IMPROVING RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS’ EFFECTIVENESS
WITH BATTERED WOMEN: ADVICE FROM VICTIM ADVOCATES

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Religious organizations are in a unique position to assist battered women. The purpose of this study was to survey counselor/advocates who work at battered women's shelters to determine what advice they have to give to religious organizations to improve their effectiveness in helping battered women.

The sample for this study consisted of 91 counselor/advocates from 20 battered women's shelters in Virginia. A questionnaire was designed to determine the counselor/advocates' opinions about their clients' interactions with religious organizations as to how helpful, or not helpful, these organizations have been. The participants identified a number of ways that religious organizations could better meet the needs of battered women. First, religious leaders can become better informed about the dynamics of wife battering so that their attempts to help will not further endanger victims. Second, leaders can be more supportive of battered women by taking a more public stand against wife battering and by creating a more accepting, healing environment within their faith community. Next, those who are not trained
to counsel individuals involved in wife battering need to learn to refer them to community agencies that are better prepared to help victims and their batterers. Finally, for battered women both inside and outside their faith communities, leaders can work with shelters to provide financial and other resources to assist these women as they search for ways to live in a violence free home environment.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Overview

Wife battering has come to be recognized as a serious social problem in contemporary America (Davidson, 1978; Gelles, 1987; U. S. Department of Justice, 1994). How much violence occurs in American families remains a controversial question, but two national surveys have indicated that domestic violence impacts nearly two million marriages in the United States each year (Straus & Gelles, 1990). Wife battering has undoubtedly existed as long as marriages have been in existence; however, it is only since the early 1970's that the incidence and patterns of this crime have received appropriate attention (Gelles & Conte, 1990; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1991). Until serious research into this issue began in the early 1970's, the conventional wisdom maintained that domestic violence was relatively rare and confined to the eccentric behavior of a few mentally or morally disturbed people (Steinmetz & Straus, 1974). After nearly two decades of research, a number of questions remain, but it is becoming clearer that domestic violence knows no racial, economic, or religious boundaries.

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons why the problem of domestic violence remained so hidden from the glare of public scrutiny has been the popular myth that the home is, above all, a place of love, safety, and security (Hotaling & Straus, 1980; Saunders, 1992). However, beginning with the article on "The Battered Child Syndrome" by C. Henry Kempe (Kempe, 1962) and his associates in 1962, the universal image of the home as a "haven in a heartless world" began to be demythologized. As a closer and closer look has
been taken into behavior that has traditionally been hidden "behind closed
doors" (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1988), the home has come to be
identified as one of the most dangerous places for a woman to be. For
instance, a study released in March of 1994 (Hilts, 1994), suggested that at
least 240,000 women are battered each year in the United States while they
are pregnant. This report indicates that, while estimates of violence against
all women ranges widely from 2.5 million victims to 12 million, the number of
pregnant women who are battered may be as high as 17 percent of the total.

Statement of the Problem

Wife battering is the kind of problem that requires interventions at a
number of different levels in society. Medical, law enforcement, and social
service personnel are all frequently involved in responding to the needs of
battered women. One of the most significant developments in the treatment
of wife battering is the development of the battered womens' shelter
movement. The first shelter was established in England in 1971 (Dobash &
Dobash, 1979). In this country, in 1974 there were only a handful of
emergency shelters for women (Roberts, 1981) but by 1986 the number had
grown to more than 800 shelters across the nation (Roberts, 1990).
Presently, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, there are 44 agencies that are
dedicated to the support of victims of domestic violence (VADV annual report,
1993). Of these 45 agencies, 33 have battered womens' shelters associated
with them, some of which served over 2000 battered women in 1993.

Battered womens' shelters serve as a vital resource for women who have
already been, or are in danger of being, physically abused. Such shelters
provide a safe haven and refuge for women and children who are in danger.
Battered women have a number of other needs to which shelters respond. They have needs for healing and support while they and their children are in the shelter. Perhaps most importantly, they have a variety of needs that must be met as they leave the shelter so that they can continue to live safely in a violence-free environment.

Because of their unique role and position in the community, religious organizations are also in an excellent position to serve battered women. Virtually every religious organization has, as a fundamental concern, the responsibility to comfort and support those who are abused (Shelton, 1991; Thompson, 1989; Webb, 1984). Whereas churches and synagogues might have the stated mission and the resources to help heal the hurts of their communities, they do not always know how they might best go about specific tasks such as ministering to battered women. Furthermore, it is possible that some of the attitudes and policies of religious organizations may, in some ways, serve to exacerbate the problem of domestic violence. Religious organizations do not have, as a stated purpose, the furthering of the abuse of women. Nevertheless, whether intended or not, such results can be the consequence of traditions and practices that place women at a disadvantage and leave them vulnerable to abuse.

While both religious organizations and battered women's shelters have been actively involved in responding to the needs of victims of domestic violence, there has been little communication between the two. Shelters have the direct service experience of responding to abused women and their children; religious organizations have a number of resources at their disposal with which to meet the needs of abused women and children. The service
personnel at battered women's shelters most likely would have additional expertise and awareness that religious organizations need in order to serve effectively. Very often, however, there is little dialogue between the two networks for healing. This research project attempts to bridge that gap so that battered women and their children might be served more effectively.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to survey victim advocates who serve in battered women's shelters and other agencies in the Commonwealth of Virginia in order to benefit from their experience in working with battered women. The basic task to be considered is how religious organizations can be more helpful to women who have been battered by their partners. Shelter workers can provide unique insights into this serious social problem. Because of their commitment to the support and healing of battered women, shelter counselors are able to speak with a passionate voice. While the stories they are able to tell are not necessarily their own stories, unless they too have been battered, shelter counselors are able to speak with a voice that comes from having connection with clarity. Furthermore, a researcher could speak with ten battered women and get ten stories. However, by speaking with ten shelter workers, the researcher could hear perhaps hundreds of stories. Consequently, shelter workers are in an excellent position to provide useful insights into the unique needs of battered women.

Research Questions

The primary research question in this study is as follows:

What advice do counselor/advocates who work with battered women's shelters and other agencies have to give to clergy and lay leaders to improve
the effectiveness of religious organizations as sources of help and support for battered women?

The sub-questions entailed in this primary question are the following:

1. What percentage of counselor/advocates would not refer battered women to a religious organization for counseling?

2. What are the main concerns of counselor/advocates about battered women receiving counseling from personnel in religious organizations?

3. What percentage of counselor/advocates believe that the women they have counseled, who have also received religious counseling, have received poor advice from religious counselors? What are some examples of the poor advice?

4. What percentage of counselor/advocates who have counseled battered women, who have received religious counseling, believe that those women have received advice from their religious leaders or spiritual advisors to stay in what was a physically violent situation?

5. What percentage of counselor/advocates believe that religious organizations, in general, foster beliefs that contribute to wife battering?

6. What percentage of counselor/advocates believe that religious organizations, in general, foster beliefs that contribute to ending violence against women?

7. What are the opinions of counselor/advocates regarding the ways that religious organizations can be most helpful to battered women?
8. What are the opinions of counselor/advocates regarding the reluctance of battered women to seek help from their religious communities?

9. How does the religiosity of counselor/advocates relate to their attitudes toward the helpfulness or hurtfulness of religious organizations?

10. Do counselor/advocates have written materials available to give to women who are struggling with harmonizing their religious beliefs with safe courses of action? Would counselor/advocates like to have such materials made available to them?

11. Have counselor/advocates received training as to how to handle battered women's struggles with their religious beliefs? Would they like to receive such training?

While the role of religion as a coping resource for battered women would be an important study, this concern will not be the focus of this study. Rather, the focus of this study will be on the ways that shelter workers perceive religious organizations to be helpful or not helpful to the women they have served in their shelters. The degree to which a religious organization is helpful or not helpful can be conceptualized as falling somewhere between two extremes. Many feminists would argue that religious organizations help keep in place the social structures which not only tolerate but even encourage the battering of women (French, 1992, pp. 50-99; hooks, 1984; Reuther, 1989). Hence, in their view, religious organizations, in general, are not only not helpful to battered women, they actually contribute to their abuse by perpetuating conditions that give men
permission to dominate their partners and by giving women the message that they are to place the sanctity of the marriage above their own safety. Other individuals would have a more positive perception of the role of religious organizations and would see them as major opponents to abuse and injustice as well as important resources for the healing of battered women. No doubt many other individuals would experience religious organizations as being rather innocuous and disconnected from the problem of battering. The concern of this study is to determine where shelter workers in the Commonwealth of Virginia would place religious organizations on this continuum and for what reasons. The leaders of religious organizations can benefit from this analysis in at least two ways. First, the helpful ways in which religious organizations are presently being of service to battered women can be affirmed and offered as examples to churches and other religious institutions. Second, the ways wherein religious organizations are being perceived as more a part of the problem than a part of the solution can also be opportunities for these organizations to help battered women by changing their practices.

Need for this Study

When women come to a shelter to escape further abuse by their partner, they often come with serious and complex religious issues. A woman's partner may be active in their church and his abusive behavior may be out of keeping with his professed religious values. The battered woman may be a deeply religious person who has prayed often for God to stop the abuse only to experience the silence of God as the assaults continue. She may feel too
embarrassed to seek help from her religious community so she is faced with the need to keep up appearances at worship services. Out of ignorance, or a need to keep up appearances, the religious community may foster the illusion that the good people of this particular community are immune to domestic violence. The battered woman may have eventually sought help from the leaders of her church or synagogue only to be told to "go home and try to be a better wife". Reluctant efforts at disclosing the extent of physical abuse might be met with disbelief by church officials. If pastoral counseling is arranged, the counselor might subject the woman to further danger by seeking to probe about the abuse in the presence of the abusive partner. If she exposes her partner and the counselor then urges them to come back later for marriage counseling, she may experience the wrath of her partner in the car or when they get home. The constant emphasis in teaching and preaching on the sanctity of the home and the marriage vows, may lead a woman to place the intactness of the marriage over her own safety. Holding the marriage together for some legalistic reasons could also have a serious detrimental impact upon the children who are subjected to such a conflictual setting. Consequently, it is not unusual for a woman to experience repeated abuse before finally seeking to escape the violence by going to a shelter. Even then, she may have to seek referrals from secular sources because her religious community knows little about the services offered to abused women. Having worked with churches as a minister for 23 years, this researcher knows from experience that these scenarios are not merely hypothetical.

Consequently, there are three realities about religious organizations that create the need for this research. First of all, such realistic scenarios as
described above may indicate that some religious organizations are not only not being helpful to battered women, they may in fact be contributing to a set of circumstances that prove harmful. Secondly, there are a number of religious organizations that may, in principle, be very sympathetic to the needs of battered women. However, because of a lack of information, they may not be offering any resources to the assistance of battered women. In a recent survey (Martin, 1989) of the clergy in a Maryland county in the metropolitan Washington, D. C. area, 29% of the clergy surveyed indicated that spouse abuse was not a problem that needed to be addressed within the congregation. Only 15% of those surveyed had attended a meeting of religious or community leaders on spouse abuse and only 11% had given a sermon on the topic. A substantial proportion of the clergy surveyed indicated that they were hampered by their lack of information about treatment programs, legal options, and programs for abusers. They also felt hindered by a lack of training on their part. It is also important to note that 88% of the clergy surveyed felt that the victims' reluctance to seek help was a major reason that the clergy were hampered from responding to the problem. There is an obvious need for clergy and lay leaders to educate their communities about the reality of domestic violence.

There is a third reality about religious organizations that prompts this research. A number of religious organizations assist shelters in a limited way and are to be commended for their sensitive involvement in the healing of battered women. However, there are a host of other creative ways wherein they could provide assistance and support that they have not considered simply because they are not involved in the day to day caregiving that
battered women and their children require. Victim advocates, who are intimately involved with the struggles of battered women, know of a number of practical contributions that churches and synagogues could supply if such organizations simply were better informed. Without access to such information, religious organizations are not likely on their own to add such innovations to their list of services that they are offering to the community.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework which informs this research is symbolic interactionism. The term "symbolic interactionism" was coined by Herbert Blumer in a rather offhanded way in an article written in *Man and Society* (edited by Emerson P. Schmidt) in 1937 (Blumer, 1969, p. 1). Humans learn and communicate through symbols which are mental abstractions such as words or ideas that have acquired meaning (Burr, Leigh, Day & Constantine, 1979). The meanings are acquired through encounters between the individual and others so that there is a merger of meaning between the self and social interaction (Plummer, 1991). Growing out of the roots of the pragmatism of George Herbert Meade, John Dewey, and William James, symbolic interactionism has developed into an important theoretical orientation without having, paradoxically, an accepted clear formulation or methodological statement (Blumer, 1969; Denzin 1992). Symbolic interactionists don't have a global theory of society because they believe that society refers to "something that sociologists have invented in order to have a subject matter" (Denzin, 1992, p. 22). Instead, they regard society as something that is "lived in the here and now, in the face-to-face and mediated interactions that connect persons to one another" (Denzin, 1992, p. 22).
Hence, interactionists are concerned with how individuals are constrained by the constructions they build and inherit from the past. So, rather than attempting to develop grand theories of society, symbolic interactionists are more concerned with "writing local narratives about how people do things together" (Denzin, 1992, p. 23).

According to Blumer (1969, p. 2), symbolic interactionism rests on three relatively simple premises. First, human beings react toward things on the basis of the meanings that those things have for them. Second, the meanings that those things have are derived from the social interactions that one person has with other persons. Third, these meanings are developed and modified in an interpretive process used by individuals as they encounter these things. For example, to one person marriage is a "lifelong commitment", to another it is "a trap", to another it is a "wonderful adventure", while to another it is merely "legalized prostitution" (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1993, p. 46). For one person, conflict might be symbolized as an opportunity to enhance closeness, while for another person conflict might be the ultimate danger to a relationship and must be avoided at all costs (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1993, p. 46).

Symbolic interactionists are not particularly concerned about importing theories from other disciplines such as the natural sciences, economics, or even psychology (Denzin, 1992). Consequently, they do not look for monocausal explanations in human behavior from such concepts as instincts, libidinal energy, needs, drives, or some sort of innate profit motive (Burr, Leigh, Day, & Constantine, 1979). Instead, symbolic interactionists try to understand human behavior in terms of the symbols that individuals have
learned about human interaction in concert with other individuals. While they are interested in the biographical experiences of individuals, symbolic interactionists are also concerned about how those experiences are lived out in the context of changing culture.

According to this theory, individuals co-construct with other human beings the worlds of experiences in which they live. Since human beings are valuing creatures, if one wants to understand human behavior then one has to study the beliefs and values which humans derive from interacting with others. Symbolic interactionism has an affinity for systems theory; but, the fact that human beings work out their beliefs and values in the context of systems is regarded as rudimentary (Burr, Leigh, Day, & Constantine, 1979, p. 48).

The principles of symbolic interactionism are very relevant for this study. For example, wife battering is an interaction between genders. This behavior is different from other kinds of violence because there are implications about gender involved. However, one's maleness or femaleness is not merely a matter of biology. Rather, one's identity as a self is determined, in large measure, by the social construction of gender (West & Zimmerman, 1991). The roles that men and women have adopted for themselves in families, and the meanings that they have ascribed to their interactions, are central to the issues of wife battering. The behavior known as wife battering (or, woman battering) flows out of a set of beliefs about what is permissible in the context of intimate relationships between males and females. Those beliefs are not innate but are enculturated through a complex process of social interactions.
The ignoring and toleration of such behavior is also a consequence of shared meanings that are grounded in and perpetuated through the culture.

While the origins of such aggressive behavior might be of interest to some researchers, our interest here is in the belief systems and values that give meaning to the interactions entailed in wife battering. Individuals come to believe as they do about using physical violence to resolve conflicts by interacting with other individuals in their culture such as parents (Kalmuss, 1984) and peers (Smith, 1991). Those beliefs are either reinforced or resisted by the individuals who make up the other important reference groups in the culture, such as religious communities and legal systems (Pleck, 1987). Also, socialized patterns of behavior, such as courtship practices, can contribute to social structures that may tolerate, or even invite, abuse and dating violence (Lloyd, 1991; Rosen & Stith, 1993). In this study, the impact on battered women of religious belief systems, and the organizations that embody and perpetuate them, is investigated. Counselor/advocates who work with battered women are connected with those women by their own value structure and belief systems. They are also able to interact with such women who may be suffering because of the negative consequences of another set of values and beliefs that somehow gives permission to men to batter their partners. Additionally, they are able to observe the impact of the belief systems that are embodied in the religious organizations that are a part of the lives of these women.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is not to discover some objective reality by accumulating more and more information from people who work with battered women. Rather, the purpose is to attempt to discern how the
healing of battered women is made easier or more difficult by the meanings that abused women associate with the interactions they have with religious organizations.

