UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

Date: June 11, 2007

I, Joyce Ann McCoy, hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

Doctor of Education

in: Urban Educational Leadership

It is entitled: Developing a Supportive Living Environment for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Violence

This work and its defense approved by:

Chair: Dr. Mary L. Brydon-Miller

Dr. Lionel H. Brown

Dr. Patricia O’Reilly

Dr. Albert L. Watson
Developing a Supportive Living Environment for Survivors Of Intimate-Partner Violence and Domestic Violence

A Dissertation submitted to the

Division of Graduate Studies and Research of the University of Cincinnati

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education (Ed. D.)

in the Urban Educational Leadership Program of the College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services

2007

by

Joyce Ann McCoy

B.S. University of Cincinnati, 1981
M.A. University of Cincinnati, 1986

Committee Chair: Dr. Mary L. Brydon-Miller
Abstract

This case study investigated what constitutes survival skills and a supportive living environment from the perspective of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) Transitional Living Program participants and YWCA support staff. Research questions that guided this investigation are the following: (1) What survival skills do you need to live independent (self-sufficient, free) from an abusive relationship? And (2) what does a supportive (encouraging, caring, helpful, accommodating) living environment mean to you in a transitional living environment? Such questions help gather insight for improving intervention programs for abused women; although great improvements have been made in terms of legislation, policy, and federal funding, such advances have not been enough to improve the situations of abused women.

Excerpts from interviews and other data were separated into common themes that emerged and were then grouped by categories – Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs pyramid (safety and security, belongingness and love, self-esteem, and self-actualization) and social support network (emotional support, informational support, and material support, and collaboration). The perceptions of the Transitional Living Program participants and YWCA support staff were used as recommendations for intervention programs. Programs recommended are the following: Assertiveness training, self-defense workshops, stress management classes, self-esteem building classes, family bonding programs, and facilitated support groups for mothers, children, and teenagers.
Acknowledgements

There are many generous people responsible for the success of this dissertation. First and foremost are the YWCA Transitional Living Program participants who trusted me enough to share their feelings and hopes. I am grateful to the committed YWCA support staff who voluntarily shared their professional expertise with me and ideas about how to better serve survivors of domestic violence and intimate partner violence.

Thanks to Theresa Singleton, the YWCA’s Director for Protection from Abuse, for her ongoing confidence in my ability to apply the knowledge gained during the doctoral program toward developing and offering a support group for survivors of intimate partner violence and the privilege of investigating how survivors of intimate partner violence feel they can be better served for survival upon exiting the Transitional Living Program.

I am grateful and indebted to Sharon Ward, a case manager for the Transitional Living Program, for providing professional support so that the research process could be successfully accomplished. Without your assistance there would be no case study.

Thank you to my committee members: Dr. Lionel H. Brown, Dr. Mary L. Brydon-Miller, Dr. Patricia O’Reilly, and Dr. Albert L. Watson. I am especially grateful to my chairperson, Dr. Brydon-Miller for her dedication to this project, for editing the dissertation throughout the research and writing process, and for providing insightful and scholarly feedback all through the writing of the dissertation. Dr. Brydon-Miller, thank you also for giving me the much needed emotional support, guidance, and encouragement necessary to accomplish this important educational goal.

I want to extend special thanks to my siblings: Thank you Bonnie McCoy for your
patience with me and support throughout the doctoral program. Thanks to Renee Cave
and Donald McCoy for your assistance. And, thank you LaTanya McCoy-Lampkin for
your technical assistance.
Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures x

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Profile of a Survivor 1
Statement of Problem 2
Context of the Problem 3
Focus of this Study 4
Significance of Study 5

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Nature of Intimate-Partner Violence and Domestic Violence 6
Definition of Intimate-Partner Violence and Domestic Violence 6
  Physical Abuse 7
  Psychological Abuse 8
  Social Abuse as Further Victimization 10
History of Domestic Violence and the Battered Women’s Shelter Movement 11
Prevalence of Intimate-Partner Violence and Domestic Violence 14
  Physical Abuse 14
  Stalking 17
Characteristics of Victimization 19
  Sociological 19
  Intergenerational Violence 20
Effects of Victimization 21
  Cycle of Violence 23
  Learned Helplessness Theory 28
  Traumatic Bonding Theory 29
  Long-Term Effects of Victimization 31
Interventions 32
  Feminist Theory 33
  Social Support 35
  Network Analysis 36
  Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs 36
  Resilience and Protective Factors 39
Strengths Perspective Intervention Model for Survivors of Domestic Violence and Intimate-Partner Violence 40
Effects of Victimization Discussion 42
Characteristics of Victimization Discussion 47
Summary of the Effects of Victimization and Characteristics of Victimization 54
  Effects of Victimization 54
  Characteristics of Victimization 55
Intervention Programs 56
  Description of Emergency Shelters 56


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptions of Individual Residential Transitional Living Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Need for Advocacy for Battered Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals and Description of Batterer Intervention Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Rate of Batterer Intervention Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangers of Batterer Intervention Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Chapter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

- Gaining Entrée | 77
  - Field Sites | 78
  - Initial Guiding Questions | 79
- Purposeful Sampling Plan | 80
  - Transitional Living Program Sample | 81
  - Transitional Living Aftercare Program Sample | 82
  - Support Staff Sample | 83
- Data Collection | 83
- Role Negotiation | 85
- Interview Process | 86
- Reflexivity | 86
- Preliminary Data Analysis | 87
- Data Analysis | 89
- Data Management | 89
- Ethical Dilemmas | 90
- Exit Strategies | 92
- Researcher Reflections | 92

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

- Introduction | 94
- Profiles of Transitional Living Study Participants | 98
- Thematic Analysis | 110
- Survivors of Abuse Perceptions of Survival Skills and a Supportive Living Environment | 112
  - Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs | 112
    - Theme #1: The Need for Safety and Security | 112
    - Theme #2: The Need for Belongingness and Love | 113
    - Theme #3: The Need for Self-Esteem | 114
    - Theme #4: The Need for Self-Actualization | 114
- Social Support Network | 118
  - Theme #5: The Need for Emotional Support | 118
  - Theme #6: The Need for Informational Support | 122
  - Theme #7: The Need for Material Support | 122
List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Strengths Perspective Intervention Model for Survivors of Domestic Intimate Partner Violence 46

Table 2: Strengths Perspective Intervention Model for Survivors of Domestic Intimate Partner Violence 52

Table 3: Transitional Housing Program Models 61

Table 4: Sociodemographic Data for Transitional Living Program Participants 97

Table 5: Sociodemographic Data for Transitional Living Program Participants Children 165

Figure 1. The Impact of the Cycle of Violence Behaviors on Victim’s Hierarchy of Needs 147
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“We can strengthen girls and women so they are more resistant to the effects of the abusive behavior directed toward them and we can also change the attitudes of known batterers so they stop beating women. However, unless we change the social conditions that breed, facilitate, and maintain all forms of violence against women, we will not eradicate domestic violence and other violence—it will return!”

(Walker, 2000, p. 15)

Profile of a Survivor

On a crisp, clear morning in January, Karen arrived at the interview site dressed warmly and casually in slacks, a sweater, and an African-styled turban. Karen is a 48-year-old African-American woman, and a mother of three children between the ages of 5 and 12. Karen has completed two years of college and is employed as a legal secretary. Our interview began with my guiding question about survival skills needed to live independent from an abusive relationship. Karen, in her soft voice and reflective manner shared the following,

“The biggest thing that I need is to get in touch with or to explore…to just love myself. To realize that I’m…it’s so important to the lives of my children and that just like I guess the foundation of what I am [laughter] how to do [laughter] what I don’t know how to do. Learn how to do…I really don’t know where to start other than just to get in touch with myself. I’ve lost so much of even knowing what I like to do or what I like to eat, where I like to go in a relationship that just getting in touch with that again will help me find myself…find out who I am would help me find myself, that’s what I need. Love myself, understand my values and values of my children.”
Karen was also asked about services or programs she felt were important for survivors. She explained,

“I think a support group would make me feel like I’m not alone, which
I know I’m not because there are other women out there who are survivors.
But it would put you kind of…help you share stories…put you right close
to people that have experienced some of the things that you have. I think
that would be very helpful…continue to work toward…to continue to be a
survivor just kind of having a …there for you.”

Karen’s views about “self” and “surviving” mimic the findings of Herman (1997) who suggests that, “having come to terms with the traumatic past, the survivor faces the task of creating a future. She has mourned the old self that the trauma destroyed; now she must develop new relationships. The old beliefs that gave meaning to her life have been challenged; now she must find anew a sustaining faith. In accomplishing this work, the survivor reclaims her world.”

Statement of Problem

This case study investigated what constitutes survival skills and a supportive living environment from the perspective of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) Transitional Living Program participants and YWCA support staff. Research questions that guided this investigation are the following: (1) What survival skills do you need to live independent (self-sufficient, free) from an abusive relationship? And (2) what does a supportive (encouraging, caring, helpful, accommodating) living environment mean to you in a transitional living environment?
Context of the Problem

There needs to be greater intervention strategies for abused women participating in a transitional living program. “Battered women in crisis who are contemplating leaving the violent relationship are confronted by internal and external barriers” (Roberts, 2002, p. 374). To address external barriers recent legislation, policy reforms, and federal funding initiatives have resulted in the increased funding for transitional housing, job training, and concrete services for battered women. According to Roberts these changes are not enough.

Carlson (1997) supports Roberts’ argument, adding that there are “four internal barriers that often keep the battered women trapped in a recurring pattern of acute crisis episodes: low self-esteem, shame and self-blame for the abuse, poor coping skills; and passivity, depression, and learned helplessness” (p. 292). In response to the research questions about necessary survival skills and the characteristics of a supportive environment, themes that emerged from the data revealed a need for a network of group support to feel connected to others; and social support that encompasses emotional, informational, and material support, and love. YWCA program providers (intervention staff) stress the importance of clients’ being aware and taking advantage of community resources, education, and group support.

Roberts’ findings show that “feeling inadequate and having low self-esteem have the potential to interfere with a woman’s ability to make decisions or to present herself in the best light when dealing with agency representatives or employers (p. 412).” Additionally, the author’s findings suggest that low self-esteem, social isolation, and depression make it more difficult for women to deal effectively with new housing related issues, finances,
their children’s school-related issues, and their ex-partners. If YWCA transitional living program participants’ internal barriers are not actively addressed by advocates, these women leave the transitional living program with their personal growth limited, particularly in terms of attaining permanent housing, improved job situation, or academic education. That is, the women participating in the transitional living program leave with the same internal barriers they brought to the program.

Focus of This Study

Transitional housing programs can play a vital role in providing the essential services needed to develop a sense of independence and autonomy in women so that they can freely choose whether they want to stay in an abusive relationship. Generalizing a concept borrowed from Benard (2004), if survivors are given the opportunity to give voice to their realities and tell their “stories,” to discuss their experiences, beliefs, attitudes and feelings, and encouraged to critically question societal messages--both those from the media and their own conditioning--then we (advocates) are empowering them to be critical thinkers and decision makers about the important concerns in their lives.

To this end, I examined qualitative data collected from classroom and program observations at the YWCA and Transitional Living Program site, interviews of Transitional Living Program participants and YWCA program providers, field notes, and archival information to analyze and describe activities currently existing that contribute to the development of survival skills and a supportive environment; and to describe additional intervention programs that are needed from the perspective of all participants in this study. Excerpts from interviews and other data were separated into common themes that emerged and were then grouped by categories – Abraham Maslow’s
Hierarchy of Needs pyramid (safety and security, belongingness and love, self-esteem, and self-actualization) and social support network (emotional support, informational support, and material support, and collaboration).

Significance of Study

The purpose of this qualitative research was to understand necessary survivals skills for abused women and the characteristics of a supportive environment in a transitional living environment from the perspective of formerly abused women participating in the YWCA Transitional Living Program and from the perspective of YWCA support staff who provide direct services so that intervention strategies can be enhanced. Information in this case study and the literature reviewed suggests that a comprehensive transitional living program should include intervention curricula that attend to mental health needs and life skills to increase survivors’ (women and children) chances of remaining resilient. The findings in this investigation also support Carlson’s (1997) belief that intervention strategies should include increasing information; enhancing coping, problem-solving, and decision making skills; and reducing isolation by increasing social support.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

“Imagine living in a world where there is no domination, where females and males are not alike or even always equal, but where a vision of mutuality is the ethos shaping our interaction. Imagine living in a world where we can all be who we are, a world of peace and possibility.”

(hooks, 2000, p. x)

NATURE OF INTIMATE-PARTNER VIOLENCE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Introduction

This section will define the various forms of intimate partner violence and domestic violence and their prevalence among male-female couples, lesbian couples, and gay male couples. Social and psychological characteristics that might place women at risk for victimization are described from the perspective of various authors. In addition to characteristics of victimization, the effects of victimization are discussed. Resilience and protective factors, social support, and Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs are discussed as interventions to address the effects of victimization on the survivors of abuse in the transitional living program. Models of transitional living programs that integrate these strategies are also presented. Finally, barriers to interventions for abused women are discussed.

Definitions of Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Violence

Intimate partner violence and domestic violence share common elements in that they both refer to the violence that occurs between people in close, personal, familial, or sexual relationships. Palmero (2004) adds that often, but not always, the aggressor is a husband or cohabitant, and the victim is his wife, partner, or children. The forms that intimate partner violence and domestic violence take can be emotional or psychological
abuse, physical abuse, or sexual abuse, although only a few states specifically identify emotional or psychological abuse as a form of intimate partner violence or domestic violence (Sanders, 2003). Dutton (1988) suggests that the bases for understanding these types of abuse are autonomy and control/dominance.

The batterer’s control often takes the form of undermining his partner’s efforts at independence (Adams, 1989), thus increasing his power and control in the relationship (Dutton, 1995). Batterers may attempt to dominate by silencing his partner’s voice in arguments and decision making, controlling family finances in a coercive way, chronically showing contempt or disregard for her opinion, showing disregard and abuse in child rearing, and forbidding outside social contacts (Bancroft & Silverman, 2006). Additional examples of how a woman’s autonomy diminishes as a result of domination and controlling behaviors are discussed in the following sections on physical abuse and psychological abuse.

**Physical Abuse**

Denzin (1984) defines domestic violence as “situated, emotional, and cognitive activity involving negative symbolic interaction between intimates, usually in the family home.” The author adds, “These acts include marital rape; sadomasochistic rituals; spouse abuse; inflicted emotionality; threats of murder; physical torture; harassment; acts of striking; mocked, pretended, or playful violence.” Threat of murder or physical torture is an abuser’s verbal expression of intent to inflict injury or end the woman’s life whether the act is carried out or not. Gordon (1998) also adds pushing, shoving, slapping, and punching to this list of abusive behaviors.
Psychological Abuse

In addition to crimes of physical violence, psychological abuse, also referred to as emotional abuse, is another powerful form of control used by many abusers. Psychological abuse involves the intimidation of the members of a family, nuclear or extended, and more specifically, it inhibits the drive for autonomy or self-determination in the members of a family. The control used to intimidate the victim may also be economic. Indeed, psychological abuse will typically extend to issues of money, to the victim’s choice of friends, to the persons with whom they are allowed to communicate, and the abuse takes form through intense criticisms, insults, and threats of bodily harm (Dutton, 1988).

Stephens and McDonald (2000) found in an examination of types of abuse in battered women, psychological abuse was rated as being more detrimental than physical abuse. When the women were asked to rate the worst type of psychological abuse, 51% rated ridicule and harassment as the worst, compared to 20% for threats of physical abuse. Carlton (1995) confirms that targeted and repeated psychological and emotional abuse can be more damaging than physical abuse, and harder to overcome. Repeated verbal abuse results in brainwashing the victim into learned helplessness. Seligman’s (1975) study, which is discussed in the Learned Helplessness section of this text, compared learned helplessness to human depression, which is comprised of three basic components: cognitive, motivational, and behavioral. Carlton (1995) explains that living under these conditions causes the victim to feel powerless and question her sense of reality, creating emotional instability and dependency.

In Walker’s (1979) research almost all the battered women reported severe verbal
harassment and criticism by the batterers. Walker’s report revealed that the men were adept at finding the battered women’s weak spots and using them for their own purposes. They were reported to use brainwashing techniques in their psychological harassment. The concept of brainwashing is supported by the work of Russell (1982), who has helped domestic violence advocates develop a framework for thinking about emotional abuse and to understand that such abuse of women by their intimate partners is remarkably similar to the techniques used to torture and brainwash American soldiers in prisoner-of-war camps. In her book, *Rape in Marriage*, Russell (1982) reprinted information from an Amnesty International publication, *Report on Torture*, indicating that brainwashing consists of a pattern of specific behavior to control an individual. As a result of the study, domestic violence advocates recognize that what was effective in prisoner-of-war camps is also effective in maintaining abusive relationships.

As with male-female violence, the violence between lesbian intimates may take many forms. Hart (1986) defines lesbian battering as a pattern of violence or coercive behaviors whereby a lesbian seeks to control the thoughts, beliefs, or conduct of her intimate partner or to punish the partner for resisting her control. Renzetti (1992) has found that the most common forms of violence in lesbian partnerships involve shoving, hitting with a fist, and throwing objects. However, the assaults may also involve severe aggression and weapons (Lockhart, White, Causby, & Isaac, 1994).

Gosselin (2000) reports that gay male couple violence is slowly coming to the surface. This type of intimate partner violence is difficult to determine due to societal preconceptions about a battered victim. The author suggests that society views battering between men as normal aggressive behavior. Issues in gay male relationships are forcing
advocates to reconceptualize domestic violence. Battered gay male victims often respond
to battering by striking back, which also occurs in male-female relationships. As with
male-female violence, the severity of gay male and lesbian incidents tends to increase
over time (Farley, 1996; Island & Letellier, 1991; Margolies & Leeder, 1995).

Domestic violence takes place in the privacy of the home or in an environment
where the victim is isolated. So far we see how the abuser’s control tactics, manifested in
a variety of cruel behaviors, may hinder her ability to act independently out of fear of
negative consequences and the unpredictability of when the abuse may occur. As a result
of the control tactics, including social isolation, the victim’s innate need to feel safe and
secure is jeopardized. The victim’s natural need to feel connected to her partner and
significant others in her life is sacrificed, and her self-esteem diminished.

According to Palmero (2004), domestic violence is a conflict in which the desire for
self-realization, self-acceptance, and respect are generally frustrated by the drive for
dominance by the stronger person. hooks (2000) agrees adding that, “Dominant parties
maintain power by the threat (acted upon or not) that abusive punishment, physical or
psychological, will be used whenever the hierarchal structures in place are threatened,
whether that be in male-female relationships, or parent and child bonds” (p. 64). And as
the review of the literature suggests, such conflicts occur between lesbian intimates and
in gay male relationships.

Social Abuse as Further Victimization

Further victimization may occur in the form of social abuse, a newly identified form
of abuse against women, which has similar characteristics as psychological abuse, but
these behaviors are imposed on women by individuals working in the social system
For example, Brown, executive director of the Women’s Resource Center of the New River Valley, Incorporated, a residential transitional program in Radford, Virginia, describes social abuse as rigid life roles imposed on women, limiting the expression of feelings to anger and depression. This abuse furthers the idea that women are not as capable or as important as men and need to be protected and controlled. The author further explains that social abuse exists in the family, the church, the school system, and the media. Brown also argues that the police and legal system, the medical system, the social services, and the economic system also support social abuse by blaming victims, not responding to requests for help, not addressing victims’ need for safety, and by undervaluing or exploiting women.

Walker’s (2000) research project summarizes these findings by sharing that the women interviewed expressed frustration, anger, and disappointment that the legal system seemed to batter them too. According to Walker (2000), recent newspaper reports indicated that while more women did get protection from all the new laws, there were still many who ended up frustrated and seriously harmed. The author also found that even with all the positive changes that have been made, the legal system can still be manipulated by the batterer to use it to continue his or her abuse of power.

History of Domestic Violence and the Battered Women’s Shelter Movement

The current reluctance of individuals and institutions to intervene in domestic violence stems from historic views of family privacy (Klein, Campbell, & Ghez, 1997). According to Klein, et al., these perspectives have existed for hundreds of years as laws and practices. The presumption of husbands’ rights and responsibilities to make and enforce family rules and to chastise their wives, even to the extent of physical
punishment, is left over from ancient norms and rules that saw women as the property of their fathers and husbands (Anderson and Zinsser, 1988; Pleck, 1987; Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Jenkins and Davidson (2001) contend that many members of the community believe that the ancient right of privacy for families is still part of the current cultural belief system, even though in the late 20th century many institutions began to view violence against women in the home as morally wrong and as criminal behavior. Evidence of this ancient cultural belief was revealed as recently as 1991 where Ford found that battered women frequently reported that the criminal justice system considered them “unworthy victims clogging up the courts with unimportant family matters” (p. 3). The reason for this finding could be that police or prosecutors may consider other issues, such as the likelihood of women dropping the charges or returning home.

The tension between the long-held cultural beliefs of acceptance and privacy surrounding the family and a newer perspective that does not condone violence influences many of the issues that arise in the prevention of domestic violence (Jenkins and Davidson, 2001). For example, the battered women’s movement began with the second wave of feminism in the United States in the early 1970s. Its strengths and success drew on the previous social influences of the antiwar and civil rights campaigns of the 1960s. Battered women’s efforts also grew from earlier protests against sexual assault that were some of the first expressions of feminist activism decrying violence toward women (Klein et al., 1997); In the 1970s, feminism created both a climate for women to speak out about violence and a structure through which they could organize.
The creation of emergency shelters to protect women from further abuse was one of the accomplishments of the movement.

Shelters for abused women arose in every major community in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s. Often founded by coalitions of formerly battered women, feminist activists (some closely aligned with organizations such as the National Organization for Women [NOW]), and veterans of rape crisis centers, the shelters are a wonderful example of the ability of grassroots organizations to provide short-term emergency services for individual women and to facilitate social change. From their introduction, shelters have tried to provide public education and training for professionals in the criminal justice system and to offer leadership in legal reform as well as shelter, safety, and advocacy for battered women and their children (Klein, et al., 1997). In addition to the introduction of emergency shelters and public education as efforts toward intervention for victims of partner abuse, energy also needed to be directed toward prevention of partner abuse or legal consequences for committing abusive acts against one’s partner.

Legislation proposing a federal response to the problem of violence against women was first introduced in 1990, although such violence was first identified as a serious problem in the 1970s. Congressional action to address gender-related violence culminated in the enactment of the Violence against Women Act (VAWA), which is title IV of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. The bill emphasizes enforcement as well as educational and social programs to prevent crime (Blucher, 2003).
Even with ongoing attempts by advocates to prevent violence by implementing legal punishment for domestic violence and offering family violence prevention educational programs in the schools, the criminal justice system, and the community at large, the prevalence rates of partner abuse serve as a reality that the effects of the historical origin of partner abuse still exist in this century.

PREVALENCE OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Physical Abuse

Schaefer, Caetano, and Clark (1998) report that in the United States, approximately one of every five male-female couples experiences at least one episode of intimate partner violence during a one year period. Sorenson (1996) estimates that each year approximately 1.8 million women to 4 million women are physically assaulted by their intimate partners in the United States. Sharps and Campbell (1999) found that prevalence rates of battering vary by the age of women. For example, adolescent and young adult and elderly women are at high risk for battering. There are currently no estimates of the prevalence and reporting rates of psychological and social abuse.

Dutton and Golant (1995) have observed that incidents of physical violence may occur only sporadically, although emotional abuse may be used by the batterer to maintain control in the meantime. They offer as an example the situation of one of Dutton’s clients, who had beaten his wife once in 1985, with a verbal warning that the next physical attack would be worse. The client’s wife recognized a particular expression and thereafter “toed the line” whenever she detected the same expression. In effect, the husband was able to control his wife’s behavior through emotional abuse; the
next violent incident did not occur until six years after the first one.

To further an understanding of violence against women, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) jointly sponsored, through a grant to the Center for Policy Research, a national telephone survey on violence against women, which was conducted from November 1995 to May 1996. To provide a context in which to place women’s experiences, the National Violence Against Women (NVAW) Survey sampled both women and men. Thus the survey provides comparable data on women’s and men’s experiences with violent victimization (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

According to Tjaden and Thoennes (1998), respondents to the NVAW Survey were asked about physical assault they experienced as children by adult caretakers; physical assault they experienced as adults by any type of perpetrator; and forcible rape or stalking they experienced at any time by any type of perpetrator. The results of the NVAW Survey, published in 1998 issue of the National Institute of Justice Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, report that 25% of surveyed women said they were raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partner, or date at some time in their life; 1.5% of all surveyed women said they were raped and/or physically assaulted by a partner in the previous 12 months. Based on the U. S. Census estimates of the number of women in the country in 1995, these findings equate to approximately 1.5 million women who are raped and/or physically assaulted by an intimate partner annually in the United States.

An examination of the prevalence rates of battering in the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) report shows that in 1998 of the approximately 900,000
intimate female partner victimizations over half of these were against African-American women. The number of violent incidents may be even higher than those reported to the criminal justice system or the NCVS. Researchers claim there are various reasons for under-reporting of violent incidents in both races. Miller and Wellford (1997) found that African-American women do not trust the justice system and are less likely to report domestic violence than people of other races. Manetta (1999) states African-American women may under-report the violence because they do not want to exacerbate negative social attitudes toward African-American men. Davis, Hagen, and Early (1994) contend some White women leave the home and seek refuge with family or friends rather than phoning the police. Also White women may be afraid to phone the police out of fear that the violence will escalate once the offender is released (Ferraro, 1997; Ptacek, 1997).

The NVAW Survey (2000) found that American Indian/Alaska Native women were significantly more likely to disclose rape and physical assault than women of other racial/ethnic backgrounds, while Asian/Pacific Islander women were significantly less likely to report rape and physical assault. For example, based on the NVAW survey conducted from November 1995 to May 1996, 34.1% of American Indian/Alaska Native reported being raped and 61.4% reported physical assault, while 6.8% of Asian Pacific Islanders reported rape incidents, and 49.6% reported physical assault during a 12 month period prior to their interview. Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) explain that because information on violence against American Indian/Alaska Native women is limited, it is difficult to explain why they report more rape and physical assault victimization. The NVAW Survey (2000) found little difference between Hispanic and non-Hispanic women’s reports of physical violence.
Coleman (1996) also cited a study (Gardner 1989) that compared rates of violence among couples that were male-female, lesbian, and gay male. Gay men had a rate of 38%. One of the major differences between battered gay men and battered women is that gay men are often unable to see to see themselves as victims, simply because they are men (Letellier, 1996). Patrick Letellier suggests that, “unless there is a high level of physical harm or injury to their bodies, gay men are likely to deny or minimize the violence that is perpetrated against them. Additional problems for these victims are the silence about same-sex battering and the risk of a homophobic response” (p. 142). These factors contribute to a low report rate.

One survey of lesbians found that 52% of the respondents had suffered physical violence by their lesbian partners (Lie and Gentlewarrior, 1991). Another survey of 284 lesbians found that approximately one-third were physically abused by their partners (Lockhart, White, Causby, & Isaac, 1994). According to Coleman (1996), lesbian couples are believed to have the highest rate of domestic victimization.

Stalking

Various investigations have reported stalking in male-female, lesbian, and gay male relationships with incidence of stalking in male-female couples to be the most prevalent (Fremouw, Westrup, & Pennypacker, 1997; NIJ, 1998; Pathe & Mullen, 1997). The NVAW Survey (1998) reports that 94% of the offenders identified by female victims were male. It also reports that when comparing White women with non-White women, there were no difference in stalking victimization during their lifetime (NIJ, 1998). Both White and non-White women had a lifetime rate of 8.2%
Also analyzed by the *NVAW Survey* were the lifetime rates of stalking victimization for women in separate ethnic and racial groups. American Indian/Alaska Native women reported twice the rate than women of other racial and ethnic groups (NIJ, 1998). These results are consistent with the evidence in the literature that Native Americans have a higher violence rate than other women (NIJ, 1998). The author cautions readers to consider the low number of American Indians/Alaska Native groups studied when reviewing the results. Asian-American and Pacific Islander women in the *NVAW* investigation were less likely to be stalked than women in other racial and ethnic groups studied (NIJ, 1998).

Partner abuse happens across race, ethnic, age groups, and all sexual orientations. Prevalence rates reported are significantly high but underestimated. These rates do not include crimes that go unreported to the police as a result of fear, racial, ethnic, or other cultural reasons. Since surveys are administered by telephone, survey data do not reflect the experiences of women living in households without telephones or in group facilities such as homeless shelters or battered women’s shelters.

To summarize, domestic violence and intimate partner violence are two of the afflictions of society. These types of violence reflect not only social pathologies, but frequently the psychopathology of the offender. Female victimization is more frequently perpetrated by intimates than by strangers. Male domination expresses itself as physical or psychological abuse. Roberts (2002) asserts that the abuse in male-female couples, lesbian couples, and gay male couples are driven by the need for power and control and the abuser’s need to dominate and disempower the victim.

Despite the fact that some men are victims of domestic violence and intimate partner
violence, the remaining discussion in this chapter will focus on women because they are the subject of the present study and typically participate in transitional housing programs designed for victims of partner abuse.

CHARACTERISTICS OF VICTIMIZATION

Sociological

Palmero (2004) reports that several studies have been conducted in an attempt to define the characteristics of persons who are victims of marital violence. The author found that in a meta-analysis of 52 studies, only one variable was consistently found to be a potential risk marker for women to become the victim of such violence: witnessing parental violence as a child or adolescent. Sugarman and Hotaling (1991) concur that the greatest risk factor for domestic violence is having witnessed parental violence as a child. Nevertheless, Palmero (2004) also believes that an important risk variable for such violence is the woman’s having been sexually abused as a child.

Social isolation is a predisposing risk factor for victimization (National Research Council Institute of Medicine, 1998). Stark and Flitcraft (1996) agree that social isolation is a risk factor but adds that alcohol use, status differences between partners, low self-esteem, and pregnancy (Greenfield, 1998) have been found to be risk factors in an intimate relationship. These authors’ findings do not specifically indicate that these factors are the cause of spouse abuse, but the more factors that are present in a relationship, the more likely it is that violence will occur.

Studies performed by Plichta (1996) and Greenfield (1998) suggest that other factors that increase a woman’s risk for battering include having less than an high school education, low income, and living in an urban area. Some authors (e.g. Kalmuss &
Strauss, 1982) agree that women with limited educational attainment and occupational skills were more likely to stay with battering husbands and less able to discourage, avoid, or otherwise protect themselves from the violence within the marriage. The fewer resources a woman has, the less power she possesses, and the more she is entrapped.

**Intergenerational Violence**

Intergenerational violence theory states that children learn from their parents how to act within relationships. That is, if children see their father beating or degrading their mother, then chances are greater that they will emulate the behavior of the abuser when they become involved in a relationship. This theory states that children learn what is “normal” from their experiences at home (Kalmuss, 1984).

Witnessing excessive fighting in the home, seeing parents lose their tempers easily and being exposed to violence in the neighborhood while growing up are harmful to children, even if they are not the direct victims. According to the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family (1996), these circumstances put children at greater risk for becoming victims of violence or participating in violence later on. Furthermore, without intervention, violence seems to continue through life. Gosselin (2000) reveals that witnessing abuse is among the most destructive thing that can happen to a child. Several studies report that children exposed to domestic violence exhibit more aggressive and antisocial behaviors (often called “externalized” behaviors), than non-exposed children (Fantuzzo, De Paola, Lambert, Martins, Anderson, & Sutton 1991; Hughes, Parkinson, & Vargo, 1989). Exposed children also show lower social competence than other children (Adamson & Thompson, 1998; Fantuzzo, et al., 1991) and higher than average anxiety, depression,
trauma symptoms, and temperament problems than children not exposed to violence at home (Hughes, 1988; Maker, Kemmelmeier, & Peterson, 1998; Sternberg, et al., 1993).

In adulthood, the abused woman may not only repeat the cycle of abuse, but continue to harm herself through self-abuse (Carlton, 1995). Prevalence rates of self-inflicted harm as an adult as a direct outcome of witnessing parental violence were not available. Gelles (1990) agrees that women who experienced more violence as children were more likely to stay in abusive relationships. Doumas, Margolin, and John (1994) report that men who witness their parents’ physically attacking each other are believed to be more likely to hit their own wives.

EFFECTS OF VICTIMIZATION

Some women are abused many times before they seek help from a victims’ shelter. In order to treat or counsel a victim of domestic violence, it is important to know why she has remained in the violent relationship for as long as she has (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Three theoretical perspectives identify why an abused woman would stay or return to a hostile environment, even if resources are available to help her escape and/or maintain a life free of partner abuse. The theories that will be reviewed are:

(1) The Battered Woman Syndrome and the Cycle of Violence, (2) Learned Helplessness Theory, and (3) Traumatic Bonding Theory.

