of Arts and Sciences
University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
1986

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is dedicated to my former Psychology Instructors, Dr. Weisman, Dr. Sylvester, Dr. Lofaro, and Dr. Caskey at Bethune Cookman College, who so greatly encouraged me to strive for academic excellence.

A very special thanks to Dr. William Wooten for providng those much needed inspirational shoves in my hours of procrastination.

A special thanks also to my committee members Dr. Rebecca Deal and Dr. Jack McGuire, and my friend Ms. Linday Dyson for licking stamps and pecking out address labels.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1
 Related Literature and Theoretical Orientation 1
BACKGROUND AND RELATED RESEARCH 3
 The Battered Woman Syndrome: History 3
 Early Research 4
 Definitions 5
 Statistics 6
 Etiology 8
 Intervention and Treatment 10
PROBLEM STATEMENT 16
METHODOLOGY 17
 Subjects 17
 Instrument 17
 Procedure 18
RESULTS 20
 Summary 20
 Section A: Demographics 20
 Data Analysis 21
DISCUSSION 26
 Summary and Recommendations 31
APPENDIX A 34
REFERENCES 41

INTRODUCTION

Related Literature and Theoretical Orientation

In the United States today, there exists at least 300 shelters for women who have been abused by their mates (Fleming, 1979). Shelters are havens where battered women can find solace and support. The shelter offers a battered woman the opportunity to recuperate from her wounds, recover her sense of self, and re-evaluate her situation (Martin, 1981). Del Martin (1981) states the following: "After having reviewed all of the supposed options open to a battered woman, I have reached the conclusion that the creation of shelters designed specifically for battered women is the only direct, immediate solution to the problem of wife-abuse. Victims and their children need refuge from further abuse."

Shelters offer a variety of services to the battered woman. Primarily, most shelters provide an immediate refuge from the abuser, give support and comfort, and furnish bed and board. Beyond this, other services offered to residents vary from shelter to shelter. Services commonly offered include the following: counseling, crisis intervention, medical care, transportation, food and clothing, child care, legal aid, income assistance, educational and vocational guidance, assistance in utilizing community services,

referrals to existing agencies, long term housing, survival skills development, and support groups (Fleming, 1979).

Shelters afford battered women the opportunity to consider their options, make decisions, and reassess without personal pressures and physical fears.

BACKGROUND AND RELATED RESEARCH

The Battered Woman Syndrome: History

Violence has become widespread in American society. Violent solutions to social problems have been incorporated into the mainstream culture of the United States (Hirsh, 1981).

The expectation and incidence of violent behavior in America increases every year (Hirsh, 1981).

It has become increasingly apparent that the family, especially the nuclear family, which is supposed to be a placid tranquil refuge, is a fertile ground on which violence can and does occur. One such form of family violence that has recently become a big social issue is wife abuse (Walker, 1977; Hirsh, 1981).

In America, early settlers held European attitudes toward women. English common law, upon which most of America's laws are patterned, gave husbands the right to chastise their wives (Hirsh, 1981). The common law doctrine, nicknamed the "rule of thumb," allowed the husband the right to whip his wife provided he use a switch no bigger than his thumb (Moore, 1979). In 1824, the Supreme Court of Mississippi acknowledged the husband's right to beat his wife. Similar decisions were rendered in both Maryland and Massachusetts (Martin, 1979). A lower court in

North Carolina declared that criminal indictment could not be brought against a batterer unless the battery was so great as to result in permanent injury, endanger life and limb, or be malicious beyond all reasonable bounds (Fields, 1977). Unless taken to these extremes, the courts would not interfere. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, courts began changing their decisions and no longer supported the husband's right to chastise his wife (Moore, 1979). These early laws serve to show us that violence against women, particularly husbands against wives, is not a new problem. It is assumed to have begun with the first monogamous pairing. What is new is public admission to the problem, and insistence that such violence is no longer acceptable.

Early Research

The issue of family violence, especially forms of violence other than child abuse, suffered from "selective inattention" (Dexter, 1958) prior to 1970 (Gelles, 1980). The decade of the seventies witnessed a large increase in attention to and published reports on violence in the home. Research in the sixties tended to view family violence as rare and confined to poor and/or mentally disturbed persons (Snell, 1964, Schultz, 1980, cited in Gelles, 1980). The majority of research on family violence in the sixties was dedicated to child abuse and written by and for medical and mental health professionals. Scholarly and even popular

literature on the subject of wife abuse was virtually nonexistent prior to the seventies (Gelles, 1980).

Straus (1974) explains the shift from "selective inattention" to the emergence of family violence as a high priority social issue. He attributes it to three cultural and social issues. First, there was an increased sensitivity to violence because of war in Southeast Asia, assassinations, increasing homicide rates, and civil rights movements in the sixties. Secondly, the women's movement played a large part in highlighting the problems of battered women. The third factor proposed by Straus was that the consensus model of society employed by social scientists was challenged, and the conflict or social action model was advanced and supported.