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations to this study. First of all, this study will not address the overall effectiveness of religious organizations in working with battered women. Undoubtedly, there are a number of circumstances in many religious organizations wherein the issue of domestic violence was handled in an effective manner so that the violence never progressed to the point where the woman found it necessary to interact with counselor/advocates at a shelter. This study only considers those women who found it necessary to seek the help of a shelter or some other similar crisis agency. Also, the subjects for this study were not selected through a random sample. Rather, invitations to participate in the study were sent to each of the shelters associated with Virginians Against Domestic Violence. Hence, the shelters included in this study were restricted to the Commonwealth of Virginia. The data taken from the counselor/advocates who worked with battered women at these shelters were in a self-report, structured questionnaire form. The conclusions drawn are subject to the limitations inherent in this approach.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one is an introduction to the problem of wife battering and the involvement of religious organizations in the helping process. Chapter one includes a statement of the problem, the research questions for the study, a
description of the conceptual framework, and a presentation of the need for this study.

Chapter two is a review of the literature that is relevant to the crime of wife battering and the contributions of battered women's shelters and religious organizations to the support of battered women. In this chapter, studies that have addressed the perceived needs of battered women are summarized. A brief overview of the shelter movement, along with current research on the role of shelters, is offered.

Chapter three presents the research design and methods used in this study. Chapter four offers a description of the results and an analysis of the data. Chapter five summarizes the study and offers conclusions and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

One of the unique features of the crime of wife battering is society's historically selective inattention to the prevalence of this lethal problem. In the 19th century in England, a crusade was conducted by a women's movement against what, at the time, was called wife torture which was the battering of wives in their homes by their husbands (Scutt, 1986). The opponents of wife battering sought to provide for the right of a wife to divorce her husband on grounds of cruelty so that a wife would not be liable for desertion if she were to leave her husband. In 1840, it was not against English law for a man to beat his wife as long as he did not do it in a "cruel or violent manner" (Scutt, 1986). It was not until 1891 that English law recognized a wife's right not to be battered by her husband. However, it was not until the early 1970's that social forces began to be mobilized against the crime of wife battering so that widespread changes in law and social policy began to take place (Jones, 1994; Pleck, 1987; Schecter, 1982).

Incidence of Wife Battering

A review of the indexes of social science journals published before 1970 would reveal very few articles on domestic violence. From its beginning in 1939 through the next thirty years, the Journal of Marriage and the Family listed no reference to violence in its index (O'Brien, 1971). An exhaustive computer search of the literature on battered women and/or spouse abuse conducted in March, 1976, produced only four to six citations, mostly written by psychoanalysts (Pagelow, 1992). One should not surmise, however, that
the actual extent of domestic violence was reflected in the lack of attention
given to it in the scholarly literature. With the gift of hindsight, it is possible
to examine historical records that reveal widespread violence within the
family (Gelles, 1990; see, for example, Bakan, 1971; DeMause, 1974; and
Radbill, 1980). In the United States, the seeds for general awareness about
the extent of domestic violence began to be sown with the publication of an
article on the "battered-child syndrome" by C. Henry Kempe and his
associates (1962). This syndrome was defined as a clinical condition having
to do with children who were deliberately injured by a parent or caretaker.
The expression battered-child syndrome soon gave way to other terms such
as child abuse, child neglect, and child maltreatment, which would include
not only physical abuse, but also sexual abuse, medical neglect, and
malnutrition (Gelles, 1987). These advances led to the implementation of the
This emphasis upon violence to children that was taking place behind closed
doors combined with the growing awareness of the extent of wife battering to
produce an upsurge of research and reporting on domestic violence in the
1970's and 80's.

The burden of proof fell on the battered women's movement to
demonstrate that wife battering was not a rare occurrence that took place
between sadistic men and "frigid, domineering, masochistic women"
(Pagelow, 1987). The earliest data on family violence relied upon clinical
studies conducted by psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors (Gelles,
1987). Later studies on violence to women were derived from interviews with
women who had sought refuge in battered women's shelters (Dobash &
Dobash, 1979; Walker, 1979; Giles-Sims, 1983; Pagelow, 1981). Such information was vital to obtaining data on the most severely abused women and on the effectiveness of intervention programs; but, such data did not lead to generalization to the wider population. The earlier studies were based on small, nonrepresentative samples and control or comparison groups were rarely used (Spinetta & Rigler, 1972).

Research that was generalizable was hampered by the prevailing notion that reliable data on wife battering could not be collected. Researchers were reminded that they would essentially be asking, "Have you stopped beating your wife?" (Gelles, 1987). However, some studies were conducted using non-clinical samples (Straus, 1971; Steinmetz, 1971). Then, in 1975, and again in 1985, national surveys were conducted that attempted to use a probability sample that was non-clinical and, thus, generalizable to the population at large (Straus & Gelles, 1986). In 1975, a national probability sample of 2,143 currently married or cohabiting adults was studied using the Conflict Tactics Scaled developed by Straus and Gelles. The results of this survey were published in book form in *Behind Closed Doors* by Murray Straus, Richard Gelles, and Suzanne K. Steinmetz (1980). The authors of this study concluded that 16% of the couples studied had engaged in one of the eight violent acts asked about. In other words, "every year about one out of every six couples in the United States commits at least one violent act against his or her partner" (p. 32). If the entire length of the marriage was considered, then the result was determined to be 28%. They concluded, "In short, if you are married, the chances are almost one out of three that your husband or wife will hit you" (p. 32).
A second national survey on domestic violence was conducted in 1985, this time with 6,002 households (Straus & Gelles, 1986). The spouse abuse data was based on 3,520 households containing a currently married or cohabiting couple. The results of this study suggested that overall husband to wife violence had decreased by 6.6% and that severe husband to wife violence (wife beating) had declined by 26.6%. However, there were still an estimated 1,620,000 beaten wives in 1985. One of the more controversial findings of these two surveys is the finding that "women are about as violent within the family as men" (p. 468). However, the authors pointed out that the numerical data does not represent the fact that much of that behavior could have been conducted in self-defense. Furthermore, the lesser size and strength of women means that the same act would likely have a lesser consequence than if the same act were done by men to women.

The publication of such national studies has had the effect of making the general population more aware of the extent of domestic violence in contemporary society. For example, a study in 1976 determined that only about 10% of Americans considered child abuse to be a serious problem. A similar poll conducted in 1986 found that 90% of Americans believed child abuse to be a serious national problem (Straus & Gelles, 1986). The emphasis of research in the 1970's was threefold (Gelles, 1987). As was mentioned above, researchers initiated studies in order to determine reliable empirical estimates of the incidence of domestic violence. Secondly, researchers attempted to identify the various risk factors identified with family violence. Thirdly, efforts were put forth to develop theoretical models of the various causes of violence in the home. While much progress was
made in the seventies in determining the scope and extent of family violence, there was a decline in the eighties in concern for research on the incidence of family violence (Gelles, 1987; Gelles & Conte, 1990; Steinmetz, 1987). Aside from the Second National Family Violence Survey (Straus & Gelles, 1986), there were no new major studies attempting to assess the extent of family violence. There was a continued emphasis upon risk factors related to violence and there was a developing interest in such matters as the consequences of abuse to women and children and the effectiveness of treatment programs. There was also an emphasis in the eighties upon developing theories about the social causes of family violence including feminist theories of wife battering (Braverman, 1988; Bograd, 1990; Yllo & Bograd, 1988). Another area of expanding interest was the emphasis given in research to dating and courtship violence (Bernard, Bernard, & Bernard, 1985; Lloyd, 1991; Rosen & Stith, 1993; Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989; Stets, 1992; Stets & Henderson, 1991).

Risk Factors

In 1869, the British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1971) wrote an essay attributing wife beating to the "mean and savage natures" of some men. For a century after Mill's essay, violence against wives was basically ignored by society (Dutton, 1988; Walker, 1979; Martin, 1977). The cases that received the attention of authorities were often as a consequence of the extreme results (e.g., murder) or as a consequence of disclosures in psychiatric treatment. Hence, these limited cases led to the generalization that men who abuse their wives were pathological in mind or character. This
overgeneralization reinforced the view that wife battering was relatively rare and was the work of men who were sadistic (Dutton, 1988).

After a decade of research into husband to wife violence by a variety of scholars, Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) conducted a review of 52 case comparison studies. Their effort was to assimilate what had been published about the various risk markers in husband to wife violence. They determined that a number of the widely held hypotheses about wife battering had little empirical support. Only one factor, witnessing violence in the wife's family of origin, was consistently associated with being a victim of violence. They also determined that wife battering cuts across demographic lines. Race, income, and educational level did not discriminate non-victims from victims. The studies did show, however, that younger women were more likely to be beaten by their husbands than older women. The authors of this review of research concluded:

The search for characteristics of women that contribute to their own victimization appears futile. There is no consistent evidence, after 15 years of research, that any behaviors, attitudes, demographic characteristics, or personality traits can predict what types of women will become victimized by husband or male partner violence. Characteristics of men with whom she is involved may be a better predictor of a woman's odds of being victimized by violence. (p. 120)

Concerning abusers, the studies evaluated indicated that there were three markers, use of violence toward children, sexual aggression toward wives, and witnessing parental violence as a child or adolescent, that showed a very strong association with the use of violence toward wives. Also, alcohol usage was strongly related to the use of violence against wives (Stith & Farley, 1993).
The Needs of Battered Women

With the rise of the battered women's movement, abundant information began to be accumulated relative to the needs of battered women (Martin, 1976; Pizzey, 1974; Roy, 1977; Walker, 1979). Their most immediate need, of course, is for physical safety in a non-threatening environment. The shelter movement was born out of the crucial need for a haven for battered women in an emergency so that they and their children could be safe (Cozzi & Arvildson, 1986; Roberts, 1981). While many women may seek refuge with family and friends or safe homes (Gibson & Gutierrez, 1991), others need the security of a place unfamiliar to their abusers such as a formal shelter provides (Bowker & Maurer, 1985). Now that thousands of shelters have been established that serve hundreds of thousands of women each year, additional information has been derived that informs us as to the various needs that battered women have (Sullivan, Basta, Tan, & Davidson, 1992; Taylor & Campbell, 1992). The needs of battered women will vary, of course, by age (Vinton, 1992), ethnicity (Torres, 1991), and socio-economic status (Davidson & Jenkins, 1989; Johnson, 1992).

The most obvious need that a battered woman has is for a safe place in which to heal from her physical abuse (Bowker & Maurer, 1987; Taylor & Campbell, 1992). It is well documented that battered women experience more physical symptoms than other groups of women (Campbell & Humphreys, 1987). One study of the health needs of battered women (Rodriguez, 1989) indicated that only 20% of the subjects had sought medical care for the injuries related to the battering. While 86% indicated that their health was a high priority, only 40% indicated that their health was excellent
or good. Also to be considered is that nearly one quarter of the battered women had been denied access to health care by their abusing partners.

Battered women also have needs that arise from the mental and emotional effects of the verbal, psychological, and physical abuse that they have received (West et al., 1990). The level of psychological distress will, of course, be associated with the length and severity of the abuse (Follingstad et al., 1991; Khan, Welch, & Zillmer, 1993). A battered woman's level of self-esteem, guilt, self-blame, depression, and post-traumatic stress will all seriously impact her functioning and ability to make choices to keep herself safe (Schutte, Bouleige, Fix, & Malouf, 1986; Turner & Shapiro, 1986; Varvaro, 1991). While shelters have provided needed social and legal services, they have not always provided therapy to assist women in coping with their struggles (Cozzi & Arvidson, 1986). Whether they find refuge in a shelter or not, battered women need the sort of self-empowerment for taking charge of their lives that therapy can provide.

Battered women who are mothers also have the need to be able to care for the physical and emotional well-being of their children. It is important to remember that the battered women's shelters in Virginia serve more children than they do adult women (VADV 1993 Annual Report). A conversation with a director for one of the battered women's shelters in southern Virginia revealed that at that time there was one mother with seven children being housed at their shelter, and on a previous occasion the shelter housed a mother and her ten children. Also, limitations have to be set as to the age of male children who can be housed at the shelter. There are obvious difficulties entailed in caring for the children that must accompany a woman
when she is fleeing from her abusive partner. It has been recognized that there are significant concerns about the mental and emotional well-being of children who have witnessed violence in the home (Davis & Carlson, 1987). Therefore, shelters are having to become actively involved in maintaining a healthy environment for the children while they are displaced (Wildin, Williamson, & Wilson, 1991). Rather than simply insisting that the mothers take absolute responsibility for the care and control of the children while at the shelter, some shelters are choosing to empower the mother by helping her to engage with the various support systems available (Gardiner, 1992).

Since battered women are often in a vulnerable and disadvantaged position, they require access to a number of services and agencies that can respond to their needs (Sullivan & Davidson, 1991). A number of studies have indicated that a woman will make several efforts at leaving her abusive partner before successfully doing so (Gondolf, 1988; Herbert, Silver, & Ellard, 1991; Strube & Barbour, 1983). Many women are forced to return to their assailant because they are unable to marshal sufficient resources for independent living (Sullivan, 1991). The success of battered women as they attempt to leave their abusers will often be determined by the availability of those resources that may be very limited in many rural areas (Edleson & Frank, 1991).

While shelters provide a temporary haven for battered women, there is a need for advocacy services as they leave the shelter so that they can be helped to access community resources (Sullivan & Davidson, 1991; Sullivan et al, 1992). Even such a simple matter as transportation can be a major obstacle to a woman who is in need of seeking medical services or temporary
housing. A woman who is afraid to return home to pick up her clothes will likely not do so unless she is accompanied by the police or some other advocate. One client seen by this researcher in private practice compared her different experiences on the several occasions during her marriage that she had to return home to pick up clothes after fleeing for safety. Many of the male police officers would allow her husband to follow her from room to room screaming at her as she tried to gather a few items to take back with her. Only one officer, a woman officer, made her husband wait outside while she gathered clothes and other necessities. Also, the experiences that battered women have had in seeking police protection legal assistance have not always been pleasant or satisfactory (Bowker, 1987; Ford, 1983; Home, 1991-1992; Lardner, 1993; Stith, 1990). Battered women who are in a stable financial situation can benefit greatly by the assistance of an able lawyer. Women of lesser resources by themselves do not always possess the assertiveness required to pursue legal redress against their abusers.

In addition to experiencing needs associated with their physical, mental, and emotional well-being, battered women often struggle with a number of religious needs as well (Clarke, 1986; Fortune & Hertz, 1987; Garma, 1991; Leehan, 1989; Pellauer, 1987). The battered woman needs to hear her plight addressed in the religious community (Pagelow & Johnson, 1988). As long as a veil of silence is drawn about the issue as if it doesn't exist, then she is forced to suffer in silence. She will be tempted to take on responsibility for her own abuse as long as the problem of wife battering is treated as a matter of shame in the community. Matters of shame are not owned and discussed openly (Harper & Hoopes, 1990; Scheff, 1991) and victims are left to feel like
outcasts in their own community of faith. Women are sometimes told in private and public by their clergy that, if they would create a good Christian home and be an obedient wife, then they would not have to worry about being abused (Shupe, Stacey, & Hazlewood, 1987, p. 94). Battered women need to be believed and accepted without being judged (Garma, 1991). They need an opportunity to struggle openly with the theological implications of their abuse (Pellauer, 1987). When religion is used both as an excuse for violence and as a solution to violence (Shupe, Stacey, & Hazlewood, 1987), battered women are left in a quandary as to how they can keep safe while keeping their faith (Fortune, 1987).