The Battered Woman Syndrome and the Cycle of Violence

Introduction

The Battered Woman Syndrome and the cycle of violence were first identified in the late 1970s in research conducted by psychoanalyst Lenore Walker and first reported in depth in her 1979 book, *The Battered Woman*. The Battered Woman Syndrome
maintains that due to society’s traditions about how boys and girls are raised, and beliefs that people take into their relationships, women maintain an inferior position within the relationship and assume responsibility for making the relationship work (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Examples of this socialization are found in social learning theory.

The concept of social learning evolved from an awareness that much learning takes place as a result of observing and imitating other people (Bandura and Walters, 1963). Social learning theory emphasizes the role of observation and imitation as means of learning new behaviors. For instance, as discussed in intergenerational theory, if children see their father beating or degrading their mother, then chances are greater that they will emulate that behavior when they become involved in a relationship. Newman and Newman (2003) propose that changes in behavior can occur without being linked to a specific pattern of positive or negative reinforcement. They can also occur without numerous opportunities for trial-and-error practice. A person can watch someone perform a task or say a new expression and imitate that behavior accurately on the first try.

Social learning theory posits that family violence arises due to a constellation of contextual and situational factors (O’Leary, 1988). Key contextual factors include individual characteristics, couple characteristics, and societal characteristics. Examples of individual and couple characteristics are manifested in behaviors such as both the man and woman having low self-esteem; and the woman strongly believing in the family unit and the man believing in male supremacy. The woman may accept responsibility for the batterer’s actions while the man blames others for his actions. The man may show extreme jealousy. In order for him to feel secure, he may become over involved in the
woman’s life and suspicious of her relationships with others. In turn, the woman may attempt to control people and events in her environment to keep the batterer from losing his temper (Carlton, 1995). Situational factors such as substance abuse or financial difficulties will lead to violence in the presence of the mentioned contextual factors.

Using the social learning perspective, Walker (1994) theorizes that some women accept their powerlessness in domestic battering situations due to gender-role socialization that induces a false belief that they cannot escape from the situation. The feeling of powerlessness may be reinforced by the “happy family” cultural stereotype as well, she suggested. Isolation from friends, family, and other victims allows the reality of the situation to be minimized while victims accept responsibility for the battering incidents. In this explanation, battering produces psychological paralysis that maintains the victim status. Economic and social factors contribute to victimization and to its continuance in this view.

Continuing the theme of social learning perspective, Walker (1979) theorizes that some women remained in physically, sexually, or psychologically abusive relationships because of extreme fear and the belief that there is no escape. Some women even blame themselves when something goes wrong (Walker, 1984; Carlton, 1995). These women can feel that they have no choice in the matter, being trapped in a cycle of fear and guilt.

Cycle of Violence

During 1975 Walker collected over 120 detailed stories of battered women. The author also listened to fragments of over 300 more stories and dozens of helpers who had offered their services to battered women. The women came from all over the country, as well as from England, where Walker (1979) spent some time visiting refuges for battered
women during the summer of 1976. Walker reported that this was a self-volunteered sample of women who were being abused by their current or former husbands or intimate partners. Walker accepted the woman’s story if she felt she was being psychologically and/or physically battered by her male partner. While listening to the taped interviews Walker also listened for incidents of coercive abuse.

According to Walker, the primary definition most researchers used for abuse is physical violence resulting in bodily injury. As battered women insisted that psychological abuse was often more harmful than the physical, Walker responded by collecting data on both physical and psychological coerciveness. The author found that both forms of violence exist in battering couples and could not be separated, despite the difficulty in documentation. To measure psychological abuse, Walker explained that the severity needed to be estimated with both frequency with which it occurs and the subjective impact it had upon the woman. The definition used in Walker’s (1979) research for battered women is as follows:

A battered woman is a woman who is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical or psychological behavior by a man in order to coerce her to do something he wants her to do without any concern for her rights. Battered women include wives or women in any form of intimate relationships with men. Furthermore, in order to be classified as a battered woman, the couple must go through the battering cycle at least twice. Any woman may find herself in an abusive relationship with a man once. If it occurs a second time, and she remains in the situation, she is defined as a battered woman. (p. xv)
Walker (1994) identified three distinct phases associated in a recurring battering cycle: Tension–building phase, acute battering phase, and loving-contrition (honeymoon) phase. (1) During the tension-building phase, there is a gradual escalation of tension, causing increased friction such as name-calling, other hurtful behaviors, and/or physical abuse. The batterer expresses dissatisfaction and hostility but not in an extreme form. The woman attempts to calm down the batterer, doing what she thinks might please him, 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 her partner. Participants in Walker’s (1994) research revealed that the tension continues to escalate until the woman is unable to continue controlling the batterer’s angry response pattern.

Walker further explained that exhaustion from the constant stress usually causes the woman to withdraw from the batterer, fearing she will inadvertently set off an explosion. He begins to move more oppressively toward her as he observes her withdrawal; tension between the two becomes unbearable and this usually (but not always) leads to battering. (2) The acute battering phase, an uncontrollable release of the tension, becomes inevitable without intervention. Sometimes, the woman precipitates the inevitable explosion so as to control where and when it occurs, allowing her to take better precautions to minimize her injuries and pain. The batterer usually explodes with verbal and physical aggression that can leave the woman shaken and injured. In fact, when injuries do occur it usually happens during this second phase. It is also the time police become involved, if they are called at all or when women make a decision to contact the battered women’s shelter. The acute battering phase is concluded when the batterer
stops, usually bringing a reduction in physiological tension. This in itself is naturally reinforcing. Violence often succeeds because it works.

(3) During the loving-contrition (honeymoon) phase the batterer may apologize profusely, try to assist his victim, show kindness and remorse, and shower her with gifts and promises. The batterer himself may believe at this point that he will never allow himself to be violent again. The woman wants to believe the batterer and, early in the relationship at least, may believe in his ability to change. This third phase proves the positive reinforcement for remaining in the relationship for the woman. Walker’s research revealed that this phase could also be characterized by an absence of tension or violence, and no observable loving contrition behavior, and still be reinforcing. According to Woods (1992), the battering cycle usually starts out in the honeymoon phase, progresses to the tension building phase, escalates to the explosive phase and returns to the honeymoon stage again. Woods’ description of occurrences in each phase is consistent with Walker’s.

Walker asserts that the cycle of violence causes the victim to think less of herself, causes confusion that reduces her chances of planning escape, preoccupies her mind with self-blame, and causes her to believe that there is still hope that they can have a happy and fulfilling relationship together. Since this is what she has been conditioned to believe is most important, and what will make her complete, she is likely to jump at the chance to salvage the relationship.

In some instances the cycle of violence may be perpetuated because of the man’s need to maintain power and control over his wife or intimate partner and denial by both the man and woman that abuse is occurring in the relationship. The cycle is usually kept
in motion by the man’s denial that his behavior is abusive and the woman’s denial that she is a victim of abuse. For instance, Hart (1990) reports that a batterer believes the following:

1. that he is entitled to control his partner and that his partner is obligated to obey him;
2. he is a moral person even if he uses violence against his partner;
3. he will get what he wants through his use of violence;
4. he will not suffer adverse physical, legal, economic, and personal consequences that outweigh the benefits achieved by his violence. (p. 5)

A woman may deny she is a victim of abuse if she witnessed parental violence as a child. Being isolated as a child in an abusive home, the woman may have never seen a non-abusive relationship. This can lead to seeing abuse as part of a relationship: “Their abusive childhoods condition them to accept abuse as normal. The men they pick often resemble their abusive parent” (Carlton, 1995, p. 84).

In one study of 1,600 battered women, Walker (1989) identified the battered women’s syndrome and the cycle of violence in two-thirds of the victims interviewed. Most of those interviewed expressed feelings of despair, helplessness, confusion, indecision, numbness, emotional relief upon sharing experiences, and finally hope that things would change. They described an inability to make decisions because they were so caught up in the cycle and their own attempts to change themselves.

After a woman has experienced the cycle of violence several times she often develops the battered woman syndrome, which surfaces as loss of hope and feeling unable to deal effectively with her situation. The Battered Woman Syndrome appears to
explain the emotions involved that create the feelings of helplessness and dependence that keep a victim in an abusive relationship (Walker, 1984; Kanel 1999). Kanel (1999) describes the battered woman syndrome as having three components: Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, learned helplessness, and self-destructive coping responses to violence. Kanel’s description of learned helplessness is most important for this study: after a woman unsuccessfully attempts to leave or get help, she learns to survive the battering rather than escape it. (pp. 182-183)

Learned Helplessness Theory

Experimental psychologist Martin Seligman is the originator of the learned helplessness theory, an area of research concerned with an early-response reinforcement and subsequent passive behavior. Seligman (1975) and his colleagues discovered that when laboratory dogs were repeatedly and non-contingently shocked, they became unable to escape from a painful situation, even when escape was possible and readily apparent to the dogs that had not undergone helplessness training. Seligman compared what he labeled learned helplessness to a kind of human depression and showed that this human depression had cognitive (learning, expectation, belief, perception), motivational (information about what will happen), and behavioral (towards what will happen) components.

The theoretical concept of learned helplessness was adapted for research by Lenore Walker to help explain why women who could develop such intricate and life-saving coping strategies, found it so difficult to escape a battering relationship. Walker (1979) found that others often failed to understand why abused women did not leave their relationships. The author explained that a battered woman’s perception of her
own control over her situation has a great deal to do with it. Even if she were able to escape, if she believes that she cannot leave or cannot survive on her own, she will not leave.

Walker (2000) defines learned helplessness as “having lost the ability to predict that what you do will make a particular outcome occur” (p. 116). Walker (1979) explained that women who experience repeated physical assaults at the hands of their husbands have much lower self-concepts than women whose marriages are free from violence. The author postulates that the repeated beatings and lower self-concepts leave women with the feeling that they cannot control what will happen to them.

Traumatic Bonding Theory

Dutton and Painter (1993) developed traumatic bonding theory that further explains the concept of learned helplessness--that is, why beaten women remain with the men who beat them. They have identified two features which they argue are common to all such relationships: the existence of a power imbalance within the relationship, so that the battered partner perceives herself as dominated by the other, and the intermittent nature of the abuse. They hypothesize that over time, the power imbalance grows and as it does, the dominant person develops an inflated sense of his or her own power, while the subjugated partner feels more negative about herself and gradually becomes increasingly dependent on the dominator. Because the abuse occurs on an intermittent basis in the cycle of violence, and those interim periods during the honeymoon phase of the cycle are often characterized by positive behaviors such as attention and declarations of love and remorse, patterns of behavior result that are difficult to bring to an end. This loyalty, Loue (2001) explains, results from the victim’s identification with the aggressor.
as a means of fending off danger in a situation in which the victim is essentially powerless. That is, similar to the Stockholm syndrome, the victim praises the enemy for periods of relief from abuse.

These theories explain the victim’s emotional and psychological responses to intimate partner violence. The Cycle of Violence describes the dynamics of the relationship in the various stages of an abusive relationship. In each of the three phases of abusive episodes, we learn of the perpetrator’s dominant behaviors to maintain control in the relationship and the victim’s submissive responses to the behaviors. The description of the abusive behavior in the tension building phase shows the tactics used to attack the victim’s feeling of worthiness and pride, and helps explain why she would question her worthiness. Also, during this phase the victim uses her best effort to problem solve, attempting to pacify the abuser because her safety is threatened. The victim’s physiological needs are at risk throughout the tension-building phase because of the stress of attempting to keep the abuser calm and the unpredictability of when or if violence will occur (the second phase of the cycle). If the battering phase occurs, the victim’s self-esteem continues to erode, her need for safety and security has been impacted, and the psychological stress continues. Additionally, stress affects the victim physically. If the victim remains in the relationship after the physical attack, the perpetrator may continue to dominate her with kindness and remorse (honeymoon phase). During the honeymoon phase (third phase of the cycle) the victim may feel a false sense of security, a temporary peace and relief from stress, and a sense of belonging and of being loved by the abuser.

The domination of the abuser in the three phases of the cycle of violence causes the victim’s self-esteem to be lowered, risk her safety, experience stress and loss of peace.
(physiological needs are jeopardized), and to hope for love and affection in the relationship. Throughout the relationship the victim’s need or request for affiliation with other members in her social circle may be denied or controlled by the abuser.

The Battered Woman Syndrome encompasses the social conditioning of the male and female and how this conditioning may influence the man’s domineering behavior and the woman’s submissive response to the man. The victim’s emotional and psychological responses during the abusive relationship and after surviving the abusive relationship are explained. These emotional and psychological responses are divided into three components by Kanel (1999), but common to all the elements is how the victims lost their peace, suffered from stress, developed a false sense of safety and security, questioned their worthiness to self and others, and lacked a connection to other individuals.

Learned Helplessness and Traumatic Bonding are psychological terms used to explain the victim’s emotional responses to the abuse when she attempts to escape from the abusive relationship without success. The unsuccessful escape is usually due to an inadequate response from external forces such as a social support network or lack of knowledge about how to obtain help. In some instances, the victim may perceive herself held in bondage out of fear or a temporary comfort derived from satisfaction of physiological, safety, security, affection, and esteem needs.

Long-Term Effects of Victimization

The long-term effects of victimization are guilt, depression, emotional dependence, a lowered sense of self-worth, self-doubt about their ability to care and protect themselves, and isolation. According to Dobash, Dobash, and Lewis (2000), the long-term effects of
violence on the victim can cause considerable stress, fear, anger, resentment, and anxiety. Walker (1994) argues that women who experience humiliation, degradation, isolation, and continued threats sometimes report a sense of the loss of themselves--of the people they used to be.

The victim of partner abuse may become so overwhelmed by shame or guilt that she cannot acknowledge or discuss the abuse with anyone. She may not believe that she deserves help, relief from suffering, or any form of healing or recovery (Gosselin, 2000). Gosselin explains that an outgrowth of this belief is self-doubt about their ability to care for and protect themselves. Victims believe they are guilty and responsible for the violence. When they are treated as a worthless object, to be used and manipulated, they believe that's what they deserve.

Walker (1994) explains that the effect of feeling guilty (self-blame) can result in an abuse victim creating a form of partial denial and minimization in which the victim acknowledges that the event occurred, but does not realize that it is improper or harmful. Sometimes this inability to recognize that an action is improper may be caused not only by the process of denial, but also by a genuine lack of knowledge that the acts in question constitute abuse.

INTERVENTIONS

Intervention Theories

The following theories were used to analyze data collected from survivors of domestic violence and intimate partner violence who are participating in a transitional living program, and from the intervention specialists who provide services to this population. These theories are also used to explain why a formerly abused woman may
avoid entering a new abusive relationship or returning to a former one. They are: (1) Social Support, (2) Network Analysis, (3) Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, and (4) Resilience and Protective Factors.

Finally, all theories are discussed through a feminist lens; that is, feminists look at the source (patriarchy and hierarchy) of women’s oppression (e.g. gender-role socialization, physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual assault, economic abuse, and stalking) and attempt to develop intervention strategies to end oppression.

**Feminist Theory**

There are several schools of feminist thought used to shape both their explanation for women’s oppression and their proposed solution for its elimination. For instance, Tong’s (1998) research reveals that liberal, radical, and Marxist-socialist feminists focus on the macrocosm (patriarchal society or capitalism) in their respective explanations of women’s oppression. The author further explains that psychoanalytic and gender feminists concentrate on the microcosm of the individual, claiming roots of women’s oppression are embedded deep in their psyche, specifically, in women’s ways of thinking. Multicultural and global feminist believe the roots of oppression are primarily cultural, racial, and ethnic. Additional feminist theories exist (ecofeminism, existentialism feminism, and postmodern feminism) but are beyond the scope of this study.

Feminist theory as applied to battering emphasizes the role of violence in maintaining control over a female intimate partner. This “violence” includes “physical violence, emotional abuse, sexual violence, social isolation, and withholding of financial resources to undermine a woman’s autonomy and limit her power in the relationship” (Chalk & King, 1998, p. 37). Feminist theory also posits that the social structure
supports social inequities that lead to the perpetuation of male dominance (Roberts, 2002). This theory attempts “to explain partner abuse on the basis of traditional gender-role expectations and the historical imbalance of power between women and men in a patriarchal society” (Chornesky, 2000, p. 487).

Feminist thought, then, underscores the previously discussed theories that place abuse within the tensions of hierarchical power. But it also contributes the recognition of other factors in the “dynamics of oppression”—that gender, race, ethnicity, age, and other factors play a role: “In this way, the violence, abuse, and control experienced by a woman are considered part of a social problem, not a problem unique to her. Feminist approaches to intervention emphasize validation of the battered woman’s experience, empowerment, and self-determination” (Brown & Root, 1990; Dutton-Douglas & Walker, 1988; Jones & Schechter, 1992; Schechter, 1987 cited in Dutton, 1992, p.100). Bograd (1990) adds “the feminist perspective is dedicated to advocacy for women” (p. 25).

The remaining theories in this section are discussed from the perspective based partly on the philosophy of liberal feminism (NCWD, 1997) which believes in rights of individuals, education as the solution to the problems, voluntary choice, and idealism, that is, it is ideas that make changes. Liberal feminists also believe in activism. The underlying theme of the theories discussed in this study are the survivors’ active role or desire to become active individually or collectively in family, peers, life skills, and career/educational activities that they have identified as crucial to living an abuse-free life. Curricula developed or implemented by intervention specialists in this study reflect
the feminist philosophy also, in that it encourages one to make choices, establish goals, and take an active role toward achieving goals.

**Social Support**

Social support is defined as the social experience leading people to believe that they are cared for and loved, that they are esteemed and valued, and that they belong to a network of communication and mutual obligation. Bergeman, Plomin, Pedersen, McClearn, and Nesselroade (1990) define social support as a broad term that includes the quantity and interconnectedness or web of social relationships in which a person is embedded, the strength of those ties, the frequency of contact, and the extent to which the support system is perceived as helpful and caring.

Murrell and Norris (1991) claim that there are several reasons why social support plays a direct role in promoting health and well-being, even when a person is not facing a specific stressful situation. First, because social support involves meaningful social relationships, it reduces isolation. Second, the presence of caring, familiar people provides a flow of affection, information, and advice. Third, the presence of a support system tends to reduce the impact of stressors and protect people from their negative consequences, especially serious illness and depression.

Several researchers have shown that social support is not a unitary characteristic of relationships. Rather different types of relationships provide different kinds of support (Barrera & Ainlay, 1983; Cutrona & Russell, 1990; Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Wasserman and Galaskiewicz (1994) add that although no standard typology exists, researchers using factor analysis and other multivariate data-analysis techniques have consistently distinguished among emotional aid, material aid (goods, money, and
service), information, and companionship. Campbell and Lee (1990) express that it is highly unlikely that any one member of an individual’s network will provide all four types of support. The authors found that parents and adult children provide a broad spectrum of aid, but neighbors and frequently network members are more likely to provide material aid, and women are more likely than men to provide emotional support. For the purpose of this study, social support was categorized into subheadings as emotional support, informational support, material support, and collaboration to explain the emerging themes of the research and to illustrate the important role that each element of support provides women in preparation for surviving an abusive intimate partner relationship.

**Network Analysis**

Network is an interconnected or interrelated chain, group or system. Network analysis asks who is linked to whom, assesses the quality of linkage, and explores how the linkage affects social interaction and individual behavior (Boissevain, 1979). Clinicians often refer to network contacts as “significant others” (Hoff, 1990). In this study, network analysis examines the process of giving or receiving help during the transition from being a victim of domestic violence or intimate partner violence to a survivor in a supportive living environment. Process is a series of continuous actions that bring about a particular result, end, or condition: the process of growth. Social network members in this study included family, peer groups, human service workers, and community volunteers.

**Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs**

According to Abraham Maslow’s theory, human beings are always in a state of
striving (Maslow, 1968). In Maslow’s (1970) view, there are five primary levels of human motivation: (1) Physiological (food, drink, sleep et cetera), (2) Safety (security, stability, dependency, protection, order, law, limits, strength in the protector, and so on), (3) Belongingness and love, (4) Self-esteem, and (5) Self-actualization.

Maslow (1970) says that if “the physiological needs are relatively well gratified, a net set of needs emerges,” which he characterized as safety needs (p. 39). A person can be completely dominated by safety needs. The author argues that practically everything looks less important than safety and protection (even sometimes the physiological needs, which, being satisfied, are now underestimated). Furthermore, Maslow explains, an individual in an extreme and chronic state of need may be characterized as living almost for safety alone. The safety needs can become very urgent on the social scene whenever there are real threats to law, to order, to the authority of society. The author contends that the threat of chaos can be expected in most human beings to produce a regression from any higher needs to the more dominant safety needs.

If both the physiological and the safety needs are fairly well gratified, there will emerge the need for love, affection and a sense of belonging. He explains that now the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, an intimate partner, a spouse, or children. Individuals will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in their group or family, and they will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal.

Everyone, Maslow (1970) believes, has a need for a “high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others” (p. 45). He suggested that the satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth,
strength, capability, and adequacy, of being useful and necessary in the world. But thwarting of these needs produces feelings of inferiority, of weakness, and of helplessness. Furthermore, these feelings in turn give rise to either basic discouragement or else compensatory or neurotic trends.

Finally, if self-esteem needs can be met and sustained, the person directs energy to self-actualization, a motive that urges the person to make optimal use of his or her full potential, to become a more effective, creative participant in daily life. The need for self-actualization becomes a driving force, urging the person to seek new levels of insight and personal fulfillment. Maslow (1970) contends that the specific form that self-actualization needs take will vary greatly from person to person. For example, as my findings suggest, in one individual it may take the form of the desire to be an ideal mother, in another person it may be expressed in educational pursuits.

Resilience and protective factors support Maslow’s theory of motivation. Both Maslow (1970) and Roberts (2002) talk about the importance of a social network as a protective factor. Maslow (1968) uses the term belongingness and love and Roberts (2002) uses collaboration to describe the role of networks in shaping one’s current and future values. Both authors discuss high self-esteem as another important protective factor for acquiring emotional strength which is usually diminished during an abusive relationship. There is also a relationship between Maslow’s (1970) belief about self-actualization and Saleebey’s (2006) philosophy on resiliency in that both concepts deal with a process of “continued and articulation of capacities, knowledge, insight, and virtues derived through meeting the demands and challenges of one’s world” (p. 13).
the context of this present study, this means the survivor’s ongoing process of developing and maximizing life skills required as a result of her unique experiences.

*Resilience and Protective Factors*

Despite the characteristics of abuse and long term-effects of abuse of victims discussed in this literature, Roberts (2002) found that some abused women have significant inner strengths, also known as resilience and protective factors, which have been found to mediate and lessen the impact of stress related to battering. Roberts (2002) explains that the most common protective factors include high self-esteem, a social support network, and cognitive coping skills.

During the past decade, a growing number of crisis interveners, counselors, social workers, and psychologists have recognized that a strengths perspective that builds on resilience of individuals is much more fruitful in helping clients grow and change in positive directions than the previous 50 years of emphasis on pathologizing the client (Saleebey, 1997). The strength perspective of crisis intervention utilizes empowerment, resilience, healing and wholeness, collaboration, and suspension of disbelief (Roberts, 2002).

The present study focuses on empowerment, resilience, and collaboration. Domestic violence advocates can help Transitional Living Program participants empower themselves by developing and offering intervention programs that case study participants have identified as necessary to live independent from an abusive relationship. Resilience occurs when newly developed intervention programs are structured to encourage Transitional Living Program participants to identify their inner strengths and enhance their knowledge pertaining to their specific needs, provide education about the dynamics
of abuse, and offer social support. This case study suggests that the collaborative efforts of survivors of abuse, Transitional Living Program case managers, friends, family, Women’s Work Project staff and peers, and the legal system are important to the women in this study for gaining resilience and feeling empowered.

Roberts and Burman (1998) defined *empowerment strategies* as creating opportunities for individuals and communities. Saleebey (2006) expands on this concept adding that, “Promoting empowerment means believing that people are capable of making their own choices and decisions. It means not only that human beings possess the strengths and potential to resolve their own difficult life situations, but also that they increase their strength and contribute to the well-being of society by doing so” (p. 97). Domestic violence advocates can help survivors uncover these strengths by providing programs and services that assist, enable, support, and encourage. It appears as though advocates utilizing these behaviors and services in their relationships with survivors of abuse are providing a protective environment that encourages resilience.

**Strengths Perspective Intervention Model for Survivors of Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence**

Table 1 and Table 2, entitled Strengths Perspective Intervention Model for Survivors of Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence, summarize the effects of victimization and the characteristics of victimization described by various theorists in this chapter. Also, based on my perception, they show how selected resilience and protective factors identified by researchers like Maslow 1970, Saleebey 2006, and Roberts 2002 can contribute to surviving the effects of domestic violence and intimate partner violence.

Each table contains three columns describing survivors’ behaviors, experiences, and
possible motivational needs. The columns are labeled: (1) Effects of Victimization and Characteristics of Victimization, (2) Survivors’ Unidentified Strengths (resilience), and (3) Protective Factors (motivational needs).

Effects of victimization and characteristics of victimization (column 1) are summaries of behaviors and experiences explained by various theorists in this chapter. Effects of victimization are the feelings or actions as a result of being abused; characteristics of victimization are risk factors for abuse that occur during an abusive relationship or that lure one into an abusive relationship.

Survivors’ unidentified strengths (column 2) capture the women’s virtues, capacities, and resources, which Saleebey (2006) defines as resilience. The behaviors and experiences in the unidentified strengths column are given a stigma by researchers, who use them to describe the effects and characteristics of victimization. Despite the challenges of living in an oppressive environment, survivors possess and utilize these behaviors and experiences—these strengths that need to be identified. As an intervention strategy, advocates can share this information, assuring survivors that their behaviors and experiences have worth and value.

The third column lists selected motivational needs (Maslow, 1970) that describe protective factors by researchers like Saleebey (1997) and Roberts (2002)—factors believed to contribute to surviving domestic violence and intimate partner violence. I believe survivors of abuse were attempting to satisfy these motivational needs as they demonstrated behaviors and experiences described in the survivors’ unidentified strengths column. Or, in some instances survivors’ motivational needs may require strengthening through collaboration with domestic violence advocates. For example,
advocates can communicate to survivors that these normal challenges faced in an unhealthy situation are unidentified strengths; they can then discuss how these challenges may have been attempts to fulfill intrinsic motivational needs and how their freedom to fulfill these needs was undermined by their partner.

Before Table 1 and Table 2, I will give a brief discussion for each effect and characteristic of victimization in order to provide an understanding of how I arrived at the descriptions given for survivors’ unidentified strengths (resilience) and protective factors.

*Effects of Victimization Discussion (Table 1)*

Guilt: “Women are trained to nurture, protect and be there for others, but not for themselves. This scripting makes women victims” (Carlton, 1995, p. 152). Some women even blame themselves when something goes wrong (Carlton, 1995; Walker, 1984). For example, abused victims might say, “It must have been my fault I was hit.” Carlton adds that “by accepting responsibility for others, these women participate in their own victimization” (p. 152). The woman’s unidentified strength is that she has the ability to express love and concern for others. She is also persistent in handling family crises but in an unhealthy manner. An abuser will sometimes make a woman feel like she is not doing enough or is not good enough. An intervention strategy could be helping the woman examine her source of guilt and whether her reasons for feeling guilty are legitimate. Advocates can affirm the importance of experiencing love for others and receiving love in intimate partner relationships. Woman can also be taught the significance of treating herself with care. This alternative coping strategy, if successful, builds self-esteem and earns the esteem of other women who have similar emotional concerns. This strategy also provides a feeling of belongingness because the women are
connected by similar concerns, experiences, and needs. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to nurture each other and learn to be self-nurturers. Finally, the woman is learning to establish boundaries in relationships by deciding not only to care for others, but also to take care of herself without feeling guilty.

Depression: “Repressed, unexpressed anger can turn into self-destructive, self-defeating behaviors, and symptoms such as depression” (Carlton, 1995, p. 156). Carlton explains that due to societal conditioning, depression is a natural outcome for women who have been victimized. As an example, the author found that if victims visit seek medical help for being battered, raped, or stressed out at work due to sexual harassment, they were most likely given a prescription for a tranquilizer to help them get over it. Carlton argues that tranquilizers are inappropriate substitutes for dealing with anger; denying anger can lead to depression. In support of anger, Carlton explains that it “is a healthy function of the body, mind, and soul. It’s a message that something is terribly wrong with what is going on. Anger is an energy and a vehicle to regain your power, self-respect, self-esteem and self-control” (p. 158) By denying anger, “Your self-esteem plummets, and you take one more step further into the victim role.” (p.158)

An alternative coping strategy to depression would be an exercise requiring the woman to share her reasons for feeling angry. A support group would provide a safe environment to educate the woman on techniques for communicating limits to her partner. Advocates can also discuss the effect of depression on self-esteem. For example, self-esteem determines how we let others treat us. Both anger and self-esteem affect how motivated we are and how hard we try to change undesirable situations. A
support group provides an environment for women to collectively discuss alternative solutions to dealing with their sources of anger.

   Emotional dependence: Although listed as one of the negative effects of victimization, it can also have a positive effect on survivors. The fact that the woman is emotionally dependent implies that she feels deserving of love and affection. Advocates can encourage healthy relationships and discuss the advantages of healthy relationships on self-esteem and the important role that giving and receiving love plays in one’s life.

   Lowered self-worth: The woman questions her self-worth and doubts her ability to take care of herself and her family because she is undeservedly accepting the blame and responsibility for the family disintegrating. Carlton (1995) explains it well:

   Because of the conditioned *learned helplessness* and the *victim role* she already plays, she feels ineffective in doing anything about the situation. Her responsibility of keeping the family together is one of her highest held values. She is an expert at selflessness and long suffering, traits she regards as admirable. Due to the constant eroding away of her confidence, she doesn’t feel she can make it on her own. ( p. 85)

   An alternative coping strategy would be self-esteem building exercises that include identifying positive behaviors, such as her persistence in keeping her commitments, living according to her family values, enduring the abusive relationship for the sake of the family, and treating others within the family with kindness in spite of the abuse. These are positive behaviors to build upon so that the woman can begin to view herself as worthwhile.

   Isolation: “People who have been abused or traumatized don’t have a place inside themselves where they feel safe. They’re cut to the very heart of their soul. And because
they feel hurt and betrayed, they won’t trust others. This leads to isolation and loneliness” (Carlton, 1995, p. 219). An alternative coping strategy would be to discuss with the woman the necessity of fulfilling love needs for good mental health and the importance of a support system to prevent reoccurring crisis episodes. Participation in a support system would help the woman to begin to regain trust in individuals.
Table 1.

Strengths Perspective Intervention Model

For Survivors of Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effects of victimization</th>
<th>Unidentified strengths of victims (resilience)</th>
<th>Protective factors via social support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>Makes sacrifices for family*; patient; persistent in handling family crisis*; expresses love for intimate others; caretaker</td>
<td>Belongingness and love High self-esteem Safety and security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Carlton, 1995; Walker, 1984)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Anger (suppressed)</td>
<td>Belongingness and love High self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Carlton, 1995; Gordon, 1998)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional dependence</td>
<td>Can accept loving and caring from others*</td>
<td>Belongingness and love High self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Carlton, 1995; Dutton &amp; Painter, 1993)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowered self-worth</td>
<td>Makes sacrifices for family*; patient; generous</td>
<td>High self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Carlton, 1995; Dobash, Dobash &amp; Lewis, 2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubt</td>
<td>Makes sacrifices for family*; patient; generous</td>
<td>High self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Carlton, 1995; Gosselin, 2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Emotions are congruent with situation* (adaptability); does not want to be dependent on others (independent)</td>
<td>Belongingness and love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Carlton, 1995; Roberts, 2002; Walker, 1994)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* titles adapted from Cowger (2006)
Characteristics of Victimization Discussion (Table 2)

Alcohol Use: Victims turn to alcohol as a coping mechanism, as a way to escape, gain confidence, reduce anxiety, etc. However, such a dangerous addiction only increases the damage of abuse (Carlton, 1995, pp. 181-182). An alternative coping skill would be learning healthy ways to manage stress such as understanding the stages of the grieving process, the importance of a healthy diet, and healthy physical activities versus nourishments from any type of addiction. By doing so, the woman is changing her behavior from self-abuse (chemical dependency) to enhancing her sense of worthiness and treating herself with respect.

Carlton argues that “Women who depend on drugs to suppress their depression, anxiety, fear, and anger to modulate their moods deny themselves access to the very feelings that must be dealt with in order to learn how to protect themselves. The drugs further the victim process” (p. 182). In this instance, education is vital in explaining the advantages of using appropriate anger as a motivator to affect positive changes in a woman’s life.

