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Breaking The Silence: Understanding Domestic Violence

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BREAKING THE SILENCE:
UNDERSTANDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

BY

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ABSTRACT

Victims of domestic violence are often misunderstood. Perceptions are often shaped by the media and individual beliefs regarding what is considered "normal" in an intimate relationship. In this study, theories and clinical explanations are explored to help understand the complexities involved in domestic violence and its effect on victims.

Domestic violence has been a part of our society for centuries. From the Romans to the Rule of Thumb, violence against women has been incorporated and accepted. This study will provide a brief overview of the history of violence against women to recent laws like the federal Violence Against Women Act to demonstrate how the issue has evolved from accepted practice to illegal behavior.

Statistics clearly demonstrate that domestic violence has not abated, even with laws designed to protect victims. Incidents like Hedda Nussbaum, Tracey Thurman, and the murders at Ft. Bragg corroborate this. A survey included in this study also indicated participants' knowledge of domestic violence, either as a victim or through knowing a victim, further confirming the presence of this problem.

With the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson, domestic violence was once again brought to the forefront with prior incidents of abuse by O.J. Simpson highlighted in the media. But the issue was overshadowed by several factors during the "trial of the century," including the issue of race, a bloody glove that did not fit, and the biases of a Los Angeles police officer.

Domestic violence has, and continues to be, an epidemic.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

What is domestic violence? Is it the picture of a middle-aged woman with a black eye calling in sick again, worried she will get fired? Is it the young mother of five children trapped in a trailer park with her drunken common-law husband yelling insults at her until he finally passes out? Is it the 20-something woman in the emergency room with a broken arm that she claims was caused by running into the door? Or is it the socialite wife often not seen for weeks because, according to her husband, she had another “accident”?

The truth is domestic violence is about all of them. It affects women across all economic and ethnic classes, and from all backgrounds. In fact, “women entering relationships that eventually become abusive do not appear to differ from their non-battered counterparts in terms of demographic variables, histories of childhood abuse, and other psychological attributes.” (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993, p. 89) Domestic violence touches the lives of one in four women in their lifetime.

But there is a stigma attached to victims of domestic violence, and it is not a positive one. Victims are considered weak if they stay in abusive relationships. The consequences of their actions, or more often their lack thereof, are heavily criticized and scrutinized. Why doesn’t she just leave? What kind of person allows herself to be beaten? What did she do to make him so angry? Domestic violence is seen as controllable by the victim. The batterer is not held accountable.
Society has also accepted a certain level of violence in relationships as normal. Television sitcoms make relationship problems comical. How many times did Ralph, with his fist in the air, tell Alice he was going to send her to the moon in the show, *The Honeymooners*? Cartoons like *The Lockhorns* chronicle their dysfunctional marriage every day in the newspapers with their perceived abuses and stereotypes. As a result, the line between love and domestic violence is blurred by the comic relief it can provide.

Additionally, domestic violence is not easily apparent given the intimate nature of the crime. Most incidents occur in the home out of sight. The home is considered to be a safe haven. But there are many other forms of domestic violence. The effect of psychological abuse, for example, is not measurable and, in most cases, not against the law. Domestic violence is incongruent with society’s beliefs about relationships and love, making the thought of abuse somehow less credible. This results in reluctance by society to acknowledge domestic violence as a serious problem.

Most cases of domestic violence only become obvious when it involves physical consequences such as a horrible disfigurement or homicide. The media has played an important role in this function, bringing domestic violence into the homes through cases like the murder of Nicole Brown, the abuse of Hedda Nussbaum, the Fort Bragg murders last year, and the horrific attack of Tracey Thurman. In certain ways, the effect has been positive. Los Angeles county domestic violence shelters experienced an 80 percent increase in calls to their hotlines the week after O.J. Simpson was charged with the murder of Nicole. (Berry, 2000, p. 58)

Yet most cases of domestic violence do not make the news. Only cases involving celebrities, athletes, or the most heinous cases warrant media coverage. Even then, only part of the story is told. Domestic violence is a pain where many victims suffer in silence.
Research Question

Given societal beliefs, what are the true effects of domestic violence on its victims?

This study will attempt to address the side of domestic violence that is not always portrayed in the media, the story that is often missed because domestic violence is not seen as a problem unless the victim is maimed or killed, or if the batterer is a celebrity. It will show the consequences of abuse and the treatment of victims by society, clinical researchers and the legal system.

Subsidiary Questions

In order to better comprehend the topic of domestic violence, this study will also address the following questions:

- What are the psychological effects of domestic violence?
- What theories are available to explain why victims stay in abusive relationships?
- What are the legal recourses for a victim of domestic violence?
- Who are the victims of domestic violence?
- How has the media influenced society’s beliefs about domestic violence?
- How accurate are these beliefs?
Purpose of Study

Domestic violence is subject to interpretation and mostly focuses on the victim rather than the perpetrator. It is a crime that is highly preventable and permeates every sector of society. However, the topic is considered taboo with little reluctance on the part of society to view domestic violence for what it is, and what it is not, except when it makes the news. Even then, not all facts are presented to make a proper assessment.

Domestic violence is not easy to explain with the variables that exist in victims and batterers, their actions, or in the case of the victims, their inaction. What may occur in one relationship may not occur in another. To try to define domestic violence in simple terms would not take into account the diverse situations each abusive relationship represents and how it affects victims.

This study will focus primarily on the research and laws pertaining to domestic violence developed over the past 25 years. During this time period, an incredible amount of clinical research was performed and laws enacted to specifically address the problem of domestic violence. Included will be a history of laws condoning the abuse of women to the evolution of laws to protect them.

Finally, it is the author's hope that by presenting the diverse research available on the topic in this study that a greater understanding of some of the psychological and legal aspects of domestic violence can be derived.
Definitions of Terms

The words *abuser, batterer, and perpetrator* are used to indicate a person who has committed an act of domestic violence. In this study, they are males and are involved or were involved in an intimate relationship with their victim.

*Domestic violence*, or intimate partner violence, is commonly defined as physical, sexual, or emotional threats or violence perpetrated by a batterer against an intimate partner in an attempt to exert control. The word abuse is used interchangeably with domestic violence.

*Intimate* is used as both a noun and a verb in this study. As a noun, intimate indicates a person who has a personal relationship with another person. As a verb, intimate refers to the characteristic of a loving relationship.

*Relationships* in this study refer to a partnership between a man and a woman, where they are married, live together, or are boyfriend/girlfriend.

*Survivor* is a word used to define victims who have managed to break free from their abusive relationship. Though the immediate threat may be removed, the danger of recurring violence remains as do the memories of the relationship.

*Suspect* is a word used in this study to describe individuals arrested for suspicion of committing domestic violence. The word perpetrator is used interchangeably with suspect.

*Victims* are the recipients of abuse. In this study, they are female and involved in an intimate relationship with their batterer.
Objectives

The intention of this study will be to uncover the truths about domestic violence and dispel common misperceptions through the presentation of some of the psychological and legal aspects of domestic violence. The author will focus on five objectives during the course of this examination.

The first and second objectives will focus on some of the clinical approaches in explaining and the effects domestic violence on its victims. **Objective one** will focus on the psychological side of domestic violence, including a review of research performed by psychologists. Included are the effects of loss of control, self-blame, and learned helplessness on victims of abuse. This research has provided pivotal insight into the effects of domestic violence on victims. The abuse of Hedda Nussbaum by Joel Steinberg and also society for her failure to leave and protect Lisa Steinberg will also be explored to illustrate the psychological effects of learned helplessness.

**Objective two** will discuss four theories used to help explain why women stay in abusive relationships and to illustrate recognized patterns of the effects of domestic violence on victims. The theories are the Battered Woman Syndrome, the Walker Cycle Theory of Violence, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the Stockholm Syndrome. Also included will be an analysis of the Ft. Bragg murders and the role of PTSD in domestic violence.

**Objective three** will discuss the legal aspects of domestic violence. Included will be a brief history on the abuse of women, how domestic violence laws have evolved through clinical studies like the Minneapolis Experiment and others, and an assessment of the Violence Against Women Act instituted by the federal government in 1995. Also included will be current statistics
from various sources to illustrate the pervasiveness of domestic violence. One case where domestic violence laws failed will be reviewed. In 1983, Tracey Thurman was horrifically attacked by her husband in front of police officers, leaving her partially paralyzed. She sued the Torrington, Connecticut Police Department and won more than $2 million for their failure to protect her. Finally, New Jersey laws will be reviewed to demonstrate what constitutes abuse and the recourse victims have against domestic violence.

The fourth objective will focus on a survivor of domestic violence who will, in her own words, chronicle in detail her two-and-a-half year relationship with her batterer. Her journey began in college and ended far away from her home, family and friends. She will reveal how she was able to finally end the abusive relationship, the extraordinary steps she took to hold her batterer accountable, and the help she received.

The fifth objective will be to interpret the results of a survey completed by 32 respondents. Since it is believed that knowledge regarding domestic violence comes primarily from and is influenced by the media, the survey will be an informal way to determine the respondents' knowledge of domestic violence. The survey serves a secondary purpose of dispelling common beliefs and to provide facts to the respondents about domestic violence.

Limitations

In covering the issue of domestic violence, the author has chosen to exclusively study the abuse of women by men. It is not a purposeful attempt to ignore or diminish the existence of this problem among men in heterosexual relationships or in same sex relationships. Rather, the
majority of the perpetrators of domestic violence are males with females being their primary victims. As a result, more focus is placed on the victims of domestic violence – women - rather than the perpetrators - men.

The author has also presented various facts in an attempt to dispel common beliefs regarding domestic violence. These beliefs have permeated and have been perpetuated by society and the media, often regardless of their validity. As a result, a considerable amount of opinions and sources are available and are subject to interpretation. However, the causes of domestic violence are quite difficult to explain in the absence of the certain patterns of behavior clinicians typically like to follow. The result can be a destructive rather than constructive approach to resolving the problem of abuse.

Additionally, the author does not believe that all men are abusive nor does the author want to imply the same. The propensity exists in both men and women. In fact, “a moderate amount of stress is essential to growth and development” (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993, p. 92) and is seen as a normal part of relationships. However, in certain cases there are marked differences between how men and women handle this stress in violent relationships. Some men may act upon stress in a physical manner whereas women may become passive. Part of this study will focus on how abusive behavior affects victims of domestic violence.

Finally, the author asks the reader to be open-minded and accept the study with its limitations rather than to view it as a failure to present an effective explanation about domestic violence. Many reports and research have preceded this study along with corresponding criticisms that warrant further investigation. Certain markers have been uncovered and numerous treatments for both the victim and batterer have been offered. Additionally, laws have
been enacted to protect victims of domestic violence. However, the causes of and effective
treatments to end domestic violence continue to be elusive.
CHAPTER TWO

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FORMS AND EFFECTS
OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Introduction

Domestic violence represents a Catch-22 for victims — a kind of damned if you do, damned if you don’t situation. Part of the problem is exacerbated by societal views about relationships in general. There are some that believe perceived minor disagreements, including incidents of abuse, can be worked out and is quite normal in a relationship. Others see disagreements as a reason for ending the relationship, especially when physical violence occurs.

In general, “commitment to a relationship is usually seen as a positive attribute. It seems, however, that such characteristics in battered women are yet another sign of ‘sickness.’ To leave is to abandon her commitments; to stay is to be beaten.” (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993, p. 19) These contradictory messages perpetuated by society send mixed messages to victims of domestic violence. As a result, few victims of domestic violence do end the relationship after the first incident of abuse. The control a batterer exerts on his victim can be emotionally powerful.

Psychological Forms of Abuse

Domestic violence is not just about physical or sexual abuse. Psychologists have studied emotional abuse, a form of abuse not easily recognized and not easily measured in the types of quantitative terms most people can easily discern. Additionally, emotional abuse is, for the most
part, not illegal, further questioning the credibility of victims. But “anecdotal evidence from counselors and abused women suggests that in the long term, non-physical abuse may be even more damaging than physical violence.” (Gordon, 1998, p. 4) The impact on victims can be devastating.

Emotional abuse, also known as verbal abuse, consists of degrading behavior such as insulting the victim, embarrassing her in public or private, accusing her of perceived deceptions like adultery, stalking, and threats. The source of the batterer’s anger may not relate to the victim directly. For example, the batterer may have had a bad day at work and takes it out on his victim. Further, in abusive relationships, emotional abuse usually escalates over time with the abuser projecting his own problems and faults onto the victim with increasing frequency. (Berry, 2000, p. 32) The victim essentially becomes an outlet for the batterer.

In most if not all relationships, there are bound to be arguments. It is considered normal and healthy. Even having some form of dysfunction is considered normal. (Barnett & La Violette, 1993, p. 13) How many people come from a “normal” family? But in cases of violent relationships, an invisible line is crossed during arguments where there is no room for compromise on the part of the batterers. Not surprisingly, “families in households where decision making is shared are less likely to be violent than those in which one partner makes all the decisions.” (Berry, 2000, p. 32) In abusive relationships, the batterer has to maintain control over his victim by making all the decisions.

The presence of emotional abuse does not predispose a victim to physical abuse. In fact, “emotional abuse is so common in batterers that, in the majority of incidents, emotional abuse is not followed by physical abuse.” (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998, p. 62) The batterer does not need to physically abuse his victim because he has already established control over her through a prior
incident. Reinforcement can easily be obtained through threats and intimidation. Often after physical abuse ends, emotional abuse continues as a way for a batterer to exert or maintain control over a victim. (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998, p. 42) For victims of abuse, the mere implication that harm may befall her, her family, or valued possessions is enough to resign herself to the abuse.

In studying emotional and physical abuse, psychologists have formulated conditions demonstrating how victims of domestic violence are affected to help provide insight into why they are unable to readily break free from their abuse. Following is a summary of these conditions.

The Phenomena of Loss of Control, Self-Blame and Learned Helplessness

For victims of domestic violence, loss of control, self-blame and learned helplessness are prevalent. In a study on the subject, O’Neill & Kerig found that “the experience of emotional and physical violence by one’s intimate partner can engender uncertainty, loss of control, and feelings of helplessness.” (2000, p. 2) In a non-violent relationship, control represents the ability to deal with stressful situations in a constructive manner. Stress is considered a normal part of a relationship and may include such factors as losing a job, experiencing financial difficulties, and taking care of children. When feelings of control are taken away, as in abusive relationships, it can manifest into higher incidents of depression. Victims may find themselves unable to cope with the added stress.
One way for the victims to regain control in the abusive relationship is to assume a certain level of responsibility. (O’Neill & Kerig, 2000, p. 2) My hair wasn’t done right. The dinner I cooked tasted bad. I forgot to clean the dishes. I shouldn’t have taken so long returning from the store. These are conditions she recognizes, albeit unreasonably, that she can control and make an effort to change. O’Neill & Kerig found that “women with abusive male partners must use certain coping mechanisms to comprehend and deal with the battering” (2000, p. 7) and attempt to create a harmonious environment to avoid further violent incidents. It is what Oprah Winfrey referred to as the “disease to please.” (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993, p. 4)

Self-blame, however, becomes a detriment to a victim of domestic violence. It gives her the “illusion of control over the abusive situation and ultimately encourage her continuation of the relationship.” (O’Neill & Kerig, 2000, p. 7) She may believe that her actions can stop the abuse “if I just did this” or “if I stopped doing that.” The victim mistakenly believes the violence is her fault. But many times the abuse has nothing to do with dinner or being late. Instead, it reverts back to the exertion of control by the batterer.

With learned helplessness, victims of domestic violence develop a “motivational impairment (passivity)...intellectual impairment (poor problem-solving ability), and emotional trauma (increased feelings of helplessness, incompetence, frustration, and depression).” (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993, p. 103) The concept was first introduced by psychologist Martin Seligman and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania. They conducted studies involving laboratory dogs. The dogs were subjected to occasional shocks administered through the bottom of the cage in which they were locked in. Initially they tried to find a way to escape. However, once the dogs realized they were unable to escape, they developed coping skills to deal with the shocks, including behavior considered bizarre or unhealthy. They would lie in their excrement to
minimize the shocks and contort their bodies into uncomfortable positions on the area of the floor where the shocks were minimal. (Berry, 2000, p. 37) When the doors to the cages were opened, the dogs were “unable to escape from a painful situation, even when escape was quite possible.” (Walker, 1984, p. 86) Instead, they continued their coping skills until they were eventually retrained to learn how to escape.

As a result, “learned helplessness causes battered women to make causal attributions that tend to keep them entrapped in the relationship.” (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993, p. 104) Self-blame emerges with the victim believing that the abuse is her fault. Society also contributes to these feelings by focusing on the perceived actions or inactions of the victims. Further, with learned helplessness, battered women adopt certain behaviors externally to cover up the violence they endure at home. (Walker, 1984, p. 10) Often this is done at great psychological cost and can result in depression. But the victim learns that passivity is a mechanism to stay alive. (Walker, 1984, p. 33) Leaving is often not possible due to uncertainty regarding the victim’s future.

Learned helplessness does not engender victims of domestic violence to be helpless. Often in “the black-and-white portrayal of domestic violence...there’s a batterer and a victim; the batterer is an ogre molded-misshapen-by patriarchal society; the victim, a mouse made helpless by it.” (Sontag, Nov. 17, 2002, p. 54) Victims of domestic violence are in fact not weak. Learned helplessness is about victims recognizing the unpredictability of their situation and developing coping skills. Survival within the abusive relationship takes precedence over escape.

In order to escape, victims of domestic violence need to “(become) angry rather than depressed and self-blaming; active rather than passive; and more realistic about the likelihood of
the relationship continuing on its aversive course rather than improving.” (Walker, 1984, p. 87) This is not easy for the victim to recognize since abuse is not the predominant component of the relationship to her. Batterers can be nice, apologetic, even charming at times. But if she does not recognize the abuse as wrong, she will continue using coping skills and fall further down the spiral of victimization.

Hedda Nussbaum

In November 1987, many New Yorkers woke up to read or hear about the horrific abuse of a six-year old girl, Elizabeth Steinberg. Little Lisa, as she was dubbed by the media, was brought to the hospital in a comatose state and died three days later. Within days of her death, Lisa’s adoptive parents, Joel Steinberg and Hedda Nussbaum, were taken into custody and charged with murder.

Pictures of a battered Lisa and Hedda emerged. The media labeled Steinberg a monster. Nussbaum was not immune from the same criticism. She had not protected Lisa. She did not call the police while Lisa lay dying in the bathroom. But Nussbaum was as much of a victim as Lisa.

When Nussbaum met Steinberg in 1975, she was “entranced by the charismatic lawyer.” (Russo, May 30, 1997, p. 26) Nussbaum was an attractive 32-year old successful book editor at Random House. They dated for two months but Nussbaum was put off by his need to be with her all the time and broke up with Joel. However she soon returned, spellbound by the man who swept her off her feet and made her feel important (Jones, 1994, p. 183). Nussbaum moved in with Steinberg in the beginning of 1976.
Before long, Steinberg began to instruct Nussbaum on the way she should dress, the way she should walk, and how to get raises. He was building her up and at the same time criticizing her for her own good. (Jones, 1994, p. 183) Nussbaum felt the attention was necessary to make her successful but was under immense pressure to live up to his standards. It was three years before the first of many incidents of physical abuse occurred.