**Shelters for Battered Women**

The modern struggle against wife battering began with the opening of the Chiswick's Women's Aid Center in England in November, 1971 (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). What had started as an organized effort on the part of women against rising food prices resulted in a slow, painfully deliberate process to educate the public at large about the scope of wife battering. The Chiswick's Women's Aid Center was designed to be a place for the women in the community to gather and share ideas and seek help with their problems. As these women began to gather and share stories, a few began to reveal that they had been "systematically and severely beaten by their husbands for many years" (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, p. 1). What appeared to be the shared experiences of a few women developed into a battered women's shelter movement that spread from England, to the United States, to Australia, India and throughout the rest of the world (Berk, Newton, & Berk, 1986; Martin, 1976; Schecter, 1982; ). In this country, in 1975, there were only
three emergency shelters for women (Pagelow, 1987; Roberts, 1981), but by 1986 the number had grown to more than 800 shelters across the nation (Roberts, 1990).

Until the battered women's shelter movement began, women who sought to escape their abusers found themselves with few if any resources with which to protect themselves and sustain their lives. In our nation's capital, of the 7500 women who sought arrest warrants against their husbands in 1966, only 200 women were granted warrants (Schecter, 1982, p. 54). Domestic violence was treated by the judicial system as a minor squabble so that women could not expect to have their assailants taken out of the home (Ford, 1983). Unless the woman had supportive family nearby, she often would lack an adequate place to go and take her children. For example, as recently as 1976, the entire city of New York provided only 45 beds for homeless women (Cozzi & Arvidson, 1986). In many cities in the early 1970s, battered women who left their husbands to seek safety from his abuse were denied welfare (Schecter, 1982, p. 55). The shelters which were available housed alcoholics and victims of fires and other catastrophes along with battered women.

As it became increasingly apparent that victims of assaults by their husbands needed some safe place of refuge, isolated shelters began to be developed. In Pasadena, California, in 1964, the women of an Al-Anon chapter became outraged that the battered wives of alcoholic husbands were having to sleep in cars with their children. The women of the Al-Anon chapter rented a house that housed not only women of alcohol related violence, but other victims as well (Schecter, 1982).
In 1978, a nationwide survey of 89 shelters identified the following items as common objectives shared by most of the shelters participating in the study:

- to provide a safe and secure environment for abused women and their children, and to provide information on women's legal rights, assist with court appearances, discuss permanent housing options, and explore future life goals and directions. (Roberts, 1981, p. 8)

This survey was a nonrandomized survey of shelters and agencies for battered women throughout the United States. With this focus on commonalities, many of the distinctions, of course, would be missed.

In the early days of the shelter movement, shelters were primarily a place of short-term room and board so that battered women could be separated from their abusers. Very few support services were offered while the women were in the shelter, and almost no services were provided after the women left (Berk, Newton, & Berk, 1986). As more shelters were developed and increasing numbers of services began to be offered, it was evident that shelters were a rich resource for information, advice, and referrals (Loseke & Berk, 1982). Many shelters continue to be small and very limited in their resources, while other shelters are able to provide a variety of services such as education, vocational guidance, legal advice, as well as counseling and support groups for women and children (Ibrahim & Herr, 1987; Neidig, 1984).

After more than a decade of the growth and development of the shelter movement, Peter Neidig (1984) suggested that shelters appeared to be serving at least four functions. First, shelters serve an educative and consciousness raising function in the community. As Murray Straus (1977)
has observed, the mere presence of a house full of women and children who are not safe to return home is a dramatic testimonial to the existence of the problem of wife battering. Second, the services provided by a shelter are designed to empower women. The role of power disparities in the onset of wife battering continues to be controversial (Coleman & Straus, 1992; Dell, 1989; Frieze & McHugh, 1992; Yllo & Straus, 1990). However, without becoming empowered to be able to make their own choices about the future, battered women will continue to caught up in dangerous cycles of violence. A third, and most obvious, function of shelters is to provide an emergency refuge in a time of danger. Many women choose to return to their spouses after a shelter stay, so the shelter provides them with a temporary haven from the immediate violence.

The fourth function, according to Neidig, is to provide a resource to assist battered women in effecting a permanent break from an abusive spouse. Neidig suggested that there is likely a clash between the third function (as experienced by a wife who does not want to leave her husband) and this fourth function which, he argues, is often the agenda of those in the shelter movement (p. 467). Many in the shelter movement would reject that analysis however (Pence, 1984; Stone, 1984). As the shelter movement has grown, shelters have tended to be organized around different ideologies and goals. Schecter (1982) identified three different, though sometimes overlapping, ideologies for shelters: feminist, grassroots, and professional. More recent research has indicated that the structure of a shelter will be more likely predicted by its organizational age than its ideology (Epstein, Russell, & Silvern, 1988). Nevertheless, shelter counselors may differ in their attitudes
as to whether a battered woman should attempt to stay in her marriage (Gondolf, 1988; Stone, 1984; Neidig, 1985; Pence, 1985). Recent research (McKeel & Sporakowski, 1993) has also indicated that shelter counselors' beliefs about who is responsible for the violence, and whether an abusive husband can cease being abusive, affects their advice to battered women about remaining in their marriages.

While shelters have undoubtedly been a vital resource for battered women, there has been little research published on shelters and their impact on the battering of women (Berk, Newton, & Berk, 1986). Some recent research (Davidson & Jenkins, 1989) suggests that there is a potential class bias in shelter programs so that those delivering the services may not fully understand the economic realities that battered women must face. Other research (Sullivan & Davidson, 1991) has emphasized the fact that battered women often lack the resources for independent living after they leave the shelter. Consequently, greater attention needs to be given to providing follow-up services for shelter residents so that they might access needed resources. In Virginia, the Lutheran Council of Tidewater has begun a program called "Partners in Hope" to assist battered women as they leave the shelters (G. Danielson, personal communication, October 30, 1994). This program connects battered women with trained support teams in participating churches. This program is designed to provide the "needed emotional support for battered women and their children to make the transition to a violence-free life in [the] community" ("Partners in Hope" brochure) so that women might have an alternative to going back into an abusive environment.
Patriarchy, Religion and Wife Battering

As has already been indicated, the prevalence of wife battering cannot be explained by appealing to intrapsychic character flaws or class origins. Wife battering occurs at all levels of society and cannot be completely accounted for by personality profiles or socio-economic status. As victim advocates in the early 1970's began to collect more data about wife battering, many became convinced that the origins of family violence were to be located in social factors as much, or more, as in individualistic factors. A series of studies began to propose that there were clear-cut sociological explanations for the prevalence of wife beating. These studies argued that wife abuse was a relatively common event which was rooted in a patriarchal social structure that supported male violence against women (Dobash & Dobash, 1978, 1992; Martin, 1977). Gelles (1972, 1978) argued that violence was committed by men who believed that the control and domination of women was their right because that notion had been passed on to them through the culture. Hence,

Men who assault their wives are actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are cherished in Western society--aggressiveness, male dominance and female subordination--and they are using physical force as a means to enforce that dominance. (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, p. 24)

As long as the prevalent culture authenticates male dominance and the right of males to control females, wives will continue to be abused by violent males. Del Martin (1983) has summarized the argument succinctly:

The historical roots of our patriarchal family models are ancient and deep. The task of tearing them up and establishing more equitable human relations is a formidable one. Still new norms for marriage and family must be created, since the battering of wives grows naturally out of ancient, time-honored traditions. (p. 26)
In the judgment of many feminist scholars, the level of violence against women can be explained only by a social structure that defines women as subordinate to men (Warren & Lanning, 1992; Williams, 1992). The term that has been used to define the social conditions wherein women are subordinated to men is the term patriarchy.

**Patriarchy**

The term "patriarchy" first emerged in 1861 in a book on ancient law authored by Henry Sumner Maine (1963). Of course, the concept and practice of patriarchy had existed for thousands of years (Bakan, 1979). Maine argued that prior to the institutionalization of modern law, society was constituted by families that were universally patriarchal in character. By that term he meant that society was organized into families as economic units with eldest male parent as absolute supreme ruler in the family. This specific form of dominion was limited to times and places where nomadic life was common and was strictly applied only to situations wherein a patriarch exercised authority over his own household. In situations wherein a patriarch or group of patriarchs ruled outside the household, the more appropriate term would be a "gerontocracy" (Waters, 1989). According to these strict historical formulations of patriarchy, patriarchy appeared prior to the establishment of the state and disappeared once the state was established (Waters, 1989).

This very specific, historical concept of patriarchy waned in social scientific thought after the time of Maine and Max Weber. However, the term was reintroduced into feminist and social scientific thought by Kate Millett (1969) in her book *Sexual Politics* where she stated that, "... our
society, like all other historical civilizations, is a patriarchy... the institution whereby that half of the populace which is female is controlled by that half which is male..." (p.25). Millett is clearly making an important point about the structure of social interaction, even though her use of the term is historically imprecise. Hence, the tendency has been to accept the label, but to refine the application (Waters, 1989).

Contemporary patriarchy can be conceptualized at two levels: the familial and the larger, social level. At the familial level, the ideology of patriarchy centers in large measure on such themes as a wife's obedience, respect, loyalty and faithfulness, sexual access and fidelity, and dependency (Beere, King, Beere, & King, 1984; Warren & Lanning, 1992). M. D. Smith (1990) argues that "a small but growing number of theoretical and empirical studies on the relationship between patriarchy and wife beating suggests that men tend to beat their wives when they violate, or are perceived as violating these ideals" (p. 258).

David Levinson (1989), in his book *Family Violence in a Cross-Cultural Perspective*, examines patriarchy as a sociological explanation for domestic violence. He suggested that three factors could be used as key inequality predictors of wife beating: (1) male economic power in the family; (2) male decision making power in the family; and (3) restrictions on the freedom of women to divorce their husbands (p. 84). He concludes:

One of the basic findings of this study is that economic inequality strongly predicts wife beating. Another key finding is that women's economic power or solidarity with other women is a powerful predictor of the absence of wife beating. (p. 84)
In one study (Yllo, 1983; see also Yllo & Straus, 1990), a researcher found that the rate of violence against wives varied curvilinearly according to their status (economic, political, social) in the states in which they lived. This result is somewhat surprising since, theoretically, one would expect a linear relationship so that, as the husband-wife relationship became less patriarchal and more equalitarian, then the rate of wife battering should drop consistently. Yllo theorized that as the relationships became more equalitarian, men, who had grown up in more patriarchal homes, would begin to feel a loss of control and try to reassert that control through force and violence. Indeed, in another study, Stets (1988) concluded that control was "the most central, meaningful object in a respondent's description of the violence" (p. 127).

Yllo (1984a) also concluded, from another study, there was a connection among structural inequality, interpersonal inequality, and wife beating. In this study, the highest rate of wife battering occurred among husband dominant couples in states where women enjoyed relatively high status. Yllo proposed that domination by a husband would be perceived as especially difficult to bear in the context of relative gender equality. This domination and marital inequality would become a major source of conflict and the already dominant husband would resort to violence to maintain his control over his wife. In a third study, Yllo (with Straus, 1991) examined the relationship among structural inequality, patriarchal norms, and wife beating. Patriarchal norms were based on six items regarding who should have the final say in marital decision making. Although they found no correlation between structural inequality and patriarchal norms, Yllo and
Straus did find a strong linear relationship between patriarchal norms and wife battering. Wife battering was highest where the structural status of women was high and where there was considerable support for patriarchal norms that emphasized the subordination of women within marriage.

**Patriarchy and Religion.**

Patriarchy is a system that is undergirded by the law, religion, and other social structures. It has been recognized that patriarchal religions have helped to keep in place systems that maintain, if not vindicate, domestic violence (Pagelow, 1981). Dobash and Dobash (1979) have pointedly described this connection in the following way:

The seeds of wife-beating lie in the subordination of females and in their subjection to male authority and control. This relationship between women and men has been institutionalized in the structure of the patriarchal family and is supported by the economic and political institution and by a belief system, including a religious one, that makes such relationships seem natural, morally just, and sacred. (pp. 32-33)

Brown and Bohn (1989), in their edited work *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse*, argue that, not only does religion often legitimate men's beliefs that they have a right to dominate and control their families with their power, but also religion tends to socialize women into these roles wherein suffering is idealized. They contend, "Christianity has been a primary--in many women's lives the primary--force in shaping our acceptance of abuse" (p. 2). Feminist scholars such as Mary Daly (1973) also argue that traditional Christian teaching about the role of Jesus perpetuates acquiescence to suffering.
The qualities that Christianity idealizes, especially for women, are also those of a victim: sacrificial love, passive acceptance of suffering, humility, meekness, etc. Since these are the qualities idealized in Jesus "who died for our sins," his functioning as a model reinforces the scapegoat syndrome for women. (p. 77)

Religious organizations have been slow to recognize and respond to the existence of the problem of wife battering (Bussert, 1986; Davidson, 1978; Fortune, 1991; Frishtik, 1990). For years church agencies and sociologists of religion did not seem to be very interested in whether or not victims were turning to clergy for support (Pellauer, 1983). Continuing research has indicated that even among the so-called "peace churches" (i.e., Quakers, Mennonites, Church of the Brethren) wives were being abused to approximately the same extent as in the culture at large (Hildebrand, 1992; Block, 1992; Brutz & Allen, 1986). Initially the evidence for the difficulties that battered women were having in getting support from their religious organizations was anecdotal. However, in recent years a variety of studies have been conducted to provide a richer insight into the interaction between religious communities, battered women, and their culture at large. For example, a 1984 doctoral dissertation entitled *The Religious Context of Misogynous Relational Violence: An Ethnographic Study* by Norine Roberts-Oppold explored these issues in rural South Dakota. Her data was gathered in a two year ethnographic study which included extensive interviews with fourteen mental health professionals who worked with individuals and families who had experienced sexual and physical violence. Eleven of the professionals believed that there was a clear connection between religious environment and the abuse of women. These professionals spoke of wife batterers who seemed to believe that the Bible gave them permission to
behave aggressively toward their wives. Furthermore, pastors emphasized the submissive role of women and urged them to accept their suffering and to see them as punishment for sin. Wives had it repeatedly affirmed to them that it was their responsibility to keep the family together no matter what the circumstances.

**Effectiveness of Clergy**

A number of studies have considered the effectiveness of clergy in responding to the needs of battered women. A study by Gayford (1975) of a hundred British battered women failed to identify a single case in which help was sought from the clergy. In a reader survey conducted by MS. magazine 1977, the clergy were the least used resource, and they received the most negative ratings of all sources of help, including friends, relatives, lawyers, police, marriage counselors, women's groups and psychotherapists (Prescott & Letko, 1977). According to a survey of 101 women served by the NOW Domestic Violence Project in Michigan (Bowker, 1982), only two of these women had contacted a religious advisor after being assaulted. Likewise, a sample of battered women in Scottish shelters indicated that only a small percentage of the women had sought help from the clergy (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). In a shelter sample studied by Pagelow (1981), twenty-eight percent reported having sought help from the clergy. However, in many cases the responses of the clergy were not very helpful, with their primary responses being (1) to tell them to do their duty, forgive and forget; (2) avoid involvement and make a referral; and (3) give useless advice, sometimes based on religious doctrine instead of the needs of the women.
In his own 1980-81 study of battered women and the clergy, Bowker (1982) found that 59 of the 146 women studied had consulted the clergy in connection with a wife beating incident. In comparing the wives' use of clergy and other formal help-sources, Bowker found that in the first battering incident, the wives were more likely to contact the clergy than any other formal help-source except the police. But the relative usage of the clergy declined with further incidents. The natural conclusion to draw would be that the women found the clergy relatively ineffective with the increase in the violence. However, assessments of the effectiveness of the clergy by the women proved otherwise.

In fact . . . the clergy were tied with the police as the least successful of the formal help-sources in the first battering incident, but they gradually improved so that they were more successful than either the police or traditional social service agencies in the final incident. Women's groups, lawyers and district attorneys continued to be rated as more effective than the clergy. (p. 233)

In other words, two factors were being examined: frequency of use and effectiveness. The fact that women tended to use clergy less and less as the violence progressed was not necessarily a reflection of their effectiveness.