In 1974, Erin Pizzey published the first book on the subject of battered wives, Scream Silently or the Neighbors Will Hear. Pizzey can be credited in large part for arousing international interest in wife battering.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, a battered woman will be defined as a female who reports being beaten, physically abused, by an intimate male partner. The term "battered wife" may appear in this study. It is used interchangeably with the term "battered woman" and applies equally to unmarried women who live with violent men. "Batterer" and

"abuser" refer to the male partner in the relationship, whether legally married or not.

Statistics

Accurately determining the incidence of wife battering is impossible. It is assumed by some to be the most under-reported crime in America (Martin, 1976). Battering occurs almost exclusively within the privacy of the home, where there are often no witnesses. When there are witnesses, those who observe it prefer not to become involved, so data are not reliable (Moore, 1979).

Statistics on the occurrence of wife battering are often taken from police records, court records, social service agencies, and emergency rooms (Moore, 1979). These sources are quite unreliable. Police may not always file a report, or it may be reported as simply a domestic disturbance call. If serious injury has been sustained the incident is reported as assault and/or battery, or homicide (Martin, 1976). Women who are treated at hospital emergency rooms are often reluctant to admit the sources of their injuries. Official police and hospital records also appear to be biased in that they show a higher rate of assault among the poor. Unofficial records of private physicians, shelters, hot lines, attorneys, etc., show no such differences (Gelles, 1974, Kirchner, 1977). The differences in public records can be attributed greatly to the fact that

wealthy women who are battered can go to their private physician, counselor, or attorney. They are able to leave their home on their own resources, whereas the poorer woman must rely on public agencies, and thus end up as part of the statistics (Moore, 1979). Despite the limitation of the aforementioned sources, they can serve as general indicators of the extent of wife battering.

In a study of the general population, Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) found that marital violence occurred for 16% of the couples interviewed. It had occurred in the past for 23%. Parker and Schamucher (1977), found that 42% of 50 consecutive females seeking help from the Domestic Relations Division of the Baltimore Legal Aid Bureau were found to have been victims of wife beating. Bowker (1983) reports that the 600 female clients were seen by the Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation, of which 60% admitted being beaten during their marriage. He also cites the following statistics: "Thirty-two percent of all aggravated assaults identified in a search of Kansas City police files were domestic. Data from a sample of police chiefs in Wisconsin were used to estimate an average of fifty-four (54) cases of domestic violence per ten thousand (10,000) citizens."

Straus (1978), in a nationwide study of over 2,000 couples representative of all American couples, suggests that the true incidence of wife beating is close to 50 to

60% of all couples who were willing to describe violent acts in a mass interview survey. Even with the limitations of the above studies in mind, there is sufficient evidence to support the premise that wife abuse is a common occurrence in the United States.

Etiology

The literature is replete with studies that attempt to isolate the causes of abusive behaviors within a particular model. The following is a brief review of these major theoretical viewpoints.

The psychodynamic explanation is that unresolved conflicts from childhood result in later frustration, which in turn leads to violent aggression. Its supporters suggest that early childhood intrapsychic experiences come to surface in later life and creates the individual's potential to abuse (Kempe, 1971).

The social-learning model proposes that failure to learn appropriate relationship skills and the lack of adequate reinforcement results in abusive behaviors (Okum and Rappaport, 1981). One of the consistent conclusions of domestic violence research is that "violence begets violence." Those who experience violence and abuse as children are more likely to grow up to be abusers than those who did not experience violent and abusive childhoods

(Straus, Gelles, Steinmetz, 1980; Gayford, 1975; Levine, 1975).

The environmental stress theory focuses on social forces and stresses as causing marital violence. The stressors include unemployment, low education, major illness, financial difficulties, and the daily uncertainties and situational stresses that accompany them. Another consistent finding of domestic violence is that violence rates are directly related to social stresses experienced by families (Fleming, 1979; Carlson, 1977).

The mental illness model describes the abuser and the abusee as psychotic, neurotic, or mentally ill (Dewsbury, 1975; Gayford, 1975; Schultz, 1960). Much of the research on family violence opposes this theory. Rousanville (1977) found that even in a study of self-selected psychiatric patients, a substantial number of women and their partners had no significant psychiatric symptoms or history. He concluded that intra-family violence is not necessarily indicative of psychiatric disturbance.