Finally, Carlton states that “Addictive and compulsive behaviors never bring full or absolute relief from the gnawing inner emptiness. Self-destructive behaviors only serve to disguise and deny the pain” (p. 185). Kanel (1999) concurs citing that “feelings such as shame, guilt, disgust, remorse, anger, and fear are denied by the alcoholic and anesthetized by alcohol consumption” (p. 140). Carlton (1995) continues her argument stating, “They never address the real problem: the inability to recover, accept love, and integrate the missing parts of the self” (p. 185). As an alternative coping strategy, the impact of giving and receiving love on good mental health cannot be emphasized enough.
Social isolation: “In abusive families, the group is maintained at the expense of the individual. Differences of opinions are discouraged. Children have few friends outside the family. They grow up isolated from the outside world. Because most of their time is spent at home they develop poor social skills.” (Carlton, 1995, p.56). Such a situation leads to a “victim life-style,” filled with powerlessness and passivity. Social isolation can also be a result of the abusive partner’s control tactic in intimate partner relationships.

Low self-esteem: Gosselin (2000) suggests that this trait can be natural or due to the experiences of battering relations described throughout this chapter. A beneficial coping strategy would be educating the woman about the dynamics of self-esteem.

Pregnancy: Pregnancy has been identified as a risk factor associated with domestic battering (Gosselin, 2000). Studies of battered women in shelters have indicated that between 40-60% of women were abused during pregnancy (McFarlane, 1998).

In a survey of women who were not residents of battered women shelters, McFarlane reports that 1 out of every 12 women interviewed reported battering during the current pregnancy. One-third of the pregnant women had sought medical attention for injuries sustained from the abuse, and 29% reported that the abuse had increased with knowledge of present pregnancy. Gosselin reports that “a strong indicator of violence during pregnancy was the pattern of battering beforehand” (p. 135). Some women become pregnant with the hope or belief that the abuse will end, and the relationship will improve with the presence of a child. Another coping strategy could be learning to recognize the characteristics of healthy intimate partner relationships and awareness about the dynamics of intimate partner violence. Through education about intimate
partner violence, the woman would learn that changes in her behavior will not stop her partner’s abuse toward her; the abuse is not her fault.

Gender-role socialization: Gender-role socialization suggests that children are oriented early in life as victims or perpetrators, according to their gender. Girls are taught to be passive and yielding to the “stronger” male sex. Gosselin (2000) proposes that “society dictates the role of women in marriage, in child responsibilities, and toward domestic duties, all of which makes them vulnerable for abuse” (p. 72). Carlton (1995) adds that “a woman socialized into the “appropriate feminine behavior” is subservient to dominant men. As a child, she was probably also trained to accept violence and/or unhappiness as an unavoidable “given” in intimate relationships” (p. 85). Advocates can teach women that it is okay to enjoy traditional feminine roles if they desire, but they should encourage women to also consider learning to communicate boundaries to their partners. By setting boundaries, women can continue to enjoy their roles without being disrespected. Education about boundary setting can include women learning to acknowledge and communicate their personal needs and treating themselves with care and a sense of self-preservation within the relationship.

Use sex to establish intimacy: According to Gosselin (2000), “The expectation that girls should be physically and sexually pleasing to men makes them susceptible to sexual abuse. In relationships, girls are taught to be submissive while boys are expected to be the sexual aggressors” (p. 72). On a positive note, Maslow (1970) believes that sex is an important motive. The psychologist believes that people who are growing and realizing their full potential (self-actualizing people) experience love and belonging. Maslow is in agreement with Gosselin that impersonal sex with someone who
is not loved is undesirable. In this situation, to help the woman take steps toward building self-esteem, advocates can provide education about how to develop healthy intimate partner relationships, learn to acknowledge her personal needs, and treat herself with care and self-preservation within the her relationship.

Sexual child abuse: Carlton (1995) states that, “Sexual child abuse leaves a woman feeling inadequate, inferior, with a poor sense of self-worth and a shattered identity” (p. 27). The author further explains that as a result of the sexual abuse, she has been given the message that she is only good for the use of her body. The author claims that “the damage goods syndrome makes women easy targets for revictimization because they will do, be, whatever they can to feel acceptable” (p. 27). As an alternative coping strategy, the woman can build her self-esteem by believing she deserves love and affection, examining aspects of her intimate relationship to determine if she is truly in a healthy relationship, and learning to create and communicate boundaries in her relationship that demands kind treatment and the respect that she deserves. Another outcome of sexual abuse, according to Carlton, is that a woman may look to a man to protect her because she thinks women cannot protect themselves. To cope with the need for protection, the woman can be educated about setting limits in all aspects of her life.

Witnessing parental violence: As Carlton (1995) observes, families that experience abuse are often cut off from other people: “Parents may be critical of their children’s friends or not allow the children to associate with others outside the family. The flow of information coming into the family unit is restricted. Outside sources of protection are cut off. With only limited knowledge available to them, children are conditioned to think
what is happening at home is normal” (p. 70). Children living in this environment may have never seen a non-abusive relationship. To change the woman’s perception of a “normal relationship,” she should be provided education about the dynamics of partner abuse, and given methods for developing healthy intimate relationships, reinforcing a belief that she deserves to receive love and affection, and setting limits in her intimate relationship that lead to respectful treatment. Her self-esteem will improve because she is encouraged to believe that she deserves respect from others, and she is also learning how to develop self-respect.

Education less than high school; low income: Gosselin (2000) claims that “Women often remain economically dependent on the man while they care for children in the home; they may delay their education and forgo employment outside the home” (p. 140). In this instance the woman can be applauded for her commitment to family, but also educated about how family, work, money, and education may influence how she views herself and the value she chooses to place on herself. It would also be beneficial to encourage the woman to treat herself with care and self-preservation. Help her to seek a healthy balance between taking care of her children and herself.
### Table 2

**Strengths Perspective Intervention Model**

For Survivors of Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of victimization</th>
<th>Survivors’ unidentified strengths (Resilience)</th>
<th>Protective factors via social support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol use (Carlton, 1995; Kanel, 1996; Stark &amp; Flitcraft, 1996)</td>
<td>Emotions are congruent with situation* (sadness, fear, grief, depression, anxiety)</td>
<td>Belongingness and love Safety and security High self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social isolation (National Research Council, 1998; Stark &amp; Flitcraft, 1996)</td>
<td>Behavior is congruent with situation (fear, insecurity loneliness)</td>
<td>Belongingness and love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem (Gosselin, 2000; Stark &amp; Flitcraft, 1996; Walker, 1984)</td>
<td>Emotion is congruent with situation* (result of repeat criticisms)</td>
<td>High self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy (Gosselin, 2000; Greenfield, 1998)</td>
<td>Demonstrates comfort in sexual role/identity*; wants to improve situation with partner*</td>
<td>Belongingness and love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender role socialization (Carlton, 1995; Gosselin, 2000; Walker, 1994)</td>
<td>Demonstrates comfort in sexual role/identity* (nurturer, affectionate); understands morality from her cultural perspective* (may reject gender roles that can lead to abuse)</td>
<td>Belongingness and love Safety and security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use sex to establish intimacy (Gosselin, 2000; Walker, 1994)</td>
<td>Emotion/behavior congruent with situation</td>
<td>Belongingness and love High self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexually abused as a child (Carlton, 1995; Palmero, 2004)</td>
<td>Emotions are congruent with situation* (inferiority, inadequacy, low self-worth)</td>
<td>Belongingness and love High self-esteem Safety and security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Strengths Perspective Intervention Model

For Survivors of Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence -- continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of victimization</th>
<th>Survivors’ unidentified strengths (Resilience)</th>
<th>Protective factors via social support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Witnessing parental violence</td>
<td>Sees the world as most other people see it from her culture* (culture of violence—she has never seen a non-abusive relationship)</td>
<td>Belongingness and love Safety and security High self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Carlton, 1995; Palmero, 2004; Sugarman &amp; Hotaling, 1991)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education less than high school; low income</td>
<td>Makes sacrifices for family members* (caretaker); performs social role* (parent); patient (delay opportunities for care of children)</td>
<td>High Self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Plichta, 1996; Greenfield, 1998)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* titles adapted from Cowger (2006)
Summary of the Effects of Victimization and Characteristics of Victimization Tables

The summary provides a brief review of the effects of victimization as well as characteristics of victimization. The role of an advocate is described as a means of addressing either the effects or the characteristics of victimization. A review of the literature on intervention programs to provide readers with a perspective on treatment options is available.

Effects of Victimization

The effects of victimization and characteristics of victimization quoted by various researchers in this section capture the internal barriers to surviving an abusive relationship cited by Carlson (1997) in Chapter 1. In this current section, we read how the effects of victimization, such as suffering from guilt, depression, low self-worth and self-doubt, keep victims in what Carlson calls an “acute recurring pattern of crisis” if the issues are not attended to. In these areas of concern, intervention strategies such as addressing safety issues that involve establishing boundaries in all relationships, assertiveness training and anger management, learning to make healthy instead of unhealthy decisions would be beneficial for survival. Furthermore, to address the feeling of low self-worth, encouraging women to participate in a support group of caring individuals would place them in a safe environment where they could experience the feeling of being valued and have their experiences validated by others who have similar experiences.

Isolation and depression was mentioned by Roberts (2002) as deterrents to handling concerns of daily living which are even more complicated as a result of surviving an abusive relationship. To aid in counteracting these behaviors, advocates can guide
women toward a supportive environment where they can feel secure, regain their freedom of expression, and learn to have confidence in themselves and others again.

An effect of intervention implies that women are no longer victims but victors because they left their abusive partner. If women elect to actively participate in the described interventions, her self-esteem will improve and risks for re-victimization will diminish as she becomes aware of the issues of survival. For each effect of victimization, positive behaviors (unidentified strengths) should be a focus to build upon.

**Characteristics of Victimization**

Poor coping skills are listed as one of the internal barriers for abused women. In the context that I am presenting unidentified strengths, coping behaviors manifested are paradoxical. On one level, alcohol use, pregnancy, and sex as a way to establish intimacy are considered poor coping skills because they are the affects of depression and having low-self esteem. On another level, if one considers the context in which the coping behaviors exist, they are a woman’s strengths. For example, they are striving to belong, be affirmed, valued, and feel secure. As an alternative to these behaviors, women could strive to feel safe and secure by learning anger management techniques to avoid depression, learning how to manage stress, participating in health education programs that include the physical affects of alcoholism, learning to establish boundaries, becoming familiar with domestic violence laws, and becoming educated about the dynamics of partner abuse. Because a woman’s safety is at risk during the abusive relationship, these strategies would be more helpful as a preventative to entering future abusive relationships upon ending an existing unhealthy relationship.

Social support can be considered to address low self-esteem, depression, social
isolation, and passivity resulting from being sexually abused as a child. A supportive environment including survivors of child sexual abuse would provide validation of experiences, allow the woman to rebuild trust in relationships, and establish boundaries in relationships. Unidentified strengths to build upon are the woman’s ability to adapt, feel, or react “normally” to her abusive experience.

Passivity, listed as an internal barrier, can result from gender-role socialization and witnessing parental violence. Establishing boundaries in relationships, learning to be assertive, and receiving affirmation of gender qualities are steps toward feeling safe and secure in relationships and who we are as a female. Validation of “appropriate” female roles can be accomplished by participating in a social support group facilitated by a leader who understands feminist issues and the dynamics of partner abuse.

Intervention Programs

Once a case of partner abuse has been reported and recognized, the next important step is intervention. This section will review the literature on providing residential transitional living programs (shelter services) which encompasses group support, case management, financial assistance, child care, social support, and education as intervention strategies to eliminate repeat victimization.

Description of Emergency Shelters

Shelter programs vary in size, scope of services, and sources and level of funding. Their most critical functions are to provide crisis intervention and safety provision for battered women and their children. An unidentified author of *History of the Battered Women’s Shelter/Movement* (2004) describes most shelter programs as operating a 24-hour hotline and limiting the length of stay in the shelter to a maximum of three months, depending on the number of requests for shelter and the availability of beds.
The author further explains that when a woman enters a shelter, an advocate works with her to develop a plan of action for her time in the shelter. The plan addresses the issues that she cites as important to enhance her safety and move her on to a better living situation. Typical shelter services include legal, economic, housing, and medical advocacy; court accompaniment; employment and job training assistance; support groups for residents; and child care and counseling programs for children.

*Descriptions of Individual Residential Transitional Living Programs*

Examples of ideal programs and services of residential transitional housing programs located in eight states (see Table 3) are described in this section. Transitional living programs bridge the gap between emergency shelters and a permanent home. Advocates from emergency shelters refer formerly abused women and their children to transitional living programs. These programs provide structural and supported housing to these families as they are transitioning from living in crisis to living safe and economically self-sufficient lives. Occupancy and participation in transitional living programs discussed in this study are a maximum of 12 months, 18 months, and 24 months as dictated by individual programs.

While there are numerous transitional living programs in the United States, this small sample was selected to expose readers to the intervention strategies designed to counteract the risk factors and effects of victimization discussed in the literature, such as low self-esteem, isolation, unemployment, and intergenerational violence. Programming also address risks factors associated with what some researchers have cited as reasons victims may return to their abuser, for example, lack of support from the legal system, social isolation, and housing. Common to all these programs are goals and services
aimed at allowing women to actively participate in learning how to counter her oppression, enhance her resilience, and strengthen her protective factors (e.g. safety and security, sense of belongingness and love, and high self-esteem).

The growth of safety and security needs is evident in financial management training, career planning, employment assistance, legal advocacy, temporary housing, and establishing goals to obtain permanent housing. Also, Herman (1997) contends that, “Because no one can establish a safe environment alone, the task of developing an adequate safety plan always includes a component of social support” (p. 167).

The safe environment and social support are vital to overcoming the trauma of abuse. “Trauma isolates; the group creates a sense of belonging. Groups have proved invaluable for survivors of extreme situations such as rape, battering, and childhood abuse” (Herman, pp. 214-215). Having a sense of belongingness and love and receiving the esteem of others is attempted through services that provide peer support groups, social activities for women, spiritual support, family programming, and case management. Herman believes that, “Those who have survived learn that their sense of self, of worth, of humanity, depends upon a feeling of connection to others” (p. 214).

Herman further explains that, “Groups provide the possibility not only of mutually rewarding relationships but also of collective empowerment. Group members approach one another as peers and equals. Though each individual is suffering and in need of help, each also has something to contribute. The group requisitions and nurtures the strengths of each of its members” (p. 216).

High self-esteem is developed through women’s active participation in a self-identified service, offered by transitional housing programs, they have deemed necessary
for their survival. In the process of establishing safety and security women are called upon to plan and initiate action and to use their best judgment. Herman believes that “As women begin to exercise these capacities which have been systematically undermined by repeated abuse, they enhance their sense of competence, self-esteem, and freedom” (p. 216).

Contrary to conventional wisdom, victims choosing to leave violent situations require ongoing economic resources, and physical and emotional support (Jenkins & Davidson, 2001). Adequate protection for herself, her children, and her loved ones may be a factor in the successful escape process. A woman may leave and return several times, hoping to impress upon her partner that she is serious about the necessity of the violence ending. Alternatively, women may leave and return upon learning that the resources needed to start anew are inadequate, that obstacles to establishing a safe independent living situation are insurmountable, or after losing hope that she can successfully evade her abuser.

Supporting Jenkins and Davidson’s argument is a study conducted by Allen, Bybee, and Sullivan (2004). These researchers found that the majority of women wanted to work on obtaining material goods and services, improving health-related issues, increasing their level of social support, and improving school-related issues. In addition, a significant portion indicated they wanted to address financial needs, transportation needs, employment, and legal issues. Addressing child care issues and other child related issues were also goals. Housing was not identified as a need because women had recently exited the shelter and obtained housing. Frequently cited priorities by survivors
in a second study were: “Managing my finances,” “working toward my goals,” “relaxing and enjoying myself,” and “expressing myself” (Gorde, Helfrich, & Finlayson, 2004). These concerns are addressed in most of the transitional housing program models (Table 3).
### Table 3

**Transitional Housing Program Models**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitional Housing</th>
<th>Brennan House (Riley Center, Inc., CA)</th>
<th>Cornerstone (Women’s Resource Center, VA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Admission requirements** | • Emergency shelter referral  
• Survivors of physical, sexual or emotional abuse  
• 1/3 of income for rent | Program fee in lieu of rent |
| **Program length** | 12 months | 24 months |
| **Max capacity** | 30 beds | 8 apartments |
| **Free Services** | • Case management  
• Intensive children’s program  
• Workshops/groups on parenting and education.  
• Food | • Court advocacy  
• Counseling  
• Support groups  
• Activity programs designed for child interaction  
• Information and referral services (social services, health and legal issues) |
| **Program goals** | • Help women secure and retain safe and affordable housing  
• Help women and children deal with long-term effects of abuse | • Teach life skills, effective communication, career exploration, money management, parenting, and ways to cope with loneliness and develop social network  
• Encourage client to take responsibility, meet goals, and increase sense of control. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitional Housing</th>
<th>Jane Doe, Inc. (MA)</th>
<th>Lydia’s House (MO)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Admission requirements</strong></td>
<td>Referral by emergency shelter</td>
<td>Referral by emergency shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program length</strong></td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Max capacity</strong></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Free Services** | • Counseling  
• Legal advocacy  
• Employment assistance  
• Economic planning  
• Housing advocacy  
• Aid children witnesses of domestic violence | • Peer support groups  
• Spiritual support  
• Community meals  
• Social activities for women and family outings  
• Referrals for community resources  
• Client establishes goals for educational, employment, legal and financial goals  
• Child advocate facilitates peer support groups, sessions with children, parenting skill sessions, and educational contacts. |
<p>| <strong>Program goals</strong> | Help women and children transition to safe and self-sufficient lives. | Empower women with abilities to realize safe and independent lives. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitional Housing</th>
<th>Providence House (NY)</th>
<th>Safeplace (TX)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admission requirements</td>
<td>Homeless, abused women</td>
<td>Referral from emergency shelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program length</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max capacity</td>
<td>15 mothers, 42 children</td>
<td>40 apartments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Services</td>
<td>- Case management</td>
<td>- Case management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Housing services</td>
<td>- Life skills training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Link residents to community support</td>
<td>- Counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>services</td>
<td>- Childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Assist with basic life skills</td>
<td>- Resource advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Childcare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program goals</td>
<td>- Foster caring relationships to help</td>
<td>- Not published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>women and children reach full potential.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Help women access services, find</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>permanent housing, and begin to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>advocate for themselves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitional Housing</th>
<th>Sojourner Center (AZ)</th>
<th>Sojourner Housing (PA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admission requirements</td>
<td>Referral from emergency shelter</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program length</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>18 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max capacity</td>
<td>120 beds</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Services</td>
<td>- Case management</td>
<td>- Counseling—individual and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Food, clothing</td>
<td>group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Career placement and training</td>
<td>- Housing services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Legal advocacy</td>
<td>- Children’s programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Victim advocacy</td>
<td>- Legal advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Prevention-based curriculum for women</td>
<td>- Community services information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and children.</td>
<td>and referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program goals</td>
<td>Help women increase independence and</td>
<td>Provide compassionate services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-sufficiency to ensure a lifestyle</td>
<td>to foster self-respect and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>free from abuse.</td>
<td>independence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Need for Advocacy for Battered Women

Gordon, Ham-Rowbottom, Jarvis, and Novaco (2005) conducted a study that focused on life constraints and the psychological well-being of 81 domestic violence shelter graduates. Graduates are defined by the researchers as women who participated in the emergency shelter program for at least 25 days and had left for positive reasons such as permanent housing or employment. Transitional housing program graduates are defined as women who had resided in the transitional housing program for at least six months and had not been forced to leave for breaking the rules.

The researchers’ study assessed the psychosocial functioning of 37 women who had been out of the emergency shelter an average of 18 months and 44 women who had been out of the transitional living program an average of 38 months. Prior to entering the shelter or transitional living program, the women had experienced serious physical and psychological abuse in an intimate relationship. During their shelter stays, residents were provided with a variety of counseling and social work services to help them adjust.

The emergency shelter provides immediate housing and support services for 45 days. During their stay, women are assisted with housing, employment, educational, financial, and legal issues, and there is an on-site program for children. The transitional living facility offers low-cost housing and support services for up to one year, following an emergency shelter stay. Vocational and life skills training, internships, and continued counseling are also offered at the transitional living site (Gordon, et al, 2005).

A structure interview was conducted to assess current functioning across life domains as well as perceptions of the shelter experience. Life status data regarding finances, housing, employment, and educational achievement were obtained. The women
were asked whether they experienced any violence since leaving the shelter, as well as about their histories of domestic violence, both in their families during their childhood and in their adult relationships; the researchers also learned about the abusive relationships that led to their entering the shelter.

In examining the psychosocial adjustment of study participants, Gordon, et al. found that women were overwhelmingly positive about their shelter experience. Women reported generous emotional support from staff, assistance with material needs, and physical safety as important aspects of their shelter stay. The women also benefited from person-specific instrumental support provided by the agency, including referrals for childcare, employment, education, housing, legal assistance, and public assistance. Gordon et al. cite that, given women’s length of stay in the shelters, the quality of the provisions there, and their very positive evaluation of the services received, there is considerable reason to look for success after departing from the shelter.

The study revealed that approximately 60% of the participants have been in at least one romantic relationship since the shelter exit. Of those who have had romantic partners since leaving the shelter, 96% of them have had violence-free relationships. One woman from each program had one experience of sexual assault and no other physical violence, and seven women reported experiencing emotional/verbal abuse from a romantic partner since exiting the shelter. The study also found that the majority of the women were satisfied or very satisfied with their housing situation (59%), job situation (57%), relationships with their family (63%), availability of healthcare (70%), and ability to be a good parent (84%). Of the women who had children in need of childcare, 66% were satisfied with their childcare arrangements (Gordon, et al).
Jane Doe, Incorporated, a residential transitional living program located in Boston, Massachusetts, allows families to participate in a transitional living program for a maximum of 18 months. This agency reported that over 80 percent of families that completed the program are living safely and independently from their abusers (Jane Doe, Incorporated, 2004).

Sullivan and Bybee’s (1999) research also supports the importance of an advocacy program for battered women’s safety and quality of life. For two years at six-month intervals, they followed women who received 10 weeks of intensive advocacy services. The advocates worked with women to identify their unmet needs and to help them access community resources. Over the two year follow-up period, 24% of women who worked with the advocates experienced no physical abuse by the original assailant or a new partner, while this was true for only 10% of women who had not received advocacy services. Women who participated in the advocacy program also made positive changes to their lives. At follow-up, they had obtained more of the resources they sought, had fewer depressive symptoms, and were more effective at acquiring social support than those in the control group.

In their extensive study of women in battered women’s shelters in Texas, Gondolf and Fisher (1988) discussed how shelters have evolved from simply providing refuge to offering many other services. Because some women return to a batterer after a stay in an emergency shelter, they contended that a shelter is part of a long-term change process. They found only two significant predictors of whether a battered woman in a shelter would return to a batterer or not. The more economic independence a woman has, the less likely she is to return. The second predictor of a woman returning to her partner was
the batterer participating in a counseling program. If they went to counseling, the battered woman returned to them and increased her risk for further victimization.

BARRIERS TO INTERVENTIONS

Programs for Batterers

Goals and Description of Batterer Intervention

There are three major intervention programs for batterers (Abusive Men Exploring New Directions, Duluth curriculum, and Emerge) used as a model by many intervention programs around the country. These programs are conducted in a structured group setting using an educational format. Group length, size, and content vary from program to program. The goal of the program is to eliminate violence in intimate relationships. In most, but not all instances, assailants are referred to batterer intervention programs through criminal court or civil court.

Abusive Men Exploring New Directions (AMEND), the Duluth curriculum, and Emerge models are based on feminist theory. As cited earlier in this text, feminists believe men batter to achieve and maintain power over their partners in order to get their own needs and desires met quickly and completely. It is also believed that men batter women because violence is an effective method to gain this power:

A feminist analysis of women battering rejects theories that attribute the causes of violence to family dysfunction, inadequate communication skills, women’s provocation, stress, chemical dependency, lack of spiritual relationship to a deity, economic hardship, class practices, racial or ethnic tolerance, or other factors. These issues may be associated with battering of women but do not cause it.
Removing these factors will not end men’s violence against women. (Analysis of Male Violence, p. 16)

Success Rate of Batterer Intervention Programs

Tolman and Bennett (1990), therapists in the field of batterer intervention, report that abuser education and treatment groups for men have become the preferred method of education and treatment by most experts in the field. The authors found that due to numerous methodological problems, researchers’ best estimates of success in ending physical violence range from 53% to 85% for those who complete the program. Both authors also reveal that groups are significantly less successful in ending controlling and abusive behavior. The authors’ research show that a lower percentage of successes occurred with lengthier follow-up and reports from battered women. A laboratory study of a small sample of 63 specially selected batterers, conducted by Neil Jacobson and associates, suggests an increase or continuation of non-physical abuse even when physical assaults decrease or stop (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998).

Dangers of Batterer Intervention Programs

Batterer programs can increase danger to battered women in several ways. One of the most obvious is that women are manipulated into returning or into staying with a dangerous man because he is in a program. Many batterers deliberately use their alleged participation in programs to coerce their partners to do as they wish. They may also use the program to decrease their accountability or to look meritorious. If the courts or police are involved, the batterer program becomes one more tool with which he abuses his partner (Tolman, 1991).

Gondolf (1988) pointed out those men whose violence may be relatively intractable to
counseling may increase the likelihood of their partner’s remaining with them, raising their hopes with little real possibility of change occurring. The victim may be less willing to call the police because she wants to “cut the abuser a break” while he is in treatment. According to Daniel Saunders of the University of Michigan, she may have “learned hopefulness” in the situation because of his promises to change repeatedly. Saunders (1989) further explains that battered women whose partners are in a program often develop great hope and expectation that he will change, in spite of the fact that no program can guarantee change. Because of this new hope women may stay with abusers when the danger is not only as real as ever, but may even be more lethal.

Another danger is that while the abuser may decrease physical abuse, he will increase psychological control and abuse as a result of being in a batterer intervention program. Now it appears to his partner and to others that he is stopping violence, but according to battered women, the emotional terror is even worse. Unfortunately batterer programs can inadvertently give men new tactics for emotional abuse by teaching “alternatives” to violence, and in the tactics men may learn from each other in the batterers’ counseling group (Tolman, 1991).

As mentioned earlier, men can use program content in order to refine their control strategies. In a research project conducted by Gondolf, Tolman, and Roberts (1990) the researchers found that abusers often misuse the pro-feminist aspects of the program. For example, he explained that abusers adopt a very sensitive stance, but then they take the concept of a relationship based on trust, respect, equality, and turn that back on their partners, saying, “Now you are no longer treating me equally; you are psychologically maltreating me.” Batterers can say, “Well, my partner sometimes doesn’t let me leave
the house. Sometimes she accuses me of having affairs. She is just as abusive as I am.”

Furthering the argument that treating the abuser is not always an effective strategy, counseling groups can become a place where abusers may not learn how to control abusive behavior, but rather how to become better batterers. Batterers may teach each other new ways to be abusive through their stories and male bonding. The expertise of a competent therapist is critical in such situations.

Legal System

Bowker (1983) surveyed 1,000 battered women about the effectiveness of eight formal services available to help them. These were police, physicians and nurses, clergy, lawyers, district attorneys, social service or counseling agencies, women’s groups, and battered women’s shelters. Of these services, women gave the highest rating (‘very’ or ‘somewhat effective’) to women’s groups (60 percent) and battered women’s shelters (56 percent).

It has been well substantiated in the domestic violence literature (e.g. Gordon, 1998; Walker, 2000) that battered women do not receive adequate legal services from the criminal justice system. For instance, a study conducted in the state of Alabama by Johnson, Crowley, and Sigler (1987) assessed the reasons victims return home to their abuser. The primary reason for battered women returning home to the abusive relationship is inadequate legal support from the criminal justice system (Johnson, Crowley, & Sigler, 1987). Ford (1991) elaborates on this finding, explaining that, “Other victims of violent crime are not seen by the prosecution as culpable for the crimes inflicted upon them, but battered women frequently report that prosecutors appear to consider them ‘unworthy victims’ who are clogging up the courts with unimportant
family matters. Some prosecutors, therefore, impose barriers to a battered woman’s use of the criminal justice system. These barriers may include delayed criminal charging, the requirement of substantial corroboration, or the imposition of fees upon the victim” (p. 3). Although shelter workers can provide the victim with assertiveness skills, job training, financial support, and other services needed to help the victim minimize her emotional and financial dependence on the abuser, Viano (1992) believes that it is imperative that effective legal support be provided by the police, lawyers, and judges if the cases are to be handled successfully by the criminal justice system.

Results of a survey conducted in Oregon Research Institute in 1998 concluded that police and lawyers needed to increase the amount of information they provide regarding domestic violence and learn more about domestic violence and its consequences. It was suggested that these providers ask specific questions of all their clients regarding domestic violence, not just women whom they suspect are victims of abuse. Also, it was recommended that these legal officers directly ask specific questions regarding domestic violence, and not rely on the woman to self-identify her abuse. Gordon (1998) explained that by asking these questions, providers not only can identify targets for intervention, but they communicate their concern for the person’s well-being, and convey that domestic violence is a real and serious problem. In addition to identification of abuse, the results of the study suggest that lawyers could benefit from continued education on legal ramifications of domestic violence (e.g. disadvantages of mediation in these cases). Furthermore, lawyers might better serve their clients by being sensitive to the consequences of domestic violence (e.g., lowered self-esteem, depression, impaired decision-making). Battered women seeking legal advice may be unable to adequately
assess their own legal and financial situation, and they may need their attorney to be their advocate.

Viano (1992) cites that because shelter workers are involved in helping the battered woman identify alternatives to the violent relationship, two of the most consistent problems confronting shelter workers are the victim’s decision to drop the charges against the abuser and her decision to return home to the abusive relationship. The author explained that shelters are concerned about knowing the reasons why battered women return home to the abusive relationship; having this knowledge could lead to appropriate services that would help the victim make rational decisions. Although some programs offer legal assistance, more assistance is needed: research confirms that the police and other members of the legal system are crucial in helping a woman live a life free from her former abuser.

In discussing the research methods used to understand what a supportive living environment is in transitional housing, and what survival skills are needed to live a life free from an abusive relationship, it is necessary to examine those components from the point of view of the survivors of domestic violence and intimate partner violence currently participating in programs offered by the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated’s Transitional Living Program.

Summary of Chapter

In this discussion I have defined the various types of intimate partner violence that are experienced in male-female, lesbian, and gay male relationships. A hierarchy established in relationships is the root of the intimate partner violence. That is, one partner perceives
himself or herself to be the authority figure in the relationship and exercises abusive
tactics toward his or her partner to maintain control. The cycle of abuse is effective
because the victimized partner accepts the submissive role in the relationship for a variety
of reasons.

Prevalence of intimate partner violence was discussed and the findings suggests that
lesbian couples experience the highest rate of violence at 48%, followed by gay male
couples at 38%, and male-female couples at 28%. There was no significant difference
between Blacks and Whites or Hispanics and non-Hispanics. American Indians/Alaska
Natives reported a higher incidence of physical violence than Asian Pacific Islanders.
These figures, for all groups, are based on self reports. One’s culture (e.g. gay male
couples, lesbian couples, race, or ethnic background) could impact the reporting of
violence. Additionally, for telephone surveys administered, the absence of a telephone in
a victim’s living environment can deflate prevalence rates for violence.

From the perspective of various authors I described social and psychological
characteristics that might place women at risk for victimization and the psychological
effects of victimization.

Theories of resilience and protective factors, social support, and Abraham Maslow’s
Hierarchy of Needs were defined and used to explain the effects of victimization and
characteristics of victimization in a Table entitled Strengths Perspective Intervention
Model for Survivors of Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence (Table 1 and
Table 2) based on my interpretation of the literature. Discussed at great length in this
text, this model summarizes the characteristics of victimization and effects of
victimization discussed by various authors. In Table 1 and Table 2 are unidentified
strengths (resilience) that describe the survivors’ courage and coping behaviors during and after surviving an unhealthy relationship, and protective factors (motivational needs) for each set of unidentified strengths. The protective factors are intrinsic human needs individuals involved in healthy or unhealthy relationships attempt to satisfy daily.

A small sample of transitional housing program models (Table 3) illustrates various types of intervention programs that I analyzed as using the strength perspective model. For example, to accomplish a sense of love and belonging, programs offer various sources of social support that encourage women to reconnect with themselves, other individuals, and society as a whole. Satisfaction of safety and security needs are achieved with the availability of and participation in life skills training. Self-esteem is improved as a result of receiving validation of behaviors and experiences from social support activities, enhancement of life skills, and other programs that contribute to personal growth and well-being.

Residential transitional housing programs provide abused women and children with more than just a place to live. These programs provide the practical support and assistance women and children need to rebuild their lives by providing counseling, job training, financial skills training, legal assistance, child care, and more. From a review of the available literature it appears that some residential transitional housing programs help victims move from crisis to recovery, and from temporary to permanent housing and safe, secure lives.