More recently, clergy members representing a variety of denominations from 143 churches and synagogues in a suburban county of Maryland were surveyed (Martin, 1989). This research indicated that most of the clergy persons did not take a proactive role with respect to the problem of wife abuse. Most did acknowledge the existence of the problem but tended to wait for the victims to seek help. The advice that clergy gave to those women that they did see varied, but nearly one half of the women were provided with
information about local shelters. Twenty-nine percent of the clergy surveyed denied that a problem of spouse abuse needed to be addressed within their congregation.

Another recent study examined the perceived helpfulness of a variety of professional services used by abused women (Hamilton & Coates, 1993). This study determined that the most frequently contacted professions were not necessarily the ones which were perceived by women to be the most helpful. The clergy were listed as one of the professions most frequently contacted by women suffering emotional and physical abuse. They were also contacted regarding sexual abuse, but not as often as psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, and police. According to this study, of those respondents who reported contacting a clergy person concerning emotional abuse, 67% said that the clergy person was helpful. Regarding physical abuse, 59% of those who contacted the clergy said that the clergy was helpful. In this study, "personal crisis counselors and social workers, followed by psychiatrists, psychologists, and physicians, were the only groups reported as helpful most of the time for all types of abuse" (p. 318). The respondents in this study also identified a number of responses by professionals that they did not find helpful. With regard to physical abuse, the following responses were identified as being particularly unhelpful: "Criticized me for staying" (in the relationship); "Suggested my partner and I get counselling together"; "Went along with me when I said it wasn't that serious"; and "Questioned the truth of my story" (p. 320). This study emphasized the need for training for all professionals who might have the opportunity to serve battered women. What was underlined by this research is that women in need reach out to all
professionals. Those women who do not receive appropriate responses in their initial, tentative efforts to seek help are likely to be hindered in subsequent decisions to seek further assistance (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

**Summary**

As the battered women's movement has evolved, the needs of battered women before, during, and after the incidences of violence have become more apparent. At the present time, battered women's shelters are among the most effective resources for meeting the needs of abused women in their hour of crisis. The number of battered women's shelters has grown from a handful in the 1970s to, perhaps, thousands today. Knowing the exact number of shelters that are operational at any moment is difficult since, as some new shelters are opening their doors, others are closing theirs (Pagelow, 1987). The quality and scope of services provided are determined by a number of factors such as location, organizational age of the shelter, funding levels, and staffing. As women enter shelters in order to escape their abusers, many arrive with a number of pressing needs, some of which are not going to be met by the shelter. A number of women come to shelters with a variety of religious struggles that may be helped, or exacerbated, by the religious organizations of which they have been a part. Many shelters are not designed to provide any kind of counseling, much less religious counseling, for their clients. And there are a number of reasons why victim advocates would be reluctant to encourage their clients to seek counseling and guidance from their religious organizations.

Religious organizations are becoming increasingly involved in supporting the work of shelters through contributions of money, food, clothing, and other
material items. The limited research that is available indicates that clergy and lay leaders in religious organizations are ill informed as to how they might best assist battered women in other, more substantial ways. In other words, shelters are proficient at providing crisis intervention and other services to women suffering abuse, but they are not generally designed to respond to the religious needs of battered women. In many cases, a woman's decisions about the future of her marriage and family (and, more importantly, about the future of her own health and safety), will be made out of religiously based values and belief systems. Since neither the shelter system nor the religious systems are, by themselves, meeting all the vital needs of battered women, it would be useful if those who are most intimately acquainted with the realities and needs of battered women could provide insights and encouragement to religious organizations so that more of those needs could be met. Furthermore, if it is the case that religious organizations are making the healing of women more difficult by the perpetuation of practices and traditions that go counter to that healing, then those religious organizations are the only ones that can change those practices. Until they are made aware of the consequences of those traditions and practices, clergy and lay leaders will not be motivated to engage in the difficult process of change.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

Design of the Study

The goal of this research was to learn how religious organizations might be more effective in helping battered women. The individuals who are among the most qualified sources of information about helping battered women are the counselor/advocates in battered women's shelters. Depending upon the size and location of the shelter, these workers have daily contact with a number of battered women and can become aware of their clients' most pressing needs. Counselor/advocates are also in a position to become aware of the social forces and influences which have either been helpful or not helpful to battered women as they seek to establish a violence-free environment for themselves and their children.

Since it is likely that many women who seek help from battered women's shelters have also sought help from religious organizations, counselor/advocates are a source of information as to how helpful or not helpful these organizations have been. Other women might have purposely chosen not to seek help from their religious communities and might have shared their reasons with workers at a shelter. These reasons could provide useful information to religious organizations as they seek to help such women.

This research was designed as a descriptive exploratory study of the helpfulness of religious organizations based on the observations of victim advocates about the interactions that battered women have had with these organizations. In a questionnaire designed for this project, the victim advocates were asked to provide their observations about the effectiveness of
religious organizations as sources of help to the clients they have seen. Specifically, these victim advocates were asked for their impressions as to how religious organizations had been helpful and/or not helpful to battered women.

**Procedures**

1. **Developing the questionnaire.** Prior to designing the questionnaire, three shelters in Northern Virginia were called and the concept for this study was discussed with shelter personnel. These workers expressed an interest in the study and indicated that they would be willing to participate in this research. They also expressed their opinions about ways that religious organizations could be more helpful to the women who come to their shelters. The concept of this study was also discussed with personnel at the Victims Assistance Network of Fairfax County. The concern was expressed that the results of this proposed study might be biased in that shelters would only see women for whom their religious organizations had not provided successful interventions. In other words, the shelters would never see women who had sought help from their religious organization and had received it in a satisfactory manner. However, it was determined that helpful information could be obtained that would provide guidance to religious organizations so that they could be even more helpful to battered women in the future. Furthermore, any practices (on the part of religious organizations) that might be obstacles to women seeking help could be communicated to clergy and lay leaders in these organizations.

Based on the literature review about the role of churches in addressing the issues of domestic violence and the above information obtained from
victim advocates, an original questionnaire was developed to be submitted to counselor/advocates who work with battered women in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The questionnaire was kept brief, with only 28 questions included, in order to encourage participation. This questionnaire was designed to provide both quantitative and qualitative data that would answer the primary research question and the 11 sub-questions. Seven of the questions on the survey form included from one to four extra lines for the respondents to give illustrations or examples. The respondents were given a half of a page in one place and two pages in another place so that they could write extensive comments that would provide qualitative data for this study. After making sure that the questionnaire addressed the research questions for this study, the questionnaire was submitted to the Human Subjects Review Board at Virginia Tech for approval.

2. Pilot testing. After approval, a pilot study of the instrument was conducted by submitting the questionnaire for evaluation by personnel in Virginians Against Domestic Violence (VADV), and to the coordinator of the Victim Assistance Network of Fairfax County. A licensed clinical social worker who has had extensive experience working with a battered women's shelter also evaluated the draft questionnaire. A total of five questionnaires were returned. The suggestions were essentially with respect to wording and terminology. The revised survey was used in the study (Appendix A).

3. Distribution of the instrument. VADV was contacted to determine how many battered women's shelters were in service in Virginia. VADV provided a list of 44 shelters and agencies that worked with battered women and also supplied mailing labels for these agencies (Appendix B). Of the 44
organizations listed with VADV, only 33 actually had shelters associated with the agency. It was decided to invite all 44 organizations to participate since it was possible that some of the personnel had at least some experience working with battered women. The agencies range in size from very small, struggling rural shelters to larger, urban shelters that may serve 2500 women a year. Since this study was a descriptive exploratory investigation it was decided to solicit data from as many potential participants as possible rather than use a random sampling process.

This researcher attended an annual business meeting of Virginians Against Domestic Violence in Richmond, Virginia on January 27, 1994. At that time, a presentation was made to those in attendance and sample questionnaires were handed out to everyone. Seven agency/shelter directors asked for packets of questionnaires to distribute to the counselor advocates working with their shelters.

Included in the packets for the agencies at the meeting were questionnaire packets, a letter explaining the project (Appendix C), a form to be filled out by the shelter or agency director (Appendix C), and a large stamped, return envelope addressed to Dr. Sandra Stith at the Northern Virginia Graduate Center of Virginia Tech. The questionnaire packets contained a questionnaire, a consent form for participation in the study (Appendix C), a form with the researchers' names and phone numbers which was to be kept by the participant, and a consent form for anyone who wanted to participate in a follow-up telephone interview (Appendix C). Also included was a separate envelope for the consent forms. The participants were instructed to place their consent forms in the designated envelope and
their questionnaire in the original questionnaire packet envelope. They were instructed to place these envelopes separately in the large return envelope which was kept in the shelter/agency office. In this way, the consent forms would not be associated with the completed questionnaires. The shelter/agency director was asked to distribute the questionnaire packets and place the return envelope in the office so that the participants could return the completed forms and questionnaires after they had finished. The shelter/agency director was also asked to complete the form about their agency so that demographic information about their agency could be collected. They were also asked to indicate how many questionnaires were distributed so that a return rate could be determined.

The next day, following the VADV meeting, invitations to participate in this project were mailed out to shelters and agencies that were not contacted at the VADV annual meeting. The invitations to participate in the study included an explanatory letter, a sample questionnaire, and a form for the shelter/agency director to complete indicating that permission was given for the shelter/agency to participate along with an indication as to how many questionnaires would be needed. On February 2, 1994, a request for ten questionnaires from a shelter in Northern Virginia was received. During the next six weeks 27 shelter/agencies responded indicating that they wanted to participate in the study. Five agencies declined participation either because they did not have an active shelter with the agency or they were constrained by time limitations.

Approximately two weeks after mailing the invitations to participate in the study, 11 shelter/agencies that had not yet responded were called.
Approximately half either had just mailed their response or were about to do so. One director had not received the original mailing but agreed to participate. One other director indicated that they were in the midst of writing grant requests but they would attend to the request within the week. Messages were left for the other directors. One month after the original mailing, another mailing was sent to the shelter/agencies that had not yet responded as to whether or not they would participate in the study. An update on the progress of the study was provided and a renewed invitation to participate was offered. Also, a copy of an article on courtship violence published by two of the faculty members with the Department of Family and Child Development at Virginia Tech was included.

Participants

Of the 33 agencies that had shelters for battered women, 27 agreed to participate in the study. However, only 20 shelters returned completed questionnaires by the time this study was concluded. A total of 130 questionnaires were distributed by the shelters and 91 were completed and returned for a 70% return rate (Table 1). Seven questionnaires were returned separately and could not be identified as to the shelter of origin.

The sample for this study consisted of 90 females and 1 male who serve as counselor/advocates with battered women's shelters in Virginia. Of the 91 participants, 71 were paid staff and 20 were volunteers. The sample was composed of 71 whites, 16 African Americans, 1 oriental, and 3 that were in the category of OTHER. Of those completing the questionnaires, 60.3% were college graduates. The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 71 years of age (M=36.9).
Table 1
Shelter Location And Number of Questionnaires Returned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelter</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abuse Alternatives</td>
<td>Bristol, VA</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTS Turning Points</td>
<td>Dumfries, VA</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria Domestic Violence Program</td>
<td>Alexandria, VA</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternatives for Abused Adults</td>
<td>Staunton, VA</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arlington Community Temporary Shelter</td>
<td>Arlington, VA</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis Assistance Emergency Response</td>
<td>Petersburg, VA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council on Domestic Violence for Page Co.</td>
<td>Luray, VA</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPE</td>
<td>Gloucester, VA</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOVES</td>
<td>Danville, VA</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East. Shore Coal. Against Dom. Violence</td>
<td>Onancock, VA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Crisis Support Services</td>
<td>Norton, VA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Focus of Richmond County</td>
<td>Warsaw, VA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Resource Center</td>
<td>Wytheville, VA</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Step</td>
<td>Harrisonburg, VA</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help and Emergency Response</td>
<td>Portsmouth, VA</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loudoun County Abused Women's Shelter</td>
<td>Purcellville, VA</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAP Women's Resource Center</td>
<td>Roanoke, VA</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Co. Council on Domestic Violence</td>
<td>Front Royal, VA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWCA Women's Advocacy Program</td>
<td>Richmond, VA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWCA Women in Crisis Program</td>
<td>Norfolk, VA</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Reduction

As the completed questionnaires arrived, they were sorted according to the shelter. A number was assigned to the shelter using the list of shelters provided by VADV. The questionnaires from each shelter were numbered in sequence for that shelter. The questionnaires were then analyzed in two main stages.

1. **Quantitative analysis.** First, the quantitative data from the questionnaires were collected and analyzed for frequency distributions and correlations using the SPSSX statistical package. Of the eleven research questions, five questions concerned what percentage of the respondents held certain beliefs about the interactions between their clients and religious organizations. One research question pertained to the relationship of the religiosity of the respondents and their attitudes toward the helpfulness or non-helpfulness of religious organizations. The results of this analysis are provided in Chapter IV.

2. **Qualitative analysis.** Since the study was designed to collect new information about how religious organizations might be more helpful, a number of questions included opportunities for the participants to add their own comments and observations. While such questions are typically ignored, a large majority of those responding to this survey chose to answer one or more of the questions with often times lengthy comments. As each questionnaire arrived, the comments written in by the participants were carefully read in order to begin a search for trends and themes in the qualitative data. A data file was started for each of the questions for which comments, examples, and other written responses were to be provided by the
respondents. These responses were collected under the heading of each question so that themes could continue to be tracked as more questionnaires arrived. Later, when all of the questionnaires were in, a more thorough qualitative analysis of the comments was conducted.

Three types of questions were used to collect the qualitative data. First, for five questions the respondents were asked to answer the question either YES or NO, and then they were invited to explain their answer. The written responses associated with each of the two answers were collected, categorized and counted. Any responses that were unique or notable for other reasons were identified for possible combination with responses to questions with a similar theme. For instance, the respondents were asked on two occasions, in different ways, regarding their concerns about referring battered women to religious organizations for counseling. These two questions provided slightly different perspectives on the research question under view.

In a second type of question, a list of alternative responses were provided which the respondents were to rank order. The list of responses had been determined by prior research to be likely responses to the question. However, one or two lines would be left for the respondent to provide his or her own preferred OTHER answer. In the analysis of the data, the frequency of response of the participants in selecting the alternative answers was determined and tabulated. A list was also composed of any written comments or OTHER answers. This analysis is provided in Chapter V.

A third type of question was an open ended question which the respondents could use to write additional comments or criticisms of the survey. There were two questions of this latter type. One question asked,
In your opinion, how can religious organizations be most helpful to battered women?" Approximately half of an 8-1/2 inch by 11 inch page was left for comments. On the last page of the survey, another question invited the respondents to provide any additional comments about their work with battered women, about religious organizations, or about this survey. The rest of that page and the back were provided for these comments.

Several steps were taken in the analysis of qualitative data provided in response to these last two questions. Following the suggestions of Joanning (1993), separate Microsoft Word text files were established for each of these two questions. The responses from each of the questionnaires were typed into these text files in double space format with a wide right margin. The questionnaire numbers were also included in the text so that the text could be checked with the original questionnaires for accuracy and to double check the quotes in case it was decided to use some of them in the discussion of the results. The question as to how religious organizations can be more helpful to religious organizations provided 24 pages of text. The text file composed of responses to the open ended question on the last page provided 26 pages of text. The two files were read over separately three times in order to identify recurring themes. As themes were identified, they were written in the margin next to the comments. A list of themes was provided for each of these two files. Fresh copies of the files were printed and used for the further development of these common themes and categories of response.

For each of these two text files, seven different themes were developed. For the question on how religious organizations can be more helpful, the following themes were determined.
1. Religious organizations can provide financial and material resources.
2. Clergy can become better educated about domestic violence and educate their faith community.
3. Religious organizations can refer battered women to other agencies.
4. Clergy can do a better job of listening to the women.
5. Clergy can be supportive of the battered women.
6. Clergy can be more knowledgable of community resources.
7. Clergy can examine the impact of religious belief systems on wife battering.

For the text file of comments in response to the open ended question on the last page of the survey, the following themes were identified:

1. **Belief systems.** Any comments about beliefs systems that might be at work in the experience of domestic violence were included (belief systems of battered women, of counselor/advocates, of batterers, and/or of religious organizations).