Another theoretical view is the personality trait perspective. It attempts to define the abusive problem in terms of labels that imply states of behavior. Hilberman (1977), Star (1978), and Walker (1979) suggest that victims of abuse have similar "psychological profiles." They conclude that results of their case study data indicate that

victims typically have low self-esteem, "learned Helplessness," chronic anxiety, shame, guilt, and are withdrawn, vulnerable, and dependent. Men who batter have been described as being domineering, jealous, having low self-esteem, being emotionally dependent, and inexpressive (Wetzel and Ross, 1983; Ponzetti, Cate, and Kovs', 1982).

Intervention and Treatment

Battered women who have reached the end of their endurance eventually reach out of their homes for assistance. Bowker (1983) distinguished informal help sources and formal help sources. Informal help sources include family members, neighbors, and friends. Formal help sources utilized by battered women are police, social service agencies, lawyers and district attorneys, clergy, and shelters.

At the time of the first battering, victims most commonly turn to members of their own family (Bowker, 1983). Friends were the second most common informal help source. Battered women reported that friends enabled them to strengthen their self-confidence (Bowker, 1983). Neighbors were the least commonly used informal source for help (Bowker, 1983).

The police department is frequently the only public agency available on a 24-hour basis in time of crisis. Although battered women who call police expect an immediate response, many police departments give domestic disturbance

calls low priority (Martin, 1981). Police do not like to respond to domestic violence calls because:

1. Batterers are most often not charged, so they feel they are wasting time making an arrest.
2. They have not been trained to respond appropriately to the emotions displayed by battered women.
3. Domestic calls are the single most risky calls for police officers. (Moore, 1979)

Moore (pg. 92) suggests that police officers need to be trained in the philosophy and psychology behind battering, so that they can be supportive and provide the assistance women need and are entitled to.

Gelles (1979) found that most social agencies are quite unprepared and unable to provide meaningful assistance to battered women. Gelles (p. 107) further states that "although social work agencies are not as indifferent about marital violence as the courts and police are, they are often unable to provide realistic answers for victims of violence due to the rather limited amount of knowledge in this area. The data on marital violence are so scanty that few policy or intervention strategies have been worked out for the use of social workers. Without a good knowledge of the causes and patterns of marital violence, many social workers have had to rely on stop-gap measures which never address the real problems."

Lawyers and district attorneys often give the same excuses for non-action that police give:

1. Domestic violence is a personal matter, not a crime.
2. District attorneys have often been involved in cases where the woman refused to follow through.
3. They feel they will not get a conviction from the judge. (Moore, 1979)

The clergy were also unable to provide meaningful assistance to battered women. The clergy were the least consulted formal help source in the worse incidents of battering (Bowker, 1983). Clergymen often do their best to keep the couple together and preserve the marriage, regardless of the consequences to the wife's welfare.

Refuges were also classified as a formal help source. Women's Advocates, one of the first refuges in the United States, feels that "refuges are the vitally necessary first step in the elimination of domestic violence and oppression, because they serve to make the problem visible and meet the immediate need for protection" (Fleming, 1979).

In 1971, Erin Pizzey pioneered the establishment of a center in London where women and their children could come together and meet their peers, escape loneliness, and discuss mutual concerns (Pizzey, 1979). Pizzey hoped that the center would be a base for political action, but an overwhelming majority of the women who showed up at the

center were victims of abuse who previously had no place to go. The center developed into the Chiswick Women's Aid, more popularly known as the Battered Wives Center. Within a few years the work of Erin Pizzey led to a network of refuges throughout the entire United Kingdom and to a parliamentary investigation of marital violence among all classes (Martin, 1978; Pizzey, 1979).

In 1971 in the state of Minnesota, Women's Advocates, Inc. began a telephone referral source for women (Davidson, 1978). In 1974 they began operating the first refuge in America for battered wives and their children (Martin, 1976). Since the early 70's, many refuges have been established throughout the country.

Snyder and Scheer (1980) note that despite growing interest in and awareness of wife abuse as a serious problem and the development of residential shelters, there have been few studies investigating women's use of these shelters and their subsequent adjustment. They further note that "from the standpoint of prevention, such information is of vital importance in determining abused women's potential response to services developed for their needs and in evaluating the outcome of such intervention. In particular, whether or not a woman returns to live with her assailant has far-reaching implications for the type of services she requires as a shelter resident.

Snyder and Scheer (1980) did a follow-up on a group of 74 women who sought residence at a shelter. Nearly two months post discharge, 55% were living with their assailants. Gale Carsena (1979) found that Interval House for community and social services served a total of 110 women during the year, and interviewed another 69 who were not admitted. Of the 110 residents, 37 returned to their mates. Chiswick Center reports that roughly 60% of the women who have left their husband for the first time return to the home, but two-thirds of those return to Chiswick within a short time. Other studies show that at least one-third to one-half of all women return to the abusive environment upon discharge from a shelter.

Basically, the options open to battered women are:

1. Return to the abusive relationship and endure their fate.
2. Try to change the relationship and salvage the marriage.
3. Get a divorce or separation.