After having a ruptured spleen removed due to abuse in May 1981, Nussbaum and Steinberg illegally adopted six-year old Elizabeth and a 16-month old boy, Mitchell. Steinberg was supposed to place the children on behalf of the birth mothers but instead kept them. In the meantime, Nussbaum experienced a brief reprieve from the violence lasting several months. But she soon found herself doing anything to make Steinberg happy. She had to ask him for permission to use the bathroom and to eat. He forced her to sleep on the floor without a blanket, subjected her to ice water baths, and kept her up all night on her feet. Steinberg “degraded her more and more – urinating on her, beating her sexual organs – and…lived constantly under the threat of his violence.” (Jones, 1994, p. 188)

Nussbaum was in denial that she was being abused. She would cover her injuries with makeup before answering the door or fabricate excuses when her injuries brought her to the emergency room. She believed each incident would be the last. When she did try to leave on several occasions, Nussbaum found herself calling Steinberg “like a child who wants to run away, but [knowing] she will be punished for crossing the street.” (Jones, 1994, p. 188) Nussbaum felt bonded to Steinberg despite his abusive behavior.

A year after the illegal adoption, Nussbaum lost her job at Random House due to her numerous absences. She had withered down to 100 pounds. She was not allowed to argue with Steinberg. When Steinberg was hitting her, Nussbaum “was not allowed to scream because if
(she) did (she'd) get hit more for that because (she) was making the neighbors think (Steinberg) was abusing (her).” (National Broadcasting Company, Jan. 2003) Neighbors reported hearing constant screams from the apartment with the police only responding twice in 12 years. (Kilgannon, April 7, 2002, p. 5) Caseworkers were called to the home to follow up on a report of child abuse. But they did not find anything wrong.

On the evening of November 1, 1987, Nussbaum and Steinberg were at home with Lisa and Mitchell. According to court testimony, Nussbaum was in the kitchen with Lisa while Steinberg dressed in the bedroom for a dinner meeting. Lisa went into the bedroom to ask Steinberg to take her with him. A few minutes later, Steinberg walked out of the bedroom carrying Lisa's limp body. Nussbaum placed the unconscious Lisa on the bathroom floor. Her breathing was raspy. Steinberg told Nussbaum that he "knocked Lisa down and she didn't want to get up again." (The People &C., Jun. 11, 1992) When Nussbaum asked what had happened, Steinberg responded, "What difference does it make? This is your child. Hasn't this gone far enough?" (Sullivan, Jan. 31, 1989)

Nussbaum attempted to revive Lisa while Steinberg returned to the bedroom to finish dressing. He told her before leaving for his dinner meeting to let Lisa sleep, that he would wake her when he returned. Nussbaum considered calling for help but did not because she believed Steinberg had supernatural healing powers. She also did not want to betray Steinberg.

When Steinberg returned three hours later, Nussbaum asked him to wake Lisa up. He declined, claiming that they "had to be relating when she wakes up." (The People &C., Jun. 11, 1992) Steinberg then freebased cocaine for the next several hours. At 4:00 a.m., Steinberg brought Lisa's body from the bathroom into the bedroom where she seemed better. Two hours later, Nussbaum left the room. Steinberg called out that Lisa had stopped breathing. Police were
called after Steinberg was unable to resuscitate Lisa. According to police reports, Steinberg told the responding officers, “interfering in a private discussion in my home is a violation of my civil rights.” (Felder & Victor, 1996, p. 28). Steinberg did not appreciate the officers’ presence in his home.

It was later determined at the hospital that Lisa had suffered a subdural hematoma which caused her brain to swell and placed pressure on her brain stem. She also had numerous bruises, both old and new, on her chest, right side, left buttock, and left shoulder. Hair was missing from the back of her head. Her fingernails and toenails were extremely filthy with layers of dirt scaling off of her feet. Her body smelled of vomit and urine. Later that morning when Steinberg was told that Lisa had suffered brain damage, he remarked to hospital staff, “Lisa would never be an Olympic athlete.” (Sullivan, 1989)

At her arrest in the death of Lisa, Nussbaum was paraded in front of the press, her battered face telling a story of unspeakable abuse. A doctor from the New York University Hospital examined Nussbaum thoroughly, finding that she was anemic, malnourished, debilitated and suffering from osteoporosis. She had old and new lacerations on her scalp, hair torn out of the right side of her head, an advanced ulceration and a recent fracture on her nose, fractures of both cheekbones, eight fractured right ribs, seven fractured left ribs and two deep and infected ulcers on her right leg. (Jones, 1994, p. 168-169) Nussbaum was close to death.

When asked recently what she was thinking about back on that day in November 1987, Nussbaum replied,

I remember walking out of the police station and being so shocked that there was all this press there. ‘Why are they making all this fuss because my daughter’s in the hospital’ That’s exactly what went through my mind. And I was sure she was going to be fine. (National Broadcast Company, Jan. 2003)
But Little Lisa was not fine. Brought to the hospital unconscious, she lay in a coma for three days before being removed from life support. She had been declared brain dead.

Nussbaum was not charged with the death of Lisa due to the extreme mental and physical abuse she endured. Instead, she appeared as a prosecution witness against Steinberg who was charged with second-degree murder, first-degree manslaughter, and seven other charges. Prosecutor Peter Casolaro was unable to admit into evidence the abuse Nussbaum that Steinberg inflicted. The trial involved the murder of Lisa, not the assaults committed against Nussbaum, which "under the law...is supposed to temper excessive vengeance." (Jones, 1994, p. 170) Instead, Judge Harold Rothwax was left to decide how much the jury would hear.

Without the jury present, Casolaro outlined 32 incidents of abuse Nussbaum endured at the hands of Steinberg between 1978 and 1987. The following four were admitted into evidence by Rothwax:

- March 17, 1978 - The first time Steinberg struck Nussbaum, hitting her in the eye with an open hand. She required hospital treatment.
- February 4, 1981 - Steinberg ruptured Nussbaum's spleen in a beating. She had to go to St. Vincent's Hospital to have it removed.
- August 1984 - Steinberg gave Nussbaum a black eye. She lost her job with Random House while staying home to recuperate.
- Late 1986 through 1987 - Steinberg beat Nussbaum repeatedly with a metal exercise bar, especially during the two months before Lisa Steinberg's death on Nov. 5, 1987.

(Jones, 1994, p. 170-173)
Steinberg was convicted of first-degree manslaughter in January 1987 and sentenced to 25 years in prison. His release is scheduled for 2004. Mitchell was returned to his birth mother following Nussbaum and Steinberg's arrest. Nussbaum has not see him since.

Following the trial, Nussbaum was vilified by the press and the jury. Columnist Gail Collins of the Daily News wrote, “Not even Nussbaum’s 32-part itinerary of abuse can make up for her failure to save that dying child on her bathroom floor.” (Jones, 1994, p. 175) Judy Maun of the Washington Post thought that Nussbaum’s victimization was an excuse by the state to pardon her “reprehensible behavior.” (Jones, 1994, p. 175) At least three jurors felt that Nussbaum was capable of killing Lisa. Juror Anne Marie King said that “she should have been charged too” and juror Helena Bartbell felt that Nussbaum should have been charged with “some crime.” (Jones, 1994, p. 178) Steinberg had elicited and received the sympathy from female jurors. Nussbaum, on the other hand, was seen as suffering from some type of “sickness” but was considered far from innocent. The abuse she endured did not mitigate her culpability in the death of Lisa Steinberg.

Today, Nussbaum works at a battered women’s shelter, My Sister’s Place, in upstate New York. It was part of a promise she made to Lisa after her death to help others in abusive relationships. (Kilgannon, Apr. 7, 2002) She has had numerous surgeries to reconstruct her nose, cheek and eyes. She walks with a pronounced limp. A single tear falls from her right eye from time to time, testament to the tear duct Steinberg damaged.

Nussbaum still has flashbacks to her days with Steinberg. Even “taking ibuprofen for her sore tooth reminds her suddenly that Steinberg wouldn’t let her take aspirin for the pain of her injuries.” (Russo, Mar. 30, 1997, p. 26) But she does not accept responsibility for the death of Lisa. Instead, she believes she was “a very loving, caring, good mother” under the
circumstances, saying “I was the best mother I possibly could have been.” (National Broadcasting Company, Jan. 2003)

Blaming The Victim

For many years, the focus on domestic violence has been on the victim. Why does she stay in an abusive relationship? She should just leave. It’s her fault. The batterer is not held liable for his actions. Instead, more focus is placed on the inaction of the victim to the point that “women who do not separate from abusive men are often labeled as helpless or as tolerating violence” (Browne, 1993, as cited in Fleury, Sullivan & Bybee, 2000, p. 1). Domestic violence is seen as controllable by the victim.

However, the belief that a victim can somehow control the violence she endures is mostly incorrect. Fleury, Sullivan & Bybee found in their study that it is the batterer’s “violent behavior, not the survivors’ decision to stay or leave, that determines whether a survivor will be assaulted again” (2000, p. 10). The victim does not, in fact, have the ability to stop the abuse. Nor do her actions or lack thereof promote abuse.

Domestic violence is about the batterer’s ability to control his victim. And sometimes that violence causes women to stay in an abusive relationship rather than to end it to the point that “battered women develop survival or coping skills that keep them alive with minimal injuries at the expense of escape skills.” (Walker, 1984, p. 33) The idea of “just leaving” is remote.

The effects of domestic violence can reach beyond the immediate relationship.
Some women with abusive partners may not end relationships because they have been threatened with increased violence if they leave. Others fear for the safety of their children, family, or friends. Although some women stay in relationships because they believe their partners will change, others stay for fear that the violence will escalate against themselves or their loved ones should they leave (Fleury Sullivan & Bybee, 2000, p. 1).

The influence a batterer has on his victim is emotionally powerful. He seeks to retain more and more control as she retains less. Hence, the thought of leaving an abusive relationship for some victims represents a larger threat than staying due to the inability to control the unknown factors outside of the abusive relationship. This feeling of the victim being in no-win situation is not always an apparent aspect of domestic violence.

Why Leaving Sometimes Does More Harm Than Good

Public opinion about domestic violence may be misguided. One common message in service announcements is to tell the victim to leave the abusive relationship. It is seen as the simplest solution to the problem. However, leaving an abusive relationship can actually subject the victim to increased violence because “leaving represents a threat to the batterer’s control; violence (becomes) a way to attempt to regain or maintain that control.” (Fleury, Sullivan & Bybee, 2000, p. 2) Leaving essentially represents a short-term solution to a problem rather than addressing the larger issue of the violent behavior by the abusers.

Most domestic violence victims are able to leave safely. However, some women experience retaliation by the batterer after the relationship ends. It is typically more severe than previous episodes of domestic violence, especially the longer the relationship lasted. One reason may be that the batterer has more vested into the relationship and thus feels the need to regain
control over his victim. (Fleury, Sullivan & Bybee, 2000, p. 7) Domestic violence is about the ability of the batterer to maintain control of his victim, sometimes no matter what.

Some of the methods batterers employ to prevent a victim from leaving include withholding financial support, destroying the victim’s property, threatening to take the children away, or hurting or killing pets. Batterers may also intimidate their victims by stalking them at home or work, making threatening phone calls, or showing up unexpectedly. In these cases, victims have to escape the violence without their batterers’ knowledge. They leave while their batterers are at work or lie about where they are going. It is often done suddenly and unexpectedly.

When the use of threats like “you can’t leave me” or “I’ll kill you if you go” do not work on his victim, the batterer may escalate to more extreme forms of physical force, even homicide. Seventy-five percent of all murders occur when or shortly after a woman has left her abuser. (Jau, Nov. 14, 1998, p. 11) Leaving a violent relationship is the most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence.

Conclusion

Stopping domestic violence is not simple. For victims, ending the abusive relationship may not be desirable because of issues of loss of control, self-blame or learned helplessness. In the worst cases, more severe violence, even murder, can occur after the victim leaves. Domestic violence is an insidious form of control by the batterer exercised during and sometimes after the relationship ends, often through nonphysical means. Mary Susan Miller, Ph.D., in her book, No Visible Wounds, appropriately assessed the devastating effects of emotional abuse when she
stated, "While her bones are never broken, her flesh never bruised, her blood never spilled, she is wounded nonetheless." (1995, p. 32)

In the following chapter, three theories, including two not exclusive to domestic violence, are explored to demonstrate the effects of domestic violence on victims. These theories help illustrate the insidious nature of domestic violence, the side not often seen or understood by society.
CHAPTER THREE
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THEORIES

Introduction

There have been a few theories put forward to help explain the effects of domestic violence on women. The two most prevalent theories are the Battered Woman Syndrome and the Cycle Theory of Violence. Lenore Walker, a well-recognized feminist psychologist specializing in violence in the family and against women, coined the terms after an extensive study of victims of domestic violence, finding patterns in the victims' behavior and the nature of the violence they endure.

The other two theories are not exclusive to victims of domestic violence. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is commonly associated with veterans of war. But the effects can also be found in victims of domestic violence, incapacitating women from escape. PTSD can also contribute to domestic violence as in the case of the Fort Bragg murders in 2002. The Stockholm Syndrome is a relatively unknown phenomena used to explain how hostages become allies to their kidnappers. Named after a botched bank robbery turned kidnapping in 1973, it is recognized by both the United States Army and the Federal Bureau of Investigation and is commonly applied to hostages in terrorist situations. The Stockholm Syndrome is applied to victims of domestic violence due to the extreme terrorist-like conditions they are exposed to in relationships.

All four theories incorporate part of the psychological effects of domestic violence discussed in the previous chapter.
The Battered Woman Syndrome

In the early 1980s, Lenore Walker sought a deeper understanding of domestic violence from the perspective of victims. Prior to her research, most data in existence revolved around the idea that "women who remained in violent relationships were thought to have serious pathology that included a masochistic need to be hurt and punished." (Walker, 1984, p. 75) Abused women were seen as suffering from some type of mental illness. Men, on the other hand, were seen as using physical force to obtain what they wanted and unable to control their violent behavior toward women. (Walker, 1984, p. 2) This stereotype was pervasive among many clinical researchers.

Between 1978 and 1981, Walker and a group of interviewers from the Battered Women Research Center at the Colorado Women's College in Denver, Colorado, embarked on a study of 400 battered women in the Rocky Mountain Region to test two theories Walker had developed – the learned helplessness theory and the cycle theory of battering. The result was what became the Battered Woman Syndrome and the Walker Cycle Theory of Violence.

Walker did not have a set victim-prone personality traits per se when she developed the Battered Woman Theory in 1978. Instead, she had what she called susceptibility factors to explain why women stay in abusive relationships. The first factor was the result of "rigid sex role socialization patterns which (left) adult women with a sense of learned helplessness (to the point) that they (did) not develop appropriate skills to stop from being battered." (Walker, 1984, p. 8) Other susceptibility factors included "repeated sexual molestation and assault, high levels of violence by members in their childhood families, perceptions of critical or uncontrollable events in childhood, and other conditions which place them at high risk for depression." (Walker,
1984, p. 8-9) However, not all women subjected to these conditions during childhood become victims of domestic violence.

Walker further postulated that the learned helplessness theory had its origins in childhood experiences. As explored in Chapter 2, learned helplessness is derived from the inability to control a situation. Repetitive occurrences of negative situations cause victims to develop coping skills to deal with feelings of loss of control. With victims of domestic violence, repetitive occurrences of battering reinforce these feelings of learned helplessness. Women who develop learned helplessness are susceptible "to experiencing the maximum effects from a violent relationship" (Walker, 1984, p. 10) and are unable to reconcile their feelings of love with the abuse they endure.

Walker Cycle Theory of Violence

Walker also found that domestic violence was cyclical in nature. Based on her research, she outlined three distinct phases in recurrent battering. Stage One in the Walker Cycle Theory of Violence is called tension building. During this phase,

there is a gradual escalation of tension displayed by discrete acts causing increased friction such as name-calling, other mean intentional behaviors, and/or physical abuse. The batterer expresses dissatisfaction and hostility but not in an extreme or maximally explosive form. The woman attempts to placate the batterer, doing what she thinks might please him, calm him down, or at least, what will not further aggravate him. She tries not to respond to his hostile actions and uses general anger reduction techniques. Often she succeeds for a little while which reinforces her unrealistic belief that she can control this man. (Walker, 1984, p. 95)
Though she may be hurt, the victim does not recognize what she is experiencing as abusive. She sees the incident as isolated. The idea of leaving the relationship is unlikely at this stage.

Stage two of the Walker Cycle Theory of Violence is referred to as the acute battering phase. Tensions and major violent outbursts by the batterer become uncontrollable. He “unleashes a barrage of verbal and physical aggression that can leave the woman severely shaken and injured.” (Walker, 1984, p. 96) There may or may not be an incident that sets the batterer off, compounding the situation. Typically the first signs of physical injuries occur at this time with possible police intervention.

Stage three of the Walker Cycle Theory of Violence is loving contrition, often referred to as the ‘honeymoon period.’ Shortly after the second phase, there is a noticeable “absence of tension or violence.” (Walker, 1984, p. 96) The batterer feels remorse for injuring his victim. He apologizes profusely and promises never to hurt her again. He may even give her gifts to show his love, in effect returning to the person the victim fell in love with. Stage three “gives the battered woman hope, allowing her to deny the other side of the abuser that terrifies her.” (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993, p. 84) With the contrition expressed by the batterer, the victim accepts a certain level of responsibility and believes her abuser when he says it will not happen again.

When Walker interviewed victims of domestic violence, she was able to verify the existence of these stages. Sixty-five percent of the participants experienced tension building prior to the battering and 58 percent experienced loving contrition afterwards. (Walker, 1984, p. 96-7) Walker also found that over time the phases altered dramatically. Seventy-one percent of the participants experienced tension building prior to battering but only 42 percent experienced
acts of contrition. (Walker, 1984, p. 97) Tension building became more prominent while contrition declined.

Breaking the cycle of violence occurs when the victim recognizes that she is receiving less and less contrition following a battering. This usually occurs following a particularly severe episode of violence to either the victim, or to her children or pets. She has an awakening where she fears the repercussions of her abuser and the possible future effects on her and her family. Only then is she able to break the cycle of violence.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Some victims of domestic violence may suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). According to the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD “is a psychiatric disorder than can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events.” (What is Post-Traumatic, n.d.) The events “most often associated with PTSD in men were rape, combat exposure, childhood neglect, and childhood physical abuse. For women, the most common events were rape, sexual molestation, physical attack, being threatened by a weapon, and childhood physical attack.” (Epidemiological Facts, n.d.)