2. **Education and training.** Any comments about the need for clergy and other religious leaders to be better trained, informed, or educated about domestic violence were included.

3. **Spiritual needs of battered women.** Comments that reflected that the counselor/advocates were aware of some spiritual needs of battered women were included.

4. **The need for religious organizations to be more vocal in speaking out against wife battering.** Any comments that indicated that religious organizations were being too silent or needed to speak out more were included.
5. **What religious organizations are doing well.** Whenever comments were made about things that religious organizations were doing well these remarks were noted.

6. **The spiritual values of shelters.** While perhaps most shelter in Virginia are secular based, any comments that indicated that there were spiritual values at work in shelters were noted.

7. **Negative examples of religious organizations.** Illustrations or examples of things that religious organizations have been doing that affect battered women negatively were noted.

Seven different fluorescent markers were used to highlight the text wherein these different themes occurred. The text files were each read over three more times as these themes were identified and marked. The text files were each read over two more times to analyze sections of comments that were not color coded to identify any helpful, unique responses that did not fit the categories. Much of the unmarked sections related to professional experience and other details that gave a personal touch to the responses.

Fresh, unmarked copies of these two data files were given to two colleagues to cross code. Both colleagues have strong academic backgrounds and rich clinical experience. The project was explained and they were asked to read the unmarked files and to look for recurring themes. The color coded copies were then provided a few days later so that a comparison of the coding process could be considered. The comparisons were discussed and differences were explored. Which themes seemed to be more primary in the minds of the counselor/advocates also was discussed. There were no significant discrepancies in the cross coding process.
The color coded responses were used as qualitative data to enrich the quantitative data for this study. Significant responses or comments were selected and interspersed in the discussion of the results in Chapter IV. These voluntary responses on the part of the participants gave the data the feel of human experience and were used to inform the conclusions of this study.

Summary

In this study, the responses of 91 counselor/advocates to a structured questionnaire were analyzed to provide quantitative and qualitative data to answer 11 research questions that guided the research. The procedures for collecting and analyzing this data were described and discussed in this chapter. In the next chapter, the results of this study will be presented.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to survey victim advocates who work closely with battered women to gather their opinions as to how religious organizations might be more effective in helping battered women. The questionnaire was designed to provide information in two areas. First, those completing the questionnaires were asked to respond to questions about practices of some religious organizations that were not helpful to battered women. Second, the participants in this study were asked to identify ways that religious organizations have either been helpful or could be more helpful to battered women. Questions were asked in each area that called for fixed choices. There were also areas provided throughout the questionnaire where the participants could add their own comments. This chapter presents the data analysis of the responses of the 91 participants in this research project. Descriptive data regarding the participants will first be presented. Then the responses of the participants to the research questions will be presented along with qualitative data that gives a clearer sense of the human dimension that is so much a part of this problem.

Sample

The sample selected for this study was 91 counselor/advocates that work with battered women in shelters or other victim advocacy agencies in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Twenty-seven shelters agreed to participate in the study; however, only 20 shelters completed questionnaires and returned them in time for the conclusion of this study. Unfortunately, this research project coincided with the funding cycle for most shelters and four of the
shelters were not able to participate at this time. Five of the shelters had agreed to participate, but were late in distributing their surveys partly because of the pressure of completing their applications for grants. However, 130 questionnaires were distributed and 91 were returned for a 70% completion rate.

Only one male completed a questionnaire. Of the 91 participants, 78% were white and 18% were African American. A majority (60.3%) were college graduates. The participants ranged in age from 20 to 71 with the mean age being just slightly under 37 years of age. The marital status of the sample was not unusual (Table 2). The category OTHER was created in response to participants in the pilot test who indicated that a gay or lesbian counselor/advocate would not be able to answer the question as it was first presented.

1. Religious Orientation. With regard to religious orientation, 75.8% indicated that they belonged to a religious organization. Most of the sample belonged to a mainline Christian denomination (Table 3). On the conservative/liberal continuum, with 1 indicating very conservative in religious orientation and 6 indicating very liberal, the mean of the responses of this sample was 4.27 indicating a somewhat liberal sample. The level of participation in religious activities in terms of attendance at worship services varied greatly (Table 4). The participation in terms of involvement in other religious activities, such as teaching and singing in the choir, also varied greatly (Table 5). Two of the participants in the study objected to the questions about religious participation. They stated that spirituality should not be measured in terms of participation in organized religion. One
Table 2
Marital Relationship Status Of The Sample

\( n=90 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single, never married</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First marriage</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living together</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remarried, divorced, or separated</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3
Religious Affiliation of the Sample
n=91

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of the Brethren</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not belong</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1-Mennonite; 1-Mormon; 1-Seventh Day Adventist; 1-Pentecostal;
1-Disciples of Christ; 1-Unitarian; 1-Church of God of Prophecy
Table 4

Participation in Terms of Attendance at Religious Services

\(n=90\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Attendance</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Active</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Attend</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5
Involvement in Activities Other Than Religious Services.
n=90

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Involvement</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Active</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Participate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
participant noted that her work with battered women was an expression of her spirituality. She commented, "I hope your survey is geared toward research(ing) the problem and not to determine how many of (us) advocates are 'church going Christians.' We give of ourselves daily to help heal the wounds of domestic violence--we need the comfort of our faith also." The responses of the participants suggested that the majority of the counselor/advocates of this sample are not anti-religion or anti-church. Rather, the majority regard themselves as church members and, while they might not all be active attenders, several observed that their work with battered women flows out of their spiritual values.

The distribution of the political views of the sample was similar to the distribution of the sample's religious views. On a scale with 1 indicating very conservative and 6 indicating very liberal, the mean was 4.26.

2. Experience of the sample. As was previously indicated, 78% of those responding to the survey were paid staff. Many of these workers had also worked with battered women as volunteers before coming on staff as a paid workers. The length of experience of the sample ranged from two months to 168 months (14 years) and the mean no of months was 34. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of experience in terms of the number of battered women with whom they had worked. The percentage of the respondents who had worked with more than 100 women was 58.9% (Table 6). This sample represents a very experienced group of workers.

From the descriptive data indicated above, the sample was composed of a very diverse group of individuals from a variety of regions across the state. Those participating in the study were very experienced in working with
### Table 6
Number of Battered Women Helped by Sample
n= 90

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-50</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 100</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
battered women and were in a position to offer useful advice to religious organizations. The following section of this chapter will present their responses as to how religious organizations have, first of all, not been helpful and, secondly, how they can be more helpful in the future to battered women.

How Religious Organizations Have Not Been Helpful

Several of the questions invited the participants to comment on ways that they have observed religious organizations not being helpful to battered women. In this section, the responses to the research questions that addressed this aspect of the survey will be presented. The results will be presented as an answer to the research question under view.

1. Forty-four percent of counselor/advocates would not refer battered women to a religious organization for counseling. Those responding to the questionnaire were asked whether or not they routinely inquired about their clients' religious experience or affiliation. Of the 91 responding, 83 (or 91.2%) answered "No." The participants in this survey were asked to estimate how many of the battered women they had worked with had sought help for a violent relationship (of any kind at any point) from a religious organization. A majority (65.9%) of those surveyed indicated that at least some of the battered women they had counseled had sought such help, and another 11% stated that about half of the women they had worked with had approached religious organizations for help (Table 7). The counselor/advocates were also asked to indicate how many of the women they had worked with had received religious counseling since coming to the shelter. Again, a majority (66.7%) said that a few had received such counseling while
Table 7
Estimation by Counselor/Advocates of Number of Women Who Sought Help from Religious Organizations
n=91

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Few</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Half</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
an additional 11.1% stated that about half of the women had received such counseling while in the shelter (Table 8).

From two separate areas in the questionnaire it was determined that many of the counselor/advocates surveyed had strong reservations about referring battered women to counselors in religious organizations. In one question, the respondents were asked to answer YES or NO to a question that asked them if they would ever make such a referral. They were also asked to write their comments to explain their answer. From this question it was determined that 44% (40 out of 91) of the counselor/advocates responding to the questionnaire would not advise women experiencing physical abuse to seek counseling from a religious organization. Of 40 respondents answering in the negative, 39 added written comments to explain the reasons why they would not make such a referral. Most of the negative answers explained that, in their experience, many pastors were not trained to do domestic violence counseling. Most of those who said that they would refer a battered woman for religious counseling said that they would do so only if the woman requested it and if they had confidence in the religious counselor.

2. There were several basic reasons given as to why the counselor/advocates would not refer battered women to religious organizations. Only two stated that such a referral would be against strict policies of the shelter. One respondent gave the curious answer "Yes--if she is Protestant & not pregnant. No--if she's Catholic, Moslem or pregnant." Eleven respondents did not like the use of the word "advise" in the question and observed that they do not advise, they merely explain options, and they would not want to do
Table 8
Battered Women Who Had Received Religious Counseling
Since Coming To The Shelter
n=90

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Few</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Half</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
anything to diminish the importance of the woman choosing for herself. Nine other counselor/advocates indicated that they would be concerned that the religious organization would pressure the woman to "make the marriage work no matter what" and not treat the abuse seriously. Five of the respondents stated that they would not refer women to religious organizations because, in their opinion, the leaders were not properly trained to handle domestic violence counseling. Four respondents indicated that such a referral was not something that would occur to them to do. The response of four others can be expressed in the words of one of the counselor/advocates:

Those clients who have volunteered information about seeking the services from religious sources have reported receiving little actual help and additional emotional stress came to them from these sources. They were made to feel guilty.

Three others mentioned their concerns about religious organizations that emphasize a male dominated household and traditional practices that stress the male's superior status.

One other question in the survey directly addressed the reluctance of counselor/advocates to refer women to religious organizations. The respondents were asked to rank order a list of likely reasons as to why they might be reluctant to refer their clients and were given the opportunity to identify additional reasons in a space provided for written comments (Tables 9 and 10). The most important reason given by the respondents for their reluctance to refer was their concern that religious counselors would be too invested in keeping the marriage together without an appropriate regard for the safety issues for the wife. The second most important reason was that
Table 9
Concerns About Women Receiving Religious Counseling

n=91

Number and Percentage of Times Selected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>1=Most</th>
<th>2=Less</th>
<th>3=Less</th>
<th>4=Least</th>
<th>0=blank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counselor would use couples counseling</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors would most likely be male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors wouldn't know how to assess risk for violence</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors would be too invested in keep. marriage together</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No. %  No. %  No. %  No. %  No. %  No. %
Table 10
Other Concerns Counselor/Advocates Have for Battered Women Receiving Counseling from Religious Organizations

- Counselors would not understand empowerment.
- I think the best counseling would be from a woman who has been in a similar situation—women for women and men for men.
- The other two (i.e., "would be male" and "use couples counseling") would not be a concern as long as the minister is knowledgeable in the area of domestic violence.
- Counselors use emotional blackmail to make women feel guilty about leaving an abusive marriage.
- No understanding of the legal ramifications of their advice. No training in psychodynamics.
- Need an understanding of the effects of abuse on the mind which causes her to stay in the abuse.
- Counselors would not know enough about the cycle of violence and why women stay or leave.
- It is too risky for couples counseling in abusive marriages.
- Counselors would be too judgemental (would impose feelings of guilt, responsibility, etc.)
- This very difficult for ranking—these are very strong concerns I have.
- There would be no material aid to them.
relational counselors would not know how to assess the risk for violence in a troubled marriage.

It is interesting to note that, in the latter survey question, only 2.2% of the respondents indicated that they were most concerned about the religious counselors using couples counseling. In fact, one-fourth of the respondents did not select that response at all. Obviously, it is not couples counseling per se that disturbs counselor/advocates; it is the possibility that the counselor, through ignorance or zeal for saving the marriage, would ignore the inherent dangers in counseling a woman in the presence of her abuser.

3. In this survey, 78.2% of the counselor/advocates believed that at least some of the women they had counseled had received poor advice from religious leaders and counselors. The counselor/advocates were also asked if the women they had assisted (who had received religious counseling) had received poor advice from their spiritual leaders or advisors (Table 11). Of the 78 responding to this question, 21.8% stated that, in their opinion, none of the women had received poor advice. However, 78.2% indicated that at least some of the women that they had interacted with who had received religious counseling had received what they regarded as poor advice. In responding to this issue, the participants were invited to give examples of "poor advice" which they believed to be given to their clients by spiritual leaders or advisors. Of the 78 participants responding to this question, 54 (69.2%) offered examples or comments regarding what they believed to be poor advice. Repeatedly, the counselor/advocates stated that battered women have been told to work harder on making the marriage work. They were reminded of their duties and obligations, and that they had gotten married
Table 11
NUMBER OF WOMEN WHO HAD RECEIVED POOR ADVICE
n=78

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number responding</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Few</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Half</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"for better or for worse." In essence, the wives were being blamed for not working hard enough to avoid the abuse. Very often, the pastors would not take seriously enough the danger to the woman. Women would be told to pray and trust God to give her the strength to endure. A common theme in these examples was that the preservation of the family was the most important priority to religious leaders.

4. Seventy percent of the counselor/advocates surveyed believed that at least some of their clients had received advice from religious leaders to remain in what amounted to a physically violent situation. Of the 87 counselor/advocates who responded to this question, 61 (70.1%) indicated that at least some of the women they had counseled had received advice from their religious leaders to remain in what was a physically violent environment (Table 12). Of the remaining 26 respondents to this question, 14 (16.1%) answered that none of the women that they had worked with had received such advice while 12 (13.8%) did not know if any of their clients had been advised to do so.

Some of the respondents in this survey were not only experienced in working with other women, they were also able to speak out of their own personal experience with domestic violence. One counselor/advocate had the following to say:

I was once in an abusive situation. I do remember a few bad experiences with the preacher of my former church. I remember I had left my abusive husband several times & he pulled everything to get me to come back. One time he even went to church regular--told me he had gotten "saved". Well, the preacher of this church met me one day at work. He told me that my husband was in church & doing well & that I
Table 13
Women Receiving Advice To Stay
In A Physically Violent Situation.

n=87

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Few</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Half</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
needed to be there beside him. I felt that even the church was against me. This preacher knew nothing about my life within the family abusive situation. It has to be understood that the abuser will pull anything to gain back the control over the victim. Tradition has been our enemy for years. Change the views & you will begin to solve the problem.

Another respondent gave another illustration of the dangers that are often not taken seriously enough by religious leaders.

I'm sorry if I sound against religious organizations' participation in domestic violence situations, but I have learned from professional and private experience that most ministers are uneducated on the fatal outcomes and mental influence of violence in the home. I have seen pastors talk female members of their church to return to an abusive environment. I have heard male ministers tell females that their place is at the side of their husbands even if he is violent. Last summer a member of our city's police department was murdered by her ex-husband who visited his minister before the shooting and after the shooting. This minister could have saved a life had he contacted the law enforcement officers immediately instead of thinking that he had taken care of the situation. I think the religious communities should make referrrals to the proper domestic violence programs and not attempt to counsel victims of violence or abusers. It's sad that these men of God are unaware of the effects of violence and sometimes use God's book to influence the abusers to continue the violence and the victims to continue living in fear of bodily and mental harm.

5. In this study, nearly 65% of the respondents believed that religious organizations fostered beliefs that contributed to wife battering. Of the 85 respondents answering this question, 55 (64.7%) answered YES when asked, "In your opinion, do religious organizations as a whole foster beliefs that contribute to wife battering?" A few of the respondents indicated that religious organizations, by virtue of their silence, were contributing to the continuation of beliefs that made room for wife battering. However, there were two larger categories of written responses that deserve mentioning.
First, 24 of those who stated that they believe that religious organizations foster beliefs that contribute to wife battering said that the patriarchal belief structure of some religious organizations was responsible for keeping women in a second-class, subservient role. One counselor wrote:

The fundamentalist approach to religion and those who read the Bible literally encourages an unhealthy balance of power between men & women. The hierarchical and male dominated qualities of most of these religions contribute to the denial which surrounds this problem.

Twenty-three other respondents composed a second category that can be identified by what one counselor/advocate called a "pray and stay" philosophy. The following comments were offered to illustrate this position:

Many of the clients go to the church first and are told through prayer it will all work out. Many have been told by deacons "We do not press charges against one's spouse in this church." Some women have lost their place of worship to their abuser!