The decision she comes to while a resident of a refuge will determine where she goes upon discharge. When a woman leaves a center she will usually go one of three places:

1. Return to the abusive home.
2. Move in with relatives or friends.
3. Seek independent living arrangements.

This study is based upon the premise that women in shelters would best be served if the services were provided on the basis of their future plans upon discharge. Women returning to their assailants have needs that are different from those who will seek independent living arrangements. For those returning to the assailant, there is a need for intervention aimed at minimizing the potential for further abuse.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The orientation of shelters leans strongly toward fostering independent living situations, providing long range legal, and financial and educational/vocational counseling. Lenore Walker (1979) writes that "small houses, refuges, and shelters, have become the cornerstone of treatment for battered women who do not wish to return to the home." But, according to recent studies, one- to two-thirds of the women served by shelters do return home. This study will try to determine whether or not these women's needs are really being met by shelters. Based upon the above discussion, the following hypotheses have been generated:

- H₁ The majority of the services offered by abuse shelters support a decision to leave the abusive relationship.
- H₂ During intake, abuse shelters encourage women to leave the abusive relationship permanently.
- H₃ Knowledge of statistics (that 30-60% of the residents will return to the abusive home) is not related to the types of services offered by the shelters.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Shelters for this study were chosen from The Battered Women's Directory, compiled by Betsy Warrior. The Directory includes a listing of organizations and individuals in each state that are interested in helping battered women. The Directory is considered to be one of the most complete listing of services available to battered women in the United States.

All shelters that provided residential accommodations of at least five days were included in the study. Shelters that provided for less than a five day stay were not included because they were usually classified as an emergency shelter where women resided only until they could be referred elsewhere. The services offered at emergency shelters usually consisted of crisis intervention strategies.

On the basis of the above criteria, 312 shelters were chosen to participate in the study.

Instrument

A three-page questionnaire was developed, with items typeset and printed on the front and the back. The first page was an introductory letter that included instructions for completing and returning the questionnaire.

The questionnaires contained five sections.

Section A covered demographics: Location, how long the shelter had been in operation, maximum capacity, etc. These items were fill-in-the-blank.

Section B contained questions on admittance requirements, readmissions, policy regarding children, and length of stay. These items were yes/no response and fill-in-the-blank.

Section C contained questions regarding intake procedures and the basis for services offered. Respondents were given a choice of 5 responses, numbered 1 to 5. The scale was as follows: 1-Always, 2-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 4-Frequently, 5-Never.

Section D included a list of services that were to be checked () if offered by the shelter. It also included fill-in-the-blank items concerning services offered.

Section E covered discharge and follow-up data, as well as the purpose of the shelter. These items were fill-in-the-blank and yes/no response. This section also included space for additional comments.

Procedure

Questionnaire were mailed out to the 312 shelters chosen from the listing. Self-addressed, stamped envelopes were included. Respondents were given a deadline of one week in which to respond. Forty-one questionnaires were

received by the deadline. This resulted in a return rate of 13%. Questionnaires were returned from 25 states throughout the United States.

RESULTS

Summary

The majority of the services offered by shelters that responded did support a decision to leave the abusive relationship and seek independent living arrangements. This confirmed the primary hypothesis of this study.

Women were not encouraged to leave the relationship permanently during the intake process, thus the second hypothesis was rejected.

The extent to which shelters were aware of statistics (that at least 30% and up to 60% of the women do indeed return to the home) had no relationship to the types of services offered. Even those aware that up to 60% of their residents returned to the home still offered a majority of services that supported a decision to leave.

Section A: Demographics

Of the 41 shelters that responded, 30 had come into operation since 1977. The oldest one opened in 1925. One opened in 1964, and the remainder opened after 1970.

Maximum capacity varied from 6 to 120, with a mean maximum capacity of 24. Out of 40 shelters, 21 charged at a daily rate ranging from \$1 to 5.20. Nineteen were free of charge. Four reported a sliding scale. Of those that

charged, most reported that a woman's inability to pay does not prevent her from being admitted if she is in need.

All of the shelters allowed children, with only one reporting a limit of three children per resident. Boys over the age of 12 or 13 were not allowed in five of the shelters. Shelters charged a reduced rate for children.

Of 41 shelters, eight had no limits on the length of time a resident is allowed to stay. Thirty-three reported limits on the maximum length of stay ranging from 2 weeks to 12 weeks. The mean maximum length of stay was six weeks. The average length of time a resident actually stayed was 16 days. Twenty-five shelters did not limit the number of times a woman may return. Six had a limit of three returns, two shelters allowed two returns, and two did not allow returns. Three reported that it depended on the individual situation.

Data Analysis

H₁ The majority of services offered by abuse shelters support a decision to leave the abusive relationship.