There are three main symptoms of PTSD. The first is hyperarousal. The victim is on guard, startles easily, and reacts to things that would not normally cause distress. (Simpson & Simpson, 2002, p. 17) She is sensitive to noises, voices, and sounds. She is unable to sleep or can only sleep for short periods of time, fearing that danger will strike. The second symptom is intrusion and refers to reliving the “nightmare.” The victim has flashbacks to incidents of abuse
and relives it in her mind. She has overwhelming feelings that may not be appropriate to her current situation. The third symptom is constriction. Due to the extreme nature of the trauma, the victim has become numb to the abuse. There is a disassociation with feelings. The victim becomes incapable of showing any emotion. Alcohol and drugs use or abuse exacerbates the effects of constriction.

More than 13 million people suffer from PTSD at any given moment. (Simpson & Simpson, 2002, p. 7) The September 11 tragedy and the Oklahoma City bombing, and natural disasters including earthquakes and tornadoes, are some of the events that can cause PTSD. Without appropriate counseling, symptoms may last for days or months. For victims of domestic violence, PTSD is caused by severe physical or sexual assault and can cause anxiety and depression. (Jacobson & Guttman, 1998, p. 211) As a result, PTSD affects a victim’s ability to plan for the future and prevent her from developing escape skills. (Jacobsen & Gottman, 1998, p. 51)

The Fort Bragg Murders

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) may also contribute to domestic violence since “the adrenaline rush a soldier experiences during war is hard to turn off, even when he safely returns home.” (Simpson & Simpson, 2002, p. 45) In June and July of 2002, four Fort Bragg soldiers killed their wives. Two were arrested but one has since committed suicide; the other two committed suicide shortly after murdering their wives. Three of the soldiers had recently returned from Afghanistan prior to the murders – Sgt. 1st Class Rigoberto Nieves returned two
days before he shot his wife, Teresa, and then himself in their bedroom; Master Sgt. William Wright strangled his wife, Jennifer, about a month after returning and hanged himself in his jail cell on March 23, 2003; and Sgt. 1st Class Brandon Floyd shot his wife, Andrea, several months after returning, before turning the gun on himself. The fourth soldier had not been deployed. Sgt. Cedric Ramon Griffin stabbed his estranged wife, Marilyn, at least 50 times before setting her house on fire. If convicted of murder, he faces the death penalty.

All but the fourth soldier were members of the Army’s Special Operations forces based at Fort Bragg, and participated in Operation Enduring Freedom created in response to the events of September 11. Two of the soldiers had requested and were granted leave to handle personal problems at home. Each soldier had years of military experience and were senior officers.

Wilma Watson, the mother of Jennifer Wright, said her daughter “had confessed that since her husband, William, had returned from a tour of duty in Afghanistan, he seemed full of rage. They couldn’t talk without his becoming angry.” (Thompson, Jul. 27, 2002) Jennifer claimed her husband was a different person when he returned. Andrea Floyd had threatened to leave her husband and take their three children prior to her murder. (Breed, Sept. 1, 2002) Marital discord was found in each of the four cases.

The Army has denied any link between Afghanistan and the murders. Instead they have claimed that the soldiers had pre-existing marital problems and failed to seek proper counseling. The Army believes that part of the problem was caused by lack of early intervention programs and the wariness of military families to take advantage of available mental health care programs. According to Col. Dave Orman, a psychiatrist, “There was a prevalent attitude that seeking behavioral health care was not career-safe.” (Thompson, Nov. 8, 2002) To obtain counseling was in essence acknowledging a weakness.
Orman and a 19-member team of mental and physical health workers and clergy members visited the base in August and September of 2002 to examine the killings. In their report, they found that “Army culture discourages military families from seeking help when domestic problems are still at a stage where they potentially can be solved.” (Thompson, Nov. 8, 2002) Soldiers were reluctant to contact health service agencies available on the base.

Dennis Orthner, a professor at the School of Social Work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, claims domestic violence is more commonly associated with younger soldiers with children and limited resources. Orthner has studied military families for 25 years and believes that the most stress occurs shortly before and after a soldier has been deployed. (Thompson, Jul. 27, 2002)

The National Center for Post-Traumatic Disorder estimates that 30 percent of the men and women who have served in war zones experience PTSD; an additional 20 to 25 percent have had partial PTSD at some point in their lives. (What is Post-Traumatic, n.d.) Victims of PTSD experience a “relentless external pressure on the victims to maintain the breach between the private, ravaged self and the public, acquiescent persona.” (Jay as quoted in Barnett & LaViolette, 1993, p. 96) Separating the two selves are quite difficult.

Additionally, military wives face unique dilemmas. Given the transient nature of their husbands’ job, there is a consistent failure “to integrate into the community.” (Braun-Haley & Haley, p. 41). Friends tend to be wives of other military officers. As a result, many find themselves isolated and vulnerable. (Braun-Haley & Haley, p. 41) The military community is a breeding ground for domestic violence given the unstable environment.

In the two years prior to the killings, there were no deaths as a result of domestic violence at Fort Bragg. (Thompson, Jul. 27, 2002) But domestic violence had been increasing at all
military installations for years. According to the Defense Department task force, there were 25.6 incidents of domestic violence per 1,000 soldiers in 1996, a rise from 18.6 incident rate per 1,000 soldiers in 1990. (Butterfield, Jul. 29, 2002) These numbers are higher than incident rates in civilian populations.

In response to the murders, an intervention policy was introduced by military officials requiring batterers to separate from their spouses for 72 hours. The previous policy required a 48-hour separation. Stress and anger management courses have been increased at the base since September 11. The U.S. House passed the Armed Forces Domestic Security Act in October 2002 to further protect civilians on military bases and Congress authorized $5 million for domestic violence programs. Additionally, soldiers will be screened for psychological problems prior to deployment to Afghanistan.

The Fort Bragg soldiers’ extreme military training, coupled with their experiences in the hostile conditions of Afghanistan, may have been important factors in the murders. Unable to handle the stress abroad and at home, they may have internalized the intense pressures until they reached a breaking point. Unfortunately it may never be confirmed. The three soldiers who served in Afghanistan have committed suicide. Only the soldier not deployed is in jail facing the death penalty.

The Stockholm Syndrome

Another theory introduced by psychologist Susan Forward to help explain why women stay in violent relationships is the Stockholm Syndrome. In 1973, two robbers, Jan-Erik Olsson
and Clark Olofsson, attempted to hold up the Sveriges Kreditbank in Stockholm, Sweden. The robbers held three bank tellers, two women and one man, captive for six days. During the first few days, the robbers turned kidnappers threatened the tellers, holding them at gunpoint and denying bathroom and food privileges. Following the intimidation period, Olsson and Olofsson began to allow the hostages to roam around and use the bathroom. Eventually they struck up conversations with their hostages seeking pity for supposed atrocities committed against them.

The hostages were released unharmed after 6 days. Olsson and Olofsson were quickly taken into custody. During the trial, two of the tellers testified on behalf of their kidnappers. One of the female tellers actually fell in love with and became engaged to one of the kidnappers. She "publicly berated the Swedish prime minister for his failure to understand the robber's point of view." (Card, Oct. 2000, p. 510) The hostages had taken up the kidnappers' cause.

In the Stockholm Syndrome, there is a pronounced "identification with the aggressor." (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993, p. 82-83) The victim, initially intimidated by her aggressor, develops positive feelings and identifies with her aggressor. This may be occur either voluntary or under duress. The aggressor, realizing the gradual compliant nature of his victim, slowly loosens his hold on his victim. He may grant her certain privileges or entrust her with certain tasks. By complying with her aggressor, the victim is trying to find safety in a dangerous situation. (Berry, 2000, p. 56) Some may actually join in with the criminal activities of the aggressors. Patty Hearst is one of the most prevalent examples of how the Stockholm Syndrome can cause victims to break the law on behalf of their captors.

The U.S. Marine Corps, in The Individual's Guide for Understanding and Surviving Terrorism, recognizes the Stockholm Syndrome as "an automatic, unconscious emotional response to the trauma of becoming a victim." (p. 3.14) Under highly stressful situations,
hostages may begin to identify with their kidnappers through the following ways: a) if the hostages experience positive contact with their abductors and are not exposed to negative experiences such as assaults; b) if the hostages feel sympathy for their kidnappers, usually through the kidnappers’ tale of woes and suffering; and c) if the hostages develop a higher threshold for abuse, typical in survival situations. (Smith, T., p. 3.16) This is especially true when victims are unsure of whether they will be released.

The Stockholm Syndrome is typically reserved for the most extreme cases of domestic violence and represents a dilemma. Victims, by staying in an abusive relationship, are seen by society as condoning the behavior of their abusers. Some are reluctant to press charges; others defend their abusers. They are not viewed as truly “innocent” and enter what Card calls a “gray zone” where their complicity makes them as guilty as their aggressors. (Oct. 2000, p. 516) This is problematic when the victims participate in criminal activities, even if the reasoning could be viewed as legitimate. An example is Faith McNulty of the Burning Bed fame. She killed her husband by pouring kerosene on him while he slept and then set him on fire. She claimed that she had suffered years of abuse. At the murder trial, the court recognized that McNulty suffered from learned helplessness. The abuse had not only rendered her incapable of leaving her husband but also drove her to commit violence. (Felder & Victor, 1996 p. 146) Domestic violence victims who suffer from the Stockholm Syndrome struggle to survive the oppression of their abusers.
Conclusion

The Battered Woman Syndrome, Cycle Theory of Violence, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and the Stockholm Syndrome are four theories to help explain the effects domestic violence victims endure. Incorporating some of the theories found in Chapter 2, they provide additional insight into why victims of domestic violence stay in abusive relationships by highlighting patterns that exist. Patterns of abuse controls, as described above, dominate a woman’s life. (Miller, 1995, p. 112) Unfortunately, for victims of abuse, violence has integrated into their lives to the point that it is the only thing they recognize. Coping with abuse replaces the prospect of leaving it.

History has played a role in domestic violence, both positive and negative. In the next chapter, the evolvement of federal and state laws designed to hurt and help women is explored along with clinical analysis of the perpetrators and victims of domestic violence.
CHAPTER FOUR

LEGAL DIMENSIONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Introduction

Patriarchy is often invoked to help explain how the problem of domestic violence has evolved. It is a system founded “on the idea that there are natural roles for men and women based on biology.” (Haley & Braun-Haley, p. 54) Patriarchy defined that men were the superior beings and therefore possessed special entitlements and privileges. This was especially evident in marriage. Men were the domineering force. Women were considered property and had to submit to their husbands. Religious sects like the church reinforced this system by projecting the belief that God ordained the victimization of women. (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993, p. 32-33) As a result, most laws regarding the treatment of women throughout the past 2,000 years were based on these stereotypes.

Laws protecting women against abuse and police intervention are only recent inventions, beginning in the late 1800s, with the majority of these laws created in the last 25 years. Mandatory arrest of batterers became the standard police intervention policy to deal with domestic violence based on studies funded by the National Institute of Justice in the 1980s. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was established in the 1990s in response to the “epidemic” of domestic violence. States such as New Jersey have also implemented laws to protect women against violence through The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 1991.

However, statistics show that domestic violence is still a problem. A woman is physically abused by her husband or boyfriend every nine seconds, over 4,000 women a day.
Numerous others are subjected to abuses not considered illegal under the law. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence estimates that 90 percent of domestic violence cases are not reported. (Berry, 2000, p. 7) Part of the problem may be attributed to police inaction. “Violence in the home [is] a low priority because it has a limited visibility, occurs within a sphere that is traditionally considered private in any democracy, and is perpetrated against victims by assailants who are know to them, often intimately.” (Felder & Victor, 1996, p. 118) And sometimes when they are reported, as in the cases of Tracey Thurman, the laws are not enforced. Domestic violence continues to be a problem.

A Brutal History

The first laws advocating wife abuse were created based on the belief that women were not equal in the eyes of men and therefore subject to discipline. “In ancient Roman times, a man was allowed by law to chastise, divorce, or kill his wife for adultery, public drunkenness, or attending public games – the very behavior that men were allowed, even expected to pursue, on a near-daily basis.” (Berry, 2000, p. 19) There was duplicity ingrained in early laws regarding assault. They were designed to protect men against other men, but not women against men.

Wives were considered property in marriage – a single entity with their husbands. They “ceased to exist before the law” (Jones, 1994, p. 19) which made the husband accountable for any illegal act the wife committed. Her actions directly reflected back on him. As such, husbands were permitted to strike their wives to “keep them in line,” including beating them into submission.
Wife abuse was codified into laws such as the Rule of Thumb. Rule of Thumb refers to an English common law whereby a husband could strike his wife with an instrument no wider than his thumb as to not cause serious injury. Ironically, the law was seen as limiting the severity of violence a husband could inflict on his wife. Rule of Thumb surfaced in American courts when in 1824, a Mississippi court declared that a husband could beat his wife “without subjecting himself to the vexatious prosecutions for assault and battery, resulting in the discredit and shame of all concerned.” (Jones, 1994, p. 20) Wife beating was condoned as long as the injury was not severe to the wife, and the abuse was kept out of sight.

It took 50 years before American courts handed down rulings against wife beating and another 10 years before laws outlawing wife beating were created. Alabama and Massachusetts courts were the first to rule against wife abuse in 1871. In *Fulgham v. State*, an Alabama judge wrote, “the privilege, ancient though it may be, to beat her with a stick, to pull her hair, choke her, spit in her face, or kick her about the floor, or to inflict upon her like indignities is not now acknowledged by our law.” (Berry, 2000, p. 21) Maryland made wife beating illegal in 1873. But even though laws banning wife beating were created, enforcement was rare. Wives were still being abused on a regular basis.

The women’s suffrage movement in the 1920s was seen as the first attempt to “protest against the absolute authority of male patriarchy in the United States.” (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998, p. 266) Attaining the right to vote was seen as empowering women not only in voice but also in society. With the feminist movement of the 1970s came a stronger cry for women’s rights. Police had long been criticized for their failure to arrest batterers; mediation or temporary separation was used. Feminists saw this approach as “too much emphasis on the social work
aspect and not enough on the criminal” (Langley & Levy as quoted in Sherman & Berk, Apr. 1984, p. 262) aspect of abuse. Research and studies were launched in response.

The Minneapolis Study

Between 1981 and 1991, the National Institute of Justice funded seven studies to examine the effects of incarceration of batterers. Known collectively as the National Institute of Justice’s Assault Replication Program (SARP), the studies were an attempt to determine whether arresting batterers was more of a deterrent to future episodes of violence than temporary separation or counseling administered on-scene by police officers.

The studies were promulgated by feminist groups that believed police were focusing more on the social rather than the criminal aspect of domestic violence in their treatment of batterers. In a 1976 Police Foundation study, 85 percent of spousal homicides had police intervention at least once in the prior two years; 54 percent had police intervention five or more times. (Sherman & Berk, Apr. 1984, p. 263) The methods used by police to protect victims were seen as ineffective.

The first and most prominent study was the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment (MDVE). Named after the city in which the study took place and with the cooperation of the Police Department, MDVE examined 314 incidents of domestic violence. Police officers were asked to record how they responded to domestic violence cases by categorizing them into three areas – arrest, temporary separation, or counseling administered at the scene.
Under the auspices of criminologists Lawrence W. Sherman and Richard A. Berk, the Minneapolis Study focused on the crime reports of 42 officers from two precincts between March 1981 and September 1982. It was designed to capture misdemeanor domestic assaults where both parties were present, excluding assaults considered felonies, incidents where both parties were injured, and incidents where the victim insisted on having the batterer arrested. A six-month follow-up report was incorporated into the study to determine the frequency and seriousness of violence after initial police intervention.

The initial results found that “99 percent of the suspects targeted for arrest actually were arrested, while only 78 percent of those to receive advice did, and only 73 percent of those to be sent out of the residence for eight hours were actually sent.” (Sherman & Berk, Apr. 1984, p. 264) An explanation for the differences was attributed to the police officers’ inability to enforce mediation or separation. Another possibility for the high arrest rate was attributed to the behavior of the suspect. Sherman and Berk found that the police were more likely to change from mediation or separation to arrest if the suspect exhibited rude behavior, attempted to assault one or both police officers, used a weapon during the assault, or violated a restraining order. Additionally, the suspect was arrested when the victim demanded a citizen’s arrest. (Sherman & Berk, Apr. 1984, p. 265)

In follow-up studies, contact was made with 205 of the 330 victims for initial interviews. The research staff found that despite numerous attempts, some victims had moved, left town, or refused to meet with them. The rate decreased to 161 victims for the subsequent 11 interviews, possibly due to the fact the victims were paid $20 for the initial interview only.

From the initial 205 interviews, the following information was derived:
Table 2. Victim and Suspect Characteristics: Initial Interview Data and Police Sheets

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Victims</th>
<th>Suspects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Unemployment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Suspects</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Relationship of Suspect to Victim</td>
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<td>Divorced or separated husband</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unmarried male lover</td>
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<td>Current husband</td>
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<tr>
<td>Son, brother, roommate, other</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Prior Assaults and Police Involvement</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Victims assaulted by suspect, last six months</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police intervention in domestic dispute, last six months</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple in Counseling Program</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Prior Arrests of Male Suspects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever Arrested For Any Offense</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever Arrested for Crime Against Person</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever Arrested on Domestic Violence Statute</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever Arrested On An Alcohol Offense</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Mean Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>30 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspects</td>
<td>32 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>F. Education</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; high school</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>high school only</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; high school</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 205 (Those cases for which initial interviews were obtained)
(Sherman & Berk, Apr. 1984, p. 266)

In analyzing the data, the researchers concluded that the “swift imposition of a sanction of temporary incarceration may deter male offenders in domestic assault cases.” (Sherman & Berk, Apr. 1984, p. 270) This belief was fostered by the recurrence of violence in the six-month follow-up period and the high percentage of suspects who had previously been arrested for other crimes. However, Sherman and Berk did not support mandatory arrest for misdemeanor domestic assaults for all cases.
Replicating the Results of MDVE

Attempts to replicate the results of the Minneapolis Experiment were undertaken in six additional sites – Atlanta, Georgia; Charlotte, North Carolina; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Dade County (Miami), Florida; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Omaha, Nebraska. A seventh study took place in Southern California. The additional studies attempted to verify if arrest of batterers resulted in deterrence through the analysis of varying group sizes, from 330 cases in Omaha to 1,658 cases in Colorado Springs.

The results were mixed. Omaha, Charlotte and Milwaukee found no evidence for a long-term deterrent effect of arrest on recidivism. Instead, researchers “found significant long-term increases in subsequent incidents.” (Sherman, Smith, Schmidt & Rogan, Oct. 1992, p. 680) In Dade County, “arrest had a significant deterrent effect among employed suspects, whereas arrest led to a significant increase in subsequent assaults among unemployed suspects.” (Pate & Hamilton, Oct. 1992, p. 695) By arresting batterers, the violence was found to increase rather than decrease. Additionally, married suspects and suspects committed in relationships were likely to be deterred by arrest. (Pate & Hamilton, October 1992, p. 693) The possibility of losing a job and spending time in jail proved to be effective deterrents.