Another shelter worker stated, "The women I have worked with who are religious feel that it would be wrong to divorce their abusers because of their religion." In other words, keeping the family intact is paramount, and if a woman is being abused then she needs to be a better wife and pray for her abuser.

Ways that Religious Organizations Can Be Helpful to Battered Wives

The participants in this survey identified a number of ways that churches and other religious organizations can be more helpful to battered women. Because of their financial support and other material contributions, religious organizations were acknowledged to be significant resources for many of the battered women's shelters. The counselor/advocates who took
part in this study were able to envision a number of other creative ways, perhaps yet untried, wherein religious organizations could provide support and encouragement to battered women.

Some of the shelter workers had observed the strengthening effect of religion in the lives of some of their clients. The preponderance of counselor/advocates (87.9%) indicated that at least a few of the battered women they had counseled had found comfort in their religious life. Of course, this result is open to a number of interpretations. First, the religious life of the battered women might simply not come up for discussion. As was seen earlier, 83% of the counselor/advocates indicated that they did not inquire about their clients' religious experience and/or affiliation. So, unless the client volunteers this information, it would go unnoticed by the shelter workers. Second, a high percentage of the women coming to the shelters might simply not have an active religious life. However, it is not likely that a high percentage of battered women coming to shelters would have a total absence of religious symbols functioning in their lives. It is very possible that the symbols of religious meaning for their lives do not take traditional forms.

6. This study indicated that 43.8% of the counselor/advocates believe that religious organizations fostered beliefs that contributed to the ending of violence against women. The counselor/advocates responding to this survey were also asked whether, in their opinion, religious organizations fostered beliefs that contributed to ending violence against women. Of the 91 responding to the survey, 11 did not answer this question while 35 (or 43.8% of the 80 responses) said YES and 45 (56.2%) answered NO. Of those 35 respondents, 25 offered written comments to support their answers. Most of
these responses pointed to the religious teachings about loving others and striving to be peacemakers in the family and in the world. These workers were aware of churches and other religious groups who had taken a stand against domestic violence and were trying to learn more about the part that they may have played in perpetuating the violence. The participants were very appreciative of those organizations that were aware of their programs and were referring women to their shelters. Several respondents mentioned interactions with ministers who were opposed to violence and were supportive of their shelter program.

7. The participants in this survey identified a number of practical ways that religious organizations could be more helpful to battered women. In order to give shelter workers the opportunity to provide the leaders of religious organizations with the most useful feedback possible, the participants of the survey were asked to respond to an open-ended question, "In your opinion, how can religious organizations be most helpful to battered women?" Of the 91 workers completing surveys, 86 wrote at least a few words in response to this question. There were a number of helpful suggestions provided by the participants (Table 14). In their responses to this issue, there was a pervasive appeal to religious leaders to listen to and believe the woman. The emphasis was on the fact that some women in abusive situations do call upon their religious leaders for help. If the clergy are to provide the most appropriate help possible for the most immediate need, then they need to listen very carefully to what the woman is saying.

Given the emphasis upon listening to and believing the woman, perhaps the second most frequent suggestion is the most important. There was a
Table 14

How Churches Might Be Most Helpful to Battered Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen to and believe the woman</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate themselves about domestic violence.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put the woman's safety first.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide material resources to the woman</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make referrals to shelters and other agencies</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
repeated emphasis upon the need for clergy to educate themselves about domestic violence. Obviously, if the clergy are going to listen well they are going to have to know what to listen for. This point was made concisely in a counselor/advocate's terse, one sentence response to this question: "Get some serious training in domestic violence." This emphasis on the importance of training was made in the following statement by one victim advocate:

Pastors, rabbis, and other relig. leaders need to be trained in the psycho dynamics of domestic violence, the cycle of violence and the tendency of violent men either to minimize and deny the violence or to believe they are entitled to control their wives/partners and children--factors which make treatment (or counseling) difficult and change unlikely without intervention. In addition, they need to examine passages in scripture that advocate equality, respect & non-violence in relationships--of which there are many!--They need to tell battered women that they are not to blame for the violence, that a violent relationship is not a marriage, that alcohol does not cause (i.e., is not an excuse) for violence. They need to tell violent men that the violence is the man's own problem, that it is unacceptable & that he must do something about it. And they need to be aware of professional resources in the community for both partners. They need to support battered women for a long time & not expect individual women to be able to leave.

It is clear from these comments that a religious leader would need to become very acquainted with the dynamics of wife battering so as to know how to respond appropriately to both partners. One of the frustrations that appeared frequently throughout the questionnaires was the fact that training events and workshops for clergy were poorly attended. So, one of the challenges that has become apparent from this research was articulated best in the words of one volunteer, "How can we get the clergy to embrace education so that they can be more effective in helping battered women?"
Another very practical response also reflects the need for clergy to be better informed about the needs of battered women. Speaking out of their experience in working with battered women in crisis, counselor/advocates recommended that religious organizations provide a variety of forms of material assistance to women who have to quickly escape a violent situation. Food, clothing, temporary safe housing, and transportation are all material embodiments of emotional and spiritual support. Very often women have to take small children with them when they leave a violent home. Therefore there is an immediate need for health and toiletry items, for diapers, and for school supplies. It is likely that many clergy and other religious leaders are inexperienced in helping a battered woman relocate in an emergency so they need to learn how to determine what is needed in non-intrusive ways. One respondent demonstrated the necessary sensitivity when she wrote that clergy could be helpful by

providing transportation to women/children for church services while being sheltered. Taking them for periods of relaxation away from the shelter. Providing any financial help that is possible and providing furniture and household items when needed during relocation.

One worker spoke affectionately about a church that brought fresh fruits and vegetables to the shelter each Saturday. Such acts of kindness are clearly translated into impressions of being supported in ways that are within the best traditions of religious organizations.

8. What are the opinions of counselor/advocates regarding the reluctance of battered women to seek help from their religious communities?

In a previous study (Martin, 1989), 88% of the clergy surveyed felt that the victims' reluctance to seek help was a major reason that the clergy were
hampered from responding to the problem of wife battering. Therefore, it would be useful to understand why counselor/advocates believe that battered women are reluctant to seek help from their spiritual communities. The respondents were given the opportunity to choose from among four reasons that the literature review had indicated were common reasons why battered women were reluctant to seek help from religious organizations. The following tables (Tables 14 A through 14 D) present how the respondents evaluated each of the proposed reasons. Of those completing this question, 47.3% indicated that the reason that would most likely explain why battered women would be reluctant to seek help from their religious community was that battered women would be too embarrassed to admit that there was a serious problem.

The following written responses to this question represent a theme that is a significant reason why battered women would be reluctant to seek help from their religious organizations:

"They believe they will be blamed for the violence."
"Their own guilt for the domestic violence and a spoken (or unspoken) confirmation by their religion and religious leaders that they are doing something to cause the problem."
"Feeling of failure in (the) responsibility to keep the family together."
"Afraid that they (the religious leaders) would not understand it all; or that they might not be believed--esp(escially) if the husband is a regular church goer."
"Afraid they won't be believed."
"Women are made to feel sinful; (told that) perseverance and love will conquer all."
"(The issue) is never discussed in churches and women feel they are alone in the situation."

It is evident from these responses that women often feel in a relatively unempowered position in their churches. Consequently, they do not feel that
Table 15A

Why Women May Be Reluctant To Seek Help From Their Religious Communities.

Reason: "Wife battering is not recognized as a problem by religious leaders"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not an important concern</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most important concern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less of a concern</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less of a concern</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least concern</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 15 B**

**Why Women May Be Reluctant To Seek Help**
From Their Religious Communities.

*Reason: "Clergy are not perceived to be adequately equipped"*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not an important concern</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most important concern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less of a concern</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less of a concern</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least concern</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15C  
Why Women May Be Reluctant To Seek Help  
From Their Religious Communities.

Reason: "Battered wives are too embarrassed to admit there is a problem."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not an important concern</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most important concern</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less of a concern</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least concern</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least concern</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15 D
Why Women May Be Reluctant To Seek Help
From Their Religious Communities.

Reason: "Their religious community provides no resources for support"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not an important concern</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most important concern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less of a concern</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less of a concern</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least concern</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
they will be believed by their religious leaders. Additionally, women feel that the responsibility is theirs to keep the marriage together. If they seek help from their leaders, then they are admitting that they have failed in their responsibility. It is likely that this dilemma is the origin of much of the embarrassment that counselor/advocates say is the major reason why battered women will not seek help from their religious communities.

One respondent stated that some women might be reluctant to seek such help because their husbands are pillars in the church community. In other places in this questionnaire it was observed that sometimes it is the pastor of the church who is an abuser. One woman wrote, "I have had a minister who regularly 'beat' his wife, so I felt that I could not confide my own abuse to him."

Another respondent had the following comment: "One woman I counseled was married to a . . . minister. Each minister she sought help from told her to be a 'better wife'." Another respondent stated that religious leaders "turn their backs on the women after they encourage her to 'do what is best for her and her children'." As an illustration of this sort of double bind, another participant in the survey offered the following experience of one woman she counseled:

One woman in particular, an active member of her church for many years, told her pastor of the violence at home. He advised her to leave and when she did he told her she could no longer teach her Sunday School class as she was a bad example. Later he told her she should return home.
9. This study indicates that the religiosity of the counselor/advocates is not a major concern in interpreting the basic message of these shelter workers to religious organizations. One of the research questions considered whether there was any relationship between the religiosity of the counselor/advocates participating in the survey and their attitudes toward the helpfulness of religious organizations. The SPSSX statistical package was used to determine the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient ($r$) for the relevant variables in this study. The responses of the participants to the question "Would you ever advise your clients to seek religious counseling?" was compared with whether they were a member of a religious organization. There was a significant positive relationship ($r = .21; p \leq .05$) between belonging to a religious organization and advising clients to seek counseling from religious organizations. Also, the participants' self scoring on the conservative-liberal continuum regarding their religious views was compared with whether they would advise clients to seek religious counseling. There was no significant relationship between how liberal a person's religious views were and whether they would advise clients to seek religious counseling ($r = -.04$).

The participants' answer as to whether they believed that religious organizations fostered beliefs that contributed to wife battering was compared with their conservative/liberal views score and with their membership in a religious organization. There was no significant relationship with either the conservative/liberal views score ($r = -.19$) or membership in a religious organization ($r = .03$). In other words, this survey indicated that counselor/advocates believed that religious organizations
fostered beliefs that contributed to domestic violence based on their experience with battered women and not their personal religious views.

The participants of this survey were very diverse in their religious backgrounds and affiliations. But the message of the counselor advocates was consistent throughout the survey: while religious organizations have been helpful in many ways in the past, they need to do a better job of empowering women to be able to expect help from their religious communities as they seek relief from a violent relationship. Religious leaders who think that shelter workers are not able to see the positive aspects of religion would be mistaken. The counselor/advocates who completed surveys for this study were a diverse group that included a large percentage of individuals who were members in mainline denominational bodies. Many were very active in their spiritual communities and, overall, a very respectful tone about religious values was demonstrated.

10. Counselor/advocates by and large (73.6%) admitted that they did not have written materials to give to their clients who might be struggling with their faith. A large majority (87.5%) acknowledged that they would like to have such materials made available for women who are having religious struggles about their choices for the future. Obviously, such materials would have to display a lack of dogmatism and an emphasis upon the empowering of women as they seek to make autonomous decisions about their future.

11. Most counselor/advocates (81.8%) would like to receive more training in helping women harmonize their religious beliefs with their efforts to keep themselves safe. This response suggests that shelter workers are aware of the very real struggles that many women have in using their religious faith
in ways that will help them make the best choices for themselves and their children. Some workers have suggested that strict funding policies prevent them from engaging their clients in dialogue about their religious struggles. Yet, from this study it is abundantly clear that shelter workers are very much aware of the struggles that battered women are having about the acceptability of separation and/or divorce and about the pressures they feel from their religious community to maintain a certain role in their family and religious community. Whether acknowledged or not, many battered women will make decisions about returning to their abuser and about taking reasonable stands for themselves out of the religious values that help define their identity and worldview.

One worker who had "8-10 years" experience as a volunteer, paid staff member, and trainer of volunteers noted this ambivalence about addressing these religious struggles.

The fact that our organization receives heavy support from 60 local churches does not seem to have helped us to explore this area with our clients. We have been reluctant to raise the issue. This has become painfully clear to me over the last several months. I would appreciate information on how to discuss these matters with clients.

Summary

The statistical and descriptive results of this study have been presented in this chapter. Also included in these quantitative results have been the qualitative data that have been derived from the comments supplied by the counselor/advocates who participated in this survey. In the next chapter, the conclusions which may be drawn from these results will be presented.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Churches, synagogues, and other religious organizations that are committed to healing the hurts of the community are in a strong position to intervene in behalf of battered women in a number of effective ways. However, religious organizations have not historically been among the most informed groups when it comes to understanding the needs of battered women. Therefore, it was the purpose of this study to discover from victim advocates who work with battered women their opinions as to how religious organizations might be more effective in helping these women.

Women who are assaulted and escape to battered women's shelters, arrive at these shelters with a number of pressing needs (Lewis, 1983; Sullivan, 1991, 1992). They also face a number of difficult decisions which they will make out of their belief structure and system of meaning. While battered women's shelters are very capable of responding to many of the most pressing needs of abused women, they are not necessarily designed to assist women with the religious struggles that may impact the decisions which they are facing. Many times battered women find themselves caught in the void between the silence of the churches and the reluctance of the shelter counselor/advocates. This study was an attempt at facilitating a dialogue between those who want to help battered women, but don't always know how, and those who know how, but need help in doing so.

The theoretical framework that guided this research was symbolic interactionism. The goal in this study was not to arrive at a consensus about
objective reality. Rather, the goal was to discover the meanings that shelter workers attribute to the interactions taking place among themselves, battered women, and religious organizations. Therefore, this study was designed to discover the perceptions of shelter workers as to how, in their opinion, religious organizations might be most effective in working with battered women.

The primary research question for this study was as follows: What advice do counselor/advocates who work with battered women's shelters and other agencies have to give to clergy and lay leaders to improve the effectiveness of religious organizations as sources of help and support for battered women? This research project was a descriptive study in which a survey questionnaire was used to obtain the data. The questionnaire was composed of structured questions and open-ended questions which were designed to collect the opinions of counselor/advocates about the interactions of their clients with religious organizations. Questions designed to elicit pertinent demographic data were also included.

The data for this study came from 91 questionnaires from counselor/advocates who work with battered women's shelters in the Commonwealth of Virginia. These 91 questionnaires were returned from 20 shelters which had distributed 130 questionnaires resulting in a 70% return rate.

The programmed statistical package, SPSSX, was used to run frequency distributions and correlations as part of the analysis of the data. The written data provided by the respondents was evaluated qualitatively by carefully reading over the comments a number of times and coding the responses of the participants. The coding was cross checked by independent evaluations
by two professional colleagues both of whom have extensive clinical experience. One colleague had also successfully completed a dissertation on domestic violence and the other had published in the areas of conflict resolution and religion as a family strength.

Conclusions of the Study

The conclusion of this study can be stated as follows:

In the opinion of the counselor/advocates participating in this study, religious organizations can become more effective in helping battered women if the leaders of these organizations will do the following:

1. Become better informed about the dynamics of wife battering;
2. Be more supportive of victims by taking a more public stand against wife battering and by creating a more accepting, healing environment within their faith community;
3. Learn how to refer those involved in domestic violence to community agencies that are better prepared to assist the partners;
4. Become more involved with local shelters in providing financial and other resources to assist battered women as they search for ways to live in a violence-free home.

These action statements summarize a number of recommendations made repeatedly in the results of this study by the counselor/advocates who took the time to respond in detail to the questionnaires. Each of these important elements warrants a brief summary.