In order to analyze the data for the first hypothesis, items in Section D of the questionnaire were assigned a label of L or S. Items labeled L were determined to be services that supported a decision to leave the abusive relationship. Items labeled S were determined to be

services that supported a decision to salvage/change the relationship. L and S scores were computed for each shelter, determined by the number of services offered under each scale. The means and standard deviations were determined for each scale. The data was further analyzed by determining the Z value for a normal distribution. If H_1 is supported, the mean L-score will be significantly higher than the mean S-score.

The data revealed that the mean L-score was 3.4 (SD 1.11), the mean S-score 2.07 (SD 1.11), with a Z-score of 4.16 $p < .05$. Based upon these results, H_1 is supported, as there is a less than 1% chance of having obtained a mean difference of 1.33 by sampling error. The data supported the hypothesis that the number of services offered that supported a decision to leave the abusive relationship is significantly higher than the number of services offered that supported a decision to stay.

H_2 During the intake process, abuse shelters encourage women to leave the abusive relationship permanently.

For H_2 , items in Section C of the questionnaire were labeled L or NL. Those items labeled L were determined to be in encouragement of a decision to leave the abusive relationship. Those items labeled NL were determined not to be in encouragement of a decision to leave. Respondents were to circle one number, ranging from 1 to 5, for each

item, with 1 expressing an affirmative response and 5 expressing a negative response. As the items were determined to be inversely related, each item was assigned a score on both the L and the NL scale (e.g., a response of 5 on an item labeled L resulted in a score of 1 on the NL scale. A response of 2 on the L scale resulted in a score of 4 on the NL scale, and a 3 on either scale resulted in a 3 on the other).

For example, Item 12 - Section C reads, "Are women encouraged to seek divorce/separation. Item 12 is labeled L, determined to be in encouragement of a decision to leave the abusive relationship. If the respondent circles 1 for always, they would receive a 1 on the L scale. Inversely, they would also receive a 5 on the NL scale. It stands to reason that if the women are always encouraged to seek divorce/separation (1-always), then they are never encouraged not to leave (5-never). Low scores on the L-scale are in support of a decision to leave. If H_2 was supported, the mean L score should be significantly lower than the mean NL score.

The data was analyzed by using a t-test for dependent samples. Based upon the findings, the difference between the mean scores of the L scale ($\underline{LM} = 19.83$) and the NL scale ($\underline{NLM} = 18.49$) was not significant. As the obtained t-score ($\underline{t}(40) = 1.50$, $\underline{p} < 1.05$, $\underline{SD} = 5.65$) was less than the table

t-score, the obtained difference was determined to be the result of sampling error. Therefore, H_2 was not supported.

H_3 Knowledge of their own return rate (>30% versus <30%) statistics has no influence on the types of services offered at shelters.

For H_3 , the Chi square test for significance was utilized to determine the degree of relationship between knowledge of the rate of return to the abusive relationship (>30% versus <30%) and the type of services offered (i.e., services supporting a decision to leave versus services supporting a decision to stay. Shelters were categorized in one of three groups based upon their response to Item 3.A. Section E. (Group 1: Those who reported return rates <30%; Group 2: Those who reported return rates of >30%; Group 3: Those who did not know/report return rates.)

H_3 actually states the null hypothesis. The research hypothesis is that those shelters that report at least 30% of their clients returning to the abusive relationship should provide more services in support of that decision (resulting in a higher S-score) than those shelters that report less than 30% of their clients returning.

H_3 was supported. The difference between the expected and obtained frequencies was not large enough to reject the null hypothesis and decide that a true population difference exists. Those who reported a return test of 30% or more

offered virtually the same types of services as those that did not have knowledge.

TABLE I

Correlation Between Knowledge of Statistics
and Services Offered

| Reported Return Rates | Obtained Versus Expected Frequencies Number of Services Offered | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---------|--------|--------|
| | | L>S | L<S | L=S |
| <30% | (o) | 10 | 3 | 1 |
| | (e) | (10.24) | (2.4) | (1.37) |
| <u>></u> 30% | (o) | 14 | 3 | 2 |
| | (e) | (13.9) | (3.24) | (1.85) |
| No Response | (o) | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| | (e) | (5.85) | (1.37) | (.78) |

Note. χ^2 (4, N = 41) = .466, p < .05

Note. o = obtained frequencies

e = expected frequencies

DISCUSSION

The implication of this study is that women who seek refuge in spouse abuse shelters are best served if they are provided services that are in support of their own decision about the relationship, whether it is to return to it or end it. If shelters are interested in primarily helping the women who plan to become independent, they are possibly providing appropriate services to only one third of the women who seek help. Even women who seek independent living arrangements most often have a history of having repeatedly left and returned to the abusive mate. Until a woman can make the decision to leave permanently, she is in need of just as much support and encouragement as those who have already made the decision. Many women wish not to leave the relationship, but to change it. These women are in need of services that support this decision. Again, as Synder and Scheer (1980) note, "Whether or not a woman returns to live with her assailant has far reaching implications for the type of services she requires as a shelter resident."