From the Colorado Springs experiment, the researchers concluded, “suspects...who had been previously arrested for domestic violence were more likely to offend again.” (Berk, Campbell, Klap, & Western, Oct. 1992, p. 706) There was no definitive deterrent in arrest. The group found to be deterred by arrest were employed suspects. In the Southern California Experiment, researchers found that “arrests (were) especially effective for batterers whom police would ordinarily be inclined to arrest.” (Berk & Newton, Apr. 1985, p. 261) Certain types of
batterers were more prone to arrest and were less likely to re-offend. Further, the researchers suggested mandatory arrests until other forms of police intervention were proven effective. (Berk & Newton, Apr. 1985, p. 262) Results from the Atlanta and Charlotte studies were not available.

Despite the mixed results from the subsequent studies, mandatory arrest remains the standard intervention policy for police when domestic violence is suspected.

Creation of the Violence Against Women Act

In response to the increased awareness about domestic violence, the US Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994. VAWA is designed to protect women's rights and addresses all forms of violence against women, including rape, kidnapping, and physical assault. It also protects the rights of illegal immigrants who may be reluctant to seek assistance. A supporter of VAWA, Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), stated that "90 percent of all family violence defendants (were) never prosecuted, and one-third of the cases that would be considered felonies if committed by strangers, (were) filed as misdemeanors." (Burby, Sept. 30, 1994) By introducing VAWA, certain acts of domestic violence were elevated to federal crimes.

Under VAWA, acts of domestic violence are considered federal crimes when:

- The perpetrator travels interstate "with the intent to kill, injure, harass, or intimidate a spouse or intimate partner, and who, in the course of or as a result of such travel, commits or attempts to commit a crime of violence against that spouse or intimate partner."

(Summary of Criminal Provisions)
• The perpetrator causes a spouse or intimate partner to travel interstate "by force, coercion, duress, or fraud, and who, in the course of, as a result of, or to facilitate such conduct or travel, commits or attempts to commit a crime of violence against that spouse or intimate partner." (Summary of Criminal Provisions)

• The perpetrator travels interstate "with the intent to kill, injure, harass, or intimidate another person, and in the course of, or as a result of, such travel places that person in reasonable fear of the death of, or serious bodily injury to, that person, a member of the immediate family of that person, or the spouse or intimate partner of that person." (Summary of Criminal Provisions)

• The perpetrator "uses the mail or any facility of interstate or foreign commerce to engage in a course of conduct that places a person who is in another State or tribal jurisdiction or within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States in reasonable fear of the death of, or serious bodily injury to, that person, a member of the immediate family of that person, or a spouse or intimate partner of that person, with the intent-

(A) To kill or injure that person; or

(B) To place that person in reasonable fear of the death of, or serious bodily injury to that person, a member of the immediate family of that person, or a spouse or intimate partner of that person."

(Summary of Criminal Provisions)

Additional provisions under VAWA prohibit individuals convicted in any court of misdemeanor domestic violence, individuals subject to a restraining order, and felons from shipping, transporting in interstate or foreign commerce, receiving or possessing any firearm or
ammunition. (Summary of Criminal Provisions) This aspect of VAWA has been especially problematic for batterers employed as police officers or in the military. In preventing them from possessing a gun, they are unable to perform their job and risk losing it.

The legal and policy issues of VAWA are administered by the Office of Violence Against Women (OVAW). OVAW has awarded more than $1 billion in grants to various state and local governments “to train personnel, establish specialized domestic violence and sexual assaults units, assist victims of violence, and hold perpetrators accountable.” (About the Office, n.d.) In addition, OVAW issues reports related to VAWA issues. October is officially recognized as the Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Sobering Statistics

Nearly a decade after the Violence Against Women Act and mandatory arrest laws were implemented, domestic violence rates remain high. Today, a woman is abused every nine seconds in the United States. (Coleman, Jan. 31 1998) Women are more likely to be injured in violence by intimates than in violence by strangers. (Craven, Dec. 1996, p. 3) According to an October 2001 report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, six women per 1,000 were victims of intimate partner violence in 1999. The rate increased to 15.6 women per 1,000 among females age 16-24. (Rennison & Welchans, Jan. 31, 2002, p. 1) The violence included incidents of rape/sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault of females 12 years or older.

Half of the victims of domestic violence are physically injured by an intimate partner; four out of ten seek medical treatment. (Rennison & Welchans, Jan. 31, 2002, p. 1) Injuries to
the head, face, neck, thorax, breasts, and abdomen are more common than women injured in other ways. (Campbell, Apr. 13, 2002, p. 1331) Reporting is sketchy since many victims are not likely to disclose to emergency room physicians the cause of their injuries. Batterers often accompany victims to the hospital and continue to exert control. However, it is estimated that 84 percent of all women seeking treatment were intentionally injured by an intimate partner. (Greenfield et al., 1998, p. v) Additionally, stress caused by abuse can also manifest in chronic health problems. Victims frequently suffer headaches, back pain, gastrointestinal problems, seizures, and hypertension. (Campbell, Apr. 13, 2002, p. 1332)

A report in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) estimates that as many as 37 percent of all obstetrical patients may be abused while pregnant. (Berry, 2000, p. 85) Forty to 45 percent of physically abused women report forced sex by the battering partner or ex-partner. (Campbell & Soeken, 1999, as quoted in Campbell, Woods, Chouaf & Parker, 2000, p. 219) Sexual abuse and rape by their batterers makes many women susceptible to gynecological and reproductive problems, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and HIV/AIDS. Victims are often unable to make contraceptive choices or cannot properly address health issues.

Unintentional pregnancy is especially dangerous for victims of domestic violence. Abuse is the leading cause of birth defects and infant mortality according to the March of Dimes. (Berry, 2000, p. 9) The batterer causes injury through physical force, emotional abuse or by denying the victim access to prenatal care. Twenty-seven percent of victims reported using tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs to deal with the stress caused by violence. (Campbell, Woods, Chouaf & Parker, Aug. 2000, p. 230) Abused women are also four times more likely to have low birth weight babies, twice as likely to miscarry, and experience higher incidents of premature labor than women who are not abused. (Berry, 2000, p. 86) Finally, women who are
forced to have sex or abused during pregnancy are at an increased risk of being murdered by their batterers. (Campbell, Woods, Chouaf & Parker, Aug. 2000, p. 233)

Abuse is not restricted to the home. "Seventy-four percent of abused women who work outside the home are harassed by their abusers at work, either in person or by telephone. Fifty-six percent are late for work at least five times a month because of their abusers. Fifty-four percent miss at least three full days of work a month, and 20 percent lose their jobs because of abuse." (Berry, 2000, p. 9) Absenteeism due to violence represents a $31 billion loss to companies. Another $13 billion is lost when battered women use company time to call their doctors, lawyers, shelters, or professional help. Battered women accounted for around 92 percent more health care costs per year than non-battered women, most of which can be attributed to cost of mental health services. (Campbell, Apr. 13, 2002, p. 1334) Nearly one-fifth of workplace deaths are caused by domestic violence, making it the leading hazard for women. (Peterson, Oct. 31, 1997)

Between 1993 and 1999, intimates committed 32 percent of all murders of females. Those aged 35-49 experienced the highest degree of victimization, 2.1 per 100,000. (Rennison, Oct. 2001, p. 3) In 1998, women represented nearly 3 out of 4 victims of the 1,830 murders committed by intimates, down from 3,000 murders in 1976. (Rennison & Welchans, Jan. 31, 2000, p. 1) In 1999, 74 percent, or 1,218 of the 1,642 persons murdered by intimates, were female. (Rennison, Oct. 2001, p. 3)

Overall, the number of female homicide victims killed by intimates has declined one percent since 1976. (Rennison & Welchans, Jan. 31, 2000, p. 1) However, it is still disproportionately higher than the number of males killed by intimates.
When Laws Fail to Protect: Tracey's Story

Prior to Hedda Nussbaum and the Fort Bragg murders, there was Tracey Thurman. In 1982, Tracey was a young 21-year old when she left her abusive husband of two years, Charles "Buck" Thurman. Tired of the violence and fearing for the safety of their one-year old son, C.J., Tracey moved away from the couple's home in Virginia to her hometown of Torrington, Connecticut.

However, Buck soon followed. He made harassing phone calls, followed and abused Tracey, and even made threats in public against her life. Buck was only arrested after a police officer witnessed him breaking the windshield of Tracey's car while she was in it. After conviction, Buck's six-month jail sentence was suspended. Instead, he was placed on probation prohibiting him from contacting Tracey. Within days, Buck showed up at her house with a gun, threatening her and C.J.

Tracey called the police to report Buck's violation of his probation. The police, however, did not arrest Buck, instead telling her to contact the Family Relations Office if she was "really afraid." (Felder & Victor, 1996, p. 13) The offense, according to the police, was not police business despite Tracey's pleas.

Tracey did contact the Family Relations Office only to be told that her problem was a police matter. Frustrated, Tracey went to court and was able to get a restraining order on May 6, 1983 barring Buck from assaulting or threatening her, and from coming within two miles of her house. (Felder & Victor, 1996, p. 14) Yet Buck continued to harass, follow and abuse Tracey. Each time, she promptly reported the violations of the order to the police to document the incidents. But Buck was not arrested until June 10, 1983.
Buck showed up at Tracey’s door, threatening her and C.J. Once again Tracey called the police. Well aware of the name and the history of threats and battering, the police officer given the call, Officer Fred Petrovitz, stopped by the station first to use to urinate before responding to the scene. (Felder & Victor, 1996, p. 15) Nearly a half-hour later, Petrovitz pulled up to Tracey’s house to find Buck chasing Tracey into the backyard. He was armed with a knife.

Still, Petrovitz did not get out of his patrol car. According to testimony by neighbors, he watched from his car as Buck chased Tracey into the backyard where Buck “grabbed her by the hair, slashed her cheek, stabbed her in the neck, knocked her down, and stabbed her 12 more times.” (Felder & Victor, 1996, p. 15) Upon hearing her scream, Petrovitz exited his car and knocked on the front door. He then entered the backyard to find Buck with a bloody knife in his hand. Petrovitz later testified, “For all I knew, since I hadn’t seen the body, the man had stabbed a dog or a chicken.” (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998, p. 207) He ordered Buck to drop the knife but did not place him under arrest. Instead, he returned to his police car to secure the knife in the trunk of his patrol car.

Buck continued to attack Tracey, stepping on her head and breaking her neck. He left briefly to get C.J. from the house. He returned and dropped C.J. on her body, threatening to kill her mother. Petrovitz re-entered the backyard and discovered Tracey lying on the ground badly injured. Nearly 30 minutes after his arrival, he called for back-up officers and an ambulance. Buck, still unrestrained, was able to attack Tracey one more time as she was being placed in the ambulance. Only then was Buck finally handcuffed and placed under arrest.

Buck Thurman was convicted in the attempted murder of Tracey. He received a 14-year prison sentence but was released after seven years. Tracey, partially paralyzed by her neck injury, sued the city of Torrington and 29 police officers for her injuries. Before a federal court,
she claimed that her rights under the 14\textsuperscript{th} Amendment of the Constitution were violated. The Amendment is supposed to guarantee equal protection under the law.

The jury agreed. Twenty-four of the 29 police officers were found negligent. Tracey was awarded $2.3 million in compensatory damages.

During an interview on 20/20 in 1991, Tracey recalled being told by the police, "'Well, if you weren't married, it'd be a lot easier'....it was like they didn't want to get involved because if was a domestic situation, you know, because it was man and wife." (American Broadcasting Companies, Inc.) Tracey had done everything she was supposed to do in her situation, including leaving her abusive husband. Still, "in the end, she was the victim not only of her husband, but also of a system that failed her by its blatant lack of response." (Felder & Victor, 1996, p. 24)
The laws that were supposed to protect Tracey instead horrifically failed her.

Current Domestic Violence Laws in New Jersey

Recognizing the epidemic nature of domestic violence, the New Jersey State Legislature created The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 1991 (the Act). The Legislature found that "many of the existing criminal statues were applicable to acts of domestic violence, ... (but) attitudes concerning domestic violence have affected the response of the law enforcement and judicial systems resulting that these acts received different treatment from similar crimes when they occur in a domestic violence context." (New Jersey Judiciary) The Act sought to address domestic violence as an intolerable crime that necessitated immediate intervention and the implementation of policies to address it.
The Act provides two types of relief to victims of domestic violence. The first is a criminal complaint where a batterer can be charged with one or more of the following:

- Homicide (N.J.S.A 2C:11-1)
- Assault (N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1)
- Terroristic threats (N.J.S.A 2C:12-3)
- Kidnapping (N.J.S.A. 2C:13.1)
- Criminal restraint (N.J.S.A. 2C:13-2)
- False imprisonment (N.J.S.A. 2C:13-3)
- Sexual assault (N.J.S.A. 2C:14-2)
- Criminal sexual assault (N.J.S.A. 2C:14-3)
- Lewdness (N.J.S.A. 2C:14-4)
- Criminal mischief (N.J.S.A. 2C:17-3)
- Burglary (N.J.S.A. 2C:18-2)
- Criminal Trespass (N.J.S.A. 2C:18-3)
- Harassment (N.J.S.A. 2C:33-4)
- Stalking (N.J.S.A. 2C:12-10)

(Domestic violence guidelines)

Police officers are required to arrest and take into custody a suspect when the victim exhibits an injury caused by an act of domestic violence, either visible or if probable cause exist, if there has been a violation of a no-contact court order (also known as a temporary restraining order), if a warrant is in effect on the suspect, or if there is probable cause that a weapon was used in the commission of an act of domestic violence.

The second form of relief for victims of domestic violence is civil whereby a restraining order may be obtained. The victim files a complaint with the court “that will ... attempt to control the abuser’s behavior.” (Legal Services of New Jersey, 1995, p. 10). The court may issue a temporary restraining order (TRO) that forbids the batterer from:

- contacting the victim, her family, relatives or friends
- entering the home of the victim or the home they share
- possessing weapons

A restraining order may be obtained after court hours in cases of emergency. Victims can obtain the appropriate paperwork to complete from the police department or fill out the
paperwork at the scene. The police contact a judge to issue the order immediately. The victim has to speak to the judge by telephone before the order takes effect.

Additional provisions include monetary restitution for pain and suffering, moving expenses, lawyer’s fees, medical bills, lost wages, cost of repairs to property damaged by the batterer, and temporary support for the victim and children. (Legal Services of New Jersey, 1995, p. 25) TROs are issued until a hearing is held to decide whether the order should be finalized, typically within 10 days. In cases where a defendant has not been served with a no-contact order, police officers are required to escort the victim to her home. The judge has the power to accommodate the victim under the law to ensure her safety. (New Jersey Department of Community Affairs)

In order to obtain a final restraining order (FRO), the victim is required to appear in court to tell her side of the story to the judge. She may include any pictures, police or medical reports as proof, and also have witnesses appear. The batterer is required to appear to answer the complaint. He is given the opportunity to present his side and can have witnesses appear as well. If the batterer does not appear at the hearing and service of the TRO/Notice to Appear has occurred, the judge will issue a FRO. (New Jersey Department of Community Affairs)

If the judge finds cause at the hearing, he or she will issue an FRO that provides “continuing protection, support, and other relief” (Williams, Oct. 30, 2001, p. 28) to the victim. The batterer is required to vacate the home unless the victim requests otherwise. The judge may also order the police to escort the batterer to remove personal items from the residence. Otherwise, he is not permitted to re-enter the home or contact the victim in any form.

When a defendant who has been served with a TRO or FRO commits another act of domestic violence or violates the terms of a court order, he is arrested and transported to the
police station. The officer signs “a criminal contempt charge concerning the incident on a complaint warrant” (New Jersey Judiciary Domestic) against the defendant and the appropriate courts are contacted to request bail. If the police officer does not find cause to file a criminal complaint, the victim is advised of the procedures for filing the complaint. The officer is to provide or arrange the transportation of the victim to headquarters to sign the complaint. If the complaint is civil, the victim must sign the complaint so that a complaint warrant can be prepared.

In 2000, there were a total of 36,071 new TROs issued, an increase of 3.7% from 1999. (Williams, Oct. 30, 2001, p. 5) A total of 11,951 FROs were issued, representing a slight decrease from the previous year. (Williams, Oct. 30, 2001, p. 16) The number of TROs and FROs overall has been decreasing with cases being denied or vacated by the victim. Reasons for the decrease were not provided.

Additionally, a victim may have a restraining order or order of protection issued in another state officially recognized by New Jersey courts and law enforcement. ” (New Jersey Judiciary Domestic) She may obtain a New Jersey restraining order by appearing in Family Court. Or she may do nothing. Her existing order is recognized by the courts and law enforcement as being valid. The latter option is preferable so that the victim does not have to disclose she has moved.

In 1994, the Legislature made amendments to the Act to “provide for the restraint against contact by the defendant personally or through an agent including verbal and written communication, with the plaintiff or others under the protection of a TRO or FRO.” (Williams, Oct. 30, 2001, p. 21) The amendments clarified the definitions of contact and harassing communications.
To further protect victims, New Jersey has established victim waiting rooms. The purpose of the rooms is to ease the victims' stress by not having them share the same waiting room with other litigants or possibly their batterer. Currently there are eight waiting rooms in Cumberland, Gloucester, Hudson, Mercer, Morris, Ocean, Salem and Union counties with plans to install more. (New Jersey Judiciary Domestic) In addition, some courthouses have a waiting room for the children of victims, providing volunteer baby-sitting services and education regarding health and social service programs. (Felder & Victor, 1996, p. 186)


Conclusion

For centuries, women were considered property under marriage and therefore subjected to the discipline their husbands chose to inflict. Laws such as the Rule of Thumb codified the abuse of women while limiting the size of the instrument a husband could use on his wife. It was not until the late 1800s that state courts started to outlaw wife beating. Most of the current laws protecting women were recent inventions, formed in response to feminist outcries. Mandatory
arrests, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and New Jersey’s Prevention of Domestic Violence Act were created in response to clinical research and the epidemic nature of domestic violence. Despite the implementation of laws, domestic violence remains a serious legal and civil issue.
CHAPTER FIVE
IN HER OWN WORDS: WHY DID YOU STAY?

The answer as to why women stay in abusive relationships is not always easy to recognize. Despite some similarities, each story is unique.

To help illustrate the problem, a survivor of domestic violence was interviewed to illuminate one of the many faces and causes of domestic violence. Lauren* came from an upper middle-class family. Stuck in between an older sister and younger brother, her life was pretty comfortable. Her parents worked hard to give her a private school education, nice clothes, a used car when she learned to drive. Lauren was pretty shy - she did well in school, didn’t get in trouble – “My mother says I didn’t give her a gray hair!”