1. Religious leaders need to become better educated about domestic violence. Repeatedly throughout the survey, the counselor/advocates pointed out the difficulties that are created by the lack of insight and awareness on the part of religious leaders regarding domestic violence. If religious
organizations are going to continue to help families, then such issues as the
cycle of violence, the psychodynamics of abuse, and power struggles within
relationships need to be topics of ongoing education for the clergy. In other
words, they need to "open a file" on these and other topics related to wife
battering. The resources used by shelters can also be used by clergy as they
endeavor to educate themselves about this crime that can have such a
devastating impact upon the family members involved. The participants in
this survey did not necessarily imply that the harm that came to battered
women from religious organizations was as a consequence of malice. Rather,
many of the difficulties that were created were as a consequence of the clergy
simply not understanding the dangers entailed in a violent household.

When the personnel who do the counseling for the religious organization
do not know how to assess for risks in highly conflictual relationships, then
they may unintentionally expose victims of battering to even more abuse. If
in a marriage counseling session, the counselor elicits from the wife
information that may be embarrassing to her abuser in the abuser's
presence, then the woman may be in grave danger after they leave the
session. A counselor needs to learn definite procedures for handling
counseling sessions where wife battering is suspected. Religious leaders also
need to learn how to assess for lethality in a violent situation. Such leaders
cannot assume that, just because the wife does not seem to be overly
concerned about leaving the relationship, then the level of abuse must be of
little concern. The respondents to this survey repeatedly emphasized how
important it is for religious counselors to be aware of the psychodynamics of
abuse and to understand why a woman might remain in an abusive situation.

The challenge, of course, is determining how to encourage the clergy to open themselves up to education and training about domestic violence. One of the respondents had some useful insights to share:

As a member of our local ministerial association in the county, I am accepted and recognized as the person for mainline church leaders to deal with any member of their church who is experiencing domestic violence. I have presented programs on family violence to the ministerial association and have received many referrals. While several of our pastors have training in counseling, they hesitate to counsel our clients and recognize their limitations in this area.

It may be the case that it will be easier to go to the clergy than to expect them to come to workshops and seminars sponsored by shelters and other agencies. If the shelter can designate a contact person who will be available to answer questions and supply reading materials to the clergy, then perhaps the door can be opened to greater awareness on the part of the clergy. As trust and confidence is gained in such resource persons, religious leaders can experience the opening up of a whole new world of insight into problems that have been hidden behind closed doors.

2. The clergy need to become more supportive of battered women. The results of this research highlighted the numerous ways wherein battered women did not feel supported by the leaders of their religious community. There are a number of ways wherein religious leaders can become more supportive of battered women. First, religious organizations need to become more proactive and outspoken about issues of domestic violence. When the issue is not addressed publically in the faith community, women who are
being physically abused by their partners feel very isolated and alone with their struggle. Previous research indicates that the level of wife battering that takes place in religious groups which place an emphasis upon non-violence (e.g. Quakers, Mennonites, Church of the Brethren) is at about the same level as that in the society at large (Block, 1992; Brutz & Allen, 1986; Hildebrand, 1992). Therefore, it would be reasonable to conclude that the level of wife battering in other religious organizations would be about the same as is reflected in the two national surveys on domestic violence (Straus & Gelles, 1990b). Consequently, rather than practicing a theology of silence (Bussert, 1986), religious organizations can bring this issue out into the open through sermons, class series, and guest speakers. However, it is not enough to offer a workshop at some obscure time, or to convene a class in some distant part of the building. The issue of domestic violence needs to be addressed in the most public forum of the congregation by someone that knows whereof they speak.

Second, religious leaders can help battered women by creating a more supportive, accepting, healing environment within the faith community. As one reads the comments of the counselor/advocates who have contributed their recommendations to this survey, one can sense the pain in the lives of women who have felt shut out of their own faith community. A number of the respondents offered comments and illustrations about women who felt caught in a double bind because it seemed if there was no acceptable path for them to follow. Several of the participants stressed how important it was for the clergy to be supportive of the woman no matter what decision she made.
One counselor/advocate from a shelter in a rural area of Virginia suggested that religious organizations can be most helpful to battered women by being supportive to victims of domestic violence no matter what they decide to do. That means if she decides to stay to assist her with whatever needs she might have, even if she just needs to talk. But let the religious organization be aware of the dynamics that are involved. But the most important thing to remember if these victims decided to leave the situation, don't cut off their support system just because you may not agree because of religious (reasons). I agree that the family is sacred but not at the cost of death or emotional scarring to the victim or to the children.

Another worker commented, "I also feel that if clergy expressed genuine concern for the women's safety rather than adhering to religious rules or guidelines they would be perceived to be more supportive." This observation reflects what may be the crux of the matter. Clearly, no mainline religion would have a rule that would explicitly minimize a woman's safety in favor of some value other than another person's safety (as in cases of self defense). What has become clear from this research, however, is that many victim advocates who work with battered women have the impression that religious organizations in general have a higher primary commitment to preserving marriages than to preserving the safety of women. Battered women cannot feel supported by their religious organizations if they know that there is going to be a bias in favor of preserving the marriage almost at all costs, and that they will have to work hard to persuade the religious counselor that their safety needs override any other vested interests of the organization. Indeed, religious organizations do have a vested interest in keeping marriages together and in projecting an image of a congregation of happy families. These vested interests, according to the participants in this survey,
are at the expense of the women who may have to suffer in order that the congregation can project certain images to the community.

A third way wherein clergy can be more supportive of battered women is by demonstrating a willingness to examine their religious belief systems for inherited thought forms that are offensive to women. Fortunately, there have been a number of changes that have taken place in the culture at large that have moderated, to some extent, the impact of oppressive structures upon women. However, religious organizations sometimes are bastions of an orthodoxy of inequality so that a cloak of righteousness is often draped about a system of patriarchal privilege. The respondents in this survey repeatedly pointed the finger at such belief systems which may, unintentionally, cooperate with abusive men to help them attempt to control and dominate their wives.

3. Religious leaders should become better able to refer those involved in domestic violence to community agencies that are better prepared to assist them. The respondents in this study stressed that, until clergy and lay leaders become better trained to work with issues of domestic violence, they need to acquaint themselves with the resources in their community and refer people involved in wife battering to these agencies. This researcher has been a minister for 23 years, six of which have been in the Northern Virginia area. It was not until beginning this training, for which this research project is a culmination, that he was aware of the existence of battered women's shelters. And this particular awareness came through academic channels rather than the shelter network or other social service agencies. Even in an area that is so rich in resources as is Northern Virginia, one can become lost in the
bureaucratic maze as one seeks to discover resources for women who are being abused by their partners. For example, while functioning as a pastoral counselor, this researcher searched without immediate success for an interpreter to work in a crisis situation with a hearing impaired woman who had been battered by her husband. While it may be true that hotlines are ready and available, if the clergy do not know how those hotlines function, or how the referral process works, then they may tend to stay with the familiar processes that have been so ineffective.

4. Religious leaders need to become more involved in providing financial and other forms of assistance to battered women. Because shelters have limited resources, they are very much aware of the need for religious organizations to continue providing the financial and other material support to battered women. Some respondents stressed that, depending upon the circumstances, the financial need may continue for a long time. Therefore, faith communities must be prepared to be supportive of victims of violence as they struggle to become independent of the abusive control of their partner. Particularly if there are small children involved, the needs of the woman and her children may be desperate until such time as they can become connected with the social services system.

The participants in this survey recommended that leaders set aside funds to assist victims of domestic violence who contact the religious organization. Assistance with transportation to doctors, to social services agencies, and to job interviews would be of great assistance to women who are in the uncomfortable position of being dependent upon strangers. Certainly the Judeo-Christian tradition of hospitality to strangers covers such assistance.
Implications for Shelter Workers

It is evident from this survey that counselor/advocates have an awareness of their own need for more training in helping battered women with their religious issues. These issues are not separate and apart from the challenges presented by the abuse. These religious struggles are very often at the core of battered women's decision making processes as they endeavor to make personal choices that may go counter to their previous religious training and enculturation. If shelter personnel are not sensitive to these struggles, battered women may, while valuing the safety of the shelter, feel that this is one more place in their lives where they are not really understood. Evidently, this survey has given several shelter workers the opportunity to reconsider the implications involved in the religious struggles of their clients. One counselor/advocate confirmed this possibility with the following words.

The program I volunteer in has never touched on any religious organization's beliefs, support (or) lack thereof, in either of our training programs or in-services up to date. We have not been asked to inquire about any aspect of the victims' religious experiences or beliefs. This may be something we will want to consider as we reorganize our program.

As a former victim and volunteer, I thank you for your interest in domestic violence. God will bless your efforts!

It should be stressed that counselor/advocates do not have to be intrusive in their responses to battered women. They can simply reflect an awareness and acceptance of the struggle. Such an openness will likely be all that is needed. Perhaps, a few well written pamphlets placed around can give abused women the opportunity to reflect in new ways about the spiritual dimensions of their struggles.
Implications for Further Research

This study has revealed the need for additional research in the area of the religious implications of wife battering. First of all, more research needs to be conducted with the women who are the victims of battering as to the nature of their religious struggles as they endeavor to cope with the violence. This present study has considered the observations of victim advocates as they have interacted with battered women whom they have counseled. Some of their responses have come from their own experiences as victims as well as their experiences as "wounded healers." Their reflections have come out of their impressions of the experiences of battered women who have many times felt betrayed and abandoned by their God and by their faith communities. Research with the victims themselves needs to be conducted to explore how they managed to work through what might be some unhealthy aspects of their socialization processes in their religious lives. Such a topic would be a fruitful area for qualitative research.

Some research needs to be conducted to determine the policies of shelters regarding the religious issues of their clients. Some of the respondents indicated that the policies of their agency or shelter restricted them from exploring these issues with their clients. Others seemed not to be sure what the policies might be. Several counselor/advocates indicated that they believed that discussing the religious struggles of their clients might encourage them to continue disempowering practices of escaping into religion instead of taking charge of their lives. If shelter workers cannot, or should not, explore these issues with their clients, do they consider any other options? Do they have referral sources in which they have confidence?
Another area that would prove to be a fruitful area for study is research with batterers regarding their belief structures that might keep in place violent practices. One respondent in the present study reflected some measure of compassion when she commented on her experiences as a men's program coordinator at the shelter with which she worked. She stated, "I believe men are hindered as much by religious values/beliefs as women. They, too, feel trapped by the lack of understanding and helpful resources available to them religiously or otherwise." Religious organizations need to be able to publically acknowledge the need for men's programs within an environment that will be both supportive and will also hold men accountable for their behavior. However, religious organizations may discover that substantial changes need to occur in their own belief systems that may keep women at a disadvantage and disempowered.

Conclusions

The response of the participants to this study was somewhat surprising. When the questionnaire was constructed, there was some reluctance on this researcher's part to leave so much space for additional comments. Leaving so much space for comments often reflects either naivete or excessive optimism (Dillman, 1978). In the chapters reporting the results of the survey (Chapters IV and V) an effort was made to indicate the number of respondents who chose to include written comments along with the responses wherein they merely had to circle a letter or number. The number of respondents who took the time to write lengthy comments was quite gratifying and gave a much needed qualitative dimension to this study.
During the data collection process it was necessary to call several of the shelter workers to follow up on some aspect of the research process. In every case, the shelter administrators were very positive about the study and expressed appreciation for the opportunity for their workers so participate in the study. Those administrators who declined to participate did so reluctantly, either because they did not believe that the research applied to their agency or else because they were restricted by their need to invest all of their time in writing grant proposals. In other words, this research obviously touched a felt need on the part of victim advocates working with battered women in Virginia. The care with which they filled out the questionnaires, and the concern with which they addressed the topic, confirmed this researcher's suspicion that they very much wanted their voices to be heard on this topic.

This study also confirmed that there is a need for more dialogue between the shelters, which deliver the day to day services to battered women in crisis, and the religious organizations of the community which can serve as support systems for the women and for the shelters. The shelters need the prophetic voice of the religious communities crying out against the crime and injustice of wife battering. The religious communities need the expertise of the shelters in responding to the needs of battered women and their children. The problem of woman abuse is a problem that is deeply engrained in the culture and can only be adequately addressed if as many social forces as possible are allied against it.

While the results of this study may seem to be an indictment against religious organizations in general, it certainly is not intended to be such a
blanket criticism. Certainly there are untold numbers of women who seek help and guidance from their religious communities and find those needs met quickly and compassionately. Consequently, these women never find their way to a shelter for battered women. It is not possible to know, then, how much good religious organizations are doing in opposing the crime of wife battering and in helping those who are the victims of this abuse. However, the purpose of this study was to give a voice to victim advocates, who have a wealth of experience that they wish they did not have to have, so that they can speak to religious organizations to let them know of ways that such organizations can be more helpful to battered women. In speaking their truth, these counselor/advocates have called attention to unfortunate practices that need to be changed. However, they have also expressed appreciation for the contributions of religious organizations which have made their sad work that much easier. Given the eloquence with which these victim advocates have spoken, the purpose of this study has been met.

Postscript: The Miracle Question

Solution-oriented, brief therapists often utilize the strategy of the "miracle question" (Berg & Miller, 1992; O' Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, 1989). In other words, what would happen if we all woke up one morning and a miracle had occurred? What would be different? Without going into great detail, one can easily envision a situation wherein there would be no battered women. However, religious organizations owe their existence to the theological questions raised by that empty vision. Whether human beings choose to be overtly religious or not, they tend to reflect, from time to time, upon such questions as why evil exists and why innocent people must suffer.
All religions must somehow seek to answer such questions if these religions are to be intellectually satisfying. The existence of battered women and abused children in religious homes forces a reflective person to wonder about the paradoxes of human nature and the seeming impotence of good to control evil. The awareness of such struggles often leads us to congregate in sacred places to contemplate these paradoxes, to seek deliverance from our evil possibilities, and to find some release from our guilt and sense of failure.

Consequently, one is invited to enjoy the prospect of an alternative vision. In this vision, battered women's shelters are working arm in arm with religious organizations to promote the healing and recovery of battered women. In celebrating their rich debt to the shelter movement for all they have done in the last two decades for battered women, religious organizations would be incessant in their efforts to learn from those who have the sad expertise on helping victims of abuse. In return, counselor/advocates would be aware of a number of resource persons within the religious community to whom they could refer women who need the encouragement of a trusted spiritual guide. There would be no lack of religious organizations to call for additional help when the shelter is full and another battered woman and her children are on the way. Also, those counselor/advocates who are so inclined, would find within their own faith community a place of encouragement, affirmation, appreciation, and renewal for their service to battered women.

This study was designed to be a part of the dialogic process that can lead to the kind of community that should exist among those who are committed to helping victims of domestic violence.
References


Jones, A. (1994). *Next time she'll be dead: Battering and how to stop it*. Boston: Beacon Press


Risk factors and adaptations to violence in 8,145 families (pp.113-132). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Questionnaire
Dear Domestic Violence Advocate,

Thank you for participating in this survey. The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain valuable information from you as to how religious organizations might be more helpful to battered women. The questionnaire is to be completed anonymously so that the confidentiality of your responses can be insured.

The questionnaire is relatively brief; but every question is important, so please be sure to respond to every question. Also, the last page has been left blank so that you might provide additional comments that you think would be helpful.

1. What is your position with the domestic violence program? (Circle one number)
   - 1 PAID
   - 2 VOLUNTEER

2. Months as domestic violence program counselor/advocate ______ months

3. How is your program primarily funded? (Circle number)
   - 1 BY A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION
   - 2 PUBLICLY FUNDED (for example, county or state funding)
   - 3 PRIVATELY FUNDED (for example, United Way)
   - 4 OTHER: ____________
   - 5 DON'T KNOW.