In this study, data was collected from 41 shelters within 25 states. The results are based upon their response to a three-page questionnaire regarding services offered at their shelter.

Briefly, the findings of this study demonstrated that the services offered by abuse shelters are most often in support of a decision to leave the relationship. As previously cited, studies show that from 30% to 60% of all women return to the abusive home upon discharge from a shelter. Shelters that responded to the questionnaire reported similar findings. If up to 60% of the residents return to their abusive mates, does this imply that shelters are failing to serve their purpose? The answer to that question would depend on what the shelter's purpose really is. Fifty-four percent of the respondents in this study checked an item that stated that the services offered by their shelter best serve the women who plan to permanently leave the abusive relationship and become independent. Yet, many of these same respondents wrote in comments stating that the purpose of their shelter was to support women in making their own decision, which they did not influence.

While shelters may not overtly attempt to influence a woman's decision, the decisions are implicitly influenced through the services offered. The underlying goal appears to be one of assisting the woman in leaving the abuser. Success seems to be measured by the number of women who are able to break away from an abusive mate. Since this is not the goal of all women, this is an inaccurate measure. Shelters appear to assume that if a woman leaves an abusive mate and seeks refuge in a shelter, she has made the

decision to leave the mate and become independent. The women who return to the abusive mate are considered too weak to stick to their decision to leave. Betsy Warrior (1982), who has done a great deal of work in the area of wife abuse, explicitly states what is often implied by others. She writes: "If a shelter, under the pretense of being neutral, offers battered women the "option" of patching up their marriages through marriage counseling, mediation, etc., they are undermining her decision, her confidence in it, and her confidence to make and carry through decisions." She further states that if many women leave a shelter to return to the abusive mate, it is a sure sign that the shelter has failed them in some way. Warrior believes that a woman coming to a shelter has already actually made the decision to leave her husband, and the shelter's job is to support her decision and fortify her resolve in carrying it through.

Warrior's assumption that a woman who seeks a shelter has already made the decision to leave the relationship permanently may not always be true. Many women leave because the violence has escalated to the point that they fear for their lives. For these women, the shelter may serve as a place that allows them to temporarily remove themselves from immediate danger. These women do not want to remain in an abusive relationship. That does not mean that they want to permanently leave the mate. What they often wish to end is the violence, not the marriage.

The results of this study indicate that shelters, as they exist today, are not providing adequate support for the woman who decides to try to salvage/change an abusive relationship. At first glance, this author assumed that the reason for this was that shelters did not believe such relationships could be salvaged/changed. A look at the research, however, shows that 66% reported that they believed abusive relationships could be salvaged/changed. Thirty-seven percent reported that the main purpose of their shelter was to assist women in changing the abusive relationship, whereas 25% reported that the main purpose was to assist women in leaving the abusive relationship. One would expect that those shelters that were included in the 37% would offer more services that encouraged salvaging/changing the relationship. Such was not the case. Even though the main purposes of the groups were different, there were virtually no differences between the types of services offered. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents believed that batterers could become nonbatters, yet they encouraged a decision to leave the relationship.

A closer look at the responses and at the literature may explain why shelters support ending a relationship even though they believe it can be salvaged/changed. While they believe that batterers can become nonbatterers, many respondents also believe that most batterers will not become

nonbatterers. This is because of the lack of effective treatment for batterers.

In the wake of the creation of services for abused women, a need to address the abuser was recognized. The absence of a wife does not stop a batterer from physically abusing. Batterers whose wives had already left them often continued their violence against women in new relationships. This presents us with an endless procession of victims, as well as the continued harassment of the former victim. The numerous programs that currently exist are based on a variety of analyses of what the problem is and what the solution should be. Some choose to see the batterer in a social vacuum by viewing wife beating as a personality quirk or merely a response to stress (Warrior, 1982). Lois Hake (1977) writes that battering is a learned, conditioned, programmed personality trait afflicting many men. She believes that the violent man is not a sick person who can be helped by counseling, but a boy grown to manhood and believing that it is not only his right, but his duty to intimidate women and keep them in their place. Other programs assess how values and beliefs are created to rationalize the use of power, affecting individual, social, and historical interactions (Warrior, 1982). As previously stated, for the most part, there is no effective treatment for the batterer. Therefore, shelters are reluctant to support a woman's decision to return to the abusive home.