College was a drastic change for Lauren. A big public university in a big city, very different than the suburban all-girl Catholic high school she went to. It wasn’t exactly the college she wanted. But she adapted, found some good friends and bad ones. Her love life was not spectacular – “I had a boyfriend or two but nothing serious” - until she met Christopher*.

Lauren’s story:

*Names have been changed to respect the confidentiality of the survivor and the batterer.
The Beginning

“I met Christopher when I was a senior in college. We took some classes together or next to each other so we would hang outside of class before it started, talking and smoking cigarettes. I was pretty shy back then so it felt good to talk to a guy that I thought was cute.”

At some point during their conversations, Lauren found out that Christopher was engaged. “I was a little disappointed but not for long. He broke up with his fiancé over the winter break. He never called her by her name. Instead he used to call her ‘psycho’ or ‘bitch.’ I thought it was strange. But I believed him when he said she was crazy after listening to him talk about her and the things that she did to him like stabbing him with a fork.” They had apparently gotten into some kind of argument.

Christopher asked Lauren out in May. It was right around her graduation. He was supposed to graduate in December. She invited him to her graduation dinner with her family but didn’t get to spend too much time with him that night with everything that was going on. Soon after, they started going out on a regular basis.

“Well, my parents did not like Christopher right away. They said they had a bad feeling about him. My mother even talked about other guys she thought I should go out with right in front of him or ignored him whenever he came over. I thought it was pretty rude because they just met him.”

According to Lauren, Christopher was very sweet in the beginning. He would send flowers after dates or after he said something she didn’t like. “I can remember leaving his house quite a few times after he said something I didn’t like. He liked to make crude remarks. I would get pissed off and leave. Then he would call me to apologize and send flowers. I would forgive him and pretty much forget about it.”
Things went pretty good for the most part. They took their first trip together about four months after they started going out, telling people they were married. “And we got along pretty well despite some differences – Christopher liked to drink, I didn’t; he liked older music, I liked newer groups; he grew a beard and moustache, I hated it; he liked dogs, I loved my cats. I mean we had our differences but it was no big deal.” Or so she thought.

First Signs of Trouble

About a year into the relationship, “just when I thought everything was going great,” Christopher hurt one of Lauren’s cats. “I don’t know exactly how it happened. I only know what he told me. He was staying at my house while I was at work. I had told Christopher a million times, ‘Just leave my cats alone. They don’t like you. They’re going to get hurt.’ My cats liked him at first but they started hissing at him when he came over.”

Christopher trapped the older cat, Socks, in the laundry room when he went to get some of his clothes. Socks was probably in there to use the litter box. He tried to escape but Christopher wanted to ‘make friends’ with him. Instead, Socks jumped all around the room trying to escape and hurt his eye and lip.

Christopher was supposed to meet Lauren for lunch that day. He called right before lunch to say he couldn’t make it. He said had car problems. She talked to him once or twice before she left work. Somehow he managed to get home later that afternoon. But he didn’t tell her about Socks until she got to his house. “Christopher started telling me about how he used to get hit in the face playing baseball. His face would swell up and there would be blood in his eye. I asked him why he was telling me about this. Christopher started to tell me about what
happened to Socks. I immediately knew something bad had happened. I listened to his story for a few minutes before I flew out of the house.”

Christopher followed Lauren home. “When I got there, I found Socks behind the dresser. He meowed like he was in pain and I saw blood in his eye. I took him to the emergency vet right away. Christopher followed me there but didn’t come in because he couldn’t bear finding out what was wrong. He also said he would pay the bill before he left. I wanted to kill him.”

When Lauren got back from the vet, she called Christopher to tell him they were over. She barely saw him over the next few days because she had to take care of Socks after work. When she did see him at his house a week later, her parents found out what happened to Socks from her brother who came home soon after Christopher hurt Socks.

“They called me at his house and told me to come home immediately or they would call the police. When I got home, they started to tell me how Christopher was violent and that I shouldn’t go out with him. I was really upset with them but I told them I broke up with Christopher.”

It’s Over?

Well, Lauren didn’t break up with Christopher. A few days later, “we were back together but I held what happened to Socks over his head for a while. He was extremely nice to me and apologetic.”

Around this time Lauren lost her job due to downsizing. She spent the entire summer going on interviews. Christopher and Lauren planned a two-week trip out west in August. It was more of his idea than hers. Right before they left, she got a job. “My 23rd interview!” Lauren knew the company was probably moving in a year but she took the job anyway.
“I didn’t start my new job until after our trip. We had a good time on the trip. I had pretty much forgiven him for hurting Socks. When I came back, I started my new job and found out that the company was moving but I would be eligible for severance and stay bonus if I didn’t move. Christopher also got a job.” It was the first time they both worked at the same time.

About four months later, Christopher proposed to Lauren. “We were in his car on the way to the pet store when he told me to open up the glove compartment for a map. When I closed it, he asked me if I saw anything in there. I told him I did but in my mind I’m thinking it wasn’t the right time. He told me to open the glove compartment again and take out the box. I opened it to see an engagement ring. I took the ring out and looked at it. I told him that it really wasn’t the right time. But he asked me to marry him anyway. I said yes.”

They decided to celebrate by going out to dinner. “I wound up paying for it.” Lauren told Christopher they should go to her house to tell her parents. So after dinner, they drove over there. “I told my parents to come into the living room because we had to tell them something. I’m sure they were thinking that I was pregnant or something. When I told them that Christopher proposed, my mother reacted by saying ‘Oh my God’ and walking away. She was very unhappy. My father didn’t say much. I could tell he was not happy either but he kept it inside.” Lauren was determined to not let them ruin what was supposed to be a special night. But it was painfully obvious to her that her parents did not approve.

“Right after Christopher proposed, he started to get unbelievably jealous. He insisted on me telling him if I spoke to men at work, what they looked like, what they said. It was kind of a joke in the beginning but he was getting more and more pissed off. I would tell him everything, even if I said hi to someone in the elevator.”
Christopher also started to fight back when they got into arguments. "I can remember the day before Thanksgiving. I got a lollipop from a guy at work. He was passing them out to all the girls in the office. Christopher knew about this guy and the fact he was married but he was still jealous. I told him I wasn't interested in the guy because I loved him." So when he found the lollipop in her pocketbook, he asked her about where it came from. "I told him I got it from the guy at work. Well, he went ballistic. He was screaming 'I asked if you talked to any guys at work.' I told him I forgot it was in there which was true." But Christopher thought she had lied to him. Christopher punished her by taking away the engagement ring.

Christopher's family started to come over for a party so the fight ended for the time. But she could tell he was mad. Lauren was hoping he would calm down and give the ring back. But it just got worse.

"We were talking about drunk driving laws with his cousin's husband and brother-in-law. Christopher was saying that it was legal to drink in a car if he was a passenger. I told him it wasn't -- no open containers in a car. Even his brother-in-law agreed with me and he worked for an insurance company." Christopher insisted he was right since he had been convicted of drunk driving and went to drunk driving school like it was something to be proud of.

Christopher left and went upstairs into the living room. Lauren found him sitting in a chair in the dark. He didn't want to talk to her. When she tried, "he accused me of making him look bad in front of his family. I told him he was wrong, I wouldn't do that to him. He told me to leave. I said I wasn't going because I didn't do anything wrong. Christopher then started to accuse me of flirting with his cousin's husband. I said I wasn't. When I didn't go, he got up and grabbed me by the arms and threw me across the room." Lauren was not hurt but she wasn't about to leave just yet.
“We fought for another 10 minutes until Christopher threw me down to the ground hard. I thought my arm was broken. I got up crying, hoping that someone from his family would come upstairs to find out what was happening with all the noise. That didn’t happen. They were probably drunk. So I decided to leave.”

The next day Lauren played on her injured arm to make Christopher feel guilty. When they talked on the phone, she told him that she was considering going to the hospital to get her arm checked out. “I really wanted him to admit he was wrong for hurting me.”

They talked for a while without screaming at each other. Christopher finally apologized for hurting her. “He was worried that if I did go to the hospital, my parents would find out and never like him. I told Christopher he was abusive. He said he wasn’t. I believed him because it was partially my fault for not leaving sooner.”

Lauren went over to Christopher’s house that night. “I was holding my arm to show him I was still hurting. He was nice to me.” But she didn’t get her engagement ring back.

From Bad to Worse

The next two months were hell. Lauren had to hide her hand “so nobody would see that the ring was gone. I was really depressed.” She found the ring hiding in a cabinet at his house. “When he left the room, I would take it out to look at it and put it on my finger.” Christopher finally gave it back to Lauren in January under the condition that “I had to promise not to lie to him anymore.”

After Lauren got the ring back, Christopher started to talk about moving out west. He had quit his job because the women in the office were ‘bitches.’ Lauren still had her job. “I wasn’t really interested in moving but I felt pressured by him to go along. We started sending
out resumes to different cities. We planned another trip in May so we could be available for
interviews. I think we sent around 250 resumes with barely any responses.” Christopher did
manage to get two interviews – one in Rapid City, the other in Santa Fe. Lauren was hoping he
wouldn’t get a job “so we wouldn’t move.”

“We got into two fights during the trip. One day Christopher wanted to drive but I was
afraid he was going to crash or get a speeding ticket. We had a rental car and it was in my name.
Well, he kept on harassing me saying I wasn’t driving fast enough so I went faster. I wound up
getting a speeding ticket for doing 25 mph over the limit. It was the first speeding ticket I ever
got. $116!”

“We fought again on the way back home. We were driving through New Mexico.
Christopher was speeding along these narrow roads. I told him to turn off the air conditioner to
save gas. He could open windows to get cool. He didn’t want to because the air was still hot. I
thought he was being ridiculous. But I decided to let him have his way because I needed to get
home to get back to work.” It took 36 long hours to drive home.

About a month after returning from the trip, Christopher got a call from the job in Santa
Fe. It was his if he wanted it. The pay was low but it was a chance to move. “I wasn’t really
interested in moving but he brought up how I promised we would move if either one of us got a
job. When I told my parents, they were obviously upset. They didn’t want me to go with him
but they knew my decision had been made.”

Soon after, Christopher started to make Lauren doubt the move out west. He was asking
her what she thought about the job – ‘should I take it, what if I don’t like it.’ Lauren wound up
telling him she wasn’t moving. “He was angry at first. But when I told him that even he had
doubts about the job, he went along with it.” They didn’t move yet. Instead they sent out more resumes and planned another trip out west.

In late August Lauren lost her job. The company moved to Atlanta. “I received a nice severance and stay bonus. Christopher and I planned on visiting four cities out west and moving to the nicest one even without a job.” They weren’t planning on returning.

“The day before we left, Christopher and I had a fight at my house. I told him I didn’t want to go. He threatened to kill me. He pushed a plant off my dresser.” The dish underneath the plant broke and cut her arm. “I wound up throwing the engagement ring at him. I told him I was going to call the police. He said he would tell them I had the ring and that I would be arrested. So I didn’t call the police.” Instead, Lauren packed her bags for the trip. “I was really afraid he would kill me if I didn’t go.”

Are You Stupid?

“We left at 6:00 a.m. the next morning. I was crying when I said goodbye to my cats. I knew I wasn’t going to see them for a while.” Lauren’s brother agreed to take care of them for her. “I didn’t let anybody know what was going on. My parents were on vacation in Mexico. My sister lived miles away. My brother thought I was going on vacation. I was really sad.”

To make the trip/move easier, they packed clothes, towels, pillows, blankets and a television in Christopher’s car. They left the car at an airport in Kansas and picked up a rental car for the rest of the trip. The first stop was San Antonio.

Just a few hours after picking up the car, Christopher was driving through Oklahoma City. “I told him to slow down and move to the middle lane when we reached the city limits.” The speed limit had dropped and the roads were more crowded. He insisted on staying in the left
lane. A mile or two up the road, he flew by a state trooper radaring from the median. “The next thing I know, the trooper is behind us.” Christopher moved over to the right lane, still going slightly over the limit. He kept on saying the trooper wasn’t going to pull him over. He did.

The trooper immediately placed Christopher in the back of his patrol car. “I was scared. When he came back, the trooper asked me for the registration and insurance papers. I told him that it was a rental car. I gave him the paperwork. He then asked for my drivers’ license. After looking at everything, he started to ask me questions like where we were going, what we were doing, why we had a rental car with Kansas plates. I explained everything to the trooper - about how we drove to Kansas, left Christopher’s car there, and how we were planning on finding a place to move to. He went back to his patrol car to talk to Christopher. “

“I was standing behind the rental car when the trooper went back to his car.” It was about 4:00 p.m. with rush hour traffic driving by. “I was so embarrassed standing out there with all the people passing by looking at me.” Ten minutes later, the trooper came back to tell Lauren that their stories matched but he wanted to search the car. “He said that the highway was a major drug route and he had pulled over a car the week before and found $200,000 worth of the drugs.” At this point, another trooper pulled up with a police dog. “I gave the trooper permission to search the car. The other trooper brought out the dog and had him sniff the outside of the car. Our bags were taken out of the trunk and searched. I wanted to die!”

The first trooper came over to Lauren with the pillow she had on her seat. He found a cashier’s check for $5,000 inside the pillowcase. “I explained that the money was a bonus from an old job. I had the check with me to make opening a bank account easier when Christopher and I got to wherever we were moving to.” The trooper asked Lauren if she had paperwork to
prove it. "I told him I could give him a phone number to call. He said the number could be a set-up."

The trooper then asked me why Christopher was so nervous - 'Has he ever been arrested before?' "I said yes. I was thinking about his drunk driving conviction. Certainly he could find out about that. I did tell him that it happened a long time ago but I didn't tell him it was for drunk driving."

The trooper then told Lauren that the dog had a 'hit' on the driver's side rear wheel well but no drugs were found. He said it would be hard to prove that any drugs found in the car were theirs because they had just picked up the car hours earlier. So he let Christopher go with a warning.

"Christopher was pissed when he got back to the car. He wanted to file a complaint against the trooper for harassment. I was a little annoyed too but really glad that the trooper didn't give Christopher a ticket for speeding. He wasn't supposed to be driving the car."

Christopher then asked Lauren what the trooper was asking about when she was standing outside the car. "I said I explained to the trooper the whole story about our moving, how we just got the rental car in Kansas, and why I had a cashier's check in the pillowcase."

Christopher pressed Lauren for more information since he thought she had talked to the trooper about more than that. "I mentioned the trooper asking about how nervous he was and whether he had ever been arrested before. He asked 'What did you say?' I told him 'Yes, he has been arrested before. But it was a long time ago.'" Christopher went ballistic. He slapped Lauren across the face while he was driving. "He screamed at me 'What the hell did you tell him that for?' 'Are you stupid?' I tried to tell Christopher that the trooper could find out about his drunk driving arrest. But he kept on saying that it was off of his record."
Christopher threatened to drive the car into a highway overpass at 60 mph “if I didn’t tell him the whole thing was my fault. He was grabbing my arm and hitting me. I had to agree with him if I wanted to stay alive.”

The rest of the trip was a blur. “I was very depressed and didn’t care if Christopher killed me. I felt like he would be doing me a favor by putting me out of my misery.” When they reached their final destination, Denver, “I told him that I was going to buy a plane ticket and fly home. I called to get flight info from our hotel room.” The nearest airport Lauren could fly out of was St. Louis. “I told him we could return the rental car to Kansas, he could take me to St. Louis or I could take a bus from Kansas, and he was free to do whatever he wanted. I even offered to give him $2,000 to go away. “

“Christopher started to throw me around the room. He wound up leaving and taking the rental car. I was worried that he was going to get drunk and crash the car. He returned a few hours later and asked me to stay. ‘After all, this was both of our dreams.’ I gave in again.”

Lauren and Christopher decided to move to Denver. “I convinced him that it was the best choice compared to the other places we went to.” Finding an apartment was relatively easy. “We found a nice one-bedroom close to downtown. A few days later, we dropped off the rental car in Kansas and picked up his car. We then drove back to Denver.” It was October 1.

Christopher and Lauren spent their first few days in Denver setting up - buying pots, dishes, a mattress, and getting the telephone and cable installed. “I was paying the rent, food, gas-basically everything. I was getting unemployment from my previous job which helped a little. But it was expensive.”
"A few days later, I called my parents to let them know that I would not be coming home, that we had moved to Denver. I could tell they were upset but they knew they couldn’t do anything. I just really wanted to go home."

They did return a few weeks later to pick up Lauren’s car, some more clothes and her two cats. She had to close her bank accounts and get some more stuff for the apartment from home. “My parents were pretty good. They actually gave us a microwave.” Christopher packed his stereo and tapes in the car. But the drive back to Denver was pretty rough. Christopher wanted to drive straight through. Lauren had to stop to sleep. The fights continued.

“We started to look for jobs in Denver when we returned. It was rough. We didn’t know we were considered ‘outsiders.’ They hated people that weren’t from Colorado.” Christopher started to change his resume to give him more experience and more prestigious titles. He went from an assistant to a director at his last job. “I refused to change his resume – I wanted no part of it. So I told him he had to change the resume himself at Kinkos.”

“I had a few interviews myself. I did get a job at an engineering firm with a great salary. But I turned it down. Christopher had to get a job first. Plus I was nervous about leaving him home alone with my cats. I told Christopher that I didn’t take the job because I was their third choice.” Lauren tried to drown herself in the bathtub that night.

Close Call

Christopher had to have his evenings out. “I gave him $20 to go downtown and basically get drunk once a week. It was his ‘allowance.’ I would drive him there and back to avoid him being arrested for drunk driving, again. I would stay home and call my parents so he wouldn’t make rude remarks about them.” One night after Lauren dropped Christopher off downtown, she
called her father. "I wanted so bad to tell him Christopher was abusive. He could tell I had been crying. When my father asked if everything was ok, I said that we were having some problems but no big deal. God, I hated lying to my parents like that."

During one of their more intense arguments, Lauren picked up the phone and started calling 911. "He grabbed me by the arms and punched me in the chest." Clothes were thrown everywhere. There was coffee all over the walls. When he left the room, she pressed 9 and 1 before she hung up the phone. "I was afraid. I was afraid that the police wouldn't believe me because we were only living together. I was afraid that my problem was not serious enough. I was afraid because I had just moved to the area. I was afraid Christopher would hurt me more if he knew I called."

When Christopher came back into the room, he ripped the telephone cord out of the wall. Lauren spent the rest of the night cleaning up the mess on the floor and walls. The living room floor became her new bed.

"I called a domestic violence shelter soon after that. I told Christopher I was going to Kinkos to fax some resumes. I took my two cats with me because I was afraid that he would hurt them while I was gone." But instead of faxing resumes, Lauren stood outside the store on a payphone telling a woman from the shelter about the abuse. "She kept asking me where I was because she wanted to make sure I was safe. I told her I was out of the house. She asked if I had any injuries. I told her about the bruises on my arms and breast. She wanted to send the police to pick me up and file a report. I needed to go to a shelter. I explained I had my cats in the car. She asked me, 'Could you get someone to watch them? The shelter doesn't allow animals.' I told her no, I couldn't leave my cats with anyone. They needed me and I needed them." Lauren hung up the phone.
"I drove back to the apartment in tears. Here I was in a strange city with no friends, no family, no one to help me." Lauren resigned herself to being in the horrible relationship with Christopher.