Theories of violence and victimization are separated into three sections: The first section, Sociological Characteristics of Victimization, provides sociological and intergenerational insight into the effects of the cycle of violence from childhood through
adulthood. For example, the cycle of intergenerational violence may attract women to abusive men or impact their decision to stay in an abusive relationship. The second section, Psychological Effects of Victimization, explains psychological behaviors that illustrate how gender oppression is used to instill fear and uncertainty about the victim’s future so that women are hesitant about leaving, question if they are responsible for the abuse, or if they are abused. And, in the third section, Interventions (theories and programs) were explored to gain an understanding of why women may survive abusive relationships. It was found that a social support network that allows the satisfaction of basic human needs is important to survive normal and adverse situations, and to encourage resilience.

Additionally, the key concept of the intervention theories is the importance of *growth and knowledge*, which leads to empowerment. This philosophy is important because some abused women inadvertently believe they have lost qualities and power that, in reality, they still possess. Curricula used by the transitional housing programs in this study bring out these hidden qualities to a level of self-awareness.

Information about intervention programs for survivors of domestic violence begin by describing the goals and services for emergency shelters (short-term intervention) and residential transitional housing programs (long-term intervention). Supporting the need for advocacy for battered women, several researchers talk about their findings on the effectiveness of shelter services in preventing victims from returning to their abusive partners or starting a new abusive relationship. The findings revealed that women’s groups and battered women’s shelters were more effective as a catalyst for avoiding former and new abusive relationships. These agencies may be more effective
because they are trained to understand the characteristics and effects of victimization and the needs of the victims (support groups, financial assistance, educational workshops, housing, etc.)

Some batterers’ intervention programs and the criminal justice system are believed to be barriers to intervention for abused women. The goals and structure of three major batterer intervention programs, AMEND, the Duluth curriculum, and Emerge, were explored. These intervention program models are based on feminist theory and used as a model by many intervention programs around the country. Research suggests that there is a 53% to 85% success rate in reducing physical violence toward partners but, psychological abuse continued or increased. It was also reported that most abusers participating in these programs are required by court orders (civil court or criminal court) in lieu of other types of punishment for physical violence.

As supporters of intervention, the criminal justice system (police, lawyers, and judges), physicians and nurses, clergy, and social service or counseling agencies were rated as less effective. This ineffectiveness could be a result of these groups lacking the appropriate training on how to be effective or sensitive to the needs of this victimized group. The overtone of the review on the criminal justice system is that it rewards the abuser, male or female, and penalizes the victim because of the lack of response to their needs.

In the results section of this study I will showcase the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated’s Transitional Living Program and discuss in depth how theories of resilience, protective factors, and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs are integrated into
some of their programs; how these programs are consistent with what their participants say are their needs for survival; and how some programs that are deemed necessary are not available.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

GAINING ENTRÉE

Introduction

The YWCA Transitional Living Program operates in the Greater Cincinnati-Hamilton County area and provides 6 to 18 months of transitional housing and supportive services for women and children who are homeless due to domestic violence. The goal of the Transitional Living Program is to create a supportive living environment for women and children where they can obtain the skills and confidence necessary to make the transition from an abusive relationship to an independent lifestyle, including the establishment of permanent housing. The program empowers at-risk families by creating programming that enhances survival skills unique to victims of domestic violence and assisting them with their educational and vocational goals. The YWCA Transitional Housing Program provides ongoing services to battered women and children that include case management and advocacy, group support, housing, financial and transportation assistance, children’s programming, comprehensive aftercare services, and community education (YWCA, 2004).

Typical support programs include Life Strides, Women’s Work Project, YWCA Employment Resources for Youth, General Educational Development (GED) program, and the Strategic Humane Intervention Program (SHIP). Life Strides is a job readiness program that assists low-income single mothers making the transition from public assistance to full-time unsubsidized employment with decent levels of pay and benefits. The Women’s Work Project is a community-based, job training program designed to serve homeless victims of domestic violence within the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati’s
network of transitional housing. The *YWCA Childcare Center* offers licensed childcare and support for mothers participating in programs provided by the YWCA. The *General Educational Development (GED)* program provides an opportunity for women to prepare for the GED exam and to develop basic skills to retain or improve employment possibilities. And the *Strategic Humane Intervention Program (SHIP)* is a multi-agency collaboration between the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, The Childhood Trust, and SPCA Cincinnati. *SHIP* uses animal-assisted therapy as a treatment intervention for women and children who have been exposed to domestic violence and trauma and reside in the Transitional Living Program.

**Field Sites**

This study collected data from current and former clients of some of these educational and supportive services and from staff who provide these services. The decision to interview Transitional Living Program and Transitional Living Aftercare Program respondents was based on willingness to participate in the study, a purposeful selection of names via volunteering, and experience in at least one of the five areas of self-reported abuse: physical, verbal, emotional, economic, and sexual. The decision to interview the YWCA staff (respondents) was based on their involvement with the programs that the Transitional Living Program and Transitional Living Aftercare Program respondents utilize and their willingness to participate in the study.

Permission to perform this study was contingent on the approval of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) of Greater Cincinnati’s Director for Protection from Abuse, which directs the activities of the Transitional Living Program, Transitional Living Aftercare Program, and the Battered Women’s Shelter; the YWCA staff who
provide direct services to the Transitional Living Program and Transitional Living Aftercare Program clients; and the University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board-Social and Behavioral Sciences (IRB). A copy of the investigator’s Institutional Review Board’s (IRB) approval letter and IRB proposal was voluntarily given to the Director for Protection from Abuse. Copies of signed consent to participate forms of Transitional Living Program and Transitional Living Aftercare Program clients were given to the Director for Protection from Abuse per her request. Names of the participants were changed in the study to protect their privacy. Because the investigator was not familiar with the programs being studied, a draft of the IRB proposal was given to the YWCA staff respondents who provide services for the Transitional Living Program, Transitional Living Aftercare Program, and the Women’s Work Project for their input prior to submission of the final proposal to the IRB.

Initial Guiding Questions

This case study investigated what constitute survival skills and a supportive living environment from the perspective of the YWCA Transitional Living Program participants and staff. Perceived survival skills and supportive living environment are defined by the use of a 19-item semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix A) used for one-on-one interviewing of Transitional Living Program and Transitional Living Aftercare Program respondents. The questionnaire was developed to gather demographic items (e.g. age, racial/ethnic group, education level, profession, etc.) from the respondents, to assess professional resource usage, and to obtain qualitative information on the perceived helpfulness of those services and recommendations for new programs.
Individual interviews took place using a five-item semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix B) designed to gather qualitative information for understanding the YWCA staff’s perception of a supportive living environment, required survival skills for survivors of domestic violence, and suggestions for program improvement. Both questionnaires were developed by the investigator to guide the interview.

**Purposeful Sampling Plan**

Respondents were obtained from the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati’s Transitional Living Program, Transitional Living Aftercare Program, Women’s Work Project, Life Strides, GED program, and the YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program. There were two samples. The first sample consisted of nine (9) Transitional Living Program participants and one (1) Transitional Living Aftercare Program participant who had experienced physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, economic abuse or sexual abuse by an intimate partner; and the second sample consisted of six (6) staff members who provide educational and supportive services to clients participating in these programs.

The Transitional Living Program has a 6-month and 18-month program. Women participating in the six-month program have agreed to actively work on overcoming their barriers to permanent housing. The 18-month program allows women additional time to complete an educational program to better prepare themselves for self-sufficiency. After-care services are offered to women once they overcome all their barriers and upon their departure from the Transitional Living Program to permanent housing. The Transitional Living Program staff will stay in contact with former Transitional Living Program participants for a period of two years. This study focused on respondents who are
currently participating in the 18 month program and who were formerly enrolled in the 18 month program and are currently participating in the Transitional Living Aftercare Program. Participants were divided into three samples according to the program in which they are involved.

*Transitional Living Program Sample*

For the purpose of recruiting participants for the study, I attended three monthly house meetings routinely scheduled for the YWCA Transitional Living Program participants in the transitional apartment building where they reside during January, March, and April, 2005. During each of the house meetings I distributed a copy of the letter of introduction (Appendix C), a copy of the interview questions, and a copy of the consent to participate form (Appendix D) explaining the study. I read the letter, the interview questions, and the consent to participate form to the participants and answered questions from the audience. After I attended the third meeting, copies of the information packets were given to the case manager and the Transitional Living Aftercare Coordinator to distribute to residents who were not available at any of the meetings.

The eleven residents who attended the first house meeting were invited to enter their names in a drawing for participation. Only five residents entered their names in the drawing and were selected for an interview. Immediately following the drawing the five individuals were asked for dates and times convenient for them to return for an interview. Interviews were scheduled on two separate days during the morning and evening hours one week following the drawing. None of the residents who attended the following two house meeting volunteered to participate in the study. During the month of May, with the assistance of the case manager who distributed and shared the
information about the information packets, four residents requested to participate in the study and were interviewed.

_Transitional Living Aftercare Program Sample_

The Transitional Living Aftercare Coordinator maintains a mailing list of clients with whom she continues to have an ongoing professional relationship. Due to confidentiality of client records, I solicited the help of the Aftercare Coordinator to mail information packets to the participants. In the spirit of maintaining client trust and confidentiality, the letter was drafted by me but signed by the Aftercare Coordinator. The Aftercare Coordinator also addressed the envelopes containing the information and mailed the packets to 16 clients residing in Cincinnati during the month of January.

The information packet included a letter (Appendix E) introducing the investigator, an explanation of the study, the dates the interviews would take place, the location of the interview site, and the Aftercare Coordinator’s telephone number to call if they had questions. The information packet also included a copy of the interview questions and a copy of the consent to participate form that elaborated on the purpose and procedure for the study. Clients were given a one week deadline to respond to the investigator’s letter. Respondents’ names and telephone numbers were added to a list as they called. This list was maintained by the Aftercare Coordinator. Only one person responded to the initial letter. The Transitional Living Aftercare Coordinator scheduled the interview for the one respondent.

During the last week of April a second letter (Appendix F) was mailed to the 15 clients who did not respond to the first request. A copy of the interview questions and a
copy of the consent to participate form were included in the information packet. Clients were given the option to schedule the interview any day and reasonable time during the month of May. Only one client agreed to participate, scheduled the interview, and then cancelled the interview a couple of days later. The client did not reschedule the interview.

**Support Staff Sample**

YWCA staff participants consisted of seven individuals who are responsible for providing direct services to women who are currently participating or who have formerly participated in the Women’s Work Project, YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program, GED program, Transitional Living Program, Transitional Living Aftercare Program, and Life Strides. In January, having already contacted YWCA staff to explain the study and invite participation, I gave the participants letters (Appendix G) introducing the study and myself, a consent to participate form (Appendix H) explaining the study, and a copy of the semi-structured interview questions. Interviews with the YWCA staff were scheduled during March because I wanted time to interview clients who participated in their respective programs and to transcribe the data.

**Data Collection**

During the months of October and November 2004 the investigator observed the program and class activities that the Transitional Living Program and Transitional Living Aftercare Program respondents patronize. I spent five days as a participant observer in the Life Strides and Women’s Work Project’s class exercises and program activities, one day observing the GED program’s class activities, and received a guided tour of the various housing sites of the Transitional Living Program where respondents reside.
Archival material (pamphlets and curriculum) was collected from the staff, the YWCA’s web site (goals of the Transitional Living Program and Transitional Living Aftercare Program, and programs available that contribute to these goals). Field notes were also taken during the observations and tour. The purpose of the visit and study was explained at the time appointments were scheduled to visit the sites. A copy of the proposal prepared for the IRB was given to each program staff upon my arrival at the site. Program staff and clients were not interviewed during these visits; however, I was introduced to the clients and the purpose of my visit was shared by staff either prior to my arrival or during my visit.

During the months of January, March, and April I attended routine monthly house meetings held for Transitional Living Program participants. Data were also obtained by audio taped semi-structured interviews with all the respondents during the months of January, February, March, April, and May, 2005.

The interviews with the Transitional Living Program respondents lasted from thirty minutes to one hour. Interviews for the Transitional Living Program respondents were conducted in the apartment building of the Transitional Living Program site. An unoccupied kitchen was provided by the manager of the housing facility for interviews. Four of the interviews were conducted in the kitchen where confidentiality was maintained, and six of the interviews took place inside of the respondents’ apartment upon their request.

Respondents participating in the Transitional Living Aftercare Program reside in various neighborhoods of Cincinnati. The participant was invited to the site of the Transitional Living Program for an interview. The interview with the Transitional Living
Aftercare Program respondent lasted forty-five minutes.

The case manager for the Transitional Living Program and the Aftercare Coordinator were interviewed in their office at the Transitional Living Program’s business office. The interviews with the Transitional Living Program case manager and Aftercare Coordinator lasted a half-hour to one-hour. The interviews with the coordinators for the Women’s Work Project, YWCA Employment Resources for Youth Program, Life Strides, GED program, and the case manager for the Employment Resources for Youth lasted between a half-hour and forty-five minutes and took place in their respective offices. Program staff and I share similar backgrounds in that four of the program providers are African-American, all of us are college graduates, all but one staff member are female, and we all share a passion for helping victims and survivors of domestic violence/intimate partner violence.

Role Negotiation

I am employed by the YWCA Battered Women’s Shelter part-time as a domestic violence advocate. My duties include answering the YWCA Protect Hotline and facilitating psycho-educational support groups for survivors of domestic violence and intimate partner violence. There were no dual role issues because I work with a different group of clients. As an introduction to the potential participants I shared information about my professional background and that I am a doctoral student interested in family violence prevention. To build rapport and validate life experiences with the participants during the interviews I used my knowledge about domestic violence, appropriately shared my experiences as a single parent, and expressed my thoughts about emotional difficulties that accompany ending intimate relationships for reasons beyond one’s
control.

Interview Process

All participants received a copy of the semi-structured interview questions prior to their scheduled interview. Some participants brought their copy of the questionnaire with written answers to the interview and elaborated on their answers beyond what was written. Other participants were also obviously prepared for the interview and reflective while answering their questions.

Before recording the interview, I read each participant the question, allowed time (determined by the participant) for reflection, and began the recorded interview by re-reading the question and waiting for their reflective responses. This interview process was repeated for each participant. In some instances the participants’ answers would lead to my asking additional questions for clarification. I used a separate copy of the interview questions to document anecdotal notes, some of their answers, and my follow-up questions for clarification. All the participants appeared to be reflective and sincere in their responses, and genuinely interested in the study.

Reflexivity

Survivors of Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence

Six women were African-American; two women were Hispanic, and two women were Caucasian. All the women had minor children living with them. Only three of the women (two African-American and one Caucasian) had attended college but discontinued their education before earning a bachelor’s degree.

It was important to me that the participants not feel intimidated by my academic and socioeconomic success during the interview. Nor did I want my social status to interfere
with listening to and analyzing the audio taped interviews. To avoid this interference I made a conscious effort to emotionally and mentally enter the world of the participants during the interviews and while transcribing the audio tapes. Although I am an African-American, I could relate to all these women because we are alike in many ways. None of these women are college graduates but I understood what it was like because I was a high school graduate, working as a secretary, and raising a child as a single parent in the 1960s and 1970s. All these women shared a concern about being able to provide adequate financial support for their children upon leaving the Transitional Living Program; similarly, financial concerns were my motivation for enrolling in college after giving birth to my child. I am not a victim of physical abuse but have experienced some of the manipulative tactics of men that the women described during their interviews. Unexpectedly, when some of the women described the emotional pain their children are experiencing as a result of witnessing an abusive relationship, I reflected on my childhood in a similar family setting.

Preliminary Data Analysis

I began my analysis of the interview by listening to each tape recorded interview. Notes were not taken as I listened to the interview for the first time. I immersed myself in the survivor’s or intervention staff’s responses for each question asked. I also reflected on his or her demeanor during our interview and the environment where the interview took place. This procedure allowed me to enter the world of the participant.

After listening to each tape recorded interview for affect and empathy, I replayed the interview and proceeded to write the participants’ responses to each question verbatim. I listened to each taped recorded interview the number of times required for verification of
the participants’ verbal answers and inclusion of any missing words or statements that I might have inadvertently omitted from my written documentation. Following the verification of the written documentation of the interview responses, I listened to the taped interviews a final time while reading the answers to the questions simultaneously. Again, I wanted to capture the emotion behind what each participant was revealing as I read their responses.

The next step in the preliminary analysis was to read, several times, the extensive responses I had documented for each question answered by the participants. I attempted to capture the essence of what the participants were conveying. Using separate sheets for each question, I then proceeded to group all the written answers to similar questions along with the participants’ fictitious names.

The participants had eloquently answered all the interview questions, but initially I was uncertain about how to classify their responses beyond the questions they had answered. As I continued to read the participants’ responses, it became clear that all the Transitional Living Program participants thought support was important to their well-being but the needs they wanted fulfilled from support varied (e.g. trust, love, and encouragement). Intervention staff revealed a variation of support perceived as a need for survivors of abuse similar to the Transitional Living Program participants.

As I researched literature on social support I learned that support has many forms: emotional, material, informational, and network support. Network support was renamed collaboration for this study. All the participants of the study were revealing various types of support desired, provided by existing programs, or lost during relationships.
Data Analysis

I analyzed qualitative data collected from classroom and program observations, interviews of program participants and providers, field notes, and archival information by identifying and classifying common themes. Excerpts from interviews were separated into common themes and grouped by categories – Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs pyramid (safety and security, belongingness and love, self-esteem, and self-actualization) and social support network (collaboration, emotional support, informational support, and material support).

Maslow’s (1970) definition for each hierarchal need was used to classify the above mentioned themes. A social support behavior inventory developed by Duck (1990) was modified and used to identify themes for social support. Duck’s three classes of support include brief definitions of support intended-behavior codes for each classification. The term ‘material aid’ was borrowed from Wasserman and Galaskiewicz (1994) and adapted to read material support and used to classify needs such as financial resources, child care, and transportation. Network analysis, social support theory, and Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs were used to analyze the data.

Data Management

Transitional Living Program participants’ responses to questions were listed under each of the 19 interview questions (Appendix I). The individual responses were assigned a code for survival skills, supportive living environment, and then categorized as a form of social support (collaboration, emotional support, informational support, and material support) or Maslow’s hierarchal (motivational) needs. Program providers’ responses were individually listed under each of the five interview questions (Appendix J) and
assigned similar codes as the participants. Artifacts and field notes were provided corresponding codes as well.

Ethical Dilemmas

One of the stipulations of IRB approval was that I not provide counseling to the participants. I have a Master of Arts in counseling and a certificate in domestic violence counseling. During the interviewing of the program participants there were times I wanted to change from the role of researcher to counselor.

It was obvious that some of the women were in pain by their verbal responses, tearful expression, or reflective behaviors. My empathic responses encouraged further sharing of the women’s abusive experiences or, in some cases, their victim reaction to the abuser. On some occasions women received my affectionate validation of their positive feelings toward their abuser and possibly the father of their children. Validation of feelings, welcomed by the women, brought apparent relief that it is okay to love someone, but not okay for that loved one to be disrespectful. During some interviews, I wondered how much I should explain the process of leaving an abusive relationship. Knowing that leaving is a process—and not an easy, one-time decision—could help the woman shed her guilt of making several attempts to leave her partner before making a courageous decision to leave for a violence-free environment.

Empathy, active listening, and validation are just a few of the responses and behaviors I learned in the counseling program, and they have become a natural part of who I am as a person. The information that I obtained from my training in the domestic violence counseling program and the extensive reading of the literature for this project are used frequently to educate victims and survivors of abuse in my professional
role as an advocate. One woman commented at the end of our interview that she felt like she had been in a therapy session. The woman appeared to be relaxed, relieved, and reflective. Had I gone too far with my compassion? Were the roles of counselor and researcher boundaries violated?

Another concern during the interviews was whether to explain safety planning when a woman shares that she is afraid her abuser will find her when she exits from the Transitional Living Program. Needless to say, equipped with a wealth of domestic violence information and a passion to help people, I was sitting on the edge of my chair feeling like I am allowing a blind person to cross the street while noticing a red traffic light or an automobile approaching. In either scenario I have the capacity to save the potential victim from undue harm.

A final experience as a researcher was with a potential participant who refused to participate in the study because she wanted counseling in exchange for her participation. Because of IRB restrictions I did not encourage the woman to participate in the study, but I shared information with her about a reputable crisis and abuse center that offers individual counseling sessions and support groups at no cost. This occurrence leads to the issue of reciprocity when the professional role of the researcher is compatible with the type of role that participants would seek help from.

In a sense, because reciprocity was forbidden, participants were further victimized because all domestic violence advocates and other individuals who are familiar with the dynamics of domestic violence have an obligation to educate and guide potential victims, victims, and survivors of domestic violence and intimate partner violence. My belief is that without restrictions from the IRB, my desired professional interaction with
participants would have contributed another step toward their healing process. This restriction is also another example of how social systems are still in place to unintentionally (due to the ignorance about domestic violence) perpetuate the effects of victimization.

All that being said about the role of a counselor, researcher, and reciprocity between researcher and participant, I don’t feel that I crossed ethical boundaries for this study. I do feel that a researcher’s professional (academic) background should be verified and considered an asset when the project warrants a dual role. I was asked by the chairperson of the IRB if I was qualified to counsel or help participants if it became necessary during the study. I shared my professional experience as an employee of the YWCA’s Battered Women’s Shelter and my academic credentials earned from the University of Cincinnati, but the chairperson suggested that I refer the distraught participants to another YWCA staff for assistance. The decision to offer a professional service in exchange for a research participant’s favor with agreed upon boundaries between parties is not an unreasonable consideration or a conflict of interest.

Exit Strategies

I plan to provide a copy of my dissertation to the Director for Protection from Abuse, per her request. And I will also distribute a briefly written executive report summarizing the findings of this investigation to all the YWCA staff who participated in this study. A formal presentation of these findings to interested parties will also be offered.

Researcher Reflections

The strength of my design was the semi-structured questions developed for each sample. Although my sample was limited to 17 individuals, I was able to provide at least
three detailed excerpts from relevant comments to support my interpretations of emerging themes and theories used for data analysis. The opportunity to be a participant observer and collect archival data to integrate into the narrative of findings contributed to the strength of the design. The weakness of the study was not being able to interview more than one woman who had completed the Transitional Living Program and was currently participating in the Transitional Living Aftercare program. The results of this sample would have provided an indication whether services received from the Transitional Living Program were needed to avoid entering into a new abusive relationship or returning to a formerly abusive relationship.

If I were to replicate the study I would include questions about the number of years the participants experienced the abuse and the number of years they were in the intimate relationship. I would also ask what type of abuse the participants experienced even though there were instances when unsolicited information about their abuse experience surfaced during the interview.

Overall, I am pleased with the emerging themes of the data generated. The selected questions also produced unexpected themes. For example, I found that educational programs that provide bonding of the mother and her children were important to the participants. Participants also expressed a need for support groups for children and teenagers who witness domestic violence. The availability of support groups for women was also important.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

“In order to have control over one’s life, several prerequisites are necessary. First, one must believe in the right to make personal choices, often a difficult task in its own right. Second, one must be aware of the choices that exist. Finally, one must have the resources (e.g., tools, skills) to engage in choice-making behavior.”

(Dutton, 1992, p. 116)

Introduction

This case study introduces the reader to a healing community of 10 survivors of domestic violence and intimate partner violence who are currently participating in the 18-month Transitional Living Program or the Transitional Living Aftercare Program. These women and their children reside in a secured apartment building located in a culturally diverse urban neighborhood in Cincinnati, Ohio, surrounded by other apartment buildings, small businesses, churches, schools, community outreach sites, and grocery stores. Six of the women in this study are African American, two are Hispanic who are not native English speakers, and the remaining two women are Caucasian.

Some of the women in this study are unemployed and others are employed as a sales associate, sanitation worker, housekeeper, childcare worker, and secretary. All the women are mothers of minor children, and none of the women are college graduates. Fictitious names are used to protect their privacy.

Based on interview responses, survivor characteristics that these women share are courage, strength, a desire to provide emotional support for one another and their children, a desire to become attentive parents, and a desire for self improvement, whether that improvement is physical, mental, economic, or academic. In other words all these
women are interested in personal growth and support for their children, and they insist that it is essential for their survival.

Survivors participating in the Transitional Living Program are recovering victims involved in educational and case management activities offered by the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated, and other organizations that prepare them and their children to reconnect with the world. One survivor describes the Transitional Living Program as a “stepping stone…a program that gradually introduces one to the real world.” These survivors are women with a multitude of challenges. In addition to being former victims of physical, emotional, verbal, psychological, economic and/or sexual abuse, they are faced with the tasks of overcoming language barriers, unemployment, chemical dependency, rebuilding relationships with their children, and fear of losing cherished relationships with fellow residents upon exiting the program.

This study also takes you behind the scenes of the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated with six intervention staff who manage, facilitate, or coordinate activities offered to Transitional Living Program participants and other Hamilton County residents who are at risk for domestic violence and intimate partner violence. Programming is designed to educate survivors of abuse about life skills (goal setting, money management, self-worth, reading, writing, self-reflection, and self-defense), and job readiness skills (resume writing, interviewing skills, employee etiquette, and dressing for success). Access to these educational opportunities is available to survivors via devoted Transitional Living Program case managers and an aftercare coordinator, a committed Women’s Work Project coordinator, the Employment and Literacy Service coordinator who also teaches preparation courses for a GED certificate, and the coordinator and case
manager for the YWCA Employment Resource for Youth program. Additionally, team members are volunteers; for example, professors from Northern Kentucky University teach self-defense classes and present information about parental rights for mothers of students who require special education; and an art teacher for Cincinnati Public Schools is committed to visiting the women twice a month to facilitate artistic exercises that encourage self-reflection and emotional healing. I observed social service employees from the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services presenting information about the importance of holistic health, healthy relationships, stress management, and advice for becoming a mother. And, finally, I attended, as a participant observer, a seminar titled “Don’t Shake the Baby” conducted by a representative from the Council on Child Abuse of Southern Ohio, Inc. These are all members of a social network who provide one-on-one involvement in a classroom setting or individually as needed to develop a supportive living environment and to promote survival skill awareness for survivors of domestic violence and intimate partner violence.
Table 4
Sociodemographic Data for Transitional Living Program Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Type of abuse</th>
<th># of months in TLP</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th># of children</th>
<th>YWCA programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2+ yrs Coll.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>BWS, TLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>P/S</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1+yrs Coll.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>BWS, TLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>P/E</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WWP, BWS, SHIP, TLP Aftercare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>WWP, BWS, SHIP, TLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reggie</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>P/E</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11th Grade</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>WWP, BWS, TLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>P/E</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6th Grade</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>WWP, BWS, SHIP, GED, TLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>BWS, TLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>GED</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>WWP, BWS, GED, TLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>P/E/EC/SA</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>WWP, BWS, TLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WWP, BWS, TLP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. P=Physical, S=Stalking, E=Emotional, EC=Economic, SA= Sexual Abuse, U= Unknown;
GED=General Educational Development; BWS= Battered Women’s Shelter, WWP=Women’s Work Project, SHIP=Strategic Humane Intervention Project, TLP = Transitional Living Program.

* Three children live with grandparents.
Profiles of Transitional Living Program Study Participants

The following is a profile for each survivor, with the exception of Karen, who appeared at the beginning of this study. Their names are listed in alphabetical order.

Angel

“I keep a picture of my abuser in my mind. This a motivator and a reminder not to get into another abusive relationship.”

On a sunny morning in May, Angel greeted me at the entrance of the Transitional Living Program’s apartment building. I was invited into her home for the interview. Angel’s three daughters were away at school, but there were numerous photographs of Angel’s children placed around the living room where Angel and I sat for the interview. Angel answered several incoming telephone calls prior to the beginning of our interview, which gave me an opportunity to observe how she had integrated her personality into the furnished apartment. I was surrounded by many live and artificial plants (even at the entrance of her apartment), artificial flowers, and figurines in abundance (many of them angels--thus the fictitious name given to her for this study).

Angel is a 24-year-old Hispanic who migrated to Cincinnati from Mexico several years ago. She has three daughters ages 6 through 13. Angel speaks her native language, Spanish, and very little English but we were able to understand each other. I was asked to rephrase and explain my questions several times before she answered (an agreement we had prior to beginning the interview). Angel shared with me that the little English that she speaks and understand was learned from residents while living in the Battered Women’s Shelter. She explained that she never felt a need to learn English
while living in the United States because her ex-husband, although an American, spoke fluent Spanish and they communicated in Spanish only.

Angel earned her high school diploma from a school in Mexico. She told me that the diploma is not recognized as equivalent to a high school diploma earned in the United States. Angel said for this reason, when employed, she has only been able to obtain housekeeping positions. Angel stated, “I don’t mind working as a housekeeper, but it is not fair that I worked hard for my education and no one is willing to give me a chance working other jobs that I know I can do.” That is, she always feels she is underemployed.

During our interview Angel voluntarily shared with me that she was a victim of economic abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse. Angel told me that during her marriage her husband always took her paycheck and never gave her or their children money. Her daughters are victims of abuse as well, but I won’t elaborate on the type of abuse. I will say as Angel felt a need to share her story about family violence, it was told while shedding tears. The child abuse inflicted by Angel’s husband motivated her to flee to the Battered Women’s Shelter.

Angel’s response to my first question about survival skills needed to live independent from an abusive relationship was, “I feel free. I feel safe. I love myself. I have to be stronger for my girls. Awareness…no one harm.” Angel also stated that she previously did not have support from anybody and that her husband didn’t support her. When asked about programs and services needed for survivors of domestic violence and intimate partner violence, Angel commented, “Because of the experiences with my American husband I would like to start a group with Hispanic [Spanish speaking] women who are Americans.” Angel emphasized that there are Hispanic husbands that
are abusive also, but she feels that American men bring Mexican women into the United States for the purpose of taking advantage of them and that some of these same women are attracted to Americans because they want to be United States citizens. Angel further elaborated on abusive relationships, commenting that American and Hispanic women share similar feelings due to domestic violence, but a Hispanic women who enters the United States feels more isolated than American women because of the language barrier: “We choose to remain silent because Americans are always saying I can’t understand you.” Continuing her thoughts about reasons for feeling isolated, Angel added United States customs, lack of knowledge about the kinds of help available or where to begin to look for help. Those Hispanic women often don’t know help is available. Angel told me that her husband lead her to believe that she could not live independently without him because she could not speak English and was not familiar with the American culture. Angel also stated that rarely do Hispanic women have family in the United States; as a result, Hispanic women are often left without a support network. As we will see later, a support network is vital for a woman’s ability to escape from an abusive relationship.

Carmen

“For me to get out of an abusive relationship…you got to remember I’m a drug addict. I’m a crack head today.”

Upon my arrival at the transitional living building on an unseasonably warm day in January, Carmen met me at the main entrance and invited me into her home instead of meeting in the community kitchen that was reserved for our interview. Our interview took place in the dining area of her apartment. Carmen is a 40-year-old African-American, and a mother of two teenage daughters. Prior to the interview she proudly
showed me photographs of her two daughters who were attending school during the
time of our interview. Carmen is a high school graduate and is employed as a
housekeeper. Carmen’s ultimate career goal is to become a chemical dependency
counselor and a nurse although she was not enrolled in classes at the time of the
interview.

Carmen’s response to my first question about survival skills needed to live
independent from an abusive relationship was,

“For me to get out of an abusive relationship…you got to remember I’m a
drug addict. I’m a crack head today. Today, I choose not to use. And for
me to learn how not use crack and that’s an ongoing process…uh, in order
for me to survive you know cause I got this thing with men. I don’t bond with
women…I like men…for me to be…to live independent and be self-sufficient
and free from abusive relationship I have to have NA [Narcotics Anonymous]
that’s my backbone. I need support groups with other women…work and talk
and share with other women. The last man I was with was my abuser and I
love him. I still love him but I am not in love. I haven’t seen him and I don’t
know what I would do if I seen him today. But if I use the skills that I apply
from NA and my knowledge [raised voice] because I’m gonna have a black
eye. I’m gonna have a black eye and a cat fight you know.”

For clarification, I asked Carmen if she was saying that she needs support. She
responded, “I need support, and that can be males and females. I choose not to get
support from men because early on in NA…I was going to NA because I was attracted to
men.” I asked Carmen what services or programs she felt were important for survivors;
she replied, “I need NA and you know they got a support group for women. Every program they [YWCA] have is needed.”

Catherine

“I know I need a strong family background and friends that will guide me if they see me going in the wrong direction…advice from them as far as relationship wise.”

Catherine is a 22-year-old African-American woman, and mother of one preschooler. She is employed as a child care worker and looks forward to starting a two-year program at a local college where she has been accepted for winter term. Catherine and I met in her home on a crisp, clear day in January immediately following my interview with another resident. Our interview took place in her kitchen where she had family pictures proudly displayed on the refrigerator. In an excited manner, she pointed out a photograph of her mother and asked me if I knew her. When I asked Catherine about survival skills needed to live independent from an abusive relationship she stated,

“I know I need a strong family background and friends that will guide me if they see me going in the wrong direction…advice from them as far as relationship wise. I’m trying to keep myself in school and look for a job.”