Realistically, chances are that the violence will continue without effective treatment. We must not, however, overlook the fact that some violent relationships change, and the woman who decides to try to salvage/change the abusive relationship is in need of lots of support and services. Linda La Belle (1979) writes that even though one may be tempted to withdraw support from the woman who repeatedly returns to her mate, it is important to continue to reach out instead of falling into the trap of further victimizing her. Shelters need not compound her feelings of low esteem by viewing her as a failure.

Summary and Recommendations

In analyzing the data, it becomes apparent that contradictions existed between shelters' stated purposes and their actual practices. Shelters maintain that their main purpose is to provide safety, and that women make their own decision about the relationship. Results, however, reveal that they are aware that services offered most often support a decision to leave the relationship. Even though they believe that relationships can be salvaged/changed, they offer few services to the woman who chooses this option. Shelters should attempt to meet the needs of the women seeking services there on the basis of their, the women's, perception of their needs. Success should be measured by the number of women leaving the shelter feeling that their needs were met.

There are about 300 shelters operating across the country, but there is little uniformity among them. Philosophies and theoretical orientations differ; what one considers a success may be considered a failure by another.

It is recommended that each shelter clearly define its own philosophies and purposes. Programs and services offered should reflect these goals. It is evident that most shelters lack a system of routine program evaluation. Programs need to be evaluated to determine actual effectiveness. Longitudinal studies of former residents are needed to obtain feedback on their perceptions of the services offered and strengths and weaknesses. One of the best ways to evaluate a program is to question those who are served by it. Many shelters, when reporting statistics in Section E, commented that they did not keep follow-up records or did not have time for record keeping. Without records, it is impossible to evaluate programs. Ongoing evaluation efforts are necessary to ensure that programs develop effectively.

Finally, there is also a need for further research aimed at successful treatment of the batterer. As there is no individual cause of wife abuse, preventative measures cannot be offered. The change in public attitude toward battered women has been a positive accomplishment, but it is just one small step. Until society totally rejects its tolerance and acceptance of violence for resolving conflict

and expressing anger, meaningful changes in family relationships will not occur.

APPENDIX A

Dear Friends,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Deborah McMillon, and I am a graduate student at the University of Central Florida, Orlando. I am pursuing a Master of Science degree in Clinical Psychology.

As partial requirement for the degree, I am conducting scientific research on the topic of wife battering and the recent development of shelters/refuges. In being one of the facilities that offer services to women in need of shelter from an abusive environment, you have been chosen to participate in this study. I am sure that you are well aware of the need for pertinent scientific research in this area. I will be investigating and analyzing the services offered at various shelters/refuges in the United States.

Please fill out the enclosed questionnaire immediately and return in the enclosed envelope. For standardization purposes, I must request that the director or a similar person in charge of the shelter operations complete the questionnaire. To be included in the study, the completed questionnaire must be returned by _____. Your participation and cooperation is greatly appreciated. Results of the study will be forwarded to you upon request.

Thank you in advance.

Deborah McMillon

_____ Yes, I would like a copy of the results.

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A

Name of Shelter: _____

Address: _____

Director: _____

Name and title of Respondent if not Director:
_____What is the population of the city where you are located?
_____How many residents did you serve in 1983? _____, in
1982? _____

When did you open? _____

What is your maximum capacity? _____

SECTION BIs there a financial requirement or limit? circle one
yes no

If yes, what is it? _____

Must women be without money to enter? yes no

How much is a woman required to pay? _____ per _____ none

Are children allowed? yes no

How many children are allowed? _____ no limit

or _____ per resident

What is the maximum length of stay? _____

How many times is a woman allowed to return? _____

SECTION D (continued)

Please check () services which are offered by your shelter

- _____ Group Counseling
- _____ Self-Defense Training
- _____ Assertiveness Training
- _____ Vocational Counseling
- _____ Marriage Counseling
- _____ Referral to Legal Aid
- _____ Referral to Welfare Agencies
- _____ Long term or second stage housing
- _____ Group counseling specifically for women who plan to return to abusive mates
- _____ Same group counseling for all, regardless of plans for after discharge
- _____ Group counseling specifically for women who do not plan to return to the abusive mate
- _____ Follow-up counseling for former residents
- _____ Follow-up counseling specifically for women who returned to abusive mate
- _____ Follow-up counseling specifically for those who are seeking to end the abusive relationship
- _____ Follow-up counseling specifically for those who are seeking to salvage the relationship
- _____ Same group or follow-up counseling for all women, regardless of placement after discharge
- _____ Child care
- _____ Medical care
- _____ Survival skills development
- _____ Counseling for children

SECTION D (continued)

_____ Counseling for batterers: individual

_____ Counseling for batterers: group

Please list services specifically for women who do not plan to return to abusive mates:

Please list services offered or referrals made for couples who want to salvage the relationship:

Please list any services available to the batterer:

Is the batterer allowed to visit? _____, call? _____

SECTION E

Are women asked plans at discharge? circle one
yes no

Is there formal/informal follow-up to determine if plans were actually followed through with? yes no

If so, is follow up at: _____ 2 weeks, _____ 1 month,
_____ 3 to 4 months, _____ 6 months or _____ 1 year.