"I did get a break at Thanksgiving. Christopher went back home for the holidays to be with his family. I was going to be alone for a week. He left the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. I had an interview that morning. It started to snow. After the interview, I went to the supermarket to buy stuff for Thanksgiving before the snow really picked up. I bought an eight-pound turkey, stuffing, vegetables, dinner rolls, and stuff to make homemade gravy. My cats and I were going to pig out!"

"Christopher called me virtually every hour he was traveling back home. He called from every stop the bus made using the calling card. He said he missed me and was worried about me. He also wanted to know how my interview went. I told him I missed him too and that everything went well. I really wanted to tell him that I was glad he was gone."

"I spent most of Thanksgiving day preparing dinner and watching the parade." The cats were able to roam around the apartment freely and even sleep on the bed with Lauren. "Christopher didn’t let them in the bedroom because their hair got in his eyes. He wore contacts. So they spent most of the time hiding in the front closet."

Dinner was great. "I shared everything with my cats including leftovers for the next few days. They slept in the bed with me. I tried to make up for lost time. For the first time in months, I wasn’t stressed out or worried that Christopher was going to hurt me. He did call. But I didn’t care. I was enjoying my freedom."
The holiday ended too quickly. Lauren had to make sure the sheets and comforter were washed before Christopher came back — no evidence of cat hair. The cats had to go back into hiding. “I was really depressed.”

Soon after Christopher returned, Lauren started to build a wall around herself. She became immune to his verbal tirades. “The fight started to come back in me — both emotionally and physically. Not that I have a temper. I told Christopher I hated him to his face. He told me that our relationship was over. He would move out after he got a job. I started to sleep on the living room floor on a regular basis to avoid him. The discomfort of carpet-covered concrete was worth being near my cats.”

Rude Awakening

A few days before going home for Christmas, Christopher and Lauren had their last big argument. He had an interview early in the morning at a government facility. It was supposed to snow. In the middle of the night, he came into the living room with the alarm clock in his hand. Apparently when he tried to look out the window to check the weather, he accidentally pulled the cord out of the wall. He wanted Lauren to reset the clock.

“I started to tell him how easy it was to reset the clock. He wanted no part of it. ‘Can’t you do it for me?’ I got up to reset the clock because I knew I’d never get back to sleep. I set the time and both alarms (it was a dual alarm clock) and went back to bed. I was pretty pissed at him for waking me up. I think I even called him stupid.”

The next morning Lauren woke up to Christopher on the phone. “I could tell after a few minutes that he was talking to the person he was supposed to be interviewing with. I didn’t let him know I was awake right away. When I did get up, he starting screaming at me ‘The alarm
didn’t go off. What did you do to the clock?” He wanted me to give him a good ‘car problem’ excuse he could use when he finally made it to the interview. I gave him a few ideas – dead battery. No, that wasn’t good enough. The starter? No, that didn’t sound believable. He didn’t want to appear like the idiot he was. I knew more about cars than he did.”

“I went in the bedroom to look at the alarm clock. I noticed that the alarm button was on radio, not buzzer. The volume was low so he didn’t hear it. I told Christopher that he probably pushed the button to radio when he picked it up the night before. ‘No I didn’t.’ I went back in the living room to lie down again. I decided to stay there until he left for his interview.”

When Christopher returned three hours later, he was still pissed. He didn’t think the guy who interviewed him believed that he had car problems. “And he said it was all my fault. ‘I am going to smash the alarm clock’. He went into the closet for his baseball bat. I ran into the bedroom to get the clock. I’m thinking if he breaks the clock, neither one of us will ever be on time for an interview. Duh!”

“I had the clock in my arms when he came in with the bat. He tried to get it out of my hands. I fell on to the bed face first with the clock against my chest. He fell on top of me trying to pull it from my hands. When Christopher couldn’t get the clock, he put his hand over my mouth and nose. I couldn’t breathe. I started to bite his hand. He finally took his hand off my mouth but scratched my face. I ran screaming into the bathroom to splash water on my face. It was burning. I walked back into the living room to lay back down on my ‘bed.’ I could hear Christopher smashing the clock in the bedroom.”

Lauren stayed in the apartment for the next few days. “My face was bruised and red from where Christopher scratched me. I made an effort to avoid arguing with him until we drove home for Christmas a few days later.”
The Final Trip

The drive to New Jersey was torturous. "I was afraid that he was going to kill me and dump my body in the middle of nowhere. He had threatened to do it a few times before. I also had my cats in the backseat of the car. They both hid in the carrier. When we stopped at a rest stop, I went into the bathroom leaving Christopher and the cats alone in the car. About an hour after we left the rest stop he said he needed to stop and get some antiseptic for his hand. It was all bloody. He had put his hand in my cats' carrier when I was in the bathroom. The cats did a nice job scratching him. We stopped at a mini-mart to get some liquid hydrocortisone. He poured it over his hand inside the car right over the gearshift. How stupid! I yelled at him to put his hand outside of the car. But I was laughing on the inside. Thank you Socks!"

They arrived in New Jersey on Christmas Eve day. It was Friday. "I dropped him off to stay at his parents' house. I stayed at my parents' house. By that time, the scratches had pretty much healed on my face. I was thinking about telling my parents about the abuse. I felt so comfortable being back home with my family."

Christopher and Lauren were going to stay for four days before heading back to Denver. Christmas Day was spent with their respective families. "The day after Christmas we went to his sister's house for a party. Christopher got drunk and basically ignored me the whole evening. When I dropped him off at his parents, he went inside without saying a word. He didn't go to the window to wave to me either like he normally did. I drove home crying. I knew it was over."

The night before they were supposed to leave, Christopher went over to his cousin's house. "He was going to drink and 'screw around.' I told him to go ahead, have fun. I didn't care. I went over to a friend's house and told her about the abuse. It felt good to finally tell someone. She gave me the best advice - tell your parents. 'They'll support you.' I really
needed to hear that.” But in the short drive home, she changed her mind. “I was going back to Denver with Christopher. I wasn’t going to tell them.”

“I was in my room packing when my father came in and sat down on my bed. He asked me ‘How are you?’ But it wasn’t a rhetorical question.” The tears started to flow. “I told him that Christopher and I were over. He was going to leave after he got a job. In the meantime, I had gotten a job finally. I was supposed to start the day after New Years. My father asked me about why we were breaking up. I started to tell him about the abuse. ‘Physical?’ I said yes. I could tell my father was close to tears.” There was no turning back now.

About this time Christopher starting calling the house. “My father answered the first three times, telling him I wasn’t home yet. But Christopher kept calling and leaving messages on the answering machine. The calls woke up my mother. She came into my room to see me crying. My dad told her that Christopher was abusing me. She asked if he hurt me. I said yes. She wanted to kill him.”

“We spent the next two hours talking. My parents asked me what I wanted to do. I said I wanted to go back to Denver. I had a job now. I had an apartment. All my stuff was out there. And I needed to get back so I could call in my unemployment. We decided my mother would drive back to Denver with me on Wednesday.” But most importantly, Lauren needed to break up with Christopher. “My parents told me to go to sleep and worry about it in the morning.” It was 2:00 a.m.

“I was supposed to pick up Christopher at 8:00 a.m. to go back to Denver. Instead, I woke up at 8:20 a.m. to the phone ringing. My mother answered it. It was Christopher. My mother was amazingly nice to him. I heard her tell him that I was sleeping but she would have me call him back.”
"I walked downstairs. I started to remember everything that had happened the night before. And I was dreading calling Christopher. She put her hand on my shoulder and told me to give it a while. But I knew I had to get it over with."

When Lauren called Christopher back, he asked where she was the night before. "I said 'I was home.' I then said 'I told them. I told my parents about the abuse.' He got really nervous. He said 'what do you mean you told them?' I said again, 'I told them you are abusing me. It's over.' He started to freak out."

Christopher asked Lauren to meet him somewhere, 'I have to see you.' "Part of me wanted to so I could break up with him in person. But I was afraid we wouldn't break up if I did. He started to tell me about how loyal I was to him. I thought that was kind of strange. And he kept on telling me that he loved me. He even started to cry. I was crying too. My mother put her hand on my shoulder and told me to end the call." It wasn't going anywhere.

So when Christopher told Lauren to hang on while he got a drink of water, she hung up the phone. He didn't call back. "That was the last time I talked to him."

The Revelation

Lauren spent the rest of the day crying and wondering what Christopher was doing. "I thought he would show up at the house but he didn't, thank God." That night her family celebrated her older sister's birthday. Lauren and her mother left the next morning to go back to Denver.

"My mom and I spent a lot of time talking on the drive back. I wasn't 100 percent convinced that the whole thing was over. Part of me wanted to get back together. But she kept on telling me why I shouldn't."
They stopped somewhere in Idaho for the night and called home. "My father and sister kept in touch with Christopher because he needed to get his stuff from the apartment in Denver. I was still thinking that maybe I shouldn’t have broken up with him, you know, maybe we could get back together. But I knew my parents were not going to let it happen."

The next day while driving through Nebraska, Lauren and her mother stopped at a Perkin’s to get something to eat. They called home again. Lauren spoke to her father. "He started to tell me how Christopher denied he ever hurt me. I couldn’t believe it. He never hurt me? What was he talking about he never hurt me? What about the bruises on my arm from where he grabbed me? Or the bruise on my breast from where he punched me? Or the bruises and scratches on my face from the time he put his hand over my nose and mouth?"

"I decided right then and there that Christopher and I were definitely over. I was really pissed off now. He hurt me and he was lying about it. I couldn’t believe it. I mean talk about denial." Lauren was determined more than ever to just get back to Denver and get on with her life. "No more crying for me!"

Lauren and her mother arrived in Denver that night. Her mother started making phone calls to see what they could do about Christopher. She called a shelter and was told that Lauren could file a report that basically tells the police that Lauren fears for her safety, please respond quickly. She then called her father to tell him what they were going to do. "That’s when I found out Christopher was planning on coming back to Denver to live. He wanted the apartment. I said he could have it. I mean how was he going to pay for it? I paid for everything."

On New Year’s Eve day, Lauren and her mother went to the Denver Police to file the report. After talking to a detective for a few minutes, she decided that she was going to arrest Christopher. "I almost died. She said there was enough evidence to charge him with domestic
violence, misdemeanor assault. She had me tell the whole story about the last time Christopher hurt me. It was a little awkward telling the detective the story with my mother there. I could tell she just wanted to kill him.”

The detective told Lauren and her mother that she would issue an arrest warrant after she got it signed by a judge later that day. “We told her that Christopher was planning on coming back to Denver on Sunday. She said that I should call the police when he showed up, tell them he had an arrest warrant, so he could be arrested. In the meantime, she suggested that I go over to the courthouse to get a restraining order. We did.” But the courts were closed for the holiday. And it was Friday.

“My mother and I went back to my apartment to call my dad to tell him what happened. We were all pretty surprised that Christopher was going to be arrested. My dad was really worried about what he might do when he came back so he decided to fly out to Denver the next day. I had to tell my old apartment manager, Maureen, what was going on. She was very sympathetic and told me she was abused by her ex-husband.” Maureen didn’t want Christopher back in the building.

On Saturday, Lauren’s father arrived in Denver. “We picked him up from the airport. Since I still had the rental car, we extended it for a few days so my parents could have a car to drive. We spent the afternoon at a mall getting some things I needed for the apartment, like a vacuum cleaner. We also did some food shopping so my parents had food to eat. When we got back, we started to put all of Christopher’s stuff in boxes so he could take it and leave.” Lauren decided to keep the apartment since she had a job.
Another Close Call

Christopher was supposed to get to Denver early Sunday morning. He had taken the train out. "He didn't call when he got in so we were all surprised when Maureen came to the door to say Christopher was in her office. My mom told me to call the police and the detective. I couldn't. I was shaking and crying. Well my mom had to do it for me." In the meantime Lauren's dad went into the office to speak to Christopher to let him know that she wanted to keep the apartment. They were not going to let him in.

"I don't know if Christopher knew it but my dad taped the conversation. He offered to pay me $1,000 if I left. My dad told him that I wanted the apartment. Somehow they started talking about what he did to me. Christopher denied he ever hurt me. He went on to say that he was the victim and that I was the violent one. I wouldn't have believed it if I didn't hear it myself. I don't know how my dad kept his composure through the whole thing."

Just about this time, the police arrived. They talked to Christopher for a few minutes and then came in to talk to Lauren. "They told me they did not have an arrest warrant for Christopher. I felt like an idiot. Well, a little while later, the detective that issued the warrant called and spoke to one of the officers. She told them that the warrant was not signed because the courts were closed on Friday. But she was going to get a judge to sign it that afternoon. I asked if the police if they could come back and arrest him. They said they couldn't but they would make him stay somewhere else that night." Christopher also had to go to the police station at 9:00 a.m. the next morning. He would be arrested then. But they didn't tell him that part.
Christopher stayed in the apartment building that night at a friend's place. He went to a party the apartment building was throwing for the holidays. "I found out that he was telling everybody that I was crazy and my cats were crazy. I was thinking if they only knew the truth."

The next day Lauren started my new job. "My parents drove me to make sure I got there ok. A few hours later I got a call from my dad telling me Christopher had been arrested and was in jail." He was scheduled to be arraigned the next day. "I had to go in to speak to the office manager to tell her what was going on and tell her I needed to take the afternoon off to get a restraining order. It turned out her daughter had similar problems. So that afternoon my dad picked me up to go the courthouse."

"I got the restraining order without any problems." Christopher was served while he was in jail so he would not be able to come back to the apartment to stay. He was arraigned Tuesday morning and pled not guilty. "My parents were there. They said he didn’t look their way." Bond was set at $500. "I don’t know if anybody from his family was there. My parents didn’t know what his parents or sisters looked like." But obviously somebody helped him because he was released later that day.

In the meantime, Lauren’s parents started looking for a new apartment for her while she was at work. "We drove around when I got home to look at some of them. I wasn’t really into moving and the apartments were expensive. But my parents were telling me – ‘you don’t want to stay here,’ ‘you’ll have all these memories about Christopher.’ It made sense, especially the part about having the bad memories."

On Thursday Lauren’s father went to the courthouse to find out about Christopher’s case. "I know they found his car parked near the courthouse." It was there for a few days. "Well, when my dad picked me up from work, he said he had some good news and some bad news. The
good news was that Christopher was gone. The bad news was that he was able to plead no contest and avoid jail time. I was pretty upset.” The city attorney’s office didn’t tell Lauren he pled no contest.

“The next thing I know, the city attorney’s office contacts my parents to tell us that Christopher was going to stop by to pick up his stuff. Since I had the restraining order on him, he had to have the police escort him over. His sister was going to be with him. I guess she flew out to rescue him. She was similar to me – middle child, college graduate of the family. Well, she left her husband who had third degree burns on his feet at home with their little baby. How pathetic!”

About 7:00 p.m., the police knocked at the door. Christopher wanted to get his stuff. “I went into the bedroom to make sure I didn’t see him or his sister. I stayed in the bedroom while they dragged the boxes out of the apartment. When the coast was clear, I went into the living room to talk to the police. They also had a counselor with them to make sure I was ok. The one thing I remember most about that night was how my younger cat, Pearl, reacted to everything. She was always afraid of people and ran away at the slightest noise. When I was talking to the officers, she actually walked over and looked up at them like, ‘I know you’re good people.’ It blew my mind!”

That weekend, Lauren signed a lease on a new apartment. “It was beautiful – views of downtown and the mountains, new building, swimming pool, exercise room, covered parking – obviously a ritzy place. They had a doorman and controlled access.” Lauren told her parents it was too expensive. But they wanted her to be safe. “They agreed to pay the difference between what I was paying at my old apartment and the new apartment.”
“My dad left to go back home that weekend. My mom stayed with me for about a month. She really kept me going. She went to counseling with me and kept me from feeling sorry for myself. She also helped me move into my new apartment. It was funny. I had no real furniture to move, just 50 small boxes. I paid a moving company $150 to move them. I left the chairs Christopher and I got in the old apartment.”

After Lauren’s mother left, “I was alone for the first time. We talked on the phone almost every day. My sister called every other week – she called one Sunday, I’d call the next. I missed home but I wanted to make it on my own.”

In June, Lauren started some one-on-one counseling sessions through Safehouse. She met with a counselor once a week for three weeks. “She wasn’t helpful but I was able to talk about what happened. After the last session, it was a Monday, I told her I felt better which was kind of true.” But Lauren knew she needed more help.

A Setback

“A day after the last session, I had a really bad feeling. I can’t really explain it. I just felt that something bad was going to happen.” Wednesday night Lauren’s parents called to tell her Christopher was coming back to Denver. Maureen from the old apartment called her parents to tell them he wanted to move into the other apartment building she managed next door. “She knew about the restraining order which meant he couldn’t go there. Well, she called my parents to let them know he was coming out on Friday. She was worried about me.”

“I was really scared. I called a shelter to talk to someone. She told me I should stay there if I felt in danger. I decided I was safer in my apartment.” It had a doorman, cameras everywhere, Christopher’s picture at the doorman’s desk. So the woman told me to call the
police to let them know.” They started to patrol the apartment building more because “I didn’t know if Christopher knew where I had moved to.”

“I called the city attorney’s office the next day to let them know Christopher was coming out. She told me he would be arrested if he showed up at the old apartment building – ‘just call the police and they’ll take him in for violating the restraining order.’ She said she would check to see if he had followed the plea agreement. I called Maureen to tell her to call the police when he got there.”

Maureen called Lauren the next day at work. Christopher was there but the police didn’t arrest him. It turns out that Lauren had to be there to sign the complaint for violating the restraining order. “The police told him to leave but I could tell Maureen was really upset and scared. She told me Christopher drove up to the building like a madman. He hit the curb and almost hit a tree. Maureen was outside with her two daughters when he got there. She ran into the office but he followed her in. She told me he looked like crap, he lost a lot of weight, he was dirty, his clothes were dirty.” He told her he wanted to move into the apartment building next door. She went into the other room to get an application, and to call the police.

The police showed up while Christopher was filling out the application. “Maureen told me she was really nervous he was going to do something to her or her daughters. I felt really bad that they didn’t arrest him and was worried because I thought Maureen was in danger. I called the city attorney’s office to let them know the police didn’t arrest Christopher. She did a little checking and comes back to me to say, ‘Yeah, you have to sign the complaint.’ I told her she lied to me. She said she didn’t know. I was so upset I told her if Christopher killed me it would be her fault. She didn’t think I was being fair.”
There was one other person at the officer where Lauren worked. "I told Marilyn what was going on. She told me to lock the front door. I called my parents to tell them that Christopher was not in jail because the city attorney's office lied to me." Lauren considered calling a bodyguard service to get her home or taking the bus to the airport to get a rental car. Her car was in the underground garage. "I was really afraid he would see me because I worked right near all the bars he liked." Marilyn agreed to take Lauren home in her car. "I was so happy it was raining on the way home so he couldn't see me".