Catherine’s response to programs and services important for survivors was,

“As far as what I need now? Oh, they need a support group up in here. Support group for children…residents in TLP [Transitional Living Program]. It could be private counseling at some point and then it could be like group sessions. I know that there are some people in here who feel like they are
the only ones suffering and have problems and they are not. They need a support group to strengthen them up to let them know they don’t have to go back.”

As we will read in Chapter 5, Catherine, similar to several women in the study, stresses the importance of support for children and mothers. Catherine also emphasizes the important role family support plays in surviving abuse.

Dana

“Without a protection order and formal paperwork filed, I will eventually be murdered.”

Dana is a 46-year-old African-American mother of a teenage daughter. She is a high school graduate and currently unemployed. Dana, when working, has the responsibility of performing tasks expected of a secretary and administrative assistant. Dana shared that she has completed numerous certificate programs and is currently enrolled in a certificate program. Dana believes that having access to a victim’s advocate (in addition to case management), legal representation, a protection order, and attending support groups are necessary for her continued existence as a survivor. According to Dana, these are her needs as a victim of her ex-boyfriend, a serial stalker; she also believes that his male friend is stalking her as well. Dana’s accomplishments of completing numerous certificate programs show that she is already traveling the path of independence; however, her request for legal support and her desire for a support group—especially in light of the danger she is still in—also show the importance and necessity of external help.
Denise

“I think one thing that I found out was that if you even stay out of an intimate relationship after you transition [from transitional living] into the mainstream you will have a tendency to attract victimization…”

Denise is a 45-year-old Caucasian woman, and mother of a teenage daughter. She has an associate’s degree and continues to participate in adult education classes to help deal with abuse. Denise is participating in the Transitional Living Aftercare program and was gracious enough to travel to the Transitional Living Program interview site on a clear day during February. Denise is currently unemployed and arrived dressed professionally in a navy blue suit and matching shoes, announcing that she had just left a job interview prior to arriving for our meeting. Her former jobs have been in customer service, a profession that Denise enjoys.

I asked Denise about survival skills needed to live independent from an abusive relationship. She answered the question succinctly,

“I think the number one is trust…to learn to trust again, and your housing is such a foundation for being able to establish trust again.” In response to my question about services or programs she believed were important for survivors she answered,

“I think one thing that I found out was that if you even stay out of an intimate relationship after you transition into the mainstream you will have a tendency to attract victimization… um from animals…um from friends…um employers…so the support system… um that normally lies there or any facet afterwards…that you almost feel like you have a target on your back when you first come out…um that you’re a magnet for victimization.”

Denise’s responses about attracting victimization speak to body language that portrays
an individual with low self-esteem or a lack of self-confidence. In the following chapter we will read about the various ways low self-esteem can be a risk factor for victimization and how self-esteem can be used as a protective factor for surviving former victimization.

Erica

“I need financial support for my four children. I’m afraid we’ll be homeless.”

Erica, a single parent of four children ranging from ages 3 to 13, is 29 years old. She is Hispanic with a language barrier and discontinued her education in the sixth grade. Erica’s 11-year-old son served as our interpreter. When employed, Erica works as a packer. After years of experiencing emotional and physical abuse she left her husband. Currently, Erica is enrolled in the GED program offered by the YWCA, she is learning to speak English as a second language, and learning about American traditions. In addition to being a student, Erica is a homemaker. When I asked what survival skills she needed to live independent from an abusive relationship she stated, “Housing for my children and work to pay bills.” Erica’s initiative to learn English and earn a GED will improve her opportunities for obtaining employment. Erica’s expressed needs and goals are reminders of the important role of collaboration and informational support.

Michelle

“I feel like…to be independent from an abusive relationship you need first of all self-esteem for yourself to be able to move on and to be independent. And a lot of support from family members.”

Michelle and I met on a summer-like day in April. I was invited to her home for the interview. Our interview took place at the kitchen island in her bright, air conditioned
kitchen. I arrived for our interview in the midst of Michelle’s lunch break. It was Michelle’s day off so she was also doing laundry and planning a shopping trip for her children. Michelle is an energetic 26-year-old African American mother of three sons between the ages of one and four. She is employed as a sanitation worker and is attending college part-time, majoring in a profession that will eventually lead to a high income. Michelle’s response to my question about what survival skills are needed to live independent from an abusive relationship was,

“Well, I feel like to be independent from an abusive relationship you need first of all self-esteem for yourself to be able to move on and to be independent, and a lot of support from family members. And...um...a lot of love because it’s hard, you know, to come from an abusive relationship and to be...to have self-esteem and to wanna to move on and to do better things.”

Michelle’s reply to my question about the services and programs was,

“Well, I feel that...um...they need, the victims of domestic violence need to know that it is not a healthy relationship, that it is not their fault for, you know, whatever the situation is and sometimes...um...a partner may, you know, one day, you know, yell and scream or fight whatever and make up and then the next day the same thing goes on and that’s not a healthy relationship. And...um...if you have children involved then it’s really not good for those children to see that all the time.”

Michelle’s views confirm the need for programs that build self-esteem, support children who witness domestic violence, and educate women about the dynamics of intimate partner violence.
Reggie

“You have to prioritize, you know, if you’re not employed, find employment. If you want a career, you know, you have to take the steps in doing so. If you don’t have a GED get it. You need to get it, apply yourself to whatever it is you wish to accomplish.”

When I arrived for an interview with Reggie on a late Sunday morning in May, she and another resident who I had interviewed several months ago were sitting on a bench in the yard with their two daughters. I stood in the yard talking to the ladies about their children and making small talk until Reggie asked me if I wanted to interview her in the yard or inside her apartment. We held the interview in the dining area of Reggie’s two bedroom apartment. Prior to the interview, while she fed her four month old daughter, she shared information about what was going on in her daily life as far as moving into permanent housing, the status of her abuser’s incarceration, and speaking out against domestic violence whenever there is an opportunity. Our interview began after Reggie finished feeding her daughter and placing her in the crib.

Reggie is a 32-year-old Caucasian woman, and a mother of four children ages 4 months to 11 years old. Three of Reggie’s children reside with her mother. Reggie is employed as a sales associate in a liquor store. She discontinued her education while in her senior year of high school and is currently registered to take the GED examination. Because of Reggie’s busy six day-a-week work schedule, she is currently enrolled in the GED program offered by the Urban Appalachian Council because the program coincided with her schedule.

Reggie has endured several abusive relationships for six to eight years with her ex-husband and another intimate partner who is currently incarcerated for the abuse. Excerpts from our interview reflect her pain as she answers my questions in a
slow, deliberate, thoughtful, and painful tone. In response to my question about necessary survival skills, Reggie responded,

“Um…the only survival skill that I can basically think of is knowing that all the trouble that I’ve had to worry about, you know, getting yourself together first and then if you ever choose to become involved with another know, run it through the computer and see if they’re not telling you something about their past because…um…they can be wearing sheep skin.”

For clarification, I asked Reggie if she was referring to a screening process. Reggie responded,

“Exactly, you have to screen them because they’re not going to tell you everything and it can take years and years and years for that side to come out. I asked Reggie what she meant by her statement “get yourself together first”. Reggie replied, “You have to prioritize, you know, if you’re not employed, find employment. If you want a career, you know, you have to take the steps in doing so. If you don’t have a GED, get it, you know. You need to get it, apply yourself to whatever it is you wish to accomplish.

Reggie’s reply to my questions about services or programs she felt were important for survivors of intimate partner violence was,

“As a survivor of domestic violence I think it would be wonderful if there could be meetings or rallies for survivors. Also, I think petitions would be great to send to the, you know, state legislators to have them consider stronger penalties for domestic violence…domestic violence…whether it be …uh…their…uh…first offense, second
offense, or third offense because I think and I’m a firm believer that
the AMEND [Abusive Men Exploring New Directions] program
is a, you know, waste of time because they can go through it and
graduate and that’ll just make people think they have, you know,
learned their lesson. Well that’s not always the case, I’ve been
through it.

Reggie’s goals and desires reflect the ongoing process of self-actualization in the form
of becoming better educated, taking the necessary steps to prepare for career
opportunities, and wanting to be a spokesperson for women who have been
victimized. Maslow believes that part of a person’s self-actualization process is the
desire to help other people.

Renee

“Teach us how to use our voice so that people believe us.”

Renee and I met for an interview in the apartment building’s community kitchen
during the evening in January. She appeared to be an outgoing and self-confident young
lady. Renee is a 24-year-old African-American woman, homemaker, and a mother of
two preschool aged daughters. When employed, she works as a cashier or warehouse
packer. Renee was recently accepted into a two-year program at a local college. Renee
believes open communication and awareness of individuals are survival skills important
for living free from an abusive relationship. Programs and services Renee feels are
important for survival are assertiveness training and self defense. She explained,

“Teach us how to use our voice so that people believe us. Need to
defend self verbally and physically…more verbally. Because I hear,
I should have said this or I should have said that. So they didn’t
have the opportunity to get it out and I would ask were you firm.”

In the literature review I shared that victimization can be manifested as being silenced
during an argument or ignored during decision making in important matters. Renee's
request for guidance in learning to defend herself verbally is a step toward the
self-actualization process because she is willing to work on doing well what she wants to
do. Also, her desire to be assertive is an attempt to maintain her power in relationships.

Thematic Analysis

Themes were defined as any subject or concern the Transitional Living Program
participants and intervention staff talked about within the scope of the semi-structured
interview questions or follow-up interview questions I asked for clarification.
Interview information evolving into seven themes was identified as consistently
mentioned by Transitional Living Participants. For intervention staff, six themes
emerged as a result of collected program literature, program observations, and
interview responses.

This section presents each participant’s philosophy about survival skills unique to
victims of domestic violence and intimate partner violence as a Transitional Living
Program participant, skills and resources needed to live independent from an abusive
relationship upon leaving the program, and what services each woman feels are important
for survivors. Interestingly, these survivors’ needs are simple. Their requirements are
similar to all human beings whether they have or have not been abused. In their own
voices, in a case analysis in this section, and in Appendix I and Appendix J, I present
excerpts of interviews separated into four themes (safety and security, belongingness and love, self-esteem, and self-actualization) identified by Abraham Maslow (1970) as hierarchy of needs that motivates individuals’ actions in everyday life. Under the heading of social support network are four themes (emotional support, informational support, material support, and collaboration) that, according to Murrell and Norris (1991), promote health and well-being even when a person is not facing a specific stressful situation. Roberts (2002) considers social support a protective factor for women who have suffered from an abusive relationship.

Dutton (1992) believes that possibly the final step in the healing process is life rebuilding as a survivor of abuse—that is, no longer being a victim. The right not to be abused or victimized is the foundation of a new life regardless of whether the battered woman chooses to remain in the relationship with a previous abuser, to seek a new relationship, or to be in no intimate relationship.

Dutton (1992) also affirms that helping a formerly battered woman to identify and/or develop her life goals helps her experience her empowerment or control over her own life. Taking responsibility for a future direction can be both liberating and overwhelming. It is necessary to work through both kinds of feelings to reach a greater sense of self-direction. As we will see later, Dutton’s research is echoed in the statements of these women. They are rebuilding their lives, taking on new responsibilities, and facing overwhelming challenges. The need for a supportive environment is crucial.

Final results of this study provide a description of activities and opinions that contribute to developing survival skills and a supportive environment from the perspectives of the Transitional Living Program participants, a Transitional Living
Aftercare participant, and YWCA intervention staff. Also, findings are compared to various literatures on victimization suggesting what survivors of domestic violence and intimate partner violence need to maintain a life free from an abusive relationship.

SURVIVORS OF ABUSE PERCEPTIONS OF SURVIVAL SKILLS AND A SUPPORTIVE LIVING ENVIRONMENT

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Theme #1: The Need for Safety and Security

The feeling of safety and security, to an extent, are absent in an abusive relationship. Walker (1994) suggested that women accepted their powerlessness in domestic battering relationships due to gender-role socialization that induces a false belief that they cannot escape from the situation. Economic and social factors contribute to their victimization and to its continuance.

Catherine, Dana, Denise, Karen, Michelle, Reggie, and Renee, in their own voices and behavior, defy the gender-role socialization theory in that they escaped their abusive situation and seek independence. It is the consensus of these survivors that in order to continue to live a life free from abuse, to feel safe and secure, their basic human requirements need to be fulfilled. These needs include safe and affordable housing, financial stability, employment, education, and the ability to protect themselves physically and verbally. Dana also added that victim advocacy and legal protection via protection order are essential.

Contrary to patriarchal beliefs, these women have identified protective factors needed to survive an abusive relationship. They do not want to be dependent on others for protection (unless in extreme danger), financial support, or housing. These women
are willing to improve their current and future situation. By leaving the abusive relationship, seeking education, employment, and financial stability, they show that they are willing to accept responsibility for their role in the situation.

As the literature suggests (e.g. Plichta, 1996) housing and lack of financial resources may cause a woman to return to her abuser. Housing and financial security were expressed by Dana, Denise, and Erica as a benefit of the Transitional Living Program and a concern upon exiting the program. Maslow (1970) says that the threat of chaos can be expected in most human beings to produce a regression from any higher needs (belongingness and love, self-esteem, and self-actualization) to the more dominant safety needs. The goal of the survivors, as the data suggests, is to live in an environment that empowers one to obtain resources and maintain basic and higher level needs.

Theme #2: The Need for Belongingness and Love

Responding to my question, What does a supportive living environment mean to you in a transitional living environment? Erica, replied, “Help with loneliness and sadness.” Erica acknowledged receiving this type of help from the YWCA staff and managers. Michelle eloquently responded to my question: “A lot of love because it’s hard, you know, to come from an abusive relationship and to have self-esteem and to wanna move on and do better things.” To the same question Angel responded, “I love myself.” In response to the same question Renee responded, “The main thing is the fact that you get to meet other single women in the same predicament, the same position you are.” Receiving esteem from other people is one facet of self-esteem and cited by Maslow as an important step toward an individual determining self-worth, feeling appreciated, and having a feeling of dignity, confidence, or importance.
Theme #3: The Need for Self-Esteem

Karen, Michelle, and Denise made powerful statements. First, they both recognize the importance of having a positive self-esteem as a motivator to survive an abusive relationship. In response to the question, *What survival skills do you need to live independent from an abusive relationship?* Karen replied, “The biggest thing I need is to love myself.” Their philosophy is significant because the literature (Walker, 2002; Stark & Flitcraft, 1996) suggests that having low self-esteem is one of several risk factors for violence. Maslow (1970) found that the satisfaction of self-esteem needs leads to feelings of strength, self-confidence, and capability—feelings that usually diminish during an abusive relationship.

Secondly, Michelle’s statement, “you need self-esteem for yourself to move on” captures the essence of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. In the context of this study, when one moves on, one is working toward becoming self-actualized. Third, Denise, a former Transitional Living Program resident, reminds readers that maintaining positive self-esteem is an ongoing process. High self-esteem does not remain static without giving it constant attention. That is, one must constantly self-evaluate and also make evaluations of self based on interactions with others, for example, with other participants in the Women’s Work Project and Transitional Living Program. As noted by Roberts (2002), high self-esteem is one of several common protective factors (inner strengths) found to lessen the impact of stress related to battering.

Theme #4: The Need for Self-actualization

In Chapter 2 Maslow (1970) discussed that if basic needs (physiological, safety and security, belongingness and love, and self-esteem) are satisfied and maintained
at a relatively stable level, then a person directs energy to self-actualization, a motive that urges the person to make optimal use of his or her full potential, to become a more effective, creative participant in daily life. The need for self-actualization becomes a driving force, urging the person to seek levels of insight and personal fulfillment.

All the women who participated in this study identified areas in their daily life that they wanted to improve upon or ways in which they had improved. Their improvements and/or aspirations are separated into four categories: Parenting: Reconnecting to Others; Healing: Reconnecting to Self; Life Skills; and Occupational Skills and Education.

**Parenting: Reconnecting to Others.** Angel, Carmen, Erica, Karen, Michelle, and Renee shared that they were either trying to become better parents or that they are better, attentive parents. While interviewing Michelle, she commented that during an abusive relationship, “It’s so much energy spent on that negative stuff that you don’t have time for your children and you don’t realize that you’re depriving your kids from all this attention and all this other stuff…so much other stuff going on.” Setting aside quality time to spend with children is important for the child’s emotional recovery after witnessing domestic violence. Jaffe and Geffner (1998) and Graham-Bermann (1998) suggest that children who have experienced profound emotional distress or trauma are largely dependent for their recovery on the quality of their relationship with their caregiver parent. The fact that these mothers are spending time with their children allows them to develop structure, set limits, and provide predictability to counteract the previous experiences of fear and turmoil; counteracting these experiences is an essential part of satisfying the child’s safety and security needs.

In the *Social Support Network* section mothers reveal their desire for support groups,
family bonding programs, and other children’s programming to aid in their healing. Mothers spending quality time with their children and the availability of children’s programming create an opportunity to address other effects of domestic violence on child witnesses, such as intergenerational violence. If such effects are not addressed, the cycle of violence will only continue.

**Healing: Reconnecting to Self.** Loss of self is a central issue with battered women. The impact of repeated violence and abusive experiences to which one is exposed often results in the erosion of the victim’s self-esteem. By focusing her energy and attention on efforts to stay safe, the woman often has little energy left to direct toward herself or her children (Dutton, p. 140). This sentiment was echoed by Karen during our interview, “I’ve lost so much of even knowing what I like to do or what I like to eat, where I like to go in a relationship that just getting in touch with that again will help me find myself… that’s what I need. Love myself, understanding my values and values of my children.”

Although Karen expressed a desire to reconnect to herself, the other women—Angel, Catherine, Denise, Michelle, and Reggie shared with me that they have already reconnected to self by becoming their best possible psychologically and emotionally, expressed by ultimate happiness, self-confidence, and mental strength. Renee prides herself on learning new life skills such as being more responsible and learning parenting skills. What is significant in this revelation is that these women now see themselves as competent, lovable, and successful. Some of the woman shared new feelings of confidence and happiness. The literature suggests that risk factors for victimization (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996) and the effects of victimization (Dobash, Dobash, & Lewis,
2000) are a lowered sense of self-worth. A survivor’s protective factor is gaining high self-esteem and becoming self-actualized, which most of these women have accomplished to an extent.

In regards to Karen, I included her response in this section because, although she has not yet achieved it, Karen expressed a desire to heal. Karen recognizes that she has been a victim and understands the effects of victimization. Now Karen is preparing to be her “best self” possible.

**Occupational Skills and Education.** Eight of the participants in this study reported that they were enrolled in various types of educational programs such as a certificate program, GED programs, and associate degree programs. Seven women (Angel, Carmen, Catherine, Denise, Erica, Reggie, and Renee) participating in educational programs are currently or have previously participated in the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati’s Women’s Work Project which assist clients with job readiness skills. A study conducted by Gondolf and Fisher (1988) found that the more economic independence a woman has, the less likely she is to return to her abusive partner. This belief is supported by Reggie. When asked about necessary survival skills, Reggie responded, “If you are not employed, find employment. If you want a career, you have to take steps in doing so. If you don’t have a GED, get it. Apply yourself to whatever you wish to accomplish.”

Most authors agree (e.g., Plichta, 1996; Greenfield, 1998) that women with limited educational attainment and occupational skills were more likely to stay with battering husbands. The level of education, job skills, employment experience, and current employment are all important resources that may make a difference in a battered
woman’s ability to respond effectively to the violence against her. This was clear in response to my question about necessary survival skills. Erica, one of the four unemployed participants in this study, responded, “Work to pay bills.” Erica also stated that financial support for her children will be one of the biggest problems she’ll face after she departs from the Transitional Living Program.

Erica and the other participants in this section are self-actualizing because they recognize that their education and employment status are two risk factors for involvement in an abusive relationship, and they are all driven to improve their socioeconomic status. Dutton (1992) cites that the greater the availability of educational and occupational resources, the greater the survivor’s access to the economic resources necessary for herself and her children. In addition, greater educational, occupational, and economic resources may provide a source of self-esteem. However, these women can regress to what Maslow (1970) refers to as basic needs of safety and security even though they have fulfilled higher needs--belongingness and love, self-esteem--and are in the process of self-actualizing; these higher needs become less dominant until their safety and security needs are stable.

Social Support Network

Theme #5: The Need for Emotional Support

The support network described as significant in this study includes Transitional Living Program residents, friends, or other women who have experienced domestic violence or intimate partner violence; the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated’s Women’s Work Project; Transitional Living Program’s case managers and staff who provide administrative support; and family. All the women agreed that a support system
is important to their emotional well-being.

Nine of the women (Angel, Carmen, Catherine, Dana, Denise, Karen, Michelle, Reggie, and Renee) shared during the interview that receiving support from women in similar situations was important. Two of the women, Catherine and Michelle, felt that family support in the form of guidance and love was important, in addition to support groups. Seven women (Angel, Catherine, Dana, Denise, Erica, Karen, and Michelle) emphasized the importance and value of receiving support in the form of encouragement and advice from their case managers. Seven women (Angel, Carmen, Catherine, Dana, Denise, Erica, and Reggie) expressed appreciation for the emotional support received from the program coordinator, a former job developer, and/or their peers enrolled in the Transitional Living Program and/or the Women’s Work Project. Finally, five of the women (Carmen, Catherine, Denise, Karen, and Renee) conveyed a need for a family bonding program and for support groups for children and teenagers who have witnessed domestic violence.

One of the benefits of a support network noted by Carlson (1997) is that a support system reduces social isolation, one of the significant effects of being in an abusive relationship. Angel, whose native language is Spanish, expressed the problem of being isolated in two ways—as an abuse victim and as someone who doesn’t speak English. When I asked, *What survival skills do you need to live independent (self-sufficient, free) from an abusive relationship?* Angel responded, “Support group for Hispanic Spanish speaking.” Karen adds, “I think a support group would make me feel like I’m not alone. I think that would be helpful.” Members of support groups also provide encouragement to each other, allowing women to see that their efforts to survive are not unique. If
Transitional Living Program participants decide not to return to their abuser upon leaving the program, they may be faced with issues such as ongoing safety planning for the family, finding and maintaining affordable housing, adjusting to financial management as a single parent, and dealing with another loss, a secure supportive environment. These issues are safety and security needs articulated by Angel, Catherine, Dana, Denise, Karen, and Renee when asked, *What do you believe will be the biggest problem(s) you will face after you depart from TLP?* These immense obstacles only emphasize the importance of a support network.

Catherine mentioned that some of the Transitional Living Program participants feel like they are the only ones with problems. As a support group facilitator I have observed that the opportunity to learn from others’ experiences is clearly present during group sessions. Consistent with my beliefs, it is also Roberts’ (2002) opinion that learning from others’ experiences is the prime benefit of the group process. Herman (1997) further explains that “groups provide the possibility not only of mutually rewarding relationships but also collective empowerment. Group members approach one another as peers and equals. Though each is suffering and in need of help, each also has something to contribute” (p. 216). In a support group, women not only learn from each other, but they also draw strength from each other.

Catherine and Michelle also talked about the value of receiving support from their family and friends. Kelly (1996) reported that most studies exploring women’s help seeking strategies find that relatives and friends, especially females, are the most likely source of immediate and often long-term support. And that, contrary to popular myth, most relatives and friends were helpful, offering emotional support and sanctuary.
As mentioned earlier, in addition to these women communicating a need for love and support, some felt it was important to offer formal support groups, family bonding programs, and recreational activities for children of all ages who witnessed domestic violence or intimate partner violence. Several women (Carmen, Karen, and Michelle) cited that during their abusive relationships so much energy was spent dealing with conflict, focusing their efforts on trying to stay safe, or staying under the influence of drugs to medicate the effects of victimization that they were unaware that they were ignoring their children.

Some authors suggest that the impact of exposure to violence in the home on the child has been found to have a most detrimental effect on them, even more significant than being raised in a single parent home. For instance, Walker’s (2002) research found that children who are exposed to violence have significant risk for using violence themselves, becoming delinquent, demonstrating school and behavior problems, and having serious and life-long mental health problems including depression, anxiety, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder symptoms. As discussed in the literature review, Palmero (2004) found witnessing parental violence as a child or adolescent to be a potential risk marker for women to become the victim of domestic violence or intimate partner violence.

In summary, these women have identified support as a protective factor which Roberts (2002) has found to mediate and lessen the impact of stress related to battering. Although some emotional support (Transitional Living Program residents and case managers, and the Women’s Work Project participants) exists for the Transitional Living Program residents, these findings suggest that there is a strong desire for ongoing facilitated, specialized groups for residents of all age groups and their families.
**Theme #6: The Need for Informational Support**

Angel, Dana, Karen, and Renee expressed the importance of learning how to protect one’s self and one’s children through education about domestic violence, self-defense instruction, and assertiveness training. Carmen, Catherine, Denise, Erica, and Renee value learning job skills. Denise also emphasized the importance of instruction on self-esteem. Acquiring positive self-esteem underlies everything one accomplishes, whether one feels competent as a result of possessing self-defense skills or having the self-assurance to seek employment. As noted by Maslow (1970) and Roberts (2002), self-esteem is both an important motivational factor and protective factor. As a motivational factor, the satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of worth, capability, and strength--personal qualities that are usually questioned or forgotten by the survivor during an abusive relationship. These feelings, recaptured by the survivors, become protective factors.

**Theme #7: The Need for Material Support**

Erica, Catherine, and Renee agree that childcare is an important source of support. Although The YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated offers a childcare program to the public, their children are not enrolled in the program. Erica, who is currently enrolled in an educational program, utilizes a professional childcare service in her neighborhood. Renee and Catherine are stay-at-home mothers, and Catherine also provides childcare services to a Transitional Living Program resident. Childcare is important for mothers because it can influence so many areas of life.

Significantly, it can affect one’s employment status, which determines one’s level of financial independence. In keeping with the theme of this study, it determines if both the
mother and child’s physiological needs (e.g. food and a place to sleep) will be adequately satisfied. It provides some level of safety and security (e.g. housing and stability) if mothers are able to free themselves from children long enough to earn wages. Another advantage is alleviating social isolation, one of the risk factors and effects of victimization. For example, the availability of childcare offers a relief so that women can be among others who have been in abusive situations or who can provide the necessary affirmation and support. Finally, at the time of our interview, Catherine and Renee had been accepted into a college program—an opportunity that would be difficult without childcare. The availability of childcare can determine to what extent one can become self-actualized in various areas of one’s life (e.g. economically, relationships, or education).

There are so many benefits that result from the availability of childcare. Most importantly, it reduces some of the concerns (e.g. homelessness, financial instability, isolation, and low self-esteem) that lure women into unhealthy intimate relationships. From this perspective, it can be what Roberts (2002) defines as a protective factor (social support).

Profile of the YWCA Support Staff

The following provides Profiles of the YWCA support staff, excerpts from interviews with the support staff, my participation observation notes, and case analyses. There are two parts, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (safety and security, belongingness and love, self-esteem), and Roberts’ protective factor (social support network), separated into a total of six themes. Listed under the heading of social support network are the subheadings informational support, material support, and collaboration to capture the
essence of the interview responses. All the participants’ names were changed to remain consistent throughout the study. An introduction to the YWCA support staff participating in this study are presented in alphabetical order.

Cari is a Caucasian woman in her early 30s. Her responsibility as the Transitional Living Program Aftercare coordinator includes overseeing the day to day operations of the Transitional Living Program’s three locations, collecting Transitional Living Program fees from the clients, and reviewing Transitional Living Program clients’ cases weekly. Cari’s duties for the Aftercare component of the Transitional Living Program include making monthly contacts to former clients via telephone, letters, or home visits. The purpose of Cari’s monthly contacts is to remind former Transitional Living Program clients that she is available for help in the form of referrals and crisis assistance and to also prevent barriers that may prevent Aftercare clients from maintaining permanent housing. Cari has worked with Transitional Living Program clients for at least 10 years and worked at the Battered Women’s Shelter prior to transferring to her current employment.

Charles is a Caucasian male in his late 40s. His role as an Employment and Literacy Services Coordinator includes coordinating and teaching classes that lead to the completion of a GED certificate. Charles has managed and taught the GED program for a number of years. The specific number of years as a YWCA employee, prior work experience, and educational level was not part of the interview questions and therefore was not disclosed.

Nia is an African-American woman in her mid 30s. In her role as the project coordinator for the Women’s Work Project, she is responsible for providing life skills
training and job readiness skills to survivors of domestic violence residing in the Battered Women’s Shelter or participating in the Transitional Living Program. Nia has a bachelor’s degree in psychology. Her prior work experience includes providing direct services as a human service worker at a social service agency to economically underprivileged women.

Shari is an African-American woman in her mid 20s. In her role as case manager for the Transitional Living Program she is responsible for the delivery of direct services to adult survivors of domestic violence participating in the Transitional Living Program. Shari’s specific duties include, but are not limited to, ensuring the provision of up-to-date and viable information, options and referrals to Transitional Living Program residents regarding legal, medical, counseling, housing, educational, and employment opportunities. Shari also provides information related to domestic violence and safety planning for each assigned resident. Prior to Shari’s role as a case manager at the Transitional Living Program she worked at the Battered Women’s Shelter as a family support specialist. Her job responsibilities included facilitating intake interviews for new residents in the Battered Women’s Shelter program, and providing telephone crisis counseling to adult female victims of abuse who called the protect hotline. Shari has a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice and has completed several college courses related to domestic violence.

Tara is an African-American woman in her mid 20s. Her job responsibilities as the Employment Resources for Youth Coordinator include providing services to expectant mothers and mothers ages 16 to 21 to help them reach their educational and employment
goals. Tara’s clients are not required to be victims or survivors of domestic violence to participate in the Employment Resources for Youth program.

Lana is an African-American woman in her early 20s. Lana’s role as a case manager for the Employment Resources for Youth program includes making home visits to clientele between ages of 16 and 21 and monitoring the progress of the clients’ established educational and employment goals. Lana was recently hired for this role at the time of our interview.

SUPPORTING WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE TRANSITIONAL LIVING COMMUNITY: SOCIAL NETWORK MEMBERS RESPOND

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Theme #1: The Need for Safety and Security

The variety of interview questions I asked staff gave me a variety of perspectives on safety and security. Shari’s perception of safety and security was expressed as providing housing with affordable rent and security from the abuser. Shari noted that, “Often, women are afraid to leave their abuser because they are not financially stable.”

Charles agreed with Shari that assistance with housing is important, adding that “making sure that needs are met for children” is also significant, along with amenities provided by the Transitional Living Program that make women feel safe so that they are able to focus on other established goals. Nia’s view of safety and security is expressed in her ongoing practice of discussing conflict resolution and problem solving in the class that she teaches.

The intervention staff’s views and available services fall in the realm of safety and
security because services are provided in an effort to create an environment where woman and children can enjoy freedom from fear, anxiety, and chaos. Topics discussed in Nia’s class encourage women to establish boundaries in relationships and counteract internal barriers cited by Carlson (1997) such as poor coping skills; such barriers can, as Roberts (2002) observes, interfere with a woman’s ability to make decisions if she feels inadequate in her current situation due to victimization.

Tara revealed that she has an “open door policy.” She explained the importance of being available: “Just really being here, and to let them know we can reach out to you, the women at the YWCA, and we’re here to help you, support you, and to protect you in any way we can assist them.” Tara’s philosophy communicates that women can find strength in the protector manifested as YWCA staff and programs.

Theme #2: The Need for Emotional Support/Belongingness and Love

The second theme that emerged from the intervention staff (Lana, Nia, and Shari) is the importance of having emotional support (social support), whether it is your neighbor, a human service worker, family, or friend. As defined in the literature (Newman & Newman, 2003), social support is a social experience leading people to believe that they are cared for and loved, that they are esteemed and valued, and that they belong to a network of communication and mutual obligation (e.g. Transitional Living Program case managers, Women’s Work Project staff and peers, and YWCA Employment Resources for Youth staff). Belongingness and love is the third level of basic needs identified by Maslow (1968).

The significance of the intervention staff in recognizing and valuing the need for
support is that developing a social network is a basic aspect of a survivor’s healing process. Survivors play a significant role by voluntarily entering the programs included in the social network because taking responsibility for one’s own needs is also a part of the survivor’s healing process and also a step toward *self-actualization*. People need other people to become self-actualized (to grow). Toward this philosophy, the intervention staff plays a significant role in the process.

The intervention staff also recognize the need for emotional support beyond what their respective programs offers. Shari and Lana agree with the survivors that in addition to support offered by case managers, program coordinators, and peers, there is a need for a formal (facilitated) support group and counseling. For instance, children who witness domestic violence are emotionally abused. It has been observed by Shari that children require emotional support beyond what mothers can provide.

Shari also shared her observations about teenage daughters during our interview. Shari commented, “I’m seeing it more is that women are having problems with their teenage daughters. They’re having discipline problems with their daughters, school problems.” Living in a structured environment such as the Transitional Living Program provides an opportunity to reduce the harm to those who have lived with domestic violence by helping them to overcome and make sense of their experiences.