What percentage of women plan to:

- A. Return to the abusive mate _____ %
- B. Move in with relatives or friends _____ %
- C. Seek independent living arrangements _____ %
- D. Other _____ %

SECTION E (continued)

What percentage of women actually return to the abusive mate within:

___ % 1 month, ___ % 3 months, ___ % 6 months, ___ % 1 year.

Of those that return to the abusive mate, what percentage of the women return to the shelter within:

___ % 1 month, ___ % 3 months, ___ % 6 months, ___ % 1 year.

The source of the above information is:

___ follow up records, ___ estimations, ___ other

(if other please explain: _____)

The service offered by your shelter: (pick only one)

___ Best serves the woman who plans to permanently leave the abusive relationship and become independent.

___ Best serves the woman who plans to return to the relationship

The main purpose of this shelter is to: (pick only one)

___ Assist women in leaving an abusive mate.

___ Assist women in changing an abusive relationship.

Do you believe that an abusive relationship can be changed/salvaged? _____ yes _____ no

Do you believe that batterers can become non-batters? _____ yes _____ no

COMMENTS:

REFERENCES

- Bowker, L. H. (1983). Beating Wife Beating. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company.
- Carlson, B. (1977). Battered women and their assailants. Social Work, 22, 455-460.
- Carsenat, G. (1975). Project interval house research submission #1. Unpublished manuscript.
- Davidson, T. (1978). Conjugal Crime. New York: Hawthorne Books.
- Dewsbury, A. R. (1975). Battered wives: Family violence seen in general practice. Royal Society of Health Journal, 95, 290-294.
- Fields, M. D. (1977). Representing battered wives; or what to do until the police arrive. Family Law Reporter, 3 (Monograph #25).
- Fleming, J. B. (1979). Stopping Wife Abuse. New York: Anchor Press.
- Gayford, J. J. (1975). Wife beating: A preliminary survey of 100 cases. British Medical Journal, 197-198.
- Gelles, R. J. (1974). The Violent Home. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Gelles, R. J. (1976). Abused wives: Why to they stay? Journal of Marriage and Family, 38, 659-668.
- Gelles, R. J. (1980). Wife abuse: A review of research in the seventies. Journal of Marriage and Family, 42, 873-883.
- Hilberman, E. (1977). Sixty battered women: A preliminary survey. Victimology: An International Journal, 2, 460-470.
- Hirsh, M. (1981). Women and Violence. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.
- Kempe, R. (1971). Child Abuse. London: Fontana Open Books.

- LaBelle, L. S. (1979). A sociological study of battered women and their mates. Victimology, 4, 258-267.
- Martin, D. (1976). Battered Wives. San Francisco: Glide.
- Moore, D. M. (1979). Battered Women. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Okum, M. & Rapapport, L. (1970). Working with families in crisis: Exploration in preventative intervention. Social Work, 3, 48-56.
- Parker, B. & Schumacher, D. (1977). The battered wife syndrome and violence in the nuclear family of origin: A controlled pilot study. American Journal of Public Health, 67, 760-761.
- Pizzey, E. (1974). Scream Silently or the Neighbors Will Hear New York: Penquin.
- Ponzetti, J., Cate, R. & Koval, J. (1982). Violence between couples: Profiling the male abuser. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 61, 222-224.
- Rousanville, B. J. (1978). Theories in marital violence: Evidence from a study of battered women. Victimology, 3, 11-31.
- Scheer, N. & Snyder, D. (1981). Predicting disposition following brief residence at a shelter for battered women. Journal of Community Psychology, 9, 559-565.
- Schultz, L. (1960). The wife assaulter. Journal of Social Therapy, 6, 103-112.
- Snell, J. R. (1964). The wife beater's wife. Archives of General Psychiatry, 2, 107-112.
- Star, B. (1977). Haven House Research Report. Los Angeles: University of Southern California, School of Social Work.
- Straus, M. A. (1977-78). Wife beating: How common and why. Victimology: An International Journal, 2, 443-456.
- Straus, M. A., Gelles, R. & Steinmetz, S. (1980). Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family, New York: Anchor.
- Walker, L. E. (1977-78). Battered women and learned helplessness. Victimology: An International Journal, 2, 525-33.

- Walker, L. E. (1979). The Battered Woman. New York: Harper and Row.
- Warrior, B. (1976). Working on Wife Abuse. Mass: D. C. Heath and Company.
- Wetzell, L., & Ross, M. (1983). Psychological and social ramifications of battering: Observations. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 6, 423-428.