That night one of Lauren's cousins called. Jim was a few years older and a former Red Beret. "He scared the crap out of me because he was really tough. He was coming out with his girlfriend to visit some friends and wanted to make sure I was ok. Well, I started talking to him about guns. I asked him which gun would work best for me. He said it wasn't the gun that mattered. It was the bullets. I asked him if he ever killed anybody. He said, 'on the record or off the record?' I said forget about it." The idea of a gun wasn't so appealing to Lauren anymore.

"My mother flew out to Denver the next day." She rented a car so Lauren wouldn't have to leave the apartment. "I let the building management know the situation. They put the doormen on high alert. We drove to the police station to see what we could do since Christopher wasn't in jail. It turned out one of the officers that responded to the apartment was there. He told me he really wanted to see Christopher in jail so he had me sign a blank police report. If he ran into Christopher, he would fill in the rest. He guaranteed that it would be something to put him in jail for a while. The officer told me I couldn't tell anybody because it was illegal but I felt better that there was a chance Christopher would be arrested."
"I had to pick up my car on Sunday night from the garage at work. I remember telling my mom that I would crash into Christopher’s car if I saw him. She said I would be the one to get in trouble.” Lauren didn’t want to give him the chance to hurt her.

“The city attorney’s office called me on Monday. It turns out that Christopher did not complete his treatment program. They could start probation revocation hearings which meant maybe jail. I was told I could still file for the restraining order violation. I just needed to go to the courthouse. A few days later I found out that Christopher’s hearing would be in a week even though he supposed went back to New Jersey to continue his treatment. I went down to the courthouse to file the restraining order violation. The sheriff was going to serve Christopher on the hearing date. I also went to the city attorney’s office to tell them how disappointed I was over him not being in jail. I also told them I wanted to talk to the judge at the hearing. I was told it’s up to the judge.”

Lauren’s mother accompanied her to the hearing. “I can remember standing in the hallway outside the courtroom waiting for Christopher to show up. There were a lot of scummy-looking people around.” Christopher didn’t show up but a representative from his lawyer’s office was there. In the courtroom she tried to get the judge to let Christopher continue his treatment. The judge agreed and was going to let him go without any punishment as long as he didn’t get in trouble in 30 days. “I was just about to stand up in the courtroom and interrupt the judge when finally the lawyer from the city attorney’s office mentioned I was in the courtroom and wanted to talk to him. The judge was like, ‘the victim?’ ‘Yes, the victim, your honor.’ He asked me to come forward. I spoke to the judge for a few minutes. I can’t really remember what I said. I just remember being really upset and nervous.”
When Lauren spoke, she jogged the judge’s memory. It turns out Christopher appeared in front of him and accepted his plea agreement a few months earlier. “He asked, ‘Is this the case where the defendant was able to return to New Jersey?’ ‘Yes, your honor.’ ‘I agreed to let him get counseling in New Jersey?’ ‘Yes, your honor.’ Well, he got really pissed off. He completely changed his ruling. He said to Christopher’s lawyer, ‘I am going to continue the probation revocation hearings. You get your client to appear in court at the next hearing or he is going to jail.’ The city attorney made sure the next hearing was going to be in front of the same judge. It was the least he could do for me.”

“Af ter the hearing, my mom and I went to the city attorney’s office to talk to them. I can remember them telling me to ‘let it go.’ Let it go? They thought I was still too upset about everything. God, did they have nerve. They let him plead no contest and go back to New Jersey, without telling me. They told me he would be arrested when he went to the apartment building. He wasn’t. He failed to follow through with his treatment. What kind of monitoring do they do to make sure he’s doing what he’s supposed to? Obviously nothing. And now I should forget about everything? I don’t think so. I told them I would be at the next hearing.”

Since Christopher didn’t show up at the hearing, he wasn’t served with the restraining order violation. The first hearing was scheduled a few weeks after the second probation revocation hearing. At the hearing, Lauren showed up once again. Christopher’s regular lawyer showed up. “My mother pointed him out to me in the hallway. Well, the judge asked if the defendant was there. ‘No he isn’t, your honor.’ ‘Didn’t I tell you that the defendant needed to appear today?’ ‘Yes, your honor.’ ‘Didn’t I say if he didn’t appear I would throw him in jail?’ ‘Yes, your honor.’”
The judge turned to Lauren and asked her if she wanted to make a statement. "I got up and spent the first two minutes basically yelling at his lawyer – Christopher was supposed to be here but he isn't. What is he afraid of? He's afraid of going to jail. I was supposed to have him served by a sheriff with the restraining order violation. But he didn't show up. And on and on and on. I started to get upset so the judge ordered a 10-minute recess. He told me I needed to talk to him, not to Christopher's lawyer. When the break was over, I told the judge about how Christopher was afraid of going to jail. He needed to go to jail. I said I knew that sending him to jail would not necessarily make me feel safer but I thought it would make an impression on him. He needed to be punished."

The judge issued a bench warrant for Christopher's arrest. Bond was set at $5,000. He was going to jail if he showed up. But his probation was not revoked. Christopher needed to appear if that was going to happen.

"Mom left before the first restraining order hearing about two weeks later. At the hearing, the judge asked me if I had Christopher served. I told him no. He asked me if I wanted a continuance to see if I could try to get Christopher served. I said yes." The next hearing date was set in six weeks. "I was really happy that I didn't lose the chance to get him for violating the restraining order. I knew Christopher was probably gone. But I wanted to keep the chance of seeing him in jail alive."

Lauren started more counseling in September. "I began a 20-week program through Safehouse. There were about eight women in the group. All of them were out of their abusive relationships and were looking to find something missing. For me, it was getting off the damn roller-coaster of emotions. I really looked forward to the sessions even though we had
"homework" sometimes. But the counselors were great and they really made me feel good about myself."

Getting By

Every six weeks, Lauren returned to the courthouse to get a continuance on the restraining order violation. "I would go during my lunch hour. I had the same judge except for once. He would always ask me the same questions – ‘Did I get Christopher served?’ ‘No, your honor.’ ‘Did I want a continuance?’ ‘Yes, your honor.’ I can remember one time watching a case where the defendant showed up after being served. He had sent his ex-girlfriend a birthday card. His defense was that he didn’t think the restraining order covered cards sent by mail. Well, the next thing you know, the court officer goes over to him, puts handcuffs on him, and takes him to jail. The guy did not have a chance. I can remember thinking I wish it was Christopher going to jail."

That fall, Lauren decided to get a second job to supplement my income. "I got a job working at Express in the mall which was only two blocks from my house." The extra money paid for her cable bill and some food. And it came in handy around Christmas with the discount at all of their stores. It was straining having a full-time and part-time job but Lauren liked being around people her age.

"I went home for Christmas. My dad flew out to Denver and we drove back together with my two cats. I couldn’t fly home. I tried to buy an airline seat for Socks; Pearl could fit under the seat. I was going to buy a carrier specially fitted for the car. But no airline would sell me a seat. They would have to go in the cargo hold. Yeah, the day the airline CEO goes cross-country in there.” So Lauren rented a car for the drive home."
“I know my dad liked the drive. The scenery was pretty and it gave us a chance to really talk. It was my first time home since I broke up with Christopher. I was nervous having the rental car sitting in the driveway with the Colorado plates. But I tried to focus on just being home with my family. If he came after me, he would be sorry.”

Driving home was especially hard. “We left on my sister’s birthday. We stopped at her house on the way out. I was crying, she was crying. I just wanted to stay. When I did get back to Denver, I just couldn’t get back into things. I had quit my part-time job. I was trying to find another full-time job without any luck. That was the one bad thing about Denver. The pay was horrible. I kept on hearing from my mother about how great the job market was back in New Jersey.”

I’m Going Home

“My parents came out to visit me in March. I was under a lot of stress at work — I worked at an accounting firm. Corporate tax deadlines were mid-March, the same time they came out to see me. I was really grumpy and tired to the point I was actually rude to my parents during the time they were out.” A few days later, Lauren drove her parents to the airport really early in the morning before work. When they were saying goodbye, all Lauren could think about was going home with them. “I couldn’t stop crying.”

“The sun was starting to rise on the drive home. I had to drive west toward the beautiful Rocky Mountains. Well, the sun lit up the mountains in these truly unbelievable colors. I started to think I don’t belong here. I mean it’s really beautiful out in Denver but it wasn’t home. I started screaming in the car, ‘I’m going home. I’m going back to New Jersey.’ I felt like a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders.”
After stopping at her apartment to clean up her face, Lauren went into work. Her parents had a stopover in Phoenix and gave her a call. "I told them I missed them and apologized for being such a bitch. I told them I wanted to move back home. I could tell they were happy. It was time to go home. Yeah!"

Lauren had to start planning right away. The first step was figuring out when she was going to move. "I decided on the end of April. I had just renewed my lease a few months earlier so I had to find somebody to sublet it. Then there was work. I wanted to stay until after the big tax deadline - April 15. Oh, and the packing, can't forget about that."

One of the first things Lauren did was get a rental truck and a trailer to tow her car. She went to the building management's office to see about subletting the apartment. They said they couldn't help her but if somebody asked they would mention her place was available after telling them about other apartment they had available. "I designed a flyer to put in the mailroom hoping somebody in the building might want to move into my apartment. I placed ads in the newspaper too. Well, I did finally sublet it to a guy on the second floor at the last minute."

"The weekend before I moved, I went to the Denver Zoo. I got a free pass in the mail. I had always wanted to go but I didn't want to spend the money. It was expensive so the pass came just in time. Hey, I couldn't waste it! And there had to be a reason it came right before I left."

"I also had a 'going away party' for myself that weekend. I invited the women from my counseling group at Safehouse. The invitation read, 'just bring your butts and your good wishes.' I didn't want them to give me anything. I wanted it to be a happy occasion. Everybody showed up. We had a good time being together for the last time as a group. I had so much food I had to have everybody take something home."
A few days later Lauren’s father flew out. “He was going to help me pack the truck and drive home with me. I had been packing for weeks but I needed help with the big stuff like my bed and couch. We packed up the truck the day before I had the elevator reserved in the building. I’m glad my dad suggested it. It made things easier. The night before we left, I dropped off food and things I didn’t need at the Safehouse shelter. I figured they could use the ice cream and coffee maker I had. I remember it was raining and snowing and sleet and hailing. There was even some thunder and lightning – they call it thundersnow. I was thinking what a night to remember.”

The next day, Lauren was about to close her apartment door for the last time when she started looking around at what used to be her home. It was empty. “I actually never got to see it empty. I was kind of sad to leave. My dad saw me looking around and asked me, ‘Do you need a minute?’ I said, ‘No, I have been here long enough.’”

“The ride home was pretty interesting. “My dad and two cats in the small cab of the truck pulling a car on a trailer! I felt bad I had to put the cats’ food and litter box on the floor. Normally they had the backseat of a car.” In the truck there was barely any room to move. “But my cats didn’t cry like they usually did. They knew we were going home. Amazing!”
Since returning home, Lauren has been doing well. She found a good job, has renewed some friendships, made new friends, and is on track to living a life without abuse. Although she has not had a serious relationship since her abusive relationship, Lauren has no regrets. “I have decided if it’s meant to be, it’s meant to be. I don’t need to be in a relationship to be happy. If anything, having a boyfriend should compliment the happiness I already have, not create it.” She adds that her family’s love and her cats more than make up for not being involved right now. “But that can change.”

Lauren has not seen Christopher since she broke up with him. Asked if she has some fear about running into him, she expressed some concern. “I know it’s been a few years, but that thought is in the back of my mind though not as much as before. Every once in a while I’ll see someone that looks like him and my heart starts beating a little faster. But I hope if I do run into him, I can show him how much better I am than him. Without him.”
CHAPTER SIX
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVEY AND RESULTS

Purpose and Description

The media and society have played an important role in the beliefs many people have regarding domestic violence. The result unfortunately has been the perpetuation of certain stereotypes, misinformation, or a general lack of information.

In order to determine to what extent society and media have influenced knowledge of domestic violence, 35 surveys consisting of six alternating true and false and six multiple-choice questions were distributed to a variety of people including college students and working professionals. Prior to the questions, the participant was asked to indicate their sex, their age (from a range of ages), whether he/she was a victim of domestic violence, and finally if he/she knew a victim of domestic violence. After completing the survey, each participant was given an answer sheet that included the question, the correct answer, and the sources of information for each answer.

A total of 32 completed surveys were returned. The survey and accompanying answer sheet given to the participants after completing the survey are provided in the back of this thesis (Appendix).
Survey Results

The first four questions were personal in nature regarding the participant’s sex, age, whether he/she was a victim of domestic violence, and if he/she knew a victim of domestic violence.

Sex:

Following are the number of participants broken down by sex and including the percentage of the overall participants in parentheses (32=100%).

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Age:

Following are the ages of the participants broken down by sex. The percentage of the total participants (32=100%) is located underneath the number of participants’ answers by age/sex in the table below.

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The following question was asked to determine if the participant was a victim of domestic violence and therefore may have firsthand knowledge about the subject. The percentage of the total participants (32=100%) is located underneath the number of participants' answers by sex in the table below.

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Have you been a victim of domestic violence?

The majority of the participants, 29 (90%), were not victims of domestic violence – 100% of the males and 86% of the females. Three female participants (9%) indicated that they were victims of domestic violence. This number represents 14% of the total female participants.

The following question was asked to determine if the participant knew a victim of domestic violence and may therefore have some knowledge about the subject. The percentage of the total participants (32=100%) is located underneath the number of participants' answers by sex in the table below.

Do you know someone who has been a victim of domestic violence?
A total of 24 participants (75%) know a victim of domestic violence, which represents 80% of the male and 73% of the female participants. A total of eight participants (25%), or 20% of the males and 26% of the females, do not know a victim of domestic violence.

Following are the participants’ answers to the six alternating true and false and six multiple-choice questions broken down by response and sex of the participant. The percentage of the overall participants is indicated in the table under the responses by sex and in parentheses under the explanation of the results immediately following the table (32=100%).

Question 1
Domestic violence occurs more frequently on Super Bowl Sunday.

True     False

*ANSWER: FALSE*
Participant Answers:

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More than half of the participants, 56%, answered the statement correctly, a total of 7 males (22%) and 11 females (34%). Three males (9%) and 11 females (34%) answered incorrectly.

Question 2

A woman is physically abused every:

A. 9 seconds
B. 90 seconds
C. 9 minutes

*ANSWER: A. 9 seconds*

Participant Answers:

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A slight majority of the participants, 16 (52%), answered A. 9 seconds – 4 males (13%) and 12 females (38%). Thirty-four percent selected answer B. 90 seconds, 3 males (9%) and 8 females (25%). Fifteen percent selected answer C. 9 minutes, 3 males (9%) and 2 females (2%).

Question 3
Domestic violence causes more serious injuries and deaths than car accidents, rapes and muggings combined especially among women between the ages of 15-44.

True False

**ANSWER: TRUE**

Participant Answers:

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Sixty-eight percent of the participants, 6 males (19%) and 19 females (59%), answered correctly. A total of 7 participants, 4 males (13%) and 3 females (9%) answered incorrectly.
Question 4
Domestic violence represents an annual loss of ____ to companies.

A. $19 billion
B. $44 billion
C. $67 billion

**ANSWER: B. $44 BILLION**

Participant Answers:

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Half of the respondents, 6 males (19%) and 10 females (31%), selected the correct answer, B. Thirty-four percent, 2 males (6%) and 9 females (28%), selected answer A. Two male (6%) and 3 female (9%) participants selected answer C.

Question 5
Males kill 90% of female murder victims.

True False

**ANSWER: TRUE**
Participant Answers:

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A total of 22 participants (69%) answered correctly, 7 males (22%) and 15 (47%) of the females. Nearly a third of the participants, 3 males (9%) and 7 females (22%), answered incorrectly.

Question 6
In the United States, approximately how many women are assaulted by their lovers, or current or former husbands?

A. 1,500,000
B. 3,000,000
C. 4,000,000

**ANSWER: C. 4,000,000**

Participant Answers:

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The majority of the participants, 19 (60%), or 4 males (13%) and 15 females (47%), selected B. 3,000,000. Eight participants (25%), 3 males (9%) and 2 females (6%), selected the correct answer, C. 4,000,000. Five participants (15%), 3 males (9%) and 2 females (6%), selected A. 1,500,000.

Question 7
Animal shelters outnumber shelters for battered women two to one.

True
False

ANSWER: FALSE

Participant Answers:

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<td>31%</td>
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The majority of the participants - 30 (93%), 10 males (31%) and 20 females (62%) - selected the incorrect answer, True. Only 2 female participants (6%) selected the incorrect answer, False.

Question 8
What percentage of workplace homicides among women can be attributed to domestic violence?

A. 20%
B. 45%
C. 60%

ANSWER: A. 20%
Participant Answers:

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*Note:* One male respondent failed to answer this question. Percentages were adjusted to accurately reflect the number of responses (31 = 100%).

The majority of the respondents, 16, or 3 males (9%) and 13 females (42%), selected the incorrect answer, B. 45%. The second largest group of respondents, 10, or 4 males (13%) and 6 females (19%), selected the correct answer A. 20%. Five respondents (16%) - 2 males (6%) and 3 females (9%) - selected the incorrect answer C. 60%.

**Question 9**

Alcohol and drug abuse is a major cause of domestic violence.

True  False

**Answer: FALSE**

Participant Answers:

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<td>25%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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Ninety-one percent of the respondents – 8 males (25%) and 21 females (66%), answered incorrectly. Only two males (6%) and 1 female (3%), picked the correct answer, false.
Question 10
Which age group of women experiences the highest level of victimization by an intimate partner?

A. 20-24 years of age
B. 25-29 years of age
C. 30-34 years of age

**ANSWER: A. 20-24 YEARS OF AGE**

**Participant Answers:**

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The majority of the participants – 4 males (13%) and 11 females (34%) – chose B. 25-29 years of age which is incorrect. Thirty-one percent, 3 males (9%) and 7 females (22%), selected the correct answer, A. 20-24 years of age. Seven participants, 3 males (9%) and 4 females (13%), selected C. 30-34 years of age, which is also incorrect.

Question 11
Women are more likely to be assaulted at home than a police officer on the job.

True       False

**ANSWER: TRUE**
Participant Answers:

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<td>28%</td>
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A total of 29 respondents, 9 males (28%) and 20 females (63%), selected the correct answer, True. Nine percent, or 1 male (3%) and 2 females (6%) selected the incorrect answer, False.

**Question 12**
What percentage of women are killed by their abusers when they attempt to leave or have left the relationship?