Cummings (1998) researched interaction factors that occur from the different ways conflict and violence are expressed together with constructive parenting behaviors in a particular family. The author found that children respond emotionally to adults’ disputes by a variety of behaviors, and those responses may be aggravated by some factors such as the disease of alcoholism in one or more parents, parental depression, and the meaning
given to marital conflict by the children. On the other hand, Cummings (1998) also found that constructive conflict resolution may mediate the effects of children’s exposure to destructive conflict and prepare them to develop better coping strategies for future exposure.

Teenagers are reported by others (e.g. Walker, 2002) to become withdrawn and passive like their mother, or else, violent like their father. According to Davidson (1979), teenage girls tend to identify with their fathers and also abuse their mothers. A number of developmental issues during adolescence make this a particularly significant period for education concerning nonviolence in relationships. Self-esteem plays a role in how well each adolescent will negotiate these developmental tasks.

Wolfe, Wekerle, and Scott (1997) explain that adolescence is a time of important physical changes that youth must learn to understand and regulate, such as changes in sexual motivation and appearance, as well as hormonal changes that may affect mood. Because of the number of physical and psychological changes, this developmental period is a particularly sensitive time for the formation of attitudes and beliefs concerning interpersonal relationships and the abuse of power and control. Most notably, teens are developing an increased interest in sex, which makes them particularly attentive to any issues involving gender, sexuality, and relationship formation. Another important point, made by Palmero (2004) earlier, is that witnessing parental violence as a child or adolescent is a potential risk marker for women to become the victim of intimate partner violence or domestic violence.

Taylor-Browne (2001) suggests offering children’s groups that cover these key issues: discovering that they are not the only ones to have had such experiences; learning
that domestic violence is wrong and not their fault; recognizing and coping with feelings involved; talking to others about what has often been a family secret; and discussing how to seek help safely. In keeping with the theme of this study, the child’s basic needs of safety and security and self-esteem are addressed if these concerns are dealt with.

Theme #3: The Need for Self-Esteem

As noted earlier by Dobash and Dobash (2002), one of the effects of victimization is a lowered sense of self-worth. Gosselin (2000) found that victims develop doubt about their ability to care for and protect themselves. Roberts (2002) believes that one of the most common protective factors is high self-esteem. To accomplish the fourth level of basic needs, self-esteem, self-assessments of self-esteem are integrated into client orientations for various programs offered by the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated. For example, the Women’s Work Project asks newcomers to the program to complete a self-evaluation instrument that measures self-esteem, assertiveness, and aggression. Another example is that each class session begins or ends with a discussion based on daily inspirational readings from Iyanla Vanzant’s book Until Today, which emphasizes the importance of self-worth.

Continuing the theme of self-esteem, clients participating in the GED program and the YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program complete a life skills questionnaire (personal, education, parenting, housing, employment, health, and well-being) that is included in an orientation packet. Nia and Tara design curricula around the assessments to meet the needs of the clients, which include some of the survivors participating in the Transitional Living Program.

Nia, Tara, and other intervention staff play a major role in dispelling false notions
about survivors’ perceived abilities, provide a venue where survivors’ learn what they are
good at, and learn about their potential. The programs that are administered affect the
survivor’s need for self-esteem, self-actualization, and assist in identifying inner
strengths.

Social Support Network

Theme #4: The Need for Informational Support

Shari, Nia, Charles, and Tara are important links in the social support network.
Their professional roles are different, but they all provide guidance to survivors of abuse
and individuals at risk for partner abuse or perpetuating intergenerational abuse.

Shari, a case manager, takes on the role of teacher in that she provides detailed
information about life skills (budgeting, mental health, parenting, and domestic violence
education) that help to sustain or fulfill physiological needs, safety and security needs,
and self-esteem needs. In Shari’s role as a teacher she also addresses substance abuse, a
risk factor for victimization and/or the effects of victimization.

Nia, a program coordinator, recognizes the significance of involving other people in
the learning/educational process. We all have different skills and experiences that can be
useful in helping others. Nia utilizes this concept for offering ideas and suggesting
actions for various situations. In this regard, Nia’s role addresses the survivors’
belongingness and love need and self-esteem.

Similar to Shari, Charles’s role includes teaching. His program is more structured
because there is an established curriculum for preparing one for the GED examination.

As a participant observer, I observed Charles providing lectures and one on one
instruction along with the assistance of a teacher’s aid. Impressively, students were
helping each other understand the information presented or with tasks assigned. Charles also provides college prep and referral information needed to be considered for admission to college.

Tara’s knowledge and expertise allow her to refer YWCA Employment Resources for Youth clientele to agencies and individuals outside of the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated. These agencies and individuals have the resources and skills to break down the barriers that interfere with individuals at risk for abuse, survivors’ goals of pursuing an academic education, or learning job readiness skills. This is important because the 16 to 21 age group that Tara’s program caters to are at a high risk for battering according to Sharps and Campbell (1999). Education less than high school and limited occupational skills also increase a woman’s risk for abuse (Greenfield, 1998; Plichta, 1996). Additionally, overcoming barriers to housing and domestic violence can lead one to feel safe and secure, as the Transitional Living Program participants attested; dealing with learning disabilities, providing on the job training, and offering counseling can support self-esteem and lead to self-actualization.

In the literature Walker (1979) shared that battered women’s perception of their own control over their situation has a great deal to do with whether they leave or remain in an abusive relationship. Walker (2000) pointed out that a state of learned helplessness develops after a woman attempts to get help and is unsuccessful. The intervention staff, in their unique approach, addresses critical life issues determined by researchers to be risk factors for victimization or the effects of victimization. If people should find themselves involved in abusive relationships, they are now familiar with resources that effect change.
Theme #5: The Need for Material Support

One of the effects of economic abuse is the diminishing of autonomy and self-determination (Dutton, 1998). Nia and Shari are involved in two separate programs that provide access to material resources. The program that Nia manages offers individuals a stipend for regular attendance. Excerpts from Nia’s interview eloquently describe economic abuse experienced by some of the survivors. The opportunity to obtain and manage one’s own money restores independence, which in turn impacts self-worth and self-esteem. Another economic benefit is living in transitional housing which assess the cost of rent based on an individual’s income. This advantage allows survivors to maintain independence along with being provided protection from their abuser.

Contributions of financial support (e.g. bus tokens, stipends, prorated rent) and tangible resources (e.g. household items and food) serve as a means for reducing a survivor’s stress level or having a domino effect in one’s life; these provisions create an environment that allows one the ability to save money to transition to permanent housing and to spend more time with children—a desire expressed by Transitional Living Program participants in this study. Continuing the theme of this study, these contributions provide a feeling of safety and security, and fulfill physiological and self-esteem needs.

Safety and security in the available resources and services provide stability for the family. Also, families are being protected by a community of caring individuals who voluntarily make contributions toward Transitional Living Program participants’ needs; at the same time, participants are becoming emotionally stronger and independent, which impacts self-worth. Physiological needs are attended to by providing an affordable
place to reside, access to free food if the need becomes necessary, and other resources that help to relieve stress.

*Theme #6: The Need for Collaboration*

In the literature Roberts (2002) revealed that resilience and protective factors have been found to mediate and lessen the impact of stress related to battering. The author identified high self-esteem, a social support network, and cognitive coping strategies as the most common protective factors.

A social support network consists of the Transitional Living Program (case management, peers, and other staff), the Women’s Work Project (staff and peers), the YWCA Employment Resources for Youth, the GED program (teacher, teacher assistant, and students), community volunteers, family, and friends. Roberts (2002) asserts that one of the most important components of maximizing a battered woman’s recovery is accomplished through believing in the client and helping her realize her strengths. Strength is a source of power. Excerpts from interviews and my role as a participant observer show how intervention staff, through their philosophy and programs, recognize survivor’s problems or potential problems as an opportunity for growth and unveiling power.

*Qualitative Observations of the Researcher: An In-depth Review of Collaborative Efforts*

For five days during the months of October and November I had the pleasure of observing the Women’s Work Project, YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program, and the General Educational Development (GED) program. These programs are components of a social support network for residents of the YWCA Battered
Women’s Shelter and the Transitional Living Program. The Women’s Work Project is designed exclusively for residents of the Battered Women’s Shelter and Transitional Living Program clients; the remaining programs are open to women in the Hamilton County area. At the end of my five days as a participant observer, I had the pleasure of interviewing the coordinator for each of the programs and the case manager for the YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program.

The Women’s Work Project is an innovative, community based, job-training program designed to serve homeless victims of domestic violence within the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated’s network of transitional housing. The Project enhances the existing support services and housing search by providing safe, accessible, economic self-sufficiency and job-training comprised of assessment, coordination, pre-job training, work preparation skill development, extensive job training and placement services, case management, group support, and follow-up and retention (YWCA 2004).

The YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program provide eligible low income pregnant and parenting women ages 16 to 21 in Hamilton and Clermont County with the work readiness skills and support necessary to secure and maintain unsubsidized employment or additional educational opportunities. The Program provides individual assessments, direct pre-job/work readiness training, career choice guidance, and assistance in job searches, GED instruction, parenting and leadership workshops, ongoing case management, and on-site childcare (YWCA 2004).

GED preparation courses are offered that foster quick success with the GED exam and allow students to progress to training, educational, or employment opportunities. What follows are my observations of how all of these programs collaborate to bring a
community of people together to provide life skills training, group support, and love and compassion to encourage program retention and individual success in a challenging society.

The Women’s Work Project, YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program, and the GED program are housed at the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated located in a business district in close proximity to where the program participants reside. A two-day workshop was held during my first visit to the Women’s Work Project and the YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program. The theme of the workshop was *The Stress of it All*. There were 20 participants ranging in ages 16 to 36. At least 6 of the 20 women were pregnant, and all of them were either parents or expecting their first child.

The first guest speaker, Dora, program coordinator for Every Child Succeeds at the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated, shared stress reduction ideas, information about community programs available for strengthening families for children, appropriate behavior for understanding parenting, and how to care for children to prevent their being abused. This presentation was about an important life skill because awareness along with practice reduces the risks of self-victimization and intergenerational violence. In a recent study, the American Psychological Association (2002) explained that children who grow up in deprived environments, where poverty, frustration, and hopelessness are common are at much greater risk of later involvement in violence than other children.

Jennifer, an employee at the Hamilton County Job and Family Services, was the second guest speaker. She gave an interesting presentation about the importance of women’s health. Jennifer talked about holistic health which covered topics about sexually transmitted disease, safe sex, nutrition, exercise, spirituality, and the importance
of annual medical examinations. At the end of Jennifer’s presentation she reminded all the participants that they were beautiful, intelligent young ladies with the ability to determine their destiny related to their sexual activities, health, and educational goals. Nia, the program coordinator for the Women’s Work Project, piggybacked on Jennifer’s affirmation by emphasizing the importance of spirituality and love in a relationship and how spirituality and love can be a prerequisite for an intimate relationship. Lynn, the third guest speaker and employee of the Hamilton County Job and Family services, facilitated an exercise about healthy relationships. The topics discussed were: “What is benevolence?” “What makes a healthy relationship?” and “Advice for Becoming a Mother.”

The workshop facilitated by Hamilton County Job and Family Services representatives was significant because several authors (e.g. Sharps & Campbell, 1998) have identified demographics such as age (adolescent and young adult women), education lower than high school, low income, and an urban living environment as risk factors for marital and intimate partner violence. Walker (1979) also identified low self-esteem and sex as a way to establish intimacy as two of several common traits among some battered women. According to studies performed by Stark and Flitcraft (1996) and Greenfield (1998), pregnancy is also a high risk period for battering.

On the following day, I observed and participated in a workshop facilitated by Rita, a YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated volunteer and an art teacher for Cincinnati Public Schools. As a volunteer, Rita presents art exercises twice a month for the participants of the Women’s Work Project and YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program. The theme of this two-hour workshop was What’s Behind Your Mask? There
were 19 participants; most were attendees from *The Stress of It All* workshop held the previous day. The goal of this workshop was getting in touch with yourself through art and self reflection by participating in a two-part exercise. Part one was devoted to designing masks to reflect who you are, and part two was spent expressing one’s self through writing a reflection statement about who you would be if you could reveal your private side in public. Throughout the exercise Rita was very supportive by recognizing the participants’ creativity, and the participants were supportive of one another during the sharing of their reflection statements. I thought this exercise was important because self-esteem is the value we choose to place on ourselves. It is how we view ourselves, not how others view or value us. We tend to perceive, judge, and act in ways consistent with our self-esteem. Because abused women tend to identify with how the abuser thinks of them, this exercise, in a safe environment, offers an opportunity for women to break out of such thinking.

During the two-day visit I observed and felt a lot of positive energy among the coordinators, guest speakers, and participants. As mentioned earlier, women ranging from ages 16 through 36 were enthusiastically participating in the workshops. I learned from Nia that the workshop participants are motivated to attend and/or participate by the awards of stipends, public assistance, and gifts. Other motivating factors are the passion and love shown by the guest speakers Dora, Jennifer, and Lynn (who present workshops frequently); the volunteer, Rita, who is committed to helping at-risk women deal with life issues through artistic expression; and Nia and Tara, the coordinators for the Women’s Work Project and YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program, who are
responsible for planning the daily activities for their respective programs and whom I observed as being passionate and nurturing individuals.

Robert and Janice, professors of education at Northern Kentucky University, were guest speakers during my third visit at the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated. Robert gave a motivational speech about striving to overcome poverty and academic difficulties, using his childhood as an example. Janice talked about legal rights of children with disabilities in an elementary and high school environment, and shared her experiences as a guardian of her grandson who has a disability.

During my fourth visit I was joined by 18 participants of the Women’s Work Project and YWCA Employment Resources for Youth to learn about the Shaken Baby Syndrome. Lauren, a director with the Council on Child Abuse of Southern Ohio, Incorporated, presented information about the Shaken Baby Syndrome. Lauren began the presentation with a film titled Elijah’s Story, followed the showing of the film with a self-assessment of handling stress associated with parenting, a lecture, and ended the program with a question and answer session. This seminar was emotional for some of the women who decided to leave in the middle of the program. Lauren also shared information about the 24-hour parent hotline for parents who have questions about the parenting of minor and adult children.

I also spent a morning observing the preparation class for the GED examination. The GED program is coordinated and taught by Charles who is also the Employment and Literacy Services coordinator. Charles began class with a lecture and a teacher assistant visited each student’s work station to see if they needed help with their class assignments.
The class meets daily from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. for three months. The GED class is offered daily during the morning and the other programs are offered daily, from 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m. so that individuals can participate in both programs without a schedule conflict. There were 9 of the 22 students enrolled in the course attending class on the day of my visit. Some of the students enrolled in the GED class also participate in the other programs mentioned in this study.

As noted earlier, Herman (1997) has suggested that establishing a safe environment requires not only the mobilization of caring people but also the development of a plan for future protection. Nia and Tara talked about making clients aware of their specific condition (e.g. “problem solving to the benefit of the abuser”) and other factors which perpetuate their oppression. Charles proposed helping the survivors regain power over their lives through community awareness. The program activities I observed are designed to help clients regain power over their lives, their environment, and their bodies by becoming more autonomous and affirmative. Not all clients are confirmed as victims of domestic violence, yet they have many of the same needs. As Nia noted, “So much is taken when you are in an abusive situation.” Thus, programs are designed to develop a sense of personal identity and to increase and restore self-esteem. These activities also deal with some of the common traits identified in battered women that were reported by Walker (1984). They are issues of having low self-esteem, feeling responsible for the batterer’s actions, and suffering from guilt.

Summary of Chapter

Transitional Living Program Participants

The participants’ ideas of safety and security were represented by either possessing or
desiring emotional strength, economic sufficiency, educational growth, and the ability to defend one self physically and verbally when challenged.

*Self-esteem* was viewed as significant in their efforts to survive an abusive relationship. The participants possessed varying degrees of self-esteem and each participant who addressed self-esteem were able to articulate at which level they were operating, acknowledging that they had reached the optimum level (high), needed a lot more work (low), or needed constant inspiration (levels fluctuated) from self, peers, and family. The level of self-esteem determines one’s ability to master other areas of life. And one’s accomplishment (big or small) determines one’s level of self-esteem.

Steps towards *self-actualization* were demonstrated by participants evaluating and improving parenting skills, recognizing the importance of self, improving education, and having the desire to improve their daily life skills.

Although all the women recognize that they are in a better place psychologically, economically, and motivationally, they also acknowledged their need and desire to nurture others via participating in an informal or formal support system. A need to receive various types of ongoing support from their peers, family, and/or intervention staff was also revealed; similar to self-actualization, healing is an ongoing process.

Participants acknowledged that their children are suffering from the after effects of abuse. They are aware of their role in the healing process and credit the Transitional Living Program for providing an environment where healing can begin.

*YWCA Support Staff*

Staff agree that being supportive is providing an environment where survivors can work toward fulfilling Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs and realizing inner strengths
(protective factors). According to the staff’s viewpoint, providing safety and security means being accessible and approachable from the survivors’ perspective. The availability of affordable housing separate from their former abuser was cited as providing support and necessary for survival. Among several skills taught by all the staff, conflict resolution and problem solving are integrated into the curriculum developed by the coordinators for the Women’s Work Project and the YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program.

Excerpts from the interview identify dependency and strength in the protector as components of safety and security. Dependency is chosen because staff want survivors to be able to depend on them for guidance during their efforts to remain safe and self-sufficient; and strength in the protector because staff (protectors) have developed curricula around issues of concerns to survivors to help them maximize their inner strengths.

In their attempt to provide emotional support, the female staff revealed their nurturing and supportive aspect of self reflected by their efforts to help women succeed through participation in mentoring programs and bringing women together to talk about issues they have in common (collective empowerment). Staff (male and female) acknowledged that children’s emotional needs should not be forgotten in the process.

The importance of providing programming to build self-esteem was emphasized. Women participating in the Women’s Work Project and the YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program complete a self-esteem inventory as part of the intake assessment. Based on the results of the assessment, coordinators for both programs collaborate to develop curriculum that provide tools to improve self-esteem.
Returning to the discussion about safety and security, I think the various types of support (informational, emotional, material, and collaboration) provide a source of strength that survivors draw from the staff and volunteers. The more survivors learn about the resources available for survival, the more confident and powerful they may feel. The literature (e.g. Weiss, 2000) suggests that victims of domestic violence and intimate partner violence leave and return to their partner on an average of five times before staying away permanently; researchers believe that each time a victim leaves she learns what services are available to her for support, and as a result returns to the relationship a stronger person. In essence, she is gradually gaining confidence to leave the abusive relationship permanently because of the new level of awareness.

Unfortunately, statistical data on the success of women who complete the programs were not available at the time of the interviews. To determine the success and benefits gained from participation in the Transitional Living Program, residents complete a survey upon exiting the program. A voluntary Transitional Living Program Aftercare service is available for up to two years upon departure. During the two year period a survey is used to determine long-term success (including maintaining permanent housing and refraining from abusive relationships). Immediate success is measured by pre- and post tests for women who participate in the Women’s Work Project and the YWCA Employment Resources for Youth program. Obviously, the success of the GED program is measured by the earning of a GED certificate.

The following chapter summarizes the dynamics of intimate partner violence and domestic violence and the results of the case analysis. The summary of findings is integrated with various intervention theories (protective factors) discussed in Chapter 2.
to support the recommended need for expanding existing or developing new intervention programs.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION


(Murdock, 2006)

Women who are in violent relationships or who have survived violent relationships face many difficulties. Socioeconomic challenges these women face include maintaining economic self-sufficiency, obtaining affordable housing, and finding affordable childcare. To address these concerns legislation, policy reforms, and federal funding initiatives have resulted in increased funding for transitional housing, job training, and concrete services for victimized women. However, these changes are not enough for women to survive an abusive relationship.

Additional challenges that survivors or victims of abuse face that require the attention of advocates are addressing women’s self-esteem problems and bringing them out of isolation, which are two issues that can be risk factors for further abuse or the effects of victimization. Psychological and emotional experiences resulting from victimization need to be validated so that women are assured their concerns are real, important, and warrant attention beyond medical treatment for depression. Participants in this study share their views on how to overcome these concerns with adequate support.

The purpose of this case study was to understand the characteristics of a supportive living environment and the necessary survival skills for victims of partner abuse from the perspectives of participants and staff of the YWCA Transitional Living Program.
As a result of the theme analyses that culminated into Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, I revisited common abusive behaviors in each phase of the cycle of violence to find out how these behaviors might negatively impact the victim’s satisfaction of hierarchy of needs. What I found is that during each phase of the cycle of violence, a woman experiences further victimization because her basic and higher level motivational needs are gradually and inevitably stripped away (see Figure 1). Results from interviews for this study reveal that these women have a desire to fulfill needs that were lost during the abusive episodes. The women also acknowledge that they require some guidance and support to fulfill these desires. Some of these desires are accomplished through a collaborative effort of individuals providing various sources of support (e.g. emotional, informational, and material). These various supports, in the center of Figure 1, are available during any phase of the cycle of violence that a woman decides to courageously leave the abusive relationship.
Figure 1. The Cycle of Violence and its impact on the Hierarchy of Needs.
The women in this study, as a consequence of terminating the abusive relationship, are survivors. Because of their courage to leave the relationship which could be a result of repeated victimization or the victimization of their children, they have achieved some level of success at the highest level of needs, self-actualization (a drive to become more effective in daily life). She has publicly acknowledged the abuse by leaving; she has asked for and received help from the YWCA Battered Women’s Shelter, the YWCA Transitional Living Program, and in some instances received help from the legal system (protection order). The woman’s fulfillment of motivational (hierarchal) needs is interrelated at this point because her actions also satisfy both physiological needs (e.g. food, rest, and relief from abuse) and safety and security needs (e.g. shelter, transitional housing, permanent housing, protection, and boundaries).

The women’s belongingness and love needs are being addressed because they no longer suffer from isolation forced on them by their abuser or self-isolation. Quotations from interviews show that women expressed gratitude for peer relationships, loving relationships with family, and supportive relationships with staff members of the YWCA. Cherished relationships with their children have been renewed also. Despite these accomplishments, women also conveyed a need and desire for ongoing and/or more frequent interaction with individuals similar to themselves in a structured environment and upon exiting the Transitional Living Program. Maslow (1970) agrees with these women that the feeling of belonging to a neighborhood, family, to be a part of one’s own ‘kind’ is important to overcome feelings of alienation, aloneness, and loneliness. He contends that, “In our society the thwarting of these needs is the most commonly found core in cases of maladjustment and more severe pathology” (p. 44). Maslow also
explains that, “Practically all theorists of psychopathology have stressed thwarting of the love needs as basic in the picture of maladjustment” (p. 44). The author stresses the importance of not overlooking the fact that the love needs also involve both giving and receiving love.

In regards to self-actualization, the study discloses evidence that as the woman’s lower level needs (physiological and safety and security) are fulfilled, her drive intensifies—she begins to heal. Her continued drive to become effective in daily life is evident not only by becoming reacquainted with her children; she strives to become a better parent. Citations from interviews indicate that the women’s self-esteem has improved or they realize that it is an ongoing process, they are goal oriented, all of the women are in pursuit of what they perceive as a better education, and they are either gainfully employed or preparing for employment.

The women admit that self-actualization is not an accomplishment they can achieve independently. This revelation is understandable because all self-actualized individuals have had some type of social support as they pursue their endeavors. Toward this end, excerpts from their interviews show what type of beneficial support they are currently receiving (e.g. informational, emotional, and material) and what type of additional support is needed within the various categories of support identified, to reach another level of self-actualization.

The women in this study are specific about what their needs are to live a life free from abuse. In fact, their views are consistent with Roberts’ (2002) protective factors identified as high self-esteem and social support and Maslow’s (1970) Hierarchy of Needs (see Chapter 2).
Interview responses, a review of life skills assessment instruments, observations of activities within the social network of the YWCA, Maslow’s (1970) Hierarchy of Needs, Roberts’ (2002) protective factors, and selective feminist theory serve as a foundation for the recommended development or expansion of current intervention strategies for families who participate in the YWCA Transitional Living Program. The recommended interventions are grouped and discussed according to the themes used in the results section and Appendix I and Appendix J to make it convenient for readers to refer back to participants’ responses and analysis and responses to specific questions that emerged into themes. The discussion of interventions also includes further analysis to justify the recommendations.

RECOMMENDED INTERVENTIONS

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Theme #1: The Need for Safety and Security

As a result of survival skills (protective factors) identified by Transitional Living Program participants, the first task of reclaiming one’s life or developing a supportive living environment is to help the women establish safety beyond living in transitional housing.

Addressing perceived safety and security needs in a structured environment such as the Transitional Living Program is a perfect opportunity to prevent what I call a revolving door syndrome. That is, repeatedly transitioning from an abusive relationship to a battered women’s shelter to transitional housing to an abusive relationship. I admit that there are no guarantees that abusive life styles will change, and I strongly believe that women haven’t done anything in their relationships or daily life to justify the abusive
behaviors imposed upon them. But I believe that possessing appropriate knowledge and skills provides awareness or a repertoire of information to choose from when attempting to establish healthy boundaries in relationships. For example, relating safety and security to the cycle of violence wheel (see Figure 1), awareness of how safety and security needs impact our decision making may prompt the woman to leave the relationship during the tension building phase or avoid entering a potentially abusive relationship.

The participants shared that they wanted to learn how to be taken seriously, to be more assertive. I agree that one should attempt to de-escalate conflict assertively as an effort to defuse the lethality of the abuse until one can escape. For potential victims of abuse this effort would probably be attempted in the tension building phase (figure 1) of the relationship when psychological abuse begins to occur. One can be assertive but the abusive tactics can still happen (e.g. blaming the victim or putting the victim on the defensive). If her efforts of handling conflict assertively fail, the woman may feel powerless or question her reality (Carlton, 1995). As a safety measure, the woman should be reminded of the possible consequences of questioning her reality. For example, the woman’s self-doubt may lead to experiencing either the battering phase or honeymoon phase of the cycle of violence (see Figure 1).

When presenting information to women about safety and security, educators can approach the curriculum from the viewpoint of how our satisfaction influences our accomplishments or how our unfulfilled basic human needs such as feeling safe and secure cause gradual deterioration of other aspects of our being needs (e.g. self-esteem or self-actualization). Especially in an abusive relationship, we are essentially giving our power to the abuser.
Theme # 2: The Need for Self-Esteem

The need for self-esteem is a complex topic intertwined in every aspect of our lives and desires. Maslow (1970) speaks of self-esteem as a two-faceted (self-perception and esteem from others) higher level need desired after accomplishing physiological needs, safety and security needs, and belongingness and love needs. Most literature about partner abuse, reports that a woman’s self-esteem level (e.g. high, medium, or low) can influence how she attempts to satisfy, destructively or constructively, her needs. There are behaviors that become either risk factors for abuse, the effects of being abused, or a protective factor (see Chapter 2, Tables 1 and 2) for surviving abusive relationships.

I have already shared that the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated’s Women Work Project, Employment Resources for Youth program, and the GED program provide a valuable self-assessment tool for measuring self-esteem. The instrument is titled Your Self-Esteem: A Self-Questionnaire. There are eight self-esteem areas assessed in the questionnaire: Personal growth, values and integrity, physical appearance, spirituality, relationships, health and wellness, self-respect and mental health, and goals, career, and finances. Within each of these categories are six questions that address key areas of life that affect one’s self-esteem.

A critical review of the questionnaire revealed that categories and questions were pertinent to Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs and Roberts’ (2002) protective factors. Although I did not have access to individual responses to the questionnaire, women in this study requested self-esteem classes. Based on the available rating scale (never, sometimes, usually, and always true) for each question I was able to ascertain if a respondent was at risk for abuse by sending out victim signals to a prospective abuser, if
the respondent suffered from an unhealthy relationship, or if the respondent possessed protective factors for a healthy relationship or surviving an abusive relationship.

Talked about earlier in this study, but worth repeating, is that maintaining a positive self-esteem is an ongoing process. Unfortunately, self-esteem assessments are not made available to all Transitional Living Program participants unless they participate in the programs mentioned in the second paragraph of this theme.

Self-esteem is a popular concept discussed in literature about partner abuse. Given that the goal of this project is to intervene or prevent new abusive relationships and empower women, I will briefly discuss how low response ratings on the Your Self-Esteem: A Self-Questionnaire can be converted to educational tools used for survival. Self-esteem areas of the questionnaire have been grouped according to what I perceive are motivational needs that are being dealt with: Physiological Needs (physical appearance, health and wellness, and self-respect and mental health), Safety and Security Needs (self-respect and mental health, and relationships), Belongingness and Love Needs (relationships), and Self-Actualization Needs (personal growth, values, integrity and goals, careers and finances). Within each area of needs I will discuss how these desires, if not attended to, become or remain risk factors for abuse. As advocates, often times we talk about warning signs of identifying an abuser or the cycle of violence. However, the warning signs of a potential victim are rarely discussed because we want women to be assured that the abuse is not their fault, particularly when they are already experiencing guilt for the violence. One risk factor is low self-esteem. Thanks to the many components of behavior and beliefs statements presented in the Your Self-Esteem: A Self-Questionnaire I can expand on the discussion about self-esteem. The information
that follows is based on literature about abuse, some abusive experiences confirmed by victims during support group sessions for survivors of domestic violence, and information learned from crisis hotline callers.

Self-Esteem as a Risk Factor

Physiological Needs

Physical appearance questions address self-perceptions about physical attractiveness, including opinions about level of satisfaction with current weight, satisfaction with quality of hair and hair style, and satisfaction with facial features. An individual at risk for abuse may be one whose self-esteem rests on being affirmed by her partner or one who has a difficult time accepting the physical attributes that she possesses. For example, according to Carlton (1995), women who are vulnerable to abuse may identify with how she thinks someone else feels about her. The author cites as an example that the woman may think, “I’m fat.” The criticized woman may work hard to fit what is perceived to be an acceptable weight to the abuser, even though in reality she is not fat. Carlton refers to people who exhibit this behavior as “as if” type people. Outlined in the tension building phase of the cycle of violence (see Figure 1) are the tactics used for disempowering the victim. A tactic specific to physical appearance would be name calling or put downs.

Health and wellness questions deal with issues such as frequency of exercise, commitment to eating a healthy and balanced diet, frequency of medical attention, stress management, and current strategies used for anger management. Individuals at risk for abuse usually do not have a sense of self-preservation or self-care. The literature suggests that victims feel guilty about giving attention to themselves. Abuse victims tend
to put others’ needs before their own.

In reference to the cycle of violence wheel (see Figure 1), physiological needs such as stress management and anger management are usually not handled appropriately. Victims tend to handle stress by attempting to pacify the abuser and internalizing their anger, which leads to depression (refer to effects of victimization, Chapter 2, Table 1).

*Self-respect and mental health* questions are about accepting abuse and neglect from others, putting oneself down when a mistake is made, and self-understanding and self-respect. There are also questions about respecting and appreciating others, and resolving problems from the past that cause unhappiness.

Risk factors for abuse would involve the victim pointing out her shortcomings to her abuser, which may send out a signal that she is weak. She may be critical of herself. These beliefs would increase the victim’s chances of believing the abuser’s accusations noted in the tension building phase and battering phase of the cycle of violence (see Figure 1). Regarding the question addressing the resolution of problems from the past, these problems may include witnessing domestic violence as a child (this observation may influence the victim’s beliefs about relationships); or being sexually abused as a child which might influence the woman to use sex to establish intimacy in a relationship or believe it is the only form of intimacy (see characteristics of abuse, Chapter 2, Table 2).

*Safety and Security Needs*

*Relationship* questions that deal with safety and security ask if they are treated with respect and kindness by people in their life, and if they feel they deserve love and affection. The *self-respect and mental health* question ask the respondent if they accept
physical abuse or emotional neglect. Risk factors include difficulty utilizing assertiveness in interpersonal relationships as well as establishing boundaries, which Maslow (1970) refers to as limits.

As a consequence of these risk factors, the respondent may overlook or accept tension building behaviors in the cycle of violence (see Figure 1) such as criticisms, put downs, and name calling. Derogatory comments may be said in a playful manner in the beginning of the interaction and eventually result in a physically abusive relationship which includes humiliation. Another risk factor is that the victim becomes submissive by becoming what she believes her partner wants her to be in order to feel safe. This is another example of “as if” type behavior pointed out earlier.

**Belongingness and Love Needs**

*Relationship* questions ask if one feels deserving of love and affection, about the level of satisfaction with partner, and frequency of loneliness. There are also questions asking if respondents are treated with respect and kindness by their circle of acquaintances, if they have healthy relationships with family members, and if respondents have at least two friends that are trusted and valued. A risk factor is feeling undeserving of love and care. Some victims feel they don’t deserve a satisfying life. An additional risk factor is isolation (see Chapter 2, Table 2). Note in the tension building phase of the cycle of violence (see Figure 1) that two of the abuse tactics are withdrawal of affection and isolation. If the respondent has a low response rating to this question, it increases her chances of remaining in the relationship which further hinders satisfying her need for belongingness and love.
Self-Actualization

*Personal growth, value, and integrity* questions deal with being motivated to be the best self possible via accomplishing daily tasks, honoring commitments, continuing education through reading and involvement in other activities and ongoing self-evaluations and self-improvements. Establishing a value system and living accordingly is also addressed. One risk factor would be giving the abuser the power to influence one’s view of self as he uses the abusive tactics included in the tension building phase and honeymoon phase of the cycle of violence (see Figure 1). A second risk factor is the abuser’s successful attempt in preventing the respondents accomplishments via criticism, humiliation and/or physical abuse. Maslow (1970) says that if accomplishments are thwarted, feelings of inferiority, of weakness and helplessness occur.