A. 35%
B. 50%
C. 75%

**ANSWER: C. 75%**

Participant Answers:

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Most of the participants – 3 males (9%) and 11 females (34%) – selected the incorrect answer, A. 35%. Five males (16%) and five females (16%) selected the incorrect answer B.
50%. The correct answer, C. 75%, was chosen by eight participants, 2 males (6%) and 6 females (19%), or 25 percent of the total number of participants.
Analyzing the Results

Among the 32 surveys, 27 participants (84%) had six or less correct answers. Of that amount, eleven participants (34%), the majority, had six correct answers. Eight participants (25%) had five correct answers. Four participants (13%) had four correct answers. Three participants (9%) had three correct answers. One participant (3%) had the lowest number of correct answers, two out of a possible 12.

The remaining five participants (16%) had seven or more correct answers. Of that amount, four participants (13%) had seven correct answers. One participant (3%) had eight correct answers, the highest number among all participants.

The three female participants who indicated that they were victims of domestic violence answered five or less questions correctly. Participant one had five correct answers; participant two had four correct answers; and participant three had three answers correct. Being a victim of domestic violence did not provide an advantage over participants who were not victims.

For participants who indicated that they knew a victim of domestic violence, one participant had eight correct answers. Three participants (9%) had seven correct answers. Eight participants (25%) had six correct answers. Six participants (19%) had four correct answers. Three participants (9%) had three correct answers. Of the eight participants who did not know a victim of domestic violence, one participant (3%) had seven correct answers. Three participants (9%) had six correct answers. Two participants (6%) had five correct answers. One participant (3%) had four correct answers. One participant (3%) had two correct answers. Overall, knowing a victim of domestic violence did not necessarily provide an advantage over participants who did not know a victim.
Question one was used to test whether the media has influenced beliefs regarding domestic violence. Commonly on Super Bowl Sunday, public service announcements and news stories focus on domestic violence based on the belief that it is the most violent day of the year. It is not. Eighteen participants (56%) did not agree with the statement that domestic violence occurs more frequently on Super Bowl Sunday. A total of 14 (44%) did believe it was the most violent day. While the results are positive with more than half of the participants answering correctly, more analysis into the media’s role needs to be conducted to prevent stereotypes about domestic violence.

Societal beliefs regarding domestic violence were the focus of question 12. Often victims of domestic violence are subjected to criticism for their failure to leave an abusive relationship. Yet leaving is also considered the most dangerous time for a victim. Only eight (25%) of the 32 respondents answered this question correctly. The remaining 24 respondents (75%) did not. Research into why society continues to chastise victims of domestic violence for not leaving and failing to recognize the dangers in leaving needs to be explored to end the double victimization.

Analyzing the Survey Answers

There is one inherent problem with conducting a survey consisting of true and false and multiple-choice questions – namely, the inability to distinguish whether the answers are in fact reflective of the belief of the participant or simply a guess. It is the author’s belief that the participants completed the surveys willingly and were therefore receptive to providing truthful answers based on their knowledge. In addition, no time restraint was placed on them in order to
give participants adequate opportunity to develop their answers. Finally, the participants were able to ask questions of the author regarding a particular question or statement to provide clarification if necessary. However, at no time was an answer to a question or statement given to the participants to assist them in selecting an answer.

Another observation made in analyzing the survey answers concerned one participant who failed to answer question 8. Under “Survey Results,” the percentages were adjusted to reflect the lack of an answer (31=100%). In “Analyzing the Results,” the lack of an answer was interpreted as an incorrect answer. Assuming the participant selected the correct answer, the increase or decrease in numbers and percentages would not significantly impact the overall results.

Overall, the author believes that the survey answers are reflective of commonly held beliefs regarding domestic violence.
CHAPTER SEVEN

FINAL WORDS

June 17, 1994. Los Angeles news and police helicopters hovered over a slow-moving white Ford Bronco on the 405. The driver, Al Cowlings, or A.C. to friends, was at the wheel with his life-long buddy, O.J. Simpson, huddled in the back with a gun to his head. Los Angeles Police had an arrest warrant for O.J. in the murder of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown and Ronald Goldman, a young 28-year old waiter from Mezzaluna Restaurant. O.J. was supposed to surrender to the police earlier that day but snuck out of the home of friend and attorney Robert Kardashian with A.C. before police could arrive. He was trying to get back to his home at 360 North Rockingham.

Thousands of people lined the chase route, hanging signs of support from freeway overpasses and stopping in the middle of the road to cheer O.J. on. Another 95 million people watched the Bronco chase on television, 5 million more viewers than the Super Bowl that year. (Toobin, p. 106) Once he reached his home, with cameras still rolling, O.J. emerged from the Bronco and was surrounded by police officers. One officer brought O.J. away from the media. A few minutes later, O.J. was handcuffed and placed under arrest. More than one month later on July 22, O.J. pled “absolutely 100 percent not guilty” to the murder charges.

The “trial of the century,” as it was dubbed by the media, began on January 24, 1995. Well-known and well-liked football star turned movie actor charged with the murder of his ex-wife and her friend. A total of 1,159 journalists were credentialed to cover the trial. (Bugliosi, p. 37) In one of his first rulings, presiding Judge Ito allowed cameras into the courtroom to cover
the proceedings. Court TV, CNN and several other networks quickly made it prime time viewing, interrupting their regular broadcasting schedules.

In the courtroom, the prosecution team, consisting of Marcia Clarke and Christopher Darden, attempted to admit 59 incidents of domestic violence between Nicole and O.J into the trial. However, only a few were permitted by Judge Ito. Presenting such evidence, as in the Joel Steinberg case, would prejudice the jury and place an unduly burden on the defendant. A domestic violence expert for the Simpson defense team, Dean Gerald Uelman, argued a motion to the court to suppress the evidence, saying, "Where is there any similarity between a bedroom argument in which both parties had been drinking and the argument escalates into a slapping incident – and the slashing of two people's throats on a sidewalk?" (Shapiro, 1996, p. 222) The incidents of violence were essentially considered irrelevant to the murder charge O.J. was accused of.

One of the incidents not allowed occurred early in the morning of New Year's Day in 1989 when O.J. and Nicole were still married. Following is an excerpt of the event from Toobin's book, The Run of His Life: The People v. O.J. Simpson:

At 3:58 A.M. on that New Year's Day in Los Angeles, the phone rang in front of 911 operator Sharyn Gilbert. At first she heard no one at the other end, but her console indicated that the call was coming from 360 North Rockingham, in Brentwood. Then there were sounds—a woman screaming, then slaps. "I heard someone being hit," Gilbert later recalled. There was more screaming, and then the call was cut off. Though no one ever said any words to her, Gilbert rated the call a "code-two high," which meant that it required immediate police response.

Officer John Edwards and his partner, a trainee named Patricia Milewski, went to the scene. Edwards pressed the buzzer at the Ashford gate to the property, and a woman who identified herself as the housekeeper came out. She said, "There's no problem here," and told the officers to leave. Edwards said they couldn't go anywhere until they spoke with the woman who had called 911. After a few minutes of this back-and-forth, a blond woman—Nicole Brown Simpson—staggered out from the heavy bushes behind the gate. She was wearing just a bra and a pair of dirty sweatpants.
Nicole collapsed against the inside of the gate and started yelling to the officers, “He’s going to kill me! He’s going to kill me!” She pounded on the button that opened the gate and then flung herself into Edward’s arms.

“Who’s going to kill you?” Edwards asked.

“O.J.”

“O.J. who?” Edwards asked. “Do you mean O.J. the football player?”

“Yes,” Nicole said. “O.J. Simpson the football player.”

“Does he have any weapons?”

“Yeah,” she replied, still breathless. “Lots of guns. He has lots of guns.”

Edwards shined his flashlight on Nicole’s face. Her lip was cut and bleeding. Her left eye was black-and-blue. Her forehead was bruised, and on her neck-unmistakably-was the imprint of a human hand. As Nicole calmed down, Edwards learned that O.J. Simpson had slapped her, hit her with his fist, and pulled her by the hair. Just before Edwards placed her in the squad car to warm up, Nicole turned to him and said with disgust, “You guys never do anything. You never do anything. You come out. You’ve been here eight times. And you never do anything about him.” She then agreed to sign a crime report against her husband.

As Edwards turned to the house, he noticed O.J. Simpson wearing a bathrobe, walking toward him. Simpson was screaming, “I don’t want that woman in my bed anymore! I got two other women. I don’t want that woman in my bed!”

Edwards explained that he was going to place Simpson under arrest for beating his wife.

“I didn’t beat her,” Simpson said, still furious. “I just pushed her out of bed.” Edwards repeated that he was going to have to take him in.

Simpson was incredulous. “You’ve been out here eight times before and now you’re going to arrest me for this? This is a family matter. This is a family matter.”

Edwards requested that Simpson go back into his house, get dressed, and return to be taken in to the station. As Simpson walked off, the housekeeper, Michelle Abuhraam, went over to Nicole, who was in the squad car, and implored, “Don’t do this, Nicole. Come inside.” The housekeeper was actually tugging on Nicole from outside the car, and Edwards came over and shoed her away. Moments later Simpson, now dressed, returned to the gate and began lecturing Edwards. “What makes you so special? Why are you doing this? You guys have been out here eight times before, and no one has ever done anything like this before.”

Edwards explained that the law required him to take Simpson in to the station. When Edwards turned to brief a second set of officers who had arrived on the scene, the officers saw a blue Bentley roar out of another gate at the property, this one on Rockingham.

Edwards got into his car and took off after Simpson-and four other police cars soon joined in the chase-but they couldn’t catch up with him. Returning to Nicole, Edwards asked what had prompted her husband’s attack. She said she had complained because there were two other women staying in their home, and
O.J. had had sex with one of them earlier in the day. Edwards never saw Simpson again. (p. 51-53)

California had at the time a must-arrest policy that required police officers to take a suspect in domestic violence cases into custody. However, O.J. was not arrested for this incident or any of the prior incidents. A few days later, with the help of his attorney, Howard Weitzman, and the reluctance of Nicole to testify, O.J. was able to plead no contest to one count of misdemeanor spousal battery without stepping in a courtroom. His punishment included 120 hours of community service, 24 months of probation, a fine of $470, and counseling he could phone in. In addition, he wrote letters of apology to Nicole professing his love and asking for her forgiveness. Pictures of a battered Nicole taken after this incident would emerge more than five years later in newspapers and magazines during the trial.

In their book, *Getting Away with Murder*, Raoul Felder and Barbara Victor see the media’s involvement in domestic violence as detrimental, even perverse.

What was once considered a private matter changes, and the horror of private lives become grist for the tabloids and confessional talk shows, when television cameras appear in courtrooms, making the public privy to every last gruesome detail of what was once considered to be the personal hell of one dysfunctional family. Tragically, what society chooses not to do is to penetrate those walls and doors and interfere in that private violence before it becomes a public funeral. (1996, p. 28-29)

Despite the increase in calls to domestic violence hotlines, the O.J. Simpson murder trial has greatly influenced how the media and society views and treats domestic violence. During the trial, newspapers and television stations raced to get the latest story out first, regardless of its validity. The transcripts of the 911 call Nicole placed in October 1993 and the contents of her diary were made public. O.J. and his former girlfriend, Paula Barbieri, separately published books. People lined up outside the courthouse early in the morning to vie for the limited number
of seats in the audience. Others stood outside holding signs like, “Free O.J.” and “Save the Juice.”

The “increased consciousness was a double-edged sword, as misinformation competed with facts, and misinformed opinions often substituted for reality” (Jacobsen & Gottman, 1998, p. 34) The attention the trial received was unprecedented, but not for the murders. Instead, the issue of race, a bloody glove found at the murder scene, the biased testimony of Los Angeles Police Detective Mark Fuhrman, and the theatrics of both the prosecution and defense teams were just some of the incidents took center stage.

The trial lasted eighteen months. On October 3, 1995, the jury, consisting of nine African-Americans, one Hispanic and two Whites, found O.J. Simpson not guilty of the murders of Nicole Brown and Ronald Goldman. The verdict and the ensuing reactions were broadcast across the nation.

Many facts regarding domestic violence are overlooked or misconstrued by the media and society despite the availability of information. The reality is that four million women are abused each year, causing more injuries and deaths than car accidents, rapes and muggings combined. (Spitzer, Dec. 31, 1992) The majority of these incidents clearly do not gain the notoriety of Nicole Brown, Hedda Nussbaum or to a lesser degree, Tracey Thurman. Yet their existence is somehow minimized by not making the news.

Further, “battered women do not catch a disease called domestic violence from random fists, blunt instruments, guns, or knives that produce bruises, fractures, or knife or gunshot wounds, and for which there is no known cure.” (Felder & Victor, 1996, p. 79) Domestic
violence is not an illness. It is a crime. Until the media and society treats it as such will there be any impact on ending domestic violence.

Nicole Brown was only one of the 1,811 murders that occurred in Los Angeles County in 1994. How many of these murders were the result of domestic violence? How many of them could have been prevented? How many of them did not make the news?

When will domestic violence end so no more victims suffer in silence?
Bibliography


Weiss, J. (September 30, 1994). When violence hits home: Media campaign targets the mainstream. [Electronic version]. *off our backs, 24*(8).


APPENDIX
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVEY

The following short survey is being conducted for a thesis project in order to receive a Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communications. The survey focuses on domestic violence, including statements and questions about common beliefs, facts and misconceptions. Once you have completed the survey, you will be given a sheet showing the question/statement, the answer, an explanation of the answer and finally the source. Your answers will remain confidential.

A presentation of the survey results will take place on May ___, 2003 in the Walsh Library at Seton Hall University. You may also contact the author directly at the address below for a copy of the thesis.

Anita L. Aricchi
Roche Laboratories
340 Kingsland Street
Nutley, NJ 07110
e-mail: aricchan@shu.edu

Please begin the survey by completing the following four questions.

Your sex:

Male  Female

Your age:

15-24  25-34  35-44  45-54  55+

Have you been a victim of domestic violence?

Yes  No

Do you know someone who has been a victim of domestic violence?

Yes  No
Following are a combination of true/false and multiple-choice questions. Please circle your answer.

Domestic violence occurs more frequently on Super Bowl Sunday.

True False

A woman is physically abused every:

A. 9 seconds
B. 90 seconds
C. 9 minutes

Domestic violence causes more serious injuries and deaths than car accidents, rapes and muggings combined especially among women between the ages of 15-44.

True False

Domestic violence represents an annual loss of _____ to companies.

A. $19 billion
B. $44 billion
C. $67 billion

Males kill 90% of female murder victims.

True False

In the United States, approximately how many women are assaulted by their lovers, or current or former husbands?

A. 1,500,000
B. 3,000,000
C. 4,000,000

Animal shelters outnumber shelters for battered women two to one.

True False
What percentage of workplace homicides among women can be attributed to domestic violence?

A. 20%
B. 45%
C. 60%

Alcohol and drug abuse is a major cause of domestic violence.

True False

Which age group of women experiences the highest level of victimization by an intimate partner?

A. 20-24 years of age
B. 25-29 years of age
C. 30-34 years of age

Women are more likely to be assaulted at home than a police officer on the job.

True False

What percentage of women are killed by their abusers when they attempt to leave or have left the relationship?

A. 35%
B. 50%
C. 75%

Thank you for your participation!
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVEY ANSWERS

Domestic violence occurs more frequently on Super Bowl Sunday.

False. In a three-year study in Los Angeles County, Super Bowl Sunday was not determined to be the biggest day for domestic violence dispatches. This is contrary to media reports each year during the Super Bowl.


A woman is physically abused every:

A. 9 seconds. A woman is physically abused by her husband or boyfriend every nine seconds, over 4,000 a day.


Domestic violence causes more serious injuries and deaths than car accidents, rapes and muggings combined especially among women between the ages of 15-44.

True. According to reports from the U.S. Surgeon General, this age bracket experiences the highest victimization rate by an intimate. The fact is that half of all women will experience some form of violence by their partner during their lifetime.

Source: Spitzer, J., "Numbers don't tell the whole story," Colorado Women News, Volume 7, Number 5, p. 15, December 31, 1992

Domestic violence represents an annual loss of ____ to companies.

B. $44 billion. Absenteeism due to violence accounts for $31 billion. Another $13 billion is lost when battered women use company time to call their doctors, lawyers, shelters or seek professional help.

Men kill 90% of female murder victims.

True. In 1995, the FBI's Uniform Reporting System reported that nine out of 10 female victims were murdered by men. About one-third of these deaths can be attributed to domestic violence. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to be killed by another man, a stranger.

Source: Craven, Ph.D., D. "Female Victims of Violent Crime," Bureau of Justice Statistics Selected Findings, NCJ-162602, December 1996

In the United States, approximately how many women are assaulted by their lovers, or current or former husbands?

C. 4,000,000. Approximately 4,000,000 women are assaulted each year by their current or former partner. These crimes are commonly treated as misdemeanors. If a stranger committed the same crime, it would be a felony.


Animal shelters outnumber shelters for battered women two to one.

False. Animal shelters outnumber shelters for battered women nearly three to one. In 1991, there were 32,000 animal shelters versus 12,000 shelters for abused women. The Baltimore Zoo spent twice as much money taking care of animals as the state of Maryland on shelters for abused women in 1990.

Source: Spitzer, J., "Numbers don't tell the whole story," Colorado Woman News, Volume 7, Number 5, December 31, 1992


What percentage of workplace homicides among women can be attributed to domestic violence?

A. 20%. Nearly one-fifth of workplace deaths can be attributed to domestic violence, making it the leading hazard for women. In addition, women are commonly harassed and threatened by their abusers at work.

Alcohol and drug abuse is a major cause of domestic violence.

False. Even though drug and alcohol abuse exists in many of these relationships, it is not the primary cause of it. In fact, domestic violence often continues after the abuser completes a treatment program.

Source: Jau, L., "What is Domestic Violence?" Diversity Folio (Asian Pages), Volume 9, Number 9, page 11

Which age group of women experiences the highest level of victimization by an intimate partner?

A. 20–24 years of age. The victimization rate among this age group is 21 per 1,000 women. The crimes perpetrated on this group include simple assault, aggravated assault and murder.

Source: Craven, Ph.D., D. "Female Victims of Violent Crime," Bureau of Justice Statistics Selected Findings, NCJ-162602, December 1996

Women are more likely to be assaulted at home than a police officer on the job.

True. In the United States, a woman is at greater risk of being assaulted in her home by her partner than a police officer on the job.

Source: Spitzer, J., "Numbers don't tell the whole story," Colorado Woman News, Volume 7, Number 5, December 31, 1992

What percentage of women are killed by their abusers when they attempt to leave or have left the relationship?

C. 75%. The truth is the end of an abusive relationship is the most deadly. Seventy-five percent of all murders occur when or shortly after a woman has left her abuser. Having lost control of his victim, the abuser commonly resorts to murder.

Source: Jau, L., "What is Domestic Violence?" Diversity Folio (Asian Pages), Volume 9, Number 9, page 11

Thank you for your participation!