*Spirituality* questions pursue one’s relationship with a higher power, commitment to religious activities, and strength of faith. Questions reflecting living a life of pride and helping others are also included. Walker (1984) listed guilt as one of the common traits of battered women. This emotion, discussed in the literature review, could have derived from teachings in religious institutions. Interestingly, spirituality and/or religiosity can have both a positive and negative affect on behaviors. As advocates it is important to discuss how spirituality or religious beliefs may influence one’s tolerance of abuse, namely, submission to an abuser.

*Goals, careers, and finances* questions reflect the level of job satisfaction, financial satisfaction, and satisfaction with educational level. Establishing life and career goals and actively working toward them are also assessed. Low income and education lower than high school are risk factors for entering unhealthy intimate relationships or
remaining in the relationship. Studies (e.g. Gondolf & Fisher, 1988) found that the more economic dependence a woman has the least likely she is to return to her abusive partner.

**Self-Esteem as a Protective Factor**

The previous section discussed how various aspects of our life can negatively affect our self-esteem if we experience feelings of unworthiness or discouragement. Also mentioned was how these feelings can become risk factors for intimate partner violence. In this section I selected questions from areas of *Your Self-Esteem: A Self-Questionnaire* to illustrate how recognition of one’s strengths serves as protective factors (high self-esteem) to help lessen the impact of stress related to battering.

**Physiological Needs**

The category *self-respect and mental health* is similar to physiological needs. Reflection statements worthy of discussion as protective elements are “I treat myself with understanding and respect” and “I try to resolve problems from my past that cause me unhappiness.” Attention to these areas is a step toward self-actualization, toward healing. The first statement, if attended to, counteracts one of the effects of victimization, a lowered sense of self-worth (see Chapter 2, Table 1). The Transitional Living Program participants’ interview statements in this study explain the essence of these beliefs when talking about their experiences leading to reconnection to self. For example, a participant shared, “I’ve worked very hard to get where I am at, I’m mentally stronger. I know a lot more about warning signs and take heed to them. I’m more confident in myself.”

Focusing on beliefs about *physical appearance* and *health and wellness* can be used to demonstrate manipulative tactics used to make victims believe untruths about
themselves or cause self-neglect. I recommend a seminar on health and wellness that include discussions about the importance of physical exercise, nutrition, self-affirmation to counteract negative untruths women believe about themselves, and exercises on valuing and nurturing self because some abuse victims feel guilty about giving attention to themselves. Also recommended is encouraging and assisting women to develop specific steps that lead to achievable goals any relative area important to them. Individuals with high response ratings on the questionnaire can be applauded by advocates and informed that self-love and self-acceptance are necessary steps toward self-actualization. Maslow (1970) classified self-esteem into two subsidiary sets. One set included a need to feel adequate and worthy and the second set included a feeling of dignity or esteem from other people.

Belongingness and Love/Emotional Support

The relationship category is synonymous to Roberts’ (2002) social support network and Maslow’s (1970) belongingness and love needs. The reflection statements highlight the impact of positive people on one’s level of self-esteem. First, there is a statement that implies that one should feel deserving of love and affection. Secondly, there are statements that prompt the respondents to evaluate the quality of their relationships. For example, family relationships are only important if they are healthy relationships. And friends are important if they are trustworthy and valued. This category also measures the frequency of feeling lonely, which can be attributed to social isolation, an effect of victimization (see Chapter 2, Table 1).

As discussed in the result section, the participants in this study repeatedly emphasized the value they placed on their families, peers, and YWCA staff. Transitional Living
Program participants confirmed that these relationships were important for their survival. Similar relationships were cited as necessary for continued survival upon their departure from the Transitional Living Program. Advocates can be affirmative about these beliefs and share the benefits of continuing to value and be among positive supportive people. I recommend offering the requested family bonding program, self-esteem classes, and support groups for mothers, teenagers, and children to reinforce these beliefs.

**Self-Actualization**

*Goals, careers, and finances* are likened to self-actualization. Statements that coincide with protective factors are: (1) My current job or daily activities are what I want to be doing; (2) I have life and career goals and actively work toward them. All but two of the Transitional Living Program participants are involved in activities that would produce a high response rating from these statements because they are working toward goals that lead to higher education and/or better job opportunities. Again, these are strides toward reconnecting to self. One of the effects of victimization is having self-doubt about one’s ability to care and protect one’s self (see Chapter 2, Table 1).

Giving attention to *personal growth, values, and integrity* issues can reassure the survivors of the significance of their accomplishments identified in the *need for self-actualization* in the results section of the study. Their interview responses are strength statements.

**Theme #3: The Need for Belongingness and Love**

In various sections of this study we gained knowledge about the significant role of belonging and love needs (e.g. positive self-esteem, self-actualization, and risk factors for
abuse) in our lives. Love is an interactive-emotion, a concept which Maslow (1970) supports, emphasizing that love needs involve both giving and receiving love.

The women in this study repeatedly testified about the importance of having loving relationships as a survival tool and as part of a supportive living environment. As noted in the results section these valued relationships are available to Transitional Living Program participants, but not in abundance. Overwhelmingly, the participants mentioned, and the YWCA intervention staff agreed, the need for support groups. The Transitional Living Program participants’ testimonies reveal that they want to be in a group atmosphere where they feel that caring individuals are listening to them. These wants were identified with comments such as “we need to be heard,” “someone to talk to,” and “express myself.” Their comments can also be interpreted as wanting to be in a safe environment where “I feel free to be who I am, not a façade.” The women yearn for empathy. This need was evident in their statements such as “[need an] Hispanic Spanish speaking support group,” “need chemical dependency counselors,” and “survivor groups.” The desire for encouragement was manifested in comments such as “women need to know they don’t have to go back,” “need family and friends that will guide me,” “people telling me I’m doing a good job, and “she believed in me…she was always there for me.” The significance of relationships was related by comments such as “I feel like I’m with family,” “I felt connected to other women,” ”my case manager is very supportive,” “the director of the Women’s Work Project was very uplifting,” and “I missed the groups to help with self-esteem.”

Participants’ perception of survival skills needed to live a life free and independent
from abuse support the findings of Berk et al. (1986) that shelters have a long-term
deterrent effect on violence when they help women change their life styles, keeping them
and their children safe from future abusive situations. Also supported is Berk et al. belief
that the success of an abuse free life is dependent on women taking control of their lives.

A support group as a protective factor reduces isolation, reduces the impact of
stressors, provides a flow of affection, information, and advice. Information that may
surface among the group members are the effects of victimization, validation of their
their experiences and feelings, and coping strategies.

During the course of interviews, some women shared that they still loved their
abusive partner. A support group is a safe environment to disclose these feelings and
receive validation that it is okay to love the abuser but hate the abusive behavior. In a
supportive environment group members learn that they are worthy of being loved, and
that they are not a bad person. Support groups also allow women to identify their inner
strengths (protective factors) and various resources crucial to their survival in society.

In my role as a group facilitator for survivors of domestic violence and intimate
partner violence, I have observed that there is a wealth of knowledge and support shared
among individuals. The knowledge is eagerly and willingly shared and received by the
members. I have also witnessed emotional transformations over a brief period of several
group meetings. Providing a forum where women can gather to be listened to,
encouraged, feel understood, and feel connected to others helps women facilitate their
own survival and takes them to another level of self-actualization.

In the results section, we also saw requests for family bonding programs and support
groups for children and teenagers. Maslow talks about being away from one’s
home and family, and friends and neighbors as having destructive effects on children. He refers to this experience as becoming disoriented. Some of the study participants (parents and staff) reported that children were abusive toward their mothers and/or exhibiting delinquent behavior at school. The children were not interviewed for the study and the sample of children is small (see Table 5). In a limited manner these observations about the children support the literature in this study, and the situation warrants intervention from an agency that advocates non-violence. In addition to focusing on children's abusive behaviors, other factors deserve consideration for their behavior, such as the challenges they face as a result of being uprooted from their familiar social system to reside in transitional housing.

Most of the children residing in transitional housing came from a dysfunctional home where there was probably some freedom. As mentioned earlier, women and children residing in transitional housing previously lived in the battered women’s shelter. The shelter is a confined environment where several families share one room; there are early curfews, assigned bed times for the children, different school districts, and limited recreational activities and facilities. Age groups vary so some of the children may not have playmates.

Residing in transitional housing, the children continue to live in a structured environment with some latitude. For convenience and safety, the children may attend a new school; some children have left cherished school and neighborhood friends behind to live in transitional housing; some children have lost their pets due to relocation; children may have lost access to valued relatives on the father’s side of the family due to jeopardizing the safety of the mother. Families residing in transitional housing are
allowed to receive guests but there are daily curfews. Children, similar to their mothers, are faced with building new relationships and mourning losses.

Mothers revealed their desire for support groups for children and teenagers, family bonding programs, and children’s programming to aid in their healing. To aid in the success of family bonding programs, I recommend that surveys be distributed to mothers to determine what type of activities are desirable and structure programs around the results of the survey. I suggest that a children’s advocate knowledgeable about the effects of witnessing partner abuse be considered to develop and facilitate support groups for children and teenagers, and for children’s programming. Mothers spending quality time with their children and the availability of children’s programming create an opportunity to address other effects of domestic violence on child witnesses discussed in this study such as intergenerational violence. Another benefit of these programs would be learning the process of a family transitioning from a formerly dysfunctional family environment to a cohesive and stable family environment which partially fulfills safety and security needs for all involve
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of Female Children</th>
<th>Age Range of Female Children</th>
<th>Number of Male Children</th>
<th>Age Range of Male Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 – 16 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 – 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0 – 14 years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 – 5 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 – 13 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme #4: The Need for Self-Actualization

The benefits of self-actualization gained from Transitional Living Program study participants are ascertained from informational support. “Self-actualization is not only an end state but also the process of actualizing one’s potentialities at any time, in any amount” (Maslow, 1970, p. 47). It is, for example, a matter of becoming better educated by studying for a GED certificate or a college degree. Self-actualization means using one’s intelligence (p. 47). Maslow argues that it does not mean doing some world-changing thing necessarily, but it may mean going through an arduous and demanding period of preparation in order to realize one’s possibilities. I refer to, as examples, a woman learning how to cope with challenges associated with leaving familiar social surroundings, recovering from the loss of meaningful relationships, adjusting to single-parenting, and learning new life skills with the goal of ultimately living an independent life free from partner abuse.

Self-actualization means working to do well the thing that one wants to do (p. 47). Transitional Living Program participants in this study expressed an aspiration to learn several skills deemed important to their ongoing survival from an abusive relationship. As an intervention strategy it is desirable that while the women and their children are residing in a structured environment that intervention staff and their allies help to foster their self-actualization. Toward this end and to enhance coping skills, women expressed a desire to become educated about the impact of domestic violence and stalking, participate in ongoing classes about self-esteem, participate in self-defense classes for families, and receive assertiveness training.
To address the assertiveness training, I recommend utilizing the 25 item Assertive Inventory to ascertain the woman’s level of assertion. This Inventory is utilized by the Women’s Work Project and other YWCA programs, and it asks women to rate their assertive behavior in a variety of situations. A review of the Assertive Inventory available reveals that responses to the inventory statements can assess if women experience comfort or hesitance in standing up for themselves in personal relationships, business situations, or social situations rather than submitting to injustices. Some assertiveness statements measure the woman’s degree of self-control so that she is able to differentiate between assertiveness and aggression while communicating her needs or wants in various life situations. Remaining statements measure the woman’s reluctance or confidence level in making decisions, trusting her own judgment, sharing her ideas, or expressing her feelings.

Essentially, in addition to building self-confidence, the Assertive Inventory can serve as a foundation for learning how to develop healthy relationships which includes equality, establishing healthy boundaries in various types of relationships (e.g. personal, social, and business), and communication of feelings in all types of relationships using assertiveness techniques. On occasion, the YWCA offers self-defense workshops to the public. I recommend that Transitional Living Program participants be offered the opportunity to participate in a similar program, at no cost, at least once during their participation in the Transitional Living Program.

Social Support Network

Theme #5: The Need for Emotional Support/Belongingness and Love
An important benefit of a social support network is its ability to help victims work past harmful illusions, which is a part of self-actualization. As Maslow explained, self-actualization is, in part, discovering what one is by breaking up an illusion and getting rid of a false notion. More than half of the Transitional Living Program participants in this study claimed they needed a support system (e.g. support group, family, and friends) to live independently, to be self-sufficient, and free from an abusive relationship. Catherine’s statement, “I know I need a strong family background and friends that will guide me if they see me going in the wrong direction…they need a support group up in here” captures the influence of a support system if a woman’s anticipated life goals becomes an illusion.

Some of the Transitional Living Program participants in this study do not have family and friends as support because they either relocated to this city from another region or they chose to isolate themselves from family members for various reasons. Given what we understand about the dynamics of partner abuse and the impact of abusive behaviors on our intrinsic needs (physiological, safety and security, belongingness and love, self-esteem, and self-actualization), I recommend ongoing support groups and that inspirational components of the curricula used by the Women’s Work Project are available to all Transitional Living Participants on site. In both programs women are receiving affirmation, encouragement, and validation of their experiences,. These women will also have someone (facilitator and peers) to help clarify their situation so that they are able to redefine and reassess their coping experiences.

**Theme #6: The Need for Informational Support**

Recommendations for informational support encompass suggestions made by study
participants. Their suggestions and the benefits of informational support have been discussed in detail throughout this section and the results section. These suggestions and recommendations, summarized below, address internal barriers (low self-esteem, self-blame and shame for the abuse, learned helplessness, and poor coping skills) that often keep the battered woman trapped in a recurring pattern of acute crisis episode if not attended to (Carlson, 1997). One woman in this study describes the Transitional Living Program as “a stepping stone…a program that gradually introduces one to the real world.” Both her response and Carlson’s findings validate the importance of staff considering the following recommendations for workshops and programs, which also provide an opportunity to address intergenerational family violence:

- Assertiveness Training
- Self-Defense Workshops
- Stress Management Classes
- Self-Esteem Classes
- Support Groups for Adults
- Support Groups for Children and Teenagers
- Family Bonding Programs

Women and their children participate in the Transitional Living Program (case management and housing) while enrolled in an educational program (e.g. GED, college, certificate program, or Women’s Work Project) for up to 18 months. This is a perfect opportunity for the YWCA to offer ongoing in-depth life skills training for families on site. Such programs should be available on site because not all women own vehicles or can afford bus fare; there may be safety issues because they reside in a confidential
location, and child care may be a concern as well. Based on the number of new families entering the Transitional Living Program frequently, just imagine the many family members who could become less of a risk for future abuse or who would less likely become potential abusers if we became proactive advocates.

Beyond the scope of this study, but worth mentioning, are needed resources such as budget for life skills assessment instruments, staffing including volunteers, and periodic program evaluations to determine the success of the programs.

Recommendations and Implications for Future Research

Limitations of Study

The Transitional Living Program sample size was small because only half of the residents were willing to participate in the study. Refusal of all but one Transitional Living Aftercare client to participate in the study prevented the researcher from learning if the Transitional Living Program is effective as it exists. That is, are former Transitional Living Program participants refraining from abusive relationships? If not, what are their perceived needs from an advocacy group to prevent reoccurrence?

Future Direction for Study

A follow up study is needed with current Transitional Living Program participants or new participants who participate in newly implemented YWCA intervention programs to determine if programs are deterrents to entering abusive relationships upon departing from the Transitional Living Program. The sample size for follow-up study should include former Transitional Living Program participants. Future studies should explore research questions with a larger sample.
Conclusion

Findings in the literature review not only confirm that abuse is driven by the abuser’s need for power and control over the victim, but also unveil the major impact that the satisfaction of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs has on individuals surviving an abusive relationship. The review also points out how deficiencies in any of these needs can lure one into or keep one in an unhealthy relationship.

Theories (battered women’s syndrome, cycle of violence, learned helplessness, and traumatic bonding) discussed in the literature that explain why women stay in a situation of intimate partner violence or domestic violence imply in some manner that victims are motivated to stay because of their low self-esteem, their need for love, or to ensure that their safety and security needs are satisfied.

For the purpose of this study, I adopted Robert’s (2002) term, protective factors, to describe what motivates former victims to maintain their survival status. A thorough, in depth analysis of the effects of victimization and the characteristics of victimization (see Chapter 2, Tables 1 and 2) reveal that if the victim’s motivational needs are unfulfilled at any level, she is at risk for entering an abusive relationship. Even if these motivational needs were initially satisfied prior to entering an unhealthy relationship, they can also diminish as a result of the abuse (see Figure 1). For example, an individual’s low self-esteem or social isolation is a risk factor for entering an abusive relationship or can be a consequence of the behavioral dynamics that take place during an abusive relationship.
Figure 1 provides a summary of typical abusive behaviors (control tactics) used in each phase of the cycle of violence to disempower the victim and lists the hierarchy of needs affected negatively in each phase. During the first phase of the cycle, tension building, all levels of hierarchy of needs are impacted except safety and security needs. If the victim does not leave during the first phase of the cycle of violence, her safety and security needs are jeopardized because of possible escalation of abuse to the second phase, battering. Maslow (1970) says that if safety and security needs are threatened, an individual can be expected to produce a regression from any higher level of needs to the more dominant need of safety. If this is correct, the victim attempts to be safe from physical abuse by seeking refuge at a shelter, contacting law enforcement, or seeking other forms of support. The survivor of abuse has also begun the process of establishing boundaries in her life.

As authors (e.g. Walker, 1984) have suggested, not all abusive episodes escalate to the battering phase. The abusive behavior may vacillate between the tension building phase and the honeymoon phase. If this happens, the victim’s hierarchy of needs is constantly in turmoil. Most notably, the victim’s need for belongingness and love may keep her in the abusive relationship even though she may only feel the exhilaration derived from receiving love temporarily during the honeymoon phase. The cycle of violence wheel (see Figure 1) implies that the abuser withdraws his affection during the tension building phase and declares his love and devotion for the victim during the honeymoon phase. Another example related to these two phases is the drive for self-actualization; this need is stymied because of the abuser’s constant efforts to maintain control over the victim. In other words, the victim sacrifices autonomy in the relationship...
which limits her motivation to become the best person possible. The victim transitions to the role of survivor if she leaves the abusive relationship during the battering phase or honeymoon phase. At this point the survivor of abuse has made a decision to establish boundaries in her life and regain her independence.

Other theories (social support network, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, protective and resiliency factors, and liberal feminism) related to why women may survive an abusive relationship emphasize the importance of possessing positive self-esteem, having a feeling of belongingness and love, and maintaining resources to fulfill physiological needs and safety and security needs. Fulfillment of all these needs leads to the self-actualization process. Thus, these are needs that motivate women in the Transitional Living Program to survive their abusive relationships.

The findings in this case study cannot be generalized to all women who have experienced partner abuse. For example, women participating in short-term intervention programs such as an emergency shelter survival needs may be different. What is exceptional and fascinating about the findings in this study is that the women upon entering the Transitional Living Program have already made a decision to live a healthy and productive life. They have already begun the process of nurturing the intrinsic needs that were diminishing and have made progress in their endeavors, but they also realize that there is more to their persona that needs cultivating. We are always a work in progress. I believe the women have done an outstanding job of articulating what these needs are. As we read, these women have a strong personal foundation to build upon. Again, this strong personal foundation is what Roberts refers to as protective factors and resilience. What these women are asking for is assistance to help them develop into the
best functioning and self-confident individuals they can be, and to become the best mothers possible.

We also learned that their requests are consistent with what various authors say are pertinent to daily existence whether one is experiencing an abusive relationship or enjoying healthy relationships and lifestyles. All the recommended programs listed in The Need for Information Support section draw women to other individuals with similar desires--the need to be safe, feel secure, belong to a group, and build self-esteem. All the programs bring the woman out of social isolation and encourage making choices because she can decide which programs are beneficial for her needs.

Finally, advantages of offering the various programs contribute to positively shaping these women’s current and future values. Women are changing their framework for understanding information about domestic violence and intimate partner violence and how to handle victimization because they are changing their perception. These women are also learning the perspective of other program participants as a result of themes emerging in support groups, self-esteem classes, and assertiveness training.

Last but not least, I would be remiss if I didn’t applaud the caring and talented support personnel who help make Transitional Living Program participants’ burdens lighter as I have showcased in the results section and Appendix J.
References


________. *Analysis of male violence*.


and Social Work, 15, 480-501.


constraints and psychological well-being of domestic violence shelter graduates.


Herman, J. (1997). Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence-from domestic abuse to political terror. New York: Basic Book.


Lockhart, L.L., White, B.W., Causby, V. and Issac, I. (1994). *Letting out the secret:*


and S. Murdock.


“Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence against Women: Finding From
the National Violence Against Women Survey.” National Institute of Justice
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of
Justice, Office of Justice Programs (November 1998).
Women Seeking Restraining Orders. In Violence between intimate partners:
Patterns, causes, and effects; ed. A. P. Cardarelli, 104-123. Needham Heights, MA:
Allyn & Bacon.
Press.
Justice Statistics, Special Report.
Therapy to Battered Women: A National Survey and Case Illustration. In Battered
women and their families. eds. A. R. Roberts and S. Burman, 3-28. New York:
Springer.
Education Inc.


Appendix A

YWCA Transitional Living Aftercare Program
YWCA Transitional Living Program
Participant Interview Questions

Fictitious Name_________________________________________ Age_______ Race________

Age and gender of your minor children

Age____ Gender_____               Age____ Gender____
Age____ Gender_____               Age____ Gender____

Participant of TLP II_____  TLP III_____ TLP Aftercare____

What programs are you currently participating in or have you formerly participated in?

___Women’s Work Project                          ___ YWCA Childcare Center
___ GED                                                       ___ SHIP
___ Life Stride                                             ___ After Care (18 month program)
___ Other __________

What survival skills do you need to live independent (self-sufficient, free) from an abusive relationship?

What does a supportive (encouraging, caring, helpful, accommodating) living environment mean to you in a transitional living environment?

What did you like most about each program that you participate/participated in?

What did you like least about each of the programs that you participate/participated in?

What programs would you have liked offered at TLP?

Do you think you have changed as a result of participating in the programs?  If yes, how? If no, why not?

What do you believe will be the biggest problem(s) you will face after you depart from TLP?
Are you currently employed? Yes ____ No ___

If yes, what type of work do you perform?

What is your highest level of education?

Intimate partner violence/domestic violence is defined as being a victim of a pattern of verbal abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, or sexual abuse by an intimate partner.

What services or programs do you feel are important for survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence?

Have you been involved in an abusive relationship while participating in the Transitional Living Program. Yes ____ No ____ If yes, what type of abuse? ______________________

Transitional Living Aftercare Program participants:

Have you been involved in an abusive relationship since departing from the Transitional Living Program? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, what type of abuse? ______________________

How long did you participate in the Transitional Living Program? (entry/departure dates)

Are you currently enrolled in school or a job training program? Name of school/program and what is your expected date of completion or graduation?

What did you accomplish during your stay in the Transitional Living Program?

What was the biggest problem you faced after your departure from the Transitional Living Program?
Appendix B

Staff Interview Questions

I am writing a case study about the YWCA services available to survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence. Answers to these questions will be available to the public. In addition to fulfilling partial requirements for a doctorate in urban educational leadership, my goal in writing the case study is to provide information that will help intimate partner violence/domestic violence advocates provide essential services that allow survivors of domestic violence to continue living a life free from abuse and to help the victims of domestic violence live their life free from abuse. I will not allow anyone to read my observation field notes or your interview transcripts but drafts of my case study will be shared with all staff participants for correction of any misunderstandings before submission of the case study for publication.

1. In your opinion...what aspect of the programs are working at TLP (TLP case management, TLP Aftercare Program, Women’s Work Project, YWCA Childcare Center, child advocacy) and what is needed to make the program more efficient or valuable to victims of domestic violence/intimate partner violence?

2. The YWCA advertises that the goal of TLP is to "create a supportive living environment for women and children where they can obtain skills and confidence necessary to make the transition from an abusive relationship to an independent lifestyle, including the establishment of permanent housing." What is your definition of a supportive living environment for women and children participating in the TLP? What do you do as an individual to contribute to a supportive living environment? What specifically does the program you manage offer to contribute to a supportive living environment?

3. The YWCA advertises that the "goal of TLP is to "empower at-risk families by creating programming that enhances survival skills unique to victims of domestic violence and assisting them with their educational and vocational goals." What is your definition of survival skills unique to victims of domestic violence?

4. In your role as Case Manager, Aftercare Coordinator, Women’s Work Project Coordinator, YWCA Childcare Center Coordinator, TLP Child Advocate, or Director of Protection from Abuse do you do to contribute to the goals mentioned in questions 2 and 3 or do you have an idea of what can be done to allow TLP staff to contribute to these goals?

5. How does your program determine the needs of the clients you serve?
Appendix C

January 2005

Dear TLP Resident,

I am a student at the University of Cincinnati pursuing a doctorate of education in urban educational leadership. My interest is in community leadership focusing on family violence prevention. As a final degree requirement I am writing a case study about the programs and services available to survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence and participants in the YWCA’s Transitional Living Program.

In order to fulfill my degree requirements I need your help in learning about the programs and services from your point of view. Your identity will remain confidential but results of your interview will be published as a partial fulfillment of my degree requirements.

Attached are a copy of the interview questions I will use during our tape-recorded interview and a copy of the consent to participate in a research study form describing the study and your rights as a participant. If you are interested in being one of five participants selected for the study, your name will be placed in a basket where I will randomly select five names.

I will return to TLP II the following week for a private interview. Private interviews will be scheduled in the TLP II lounge every hour beginning at 5:00 p.m. and no later than 8:00 p.m. during January on the days that childcare activities are routinely planned.

By participating in this study you will be helping intimate partner violence/domestic violence advocates like me who are interested in providing programs and services essential for your survival in an abuse free environment.

Thank you,

Joyce A. McCoy
University of Cincinnati
Title of Study:

Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) Transitional Living Program’s Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence and Staff Members’ Perception of Survival Skills and a Supportive Living Environment

Introduction:

Before you agree to participate in this study, it is important that you read this consent form and understand the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study as well as your right to withdraw from the study at any time. Please note that no guarantee or assurance can be made as to the results of the study.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to investigate what a supportive living environment is from a survivor of intimate partner violence point of view and the YWCA Transitional Living Program staff’s perspective.

Duration and Procedures:

I will also observe the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati ‘s General Educational Development (GED) certificate program, the Women’s Work Project, Life Strides, and YWCA Childcare Center during the designated time for each program for approximately five (5) days. After the five (5) day observation period, I will ask you to participate in a structured tape-recorded interview where you will be asked questions about what aspects of the programs you manage are working and what is needed to make the programs you manage more efficient or valuable to survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence; what your definition is of a supportive living environment for women and their children participating in TLP; what do you do to contribute to a supportive living environment; what specifically does the program you manage contribute to a supportive living environment; what is your definition of survival skills unique to victims of domestic violence/intimate partner violence; and, how do you contribute to the goals of the YWCA services for domestic violence/intimate partner violence. The interview will last no more than one hour. The interview will be conducted at your program site on a day and at a time convenient for you.

Risks/Discomforts:

There are no anticipated risks associated with this study.
Benefits:

You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study, but your participation will assist intimate partner violence/domestic violence advocates in recognizing essential and possibly overlooked resources required for survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence to continue to live in an abusive free environment.

Confidentiality:

Individual information will not be shared with the YWCA, however, my advisor for the research project may need to read my observation field notes, interview transcripts or listen to your tape recorded interview if I need assistance writing about the study. The data from the study will be published and may be presented at conferences; however, you will not be identified by name. To further ensure confidentiality, all field notes, and audiotapes and interview transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet and destroyed after the study is completed.

Participant’s right to refuse or withdraw:

Your participation is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate or may discontinue participation AT ANY TIME without penalty. I have the right to withdraw you from the study AT ANY TIME. Your withdrawal from the study may be for reasons related solely to you (for example, for not following my study-related directions) or because the entire study has been terminated.

Offer to answer questions:

If you have any other questions about this study, you may call me, Joyce A. McCoy, at (513) 487-XXXX, my University of Cincinnati advisor for this study, Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller, at (513) 556-XXXX, or the co-chairperson of my research committee at the University of Cincinnati, Dr. Lionel Brown, at (513) 556-XXXX. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call Dr. Margaret Miller, Chair of the Institutional Review Board-Social and Behavioral Sciences at (513) 558-5784.

Legal Rights:

Nothing in this consent form waives any legal right you may have nor does it release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.
I HAVE READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE. I VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM FOR MY INFORMATION.

Participant Signature ___________________________________________ Date ___________________________________________

Signature and Title of Person Obtaining Consent __________________________ Date __________________________

Identification of Role in Study
Appendix E

Date

Dear TLP Aftercare Participant,

I am a student at the University of Cincinnati pursuing a doctorate of education in urban educational leadership. My interest is in community leadership focusing on family violence prevention. As a final degree requirement I am writing a case study about the programs and services available to survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence and participants in the YWCA’s Transitional Living Program and the Transitional Living Aftercare Program.

In order to fulfill my degree requirements I need your help in learning about the programs and services from your point of view. Your identity will remain confidential but results of your interview will be published as a partial fulfillment of my degree requirements.

If you are interested in being one of five participants in the study, please join me on Wednesday or Thursday, January ____, 2005 @ time in the ____ lounge for an orientation. During the orientation I will review the enclosed consent to participate in a research study form and answer your questions. I have also enclosed a copy of the interview questions I will use for our tape-recorded interview. If you feel you would still like to participate in the study after I review the procedures and the interview questions, your name will be placed in a basket where I will randomly select five names during the orientation. You will have an opportunity to schedule an appointment to schedule an appointment for the following week.

By participating in this study you will be helping intimate partner violence/domestic violence advocates like me who are interested in providing programs and services essential for your survival in an abuse free environment.

Thank you,

Joyce A. McCoy
University of Cincinnati
April 6, 2005

Dear TLP Resident,

I am a student at the University of Cincinnati pursuing a doctor of education in urban educational leadership. My interest is in community leadership focusing on family violence prevention. As a final degree requirement I am writing a case study about the programs and services available to survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence and participants in the YWCA’s Transitional Living Program.

In order to fulfill my degree requirements I need your help in learning about the YWCA programs and services from your point of view. Your identity will remain confidential but results of your interview will be published as a partial fulfillment of my degree requirements.

Attached are a copy of the interview questions I will use during our tape-recorded interview and a copy of the consent to participate in a research study form describing the study and your rights as a participant. If you are interested in being a participant for the study, I will return to the ____ next week (Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.) on a day and time that is convenient for you. Private interviews will be held in the kitchen.

By participating in this study you will be helping intimate partner violence/domestic violence advocates like me who are interested in providing programs and services that are essential for survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence to continue living in an abuse free environment.

Thank you,

Joyce A. McCoy
University of Cincinnati
Appendix G

January  2005

Dear______,

I am a student at the University of Cincinnati pursuing a doctorate of education in urban educational leadership. My interest is in community leadership focusing on family violence prevention. As a final degree requirement I am writing a case study about the programs and services available to survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence and participants in the YWCA’s Transitional Living Program.

In order to fulfill my degree requirements I need your help in learning about the programs and services from your point of view. Your identity will remain confidential but results of your interview will be published as a partial fulfillment of my degree requirements.

Attached are a copy of the interview questions I will use and a copy of a consent to participate in research study form describing the study and your rights as a participant. I will call to schedule an interview for a day and time convenient for you.

By participating in this study you will be helping other intimate partner violence/domestic violence advocates like me who are interested in providing programs and services essential for survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence to continue to live their life free from abuse.

Thank you,

Joyce A. McCoy
University of Cincinnati
Title of Study:

Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) Transitional Living Program’s Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence and Staff Members’ Perception of Survival Skills and a Supportive Living Environment

Introduction:

Before you agree to participate in this study, it is important that you read this consent form and understand the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study as well as your right to withdraw from the study at any time. Please note that no guarantee or assurance can be made as to the results of the study.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to investigate what a supportive living environment is from a survivor of intimate partner violence point of view and the YWCA Transitional Living Program staff’s perspective.

Duration and Procedures:

I will also observe the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati ‘s General Educational Development (GED) program, the Women’s Work Project, Life Strides, and YWCA Childcare Center during the designated time for each program for approximately (five) 5 days. After the five (5) day observation period, I will ask you to participate in a structured tape-recorded interview where you will be asked questions about what aspects of the programs you manage are working and what is needed to make the programs you manage more efficient or valuable to survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence; what your definition is of a supportive living environment for women and their children participating in TLP; what do you do to contribute to a supportive living environment; what specifically does the program you manage contribute to a supportive living environment; what is your definition of survival skills unique to victims of domestic violence/intimate partner violence; and, how do you contribute to the goals of the YWCA services for domestic violence/intimate partner violence.
The interview will not last more than one hour. The interview will be conducted at your program site on a day and at a time convenient for you.

Risks/Discomforts:

There are no anticipated risks associated with this study.

Benefits:

You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study, but your participation will assist intimate partner violence/domestic violence advocates in recognizing essential and possibly overlooked resources required for survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence to continue to live in an abusive free environment.

Confidentiality:

Individual information will not be shared with the YWCA, however, my advisor for the research project may need to read my interview transcripts or listen to your tape recorded interview if I need assistance writing about the study. Although individual information will not be shared with the YWCA, your responses may be identifiable due to the small number of staff participants in your program.

The data from the study will be published and may be presented at conferences; however, you will not be identified by name. To further guarantee confidentiality, all field notes, and audiotapes and interview transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet and destroyed after the study is completed.

Participant’s right to refuse or withdraw:

Your participation is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate or may stop participating AT ANY TIME without penalty. I have the right to ask you to stop participating in the study AT ANY TIME. Your withdrawal from the study may be for reasons related only to you (for example, for not following my study-related directions) or because the entire study has been terminated.

Offer to answer questions:

If you have any other questions about this study, you may call me, Joyce A. McCoy, at (513) 487-XXXX, my University of Cincinnati advisor for this study, Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller, at (513) 556-XXXX, or the co-chairperson of my research committee at the University of Cincinnati, Dr. Lionel Brown, at (513) 556-XXXX. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call Dr. Margaret Miller, Chair of the Institutional Review Board-Social and Behavioral Sciences at (513) 558-5784.

Legal Rights:
Nothing in this consent form waives any legal right you may have nor does it release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

I HAVE READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE. I VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM FOR MY INFORMATION.

______________________________________________           ___________________
Participant Signature                                                                        Date

______________________________________________            ___________________
Signature and Title of Person Obtaining Consent                            Date

Identification of Role in Study
Appendix I

SURVIVORS’ OF ABUSE PERCEPTIONS OF SURVIVAL SKILLS AND A SUPPORTIVE LIVING ENVIRONMENT

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Theme #1: The Need for Safety and Security

Question

What survival skills do you need to live independent (self-sufficient, free) from an abusive relationship?

Responses

Angel: “Feel free, feel safe. No one harm. Be stronger for my girls.”

Erica: “Housing for my children; employment to pay bills.”

Catherine: “I’m trying to keep myself in school and look for a job.”

Dana: “Investigation and protection order of my current long-term predicament of stalking, etc.”

Denise: “I think the number one is trust. To learn to trust again and your housing is such a foundation for being able to trust again.”

Reggie: “If you’re not employed, find employment. If you don’t have a GED, get it. Apply yourself to whatever it is you wish to accomplish.”

Question

What does a supportive (encouraging, caring, helpful, accommodating) living environment mean to you in a transitional living environment?

Responses

Karen: “As a result of living at TLP [a] financial burden is lifted.”

Michelle: “Since I’ve been here in the transitional housing I’ve been able to save money and since it’s like a security place, I feel safe…when I leave here I don’t think I would feel as safe.”
Question
What did you like most about each program that you participate/participated in?

Responses
Dana: “Clean, safe facility. Scale rent.”

Question
What programs would you have liked offered at TLP?

Response
Angel: “Everyone is generous. Help with all my needs.”

Question
Do you think you have changed as a result of participating in the programs? If yes, how? If no, why not?

Responses
Angel: “I don’t feel scared anymore. I am comfortable now.”

Dana: “The program did give me time to plan other recourse for victim assistance and advocacy.”

Question
What services or programs do you feel are important for survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence?

Responses
Angel: “Hispanic group to talk about domestic violence. Hispanic women feel scared.”

Karen: “Self-defense classes for moms and children to take better care of yourself.”

Renee: “Teach us how to use our voice so that people believe us. Need to defend self verbally and physically, more verbally.”
Question

What do you believe will be the biggest problem(s) you will face after you depart from TLP?

Responses

Angel: “I feel with family. Check to see if okay. I know people will check to see if okay. Support from staff.”

Dana: “Without a protection order and formal paperwork filed, I will eventually be murdered.”

Denise: “The feeling that you can financially manage things.”

Erica: “Afraid of abuser, out of state but may find me.” Financial support for children, afraid may be homeless.”

Karen: “Paying market rent.”

Michelle: “I feel safe living here and my biggest fear is when I move that my spouse will try to push himself back in the picture and you know start coming around.”

Reggie: “Making sure my abuser doesn’t find out where I’m going to be living.”

Renee: “Feel protected at TLP, starting over tests you.”

Theme #2: The Need for Belongingness and Love

Question

What does a supportive (encouraging, caring, helpful, accommodating) living environment mean to you in a transitional living environment?

Responses

Erica: “Grateful to women helping at YWCA, everybody and the manager at ____. House. Help with loneliness and sadness. Give advice about what I can do.”

Michelle: “A lot of love because it’s hard, you know, to come from an abusive relationship and to have self-esteem and to wanna move on and do better things.”
Renee: “The main thing is the fact that you get to meet other single women in the same predicament, the same position you are. And you know everybody’s story is different but it’s almost still the same.”

Theme #3: The Need for Self-esteem

Question

What survival skills do you need to live independent (self-sufficient, free) from an abusive relationship?

Responses

Angel: “I love myself.”

Karen: “The biggest thing I need is to get in touch with or explore, to just love myself.”

Michelle: “I feel like to be independent from an abusive relationship you need first of all self-esteem for yourself to be able to move on and be independent.”

Question

What does a supportive (encouraging, caring, helpful, accommodating) living environment mean to you in TLP?

Response

Denise: “I miss the different groups [TLP, WWP] and the interaction to help with self-esteem.

Theme #4: The Need for Self-actualization

Question

Do you think you have changed as a result of participating in the programs? If yes, how? If no, why not?

Responses- Parenting: Reconnecting to Others

Carmen: “I’m trying to be a better mother.”

Erica: “Support kids so they know how to be as adults...spending time with children.”

Karen: “I’m more serious about my children and their future.”

206
Michelle: “I spend time with my kids…go places, do things.”

Responses- Healing: Reconnecting to Self

Angel: “Stronger, more secured woman. Secure in myself. I’m myself now, I feel really happy now.”

Catherine: “Goal setting for myself and following my goals.”

Denise: “I’ve regained my ability to believe I can plan and be a part of the system again. Reshapes your entire persona to the core and it gave me the ability to regroup as a person.”

Karen: “I’m ready to move on and leave the abuse behind. I want to take some time to get to know myself.”

Michelle: “I have become the person that I was before I got into that relationship.”

Reggie: “I’ve worked very hard to get where I am at, I’m mentally stronger. I know a lot more about warning signs and take heed to them. I’m more self-confident in myself.”


Response-Life Skills

Carmen: “I’ve learned to follow rules.”

Renee: “I’ve learned to pay bills on time. Learned parenting skills for different age groups from other residents. Learned to share.”

Question

What survival skills do you need to live independent (self-sufficient, free) from an abusive relationship?

Responses-Parenting: Reconnecting to Others

Angel: “Feel free, feel safe, no one harm. Be stronger for my girls.”

Response-Healing: Reconnecting to Self

Reggie: “Getting yourself together first. You have to prioritize, if you’re not employed, find employment; if you want a career you have to take the steps in doing so; if you don’t have your GED, get it. Apply yourself to whatever it is you wish to accomplish.”
Question

What does a supportive (encouraging, caring, helpful, accommodating) living environment mean to you in a transitional living environment?

Response-Healing: Reconnecting to Self

Renee: “I learned to trust women.”

Question

What programs are you currently participating in or have formerly participated in?

Responses—Education

Angel: Women’s Work Project.

Carmen: Women’s Work Project.

Catherine: Accepted into an associate degree program. Women’s Work Project.

Dana: Enrolled in a certificate program.

Denise: Enrolled in adult education classes to deal with abuse. Women’s Work Project.

Erica: Enrolled in a GED program offered by the YWCA. Learning to speak English as a second language. Women’s Work Project.

Reggie: Enrolled in a GED program offered in the community. Women’s Work Project.

Renee: Accepted into an associate degree program. Women’s Work Project.

Michelle: Attending college part-time.

Question

What did you like most about each program that you participate/participated in?

Responses—Occupational Skills and Education

Carmen: Women’s Work Project—“She [job developer] helped me with a resume.”

Catherine: Women’s Work Project—“Job readiness skills (interviewing, overcoming obstacles, appearance).”

Denise: Women’s Work Project—“Inspirational and focused on the future. Addressed self-esteem issues.”
Erica: Women’s Work Project – “Help to get jobs and how to get first job.” Enrolled in a GED program offered by the YWCA. “Learning to speak English as a second language”.

Renee: Women’s Work Project – “Job related skills. Parenting skills.”

Social Support Network

Theme #5: The Need for Emotional Support/Belongingness and Love

Question

What survival skills do you need to live independent (self-sufficient, free) from an abusive relationship?

Responses

Angel: “Support group for Hispanic Spanish speaking women.”

Carmen: “I need support groups with other women, work and talk and share with other women. I need NA [Narcotics Anonymous] and you know they got a support group for women.” “To live independent and be self-sufficient and from an abusive relationship I have to have NA, that’s my backbone.”

Catherine: “I know I need a strong family background and friends that will guide me if they see me going in the wrong direction.” “They need a support group up in here [TLP].”

Karen: “I think a support group would make me feel like I’m not alone.”

Michelle: “And a lot of support from family members. A lot of love because it’s hard, you know, to come from an abusive relationship and to have self-esteem and to wanna move on and do better things.”

Reggie: “As a survivor of domestic violence I think it would be wonderful if there could be meetings or rallies for survivors…as a remembrance thing and a prevention thing because everybody needs to be heard.”

Question

What does a supportive (encouraging, caring, helpful, accommodating) living environment mean to you in a transitional living environment?
Responses

Angel: “Case manager, someone to talk to, made stronger. People help, all staff.”

Carmen: “They need people on staff who are trained counselors or either recovering addicts or alcoholics.” “They need chemical dependency counselors because a lot of women get some kind of addiction.”

Catherine: “Positive people telling me I’m doing a good job at what I’m doing. People who are willing to guide me towards the right direction I’m trying to go with my life.”

Dana: “Supportive case manager.”

Denise: “The weekly meetings [case managers] were really good. The monthly house meetings.” “I miss the different groups and the interaction to help with self-esteem.”

Erica: “Manager in ____ House and classmates [GED, WWP] are support systems.”

Karen: “Everyone’s [TLP residents] really working well together, everyone is really nice. That make you really want to keep on going, don’t feel uncomfortable. Women are supportive.” “I get great support from my case manager.”

“Office staff providing services to building residents needs sensitivity training.” You already don’t feel like you really are a whole person because you are in this situation and even though you are working toward you still kinda under the thumb or something and for somebody that is not sensitive, it can hurt you badly. When I say hurt you badly I mean it can make you reluctant to ask for the help that you need.”

Michelle: “It’s nice around here--the people, the case workers, and stuff they’re very helpful and always willing to meet any kind of need that you have.”

Reggie: “If you should have a stumbling block, that there’s gonna be somebody there that can help you get through whatever problem you may be encountering.”

Renee: “The main thing is the fact that you get to meet other single women in the same predicament, the same position you are. I’ve learned to trust women.”

Question

What did you like most about each program that you participated in?
Responses

Angel: Women’s Work Project. “Sincerity, conversation, Ms. T __try to support everyone. Express myself, release stress.”

Carmen: Women’s Work Project. “I____believed in me; she was always there for me when I was depressed.”

Catherine: Women’s Work Project. “Help with overcoming obstacles.”

Erica: Women’s Work Project. “People express feelings.”

Reggie: “Women’s Work Project. The director of the program was very uplifting, very lively, very understanding, and the women that were in there we could all connect in one way or another. Each participant’s history was similar but it was different in many ways and we could all connect and were always there for each other and we got to laugh when we needed to laugh and then when somebody would tell a story we all cried together because we’ve all been down that same road and it made me realize that you know regardless of who you are or what you’ve been through we’re all the same and we all need support.”

Question

What programs would you have like offered at TLP?

Responses

Carmen: “We need more programs for teens to help them cope with what their parents have been through. They need to offer more for the teens at TLP.”

Karen: “Family recreational activities. Family bonding.”

Reggie: “Recreation for mothers.”

Renee: “More child advocates and more than one day set aside for children recreation.”

Question

What services or programs do you feel are important for survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence?

Responses

Catherine: “Support group for children, residents in TLP. They [women] need a support group to strengthen them up to let them know they don’t have to go back.”
Dana: “Support groups, advocates, and liaisons.

Denise: “Support system, networking system similar to the Women’s Work Project.”

Karen: “I think a support group would make me feel like I’m not alone. I think that would be very helpful, continue to work toward, to continue to be a survivor.”

Michelle: “The victims of domestic violence need to know that it is not a healthy relationship, that it is not their fault for whatever the situation is.”

Reggie: “As a survivor of domestic violence I think it would be wonderful if there could be meetings or rallies for survivors.”

Renee: “Women time. Staff provides activities for adults (TV, arts and crafts, stress relieving activities, recreational activities).”

Question

What do you believe will be the biggest problem(s) you will face after you depart from TLP?

Responses

Angel: “I feel I’m with family. I know people will check to see if okay. Support from staff.”

Catherine: “Friends, that’s about it.”

Denise: “I did not want to give up support system. You establish community at TLP. Felt like a loss process.”

Karen: “Better have a good support system when you leave where you have somebody you can talk to. Have someone to talk to when you are feeling lonely and there’s nobody knocking at the door and just walking on in. Seems like the biggest problem for me would be just really being alone.”

Renee: “Meeting new people.”

Theme #6: The Need for Informational Support

Question

What survival skills do you need to live independent (self-sufficient, free) from an abusive relationship?

Response
Renee: “Learned parenting skills for different age groups from other residents.”

Question

What programs would you like offered at TLP?

Responses

Dana: “Mandatory classes to educate the impact of domestic violence and/or stalking, physically, emotionally, socially, and economically.”

Denise: “Would be helpful to talk about domestic violence with parents and children.”
“Ongoing classes—self-esteem, SHIP [Strategic Humane Intervention Program], image.”

Question

What services or programs do you feel are important for survivors of intimate partner violence/domestic violence?

Responses

Angel: “Hispanic group to talk about domestic violence. Hispanic women feel scared.”

Karen: “Self-defense classes for moms and children to take better care of yourself. More programming for children to pull families together.”

Renee: “Teach us how to use our voice so that people believe us. Need to defend self verbally and physically—more verbally.”

Question

What did you like about each program you participated in?

Responses:

Carmen: Women’s Work Project. “She helped me with my resume.”

Catherine: Women’s Work Project. “Job readiness skills (interviewing, overcoming obstacles, appearance).”


Erica: Women’s Work Project. “Help to get jobs and how to get first job. GED, help
Renee: Women’s Work Project. “Job readiness skills.”

Question
What do you believe will be the biggest problem(s) you will face after you depart from TLP?

Response
Carmen: “Parenting, I missed out on so much with my kids. They [TLP] don’t offer parenting classes and all that.”

Theme #7: The Need for Material Support

Question
What does a supportive (encouraging, caring, helpful, accommodating) living environment mean to you in a transitional living environment?

Response
Erica: “Financial support for kids and daycare.”

Question
What programs would you have like offered at TLP?

Responses
Catherine: “Daycare”
Renee: “Transportation for business and daycare.”
Theme #1: The Need for Safety and Security

Question

What is your definition of a supportive living environment for women and children participating in TLP?

Response

Charles: “That they would get an environment that is safe and that they would have the support services that they would require whether it would be in the matter of housing or finding housing or whether it would be to make sure their other needs are met for the children; there’s advocacy for the children participating in the program. Making sure that the living environment there [TLP] offers everything that they need to feel safe and advance on to whatever their next goal would be.

Question

What specifically does the program you manage offer to contribute to a supportive living environment?

Response

Shari: “We typically know about more services that’s available to the women and we can inform them of the services and we [TLP] also contribute because we provide them with a place away from their abuser. And also, and I think one good thing is that while they’re in their apartment [TLP] they’re not paying market rent because well, I know that, a lot of times women are afraid to leave their abuser because they are not financially stable, they’re safe [financially], so by coming here you don’t have to be financially stable because we have that this type of shelter has that contact person that comes to shelter and can get them their benefits sooner.”
Question

In your role as Women’s Work Project coordinator or Employment Resource coordinator what do you do to contribute to the following YWCA goals: (1) Create a supportive living environment for women and children where they can obtain skills and confidence necessary to make the transition from an abusive relationship to an independent lifestyle, including the establishment of permanent housing. (2) Empower at-risk families by creating programming that enhance survival skills unique to victims of domestic violence and assisting them with educational and vocational goals. Or do you have an idea of what can be done to allow staff to contribute to these goals?

Nia: “In regards to survival skills how I contribute to that, the dynamics of the classroom [WWP] are set up for topics, things that we discuss such as self-esteem, conflict resolution, problem solving. Those topics, especially self-esteem, over and over again to create the self-worth that the ladies need to move forward. So I think before I develop a curriculum each month, keep that in mind as far as the issues that the ladies are dealing with and how we can meet their needs. I also want to have a support system in place.”

Tara: “Being here, I have an open door policy. Just really being here, and to let them know we can reach out to you, the women at the YWCA, and we’re here to help you, support you, and to protect you in any way that we can assist them. So, just really once again, just really being that support system for the ladies and as far as the YWCA, I think we are really doing a good job to the ladies and having the resources available to them in their situation.”

Theme # 2: The Need for Emotional Support/Belongingness and Love

Question

In your role as Transitional Living Program case manager what do you do to contribute to the following YWCA goals: (1) Create a supportive living environment for women and children where they can obtain skills and confidence necessary to make the transition from an abusive relationship to an independent lifestyle, including the establishment of permanent housing. (2) Empower at-risk families by creating programming that enhance survival skills unique to victims of domestic violence and assisting them with educational and vocational goals. Or do you have an idea of what can be done to allow staff to contribute to these goals?

Response
Shari: “What do we actually do to address the domestic violence? That’s it besides the case management and letting them know what resources. We [TLP] don’t really do anything else but the domestic violence, I think that’s the main focus of our program is the domestic violence. Maybe we should start doing support groups or doing something. Or maybe, I don’t know what’s possible besides support groups, we have brochures and stuff about domestic violence.”

“I think that we should at least make a support group mandatory when they first get here [TLP], and for children, I don’t really deal with children but what I do see, I’m seeing it more is that the women are having problems with their teenage daughters. Well, we have mostly teenage daughters. So their teenage daughters, I don’t know how the children see their moms or what is causing it, but they’re having discipline problems with their daughters, school problems, and stuff like that. I think maybe we should get the child advocate more involved in maybe those families just try to see what is going on. Maybe focus more on that because the families that I’m thinking of in particular their daughters are showing signs of being abusive towards their moms so we have to I think that should definitely be addressed because if their being abusive toward their moms the moms are experiencing domestic violence while they’re in our program. I don’t think this is helping, I think that we definitely need to focus on that, offer some more services for that.”

“But, I think the main thing is that we need to focus more on the domestic violence and what some people need to realize though is that some people have other problems besides domestic violence, like substance abuse which you also need to focus on while you’re doing domestic violence because if they are having substance abuse problems or mental health, something like if they are depressed they won’t be able to really focus on helping themselves with domestic violence.”

Question

In your opinion, what aspects of the programs are working at TLP (TLP case management, TLP Aftercare Program, Women’s Work Project, YWCA Childcare Center, child advocacy) and what is needed to make the program more efficient or valuable to victims of domestic violence/intimate partner violence?

Response

Lana: “A counselor, we can only do so much. We can only counsel them so much. But if we had someone here [YWCA] to work with that it would probably be a great benefit.”
What is your definition of a supportive living environment for women and children participating in TLP?

Tara: “Here at the YWCA we really try to work with the young ladies to let them know that we are a support system program. Let them know that it’s just not your inner family; it’s the people that you are in class with everyday, staff, people in group to build a bigger support network system.

Question

What do you do as an individual to contribute to a supportive living environment?

Responses

Tara: “If I have a young lady who comes in and she really doesn’t know what to do or which way to go, I have made some contacts to try to, even if it’s just a phone call to have, like for instance, I have someone I know is 30 and she has five kids. We [YWCA Employment Resources for Youth] have another lady in the program who is 19 with three kids and so really just trying to pair them up and let her know I got through school you can get through school and just kind of have her talk her through some of the things she was feeling because she also went through the same thing.”

Nia: “I think the group setting [Women’s Work Project] as a whole also provides a supportive living environment separate from their actual living situation, but it gives them the interaction with other people that have been through a similar situation as themselves. And that also kind of boost their confidence level because they are not alone, they’re not out there by themselves, they’re not the only ones of such types of abuse. And I think that kind of helps to know that they can do better in the future.”

Shari: “I try to pause when I meet with them. I try not to make it seem like I’m in this role of power. I try to make them seem like they can talk to me about anything without me passing judgment so they can feel comfortable, because if they don’t feel comfortable with me they’re not going to tell me what their problem is, so I won’t be able to help them.”

“I let them know that I’m here to support them and I’ll do my best to work with them. I really feel that supporting them is just having their confidence and not making them feel that I’m in this role of power and that they have to do something. I can’t make them do anything. Nobody can make them do anything, it’s up to them. We [TLP] have to help them realize that it’s their responsibility and we can’t do it for them, basically it’s just them. We can help you, but you have to do it.”

“Sometimes it’s hard, you know, because you’ll become friends with these people
and you try not to do it. You try to maintain that balance like I’m not your friend, I’m your case manager but what they’re looking for sometimes is a friend. You just sitting there everyday talking with them they can think you are their best friend because they have somebody to talk to.”

Question

In your opinion, what aspects of the programs are working at TLP (TLP case management, TLP Aftercare Program, Women’s Work Project, YWCA Childcare Center, child advocacy) and what is needed to make the program more efficient or valuable to victims of domestic violence/intimate partner violence?

Responses

Shari: “I would like to see more domestic violence focused children’s group, like the Rape Crisis and Abuse Center have children who witness domestic violence. And, I know it doesn’t have to be where children sit down and talk about domestic violence, it could be like when they meet once a week, have one fact they are going to focus on, maybe 10 or 15 minute conversations then do whatever they want to do.”

Shari: “TLP Aftercare contact is attempted once a month by T___. With the program I think that is a great idea because once they leave here [TLP] they are not always secure or they are still worried that they don’t have anybody to help them. So, just offering them the program may be the extra support they need just in case they feel like they are going to run into a problem.

Researcher: If T___ can’t reach them it’s up to them to contact her?

Shari: “I think that if they feel that they need someone to talk to or maybe if they have a problem or maybe don’t know how to handle a certain situation they can call T___. She’ll assist them with a problem. I think that’s one good part about the program [TLP Aftercare], she is willing to go look for an answer for them.”

Theme #3: The Need for Self-Esteem

Question

What is your definition of survival skills unique to victims of domestic violence?

Response

Nia: “Include but not limited to self-worth, self-confidence, self-love, self-esteem, and once we have the self together, then we are better equipped to deal with conflict resolution, problem solving, and tapping into our support system. There are skills that we all need when we come from a domestic violence situation and there are
times when at times our self-esteem is low, our self is low, our self-confidence is low, so then you problem solve for the benefit of the abuser. And we tend to connect to the abuser as opposed to connecting to ourselves and looking at what we need because so much is taken when you are in an abusive situation.”

Question

In your opinion, what aspects of the programs are working at TLP (TLP case management, TLP Aftercare Program, Women’s Work Project, YWCA Childcare Center, child advocacy) and what is needed to make the program more efficient or valuable to victims of domestic violence/intimate partner violence?

Response

Tara: “We also focus on this in our group [Women’s Work Project/YWCA Employment Resources for Youth] as well, having healthy relationships, and also helping the young ladies just build self-esteem within themselves.

Social Support Network

Theme #4: The Need for Informational Support

Question

What is your definition of a supportive living environment for women and children participating in TLP?

Responses

Shari: “Helping them with skills they would need to maintain permanent housing via working with a budget, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, problems with children. Just basically whatever they need any kind of help with or we [TLP] feel they may run into problems while on their own [permanent housing].”

“We [TLP] don’t want to get them into permanent housing and then get into another abusive relationship so we have to also educate them or get them help with seeing the signs of an abusive relationship. If it’s something like substance abuse, we have to at least set up some kind of services before they get into permanent housing because they won’t be able to maintain their housing if they are having a substance abuse problem. If it’s a problem with children, trying to show them ways to talk with their children dealing with their situation. Just supporting them. Supporting them isn’t necessarily one thing or focusing on one thing, it’s like a wholesome [holistic] system.”

Nia: “Case management, I think that is a very important piece that plays a big part in
support. They [survivors] need people in place to help them and not enable but to show them how to make things happen for themselves and then that will instill the confidence.”

Question

What do you do as an individual to contribute to a supportive living environment?

Responses

Charles: “My specific goal would be to help the women to find or to pursue higher education, a GED, or to get into college.”

Tara: “Try to do job shadowing. If a young lady has interest in being a massage therapist, which we [YWCA Employment Resources for Youth] have one, we try to call around to different employers and try to help them do job shadowing.”

Question

What specifically does the program you manage offer to contribute to a supportive living environment?

Responses

Charles: “I think our [GED] program offers an opportunity for the women to pursue a higher education.”

Tara: “Employment Resources for Youth is a program, 16 to 21 [age group], to help them reach their education and employment goals. Also during the time they receive their GED some of the things we do run into is we have to do a lot of case management in order for the ladies to even begin to start focusing on receiving their GED. So, they may be going to class [GED] but as far as actually focusing on receiving their GED or their education it’s kind of hard for them because they have other outside barriers that they are working on so they can become more focused.”

“Some of the barriers may be childcare; some of the barriers may be families. We do have a couple of ladies who have expressed domestic violence with us, and maybe learning disabilities, housing, counseling. There’s a lot of different barriers that we try to help the ladies with at least find them resources for them to help them kind of try to knock down some of the barriers so they can begin to focus on education.”
Theme #5: The Need for Material Support

Question

What specifically does the program you manage offer to contribute to a supportive living environment?

Nia: “We [WWP] do offer an incentive for the ladies coming into class everyday and that incentive is money. And it does help them to make their day to day needs and wants which is also a key in self-worth and self-esteem. Having money, a lot of times the situations they came from they didn’t have that monetary advantage. That was taken from them or withheld from them, rationed out to them, so just everything is kind of all inclusive to help support the women in their environment do better for themselves and their children.”

“Also, with the supportive living environment, it’s the access to resources that’s very important that comes through the case management. So it comes through the Women’s Work Project and sometimes just the Y as an agency having access to resources that you otherwise wouldn’t have so that also contributes to a supportive living environment, that support system, that access to resources those kind of tie in together.”

Shari: “We [TLP] typically know about more services that’s available to the women and can inform them of the services and also we contribute because we provide them with a place away from their abuser and also, I think one good thing is that while they’re in their apartment they’re not paying market rent because, well, I know that a lot of times women are afraid to leave their abuser because they are not financially stable, they’re safe [financially], so by coming here [TLP] you don’t have to be financially stable because we have that, this type of shelter has that contact person that comes to shelter and can get them their benefits sooner.”

Researcher Observations

As a participant observer I observed Nia distributing bus tokens, upon request, at the end of class. Additionally, on a weekly basis, women were given an opportunity to select pre-owned household items and personal items that were donated to the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Incorporated.

During my visits to the Transitional Living Program site I observed boxes of donated bakery goods placed in the entrance hall of the building for residents’ consumption. At the conclusion of each monthly house meeting a grocery bag filled with household
items (paper goods, cleaning supplies, et cetera) was distributed to each resident. These items are donated by a volunteer group in the community. A free public telephone is also located in the entrance hall for residents who cannot afford telephone service.

Upon transition from the Battered Women’s Shelter to the Transitional Living Program, participants are given large amounts of new household items required to set up housekeeping such as dishes, cookware, cutlery, and cleaning utensils. These items are donated by a volunteer group formed specifically to support battered women and their children who are starting a new life.

Theme #6: The Need for Collaboration

Question

In your role as Case Manager, Aftercare Coordinator, Women’s Work Project Coordinator, TLP Child Advocate, Employment and Literacy Services Coordinator, Case Manager for YWCA Employment Resources for Youth, or YWCA Employment Resources for Youth Coordinator what do you do to contribute to the following YWCA goals: (1) Create a supportive living environment for women and children where they can obtain skills and confidence necessary to make the transition from an abusive relationship to an independent lifestyle, including the establishment of permanent housing. (2) Empower at-risk families by creating programming that enhance survival skills unique to victims of domestic violence and assisting them with educational and vocational goals. Or do you have an idea of what can be done to allow staff to contribute to these goals?

Responses

Charles: “I think the main thing is for all the Y staff to have a system of communicating with each other so that all the people mentioned in your question whether it’s the coordinator of childcare, employment literacy services, whether it might be GED, Women’s Work Project that we all have a communication system to help the clients meet their goals would be my main suggestion.”

Nia: “I also want to have a support system in place. I also try to instill in the women that sometimes we look at families as being our support and we look at the fact that if family is not going to help us, why would strangers. So, why would people we don’t know help us and what I try to stress to them that sometimes in your darkest hour there might be a stranger, that we can’t be too concerned with family because sometimes those are our barriers. That we just have to look at where the help is coming from and know that it is genuine.”
Lana: “I think the YWCA is really good at working with the ladies on different issues. I think as an agency sometimes we don’t really know that because there are so many programs we offer. Sometimes we don’t know what everybody else has. I think that if we can come together a little bit more as an organization, we can better service the people we work with.”

Question

In your opinion, what aspects of the programs are working at TLP (TLP case management, TLP Aftercare Program, Women’s Work Project, YWCA Childcare Center, child advocacy) and what is needed to make the program more efficient or valuable to victims of domestic violence/intimate partner violence?

Responses

Lana: “I think we do a really good job of bringing in speakers that address domestic violence because we only know so much. We can only counsel them so much.”

Nia: “As far as what is needed to make the program more efficient, we [Women’s Work Project] are at the present in need of a job developer. That position is very important from the job development aspect. It helped the ladies have a person they can exclusively go to answer any job related questions. That, and also resume development and just overall sometimes even case management need services. They [job developer] would go back and forth to different job sites and so that helped them out.”

Charles: “I have dealt with case managers at TLP concerning students who may need assistance in earning a GED or helping achieving some type of goal toward literacy improvement. And the case managers there that I’ve worked with have always followed through and have always been very professional in helping me to find out the needs of the clients they have.”

“Women’s Work Project, I am familiar with them because I grade their tests which they take, which are known as the TABE test, which is a Test of Adult Basic Education. I do grade the tests for them and I do observe the women who are participating in that [Women’s Work Project] in the afternoon because many of them are also in my GED class in the mornings. So, I am familiar with the goals that they are working on. Also, the Women’s Work Project students sometimes will come into my other class or are referred to me for help by people who are involved in the Women’s Work Project.”

Shari: “Here at TLP the children are only in group once a week. It’s usually the child advocate and a couple of volunteers. It’s nice to have a group where they can get away, the children can get away from the parents for a little while and actually observe the children, how they behave with the other kids. But one of the
problems not all the moms send the children to the groups or there’s not a good turn out always, it really depends week to week. And since it’s domestic violence, I would like to see more domestic violence focused group like the Rape Crisis and Abuse Center have children who witness domestic violence.”

Shari: “We [TLP] typically know about more services that’s available to the women and can inform them of the services and also we contribute because we provide them with a place away from their abuser and also, I think one good thing is that while they’re in their apartment they’re not paying market rent because, well, I know that a lot of times women are afraid to leave their abuser because they are not financially stable, they’re safe [financially], so by coming here [TLP] you don’t have to be financially stable because we have that, this type of shelter has that contact person that comes to shelter and can get them their benefits sooner.”

Question

What specifically does the program you manage offer to contribute to a supportive living environment?

Response

Tara: “Employment Resources for Youth is a program, 16 to 21 [age group], to help them reach their education and employment goals. Also during the time they receive their GED some of the things we do run into is we have to do a lot of case management in order for the ladies to even begin to start focusing on receiving their GED. So, they may be going to class [GED] but as far as actually focusing on receiving their GED or their education it’s kind of hard for them because they have other outside barriers that they are working on so they can become more focused.”

“Some of the barriers may be childcare; some of the barriers may be families. We do have a couple of ladies who have expressed domestic violence with us, and maybe learning disabilities, housing, counseling. There’s a lot of different barriers that we try to help the ladies with at least find them resources for them to help them kind of try to knock down some of the barriers so they can begin to focus on education.”