4. Approximately how many battered women have you assisted? (Circle number)
   - 1 1 TO 25
   - 2 BETWEEN 25 AND 50
   - 3 BETWEEN 50 AND 100
   - 4 MORE THAN 100

5. Do you routinely inquire about your clients' religious experience and/or affiliation? (Circle one)
   - 1 YES
   - 2 NO

6. Approximately how many of the women you have worked with sought help for a violent relationship (of any kind at any point) from a religious organization (Circle number)
   - 1 NONE
   - 2 A FEW
   - 3 ABOUT HALF
   - 4 MOST
   - 5 ALL
   - 6 DON'T KNOW
7. Approximately, how many of the women you have counseled through your domestic violence program have had religious counseling since coming to the shelter? (Circle one number)
   1. NONE SO FAR
   2. A FEW
   3. ABOUT HALF
   4. MOST
   5. DON'T KNOW

8. Would you ever advise women who are experiencing physical abuse to seek counseling from a religious organization? (Circle number)
   1. YES
   2. NO

   If YES, under what circumstances? If NO, why not?
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

9. In your opinion, do religious organizations as a whole foster beliefs that contribute to wife battering? (Circle number)
   1. YES
   2. NO

   Please explain: ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

10. In your opinion, do religious organizations foster beliefs that contribute to ending violence against women? (Circle one number)
    1. YES
    2. NO

    Please explain: ________________________________
    ________________________________
    ________________________________

11. In your experience, how many of the women you have counseled reported finding comfort in their religious life/convictions/beliefs/practices? (Circle one number)
    1. NONE SO FAR
    2. A FEW
    3. ABOUT HALF
    4. MOST
    5. ALL
    6. DON'T KNOW
12. How many of the women you have counseled who have sought religious counseling have received, in your opinion, poor advice from their spiritual leaders or advisors?

1. NONE SO FAR
2. A FEW
3. ABOUT HALF
4. MOST

Please give examples:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

13. Have any of the women you have seen who sought religious counseling received advice from their religious leaders or spiritual advisors to stay in a physically violent situation?

1. NONE SO FAR
2. A FEW
3. ABOUT HALF
4. MOST
5. DON'T KNOW

14. In your opinion, how can religious organizations be most helpful to battered women?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
15. If you have concerns about battered women receiving counseling from personnel in religious organizations, which of the following would most accurately represent your concern? (Please rank your concerns with 1 being most disturbing to you)

- Counselors would use couples counseling
- Counselors would most likely be male
- Counselors would not know how to assess risk for abuse and violence
- Counselors would be too invested in keeping the marriage together without understanding the safety issues for the wife

Others:

16. Do you have written materials available to give to women who are struggling with religious beliefs to help them to harmonize their beliefs with safe courses of action? (Circle one)

1 YES  2 NO
If YES, what materials are you using?

Would you like to see such materials made available to you?

1 YES  2 NO
Comments:

17. Have you received training as to how to handle battered women's struggle with their religious beliefs? (Circle number)

1 YES  2 NO
If NO, would such training be useful to you?

1. YES
2. NO

18. If, in your experience, you have found that some battered women are reluctant to seek help from their religious communities, what might explain their reluctance? (Rank order the ones that you think apply with 1 being most important)

- Wife battering is not recognized as a problem by religious leaders
- Clergy are not perceived as adequately equipped to be helpful
- Battered wives are too embarrassed to admit that there is a serious problem
- Their religious community provides no resources for support or assistance
- Others:
Finally, we would like to ask a few questions about yourself for statistical purposes

19. What is your sex? (Circle number)
   1 MALE
   2 FEMALE

20. What is your present age?
   _______ YEARS

21. What is the highest level of schooling you have completed? (Circle one)
   1 HIGH SCHOOL NOT YET COMPLETED
   2 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE
   3 SOME COLLEGE, BUT NOT A GRADUATE
   4 COLLEGE GRADUATE
   5 POST GRADUATE CREDITS
   6 GRADUATE DEGREE

22. What is your present marital status? (Circle one)
   1 SINGLE, NEVER MARRIED
   2 FIRST MARRIAGE
   3 LIVING TOGETHER BUT NOT MARRIED
   4 REMARRIED, DIVORCED, OR SEPARATED
   5 WIDOWED
   6 OTHER

23. What is your race?
   1 WHITE, NON-HISPANIC
   2 BLACK
   3 HISPANIC
   4 ORIENTAL
   5 NATIVE AMERICAN
   6 OTHER ________________

24. Do you belong to a religious organization? (Circle number)
   1 YES
   2 NO
   If yes, please indicate which organization or denomination: ________________________________
When answering the next four questions, please place an "X" on the line above the appropriate response:

25. How would you describe your religious views?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)
Very Conservative _______ _______ _______ _______ _______ Very Liberal

26. How would you describe your political views?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)
Very Conservative _______ _______ _______ _______ _______ Very Liberal

27. How would you describe your religious participation in terms of attendance at religious services?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)
Very Active _______ _______ _______ _______ _______ Do not attend at all

28. How would you describe your religious commitment in terms of your active involvement in the activities (other than worship services) of a religious organization?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)
Very Active _______ _______ _______ _______ _______ Do not participate
Additional Comments
If you have any other comments about your work with battered women, about religious organizations, or about this survey please provide them below. (Use the back if needed)
APPENDIX B

List of Battered Women's Shelters

Map of Shelter Distribution in Virginia
**LIST OF SERVICE PROGRAMS**

This list of domestic violence service programs includes the name of the program, the coordinator of domestic violence services, mailing address, office phone number, and hotline phone number (in italics).

Fact sheets for each program follow in alphabetical order by program title. The fact sheets list all services provided and localities served by the program. Localities listed in bold print are areas where all services are available to residents; other localities listed are secondary service areas where services may be more limited or transportation may be required to access services. (NOTE: "TBA" before service indicates service is to be added in upcoming year.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>Coordinator</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abuse Alternatives</td>
<td>Beth Owens</td>
<td>2022 Euclid Avenue, Bristol, VA 24201</td>
<td>703/645-5499, 615/764-2287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTS: Turning Points</td>
<td>Pat Sodo</td>
<td>P.O. Box 74, Dumfries, VA 22026</td>
<td>703/221-4855, 703/221-4951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria Domestic Violence Program</td>
<td>Claire Dunn</td>
<td>110 N. Royal Street, #201, Alexandria, VA 22314</td>
<td>703/838-4911, 703/838-4911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternatives for Abused Adults</td>
<td>Sue Miller</td>
<td>P.O. Box 1414, Staunton, VA 24401</td>
<td>703/886-4001, 800/56-HAVEN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amherst Co. Commission Against Domestic Violence</td>
<td>G.F. Gould</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arlington Community Temp Shelter</td>
<td>Charmain Hendy</td>
<td>P.O. Box 1285, Arlington, VA 22210</td>
<td>703/237-0881, 703/227-0881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avalon</td>
<td>Joyce O'Brien</td>
<td>P.O. Box 1079, Williamsburg, VA 23187-1079</td>
<td>804/258-5022, 804/258-5051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany House of NOVA, Inc</td>
<td>Doris J. Ward</td>
<td>501 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041</td>
<td>703/998-5811, 703/256-3526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARES</td>
<td>Jerry Richards</td>
<td>P.O. Box 1142, Petersburg, VA 23804</td>
<td>804/961-0561, 804/861-0849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choices</td>
<td>Libby Boyd</td>
<td>P.O. Box 317, Stanley, VA 22851</td>
<td>703/743-4414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens Against Family Violence</td>
<td>Lynn Wehau</td>
<td>P.O. Box 210, Martinsville, VA 24114</td>
<td>703/632-8701, 703/632-8701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPE</td>
<td>Lind Hodges</td>
<td>P.O. Box 528, Gloucester, VA 23061</td>
<td>804/693-COPE, 800/542-COPE</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOVES</td>
<td>Toni Morris</td>
<td>P.O. Box 2381, Danville, VA 24541</td>
<td>804/799-3683, 804/791-1400</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESCADV</td>
<td>Diane Parks</td>
<td>P.O. Box 3, Onancock, VA 23417</td>
<td>804/787-1329, 804/778-1329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfax Co. Women's Shelter</td>
<td>Mim Keo</td>
<td>P.O. Box 1174, Vienna, VA 22183</td>
<td>703/435-4940, 703/435-4940</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Crisis Support Services</td>
<td>Liz Betterly</td>
<td>P.O. Box 447, Norton, VA 24273</td>
<td>703/59-7240/5835, 800/572-2278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Focus of Richmond County</td>
<td>Pam McNees</td>
<td>The Haven, P.O. Box 713, Warsaw, VA 22572</td>
<td>804/333-5370, 800/22-HAVEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Resource Center, Inc.</td>
<td>Katie Gifford</td>
<td>P.O. Box 512, Wytheville, VA 24382</td>
<td>703/228-7411, 703/228-8431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Violence Prevention Program</td>
<td>Nancy Turner</td>
<td>420 South Main Street, Emporia, VA 23847</td>
<td>804/348-0100, 804/348-0100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Step</td>
<td>Sue Ann Myers</td>
<td>P.O. Box 621, Harrisonburg, VA 22801</td>
<td>703/344-0295, 703/434-0295</td>
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<td>Organization</td>
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<td>Franklin Co. Family Resource Ctr.</td>
<td>ATTN: Jaly Daniels</td>
<td>Rocky Mount, VA</td>
<td>24151</td>
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<td>P.O. Box 4</td>
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<td>The Geneve Shelter</td>
<td>ATTN: Diane Hall/Barb Smith</td>
<td>Suffolk, VA</td>
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<td>Help and Emergency Response</td>
<td>ATTN: Sue Sigler</td>
<td>Portsmouth, VA</td>
<td>23705</td>
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<td>Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter</td>
<td>ATTN: Sandy Scafd/Pam Stutz</td>
<td>Leesburg, VA</td>
<td>22075</td>
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<td>Project Horizon, Inc.</td>
<td>ATTN: Lisa Coffey</td>
<td>Lexington, VA</td>
<td>24450</td>
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<td>RCDV</td>
<td>ATTN: Nancy Fowler</td>
<td>Fredericksburg, VA</td>
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<td>Response</td>
<td>ATTN: Georgia Taylor</td>
<td>Woodstock, VA</td>
<td>22664</td>
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<td>Saferhome Systems</td>
<td>ATTN: Wilma McClung/Melanie White</td>
<td>Cornington, VA</td>
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<td>Samaritan House</td>
<td>ATTN: Elen Ferber</td>
<td>Virginia Beach, VA</td>
<td>23452</td>
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<td>Services to Abused Families</td>
<td>ATTN: Pat Latova/Linda Wirby</td>
<td>Galilee, VA</td>
<td>22701</td>
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<td>The Shelter for Abused Women</td>
<td>ATTN: Donna Carpenter</td>
<td>Winchester, VA</td>
<td>22604</td>
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<td>Shelter for Help in Emergency</td>
<td>ATTN: Carrie Lominack</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
<td>22903</td>
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<td>TAP Women's Resource Center</td>
<td>ATTN: Elen Brown</td>
<td>Roanoke, VA</td>
<td>24001-2868</td>
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<td>The Turning Point</td>
<td>ATTN: Darlene Young</td>
<td>Roanoke, VA</td>
<td>24016</td>
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<td>Victim Assistance Network</td>
<td>ATTN: Ann Van Ryzin</td>
<td>Alexandria, VA</td>
<td>22306</td>
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<td>Women's Res Ctr-New River Valley</td>
<td>ATTN: Pat Brown</td>
<td>Front Royal, VA</td>
<td>22630</td>
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<td>YWCA Family Viol Prev Prog</td>
<td>ATTN: Cynthia Oke-nnou</td>
<td>Lynchburg, VA</td>
<td>24504</td>
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<td>YWCA Women's Advocacy Prog</td>
<td>ATTN: Venita Caruso-Walton</td>
<td>Richmond, VA</td>
<td>23219</td>
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<td>YWCA Women In Crisis Program</td>
<td>ATTN: Cheryl Bonneville</td>
<td>Norfolk, VA</td>
<td>23510</td>
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List of Service Programs
PRINTED BY VIRGINIANS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE JANUARY 25, 1994

VIRGINIANS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Virginia Service Areas

Direct Service Programs are located in every city listed.

The area around each city listed has been shaded for easy identification.

For more information, contact Virginians Against Domestic Violence, 2850 Sandy Bay Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185, (804) 221-0990.
APPENDIX C

Letter to Shelter Administrators

Informed Consent Form

Subject's Information Sheet

Follow-up Letter to Shelter Administrators
January 27, 1994

Dear 1994 VADV Conference Participant:

Virginia Tech is conducting a study of the experiences of domestic violence counselor/advocates in order to help religious organizations become more aware of ways that they might better support battered women. From this study resources will be produced that will be used to inform these leaders regarding the opportunities they have to serve women who are at risk or who have already been battered. Even more importantly, we are confident that this study will provide valuable information to individuals such as yourself who are expressing a commitment to battered women through their work with shelters and other agencies.

We would like to include the experiences of the workers in your program so that we might more completely and accurately represent the stories of battered women and how religious organizations have been either helpful or not helpful to them. We have included a sample of the form that we will be using to enrich our understanding of the experiences of counselor/advocates as they have responded to the needs of women who have been abused.

Please examine the enclosed questionnaire to determine if you are willing to distribute these questionnaires to volunteer and paid workers at your agency. If you are willing to distribute these surveys, please use the enclosed form to let us know how many surveys you might need. Please complete the form which describes the demographic profile of your agency and let us know if you have any suggestions for improving our survey whether or not you choose to participate. Your feedback is very important to us as we attempt to collect useful data which we hope will enhance services to battered women.

The confidentiality of your workers and the women they have served will be strictly protected. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call either of the research staff listed below.

Sincerely,

Sandra Stith, Ph. D.
Program Director
Family and Child Development
Virginia Tech
2990 Telestar Court
Falls Church, VA 22042
(703) 698-6035

Jerry Gross
Graduate Student
Family and Child Development
Virginia Tech
2990 Telestar Court
Falls Church, VA 22042
(703) 698-6035
Informed Consent for Participants in Investigative Projects

Improving Religious Organizations' Effectiveness with Battered Women: Advice from Victim Advocates

Principal Investigator: Waymon Gerald Gross

Study Purposes and Procedures:

The purpose of this study is to gather advice from victim advocates regarding how to improve religious organizations' effectiveness with battered women. We want your ideas about how religious organizations can be more helpful to battered women.

We are asking you to complete a survey about your experiences with battered women who have sought assistance from religious organizations and your ideas about how these organizations can be more helpful. You should be able to complete the survey in less than 30 minutes. Please seal the survey in the enclosed envelope and place it in the envelope located in your shelter. All surveys will be mailed back by the director of your shelter. If you are willing to be contacted by telephone later to give us more ideas, you are asked to sign the last page of the survey and let us know how to contact you. These telephone calls will be audiotaped and your ideas may be included in the final report of this project.

Benefits: We hope that this study will help us prepare religious organizations to be more helpful to battered women. No guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate. Your shelter will receive a summary of this research when completed. If you would like to have a copy mailed directly to you, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this research will be kept confidential. Please do not put your name on the survey. If you are willing to be contacted for further information, please fill out the form at the end of the survey, detach the form and place it in the envelope with the informed consent form. Your name will never be associated with your responses in any report of this study. If you are selected to participate in the follow-up telephone interviews your conversation with the researcher will be taped. These tapes will only be reviewed by Waymon Gerald Gross and Sandra Stith and will be erased after January 1993.

PERMISSION: I have read and understand the informed consent and conditions of this project. I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary. I know no reason why I cannot participate in this study. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project. If I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Participant's Signature

Approval of Research

This research project has been approved, as required by the Institutional Review Board for projects involving human subjects at Virginia Tech and by the Department of Family and Child Development.
SUBJECT'S PERMISSION (PLEASE KEEP THIS FORM)

Improving Religious Organizations's Effectiveness with Battered Women: Advice from Victim Advocates

I have read and understand the informed consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study.

If I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I will contact:

Waymon Gerald Gross (703) 698-6035
Investigator Phone

Sandra Stith (703) 698-6035
Faculty Advisor Phone

Ernest Stout (703) 231-6077
Chair, IRB Phone
Research Division
Dear Program Administrator:

Our research project on how religious organizations can be more helpful to battered women is going very well. In order for us to have as representative a sample as possible, please consider participating in this study. Anyone who has had some interaction with battered women and may have observed their involvement with religious organizations (as to whether they have been either helpful or not helpful to the woman) can participate.

Name of Your Service Program: ________________________

Address: _____________________________________________

Your Name: __________________________________________

Yes, we would like to participate in this study.
We will need the following number of questionnaires __

We have already sent in our questionnaires
We gave out ____ questionnaires and ____ were returned.

No, we will not be able to participate in this study.
In order to help us improve our study, please share with us why you have chosen not to participate in this study at this time.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

If you have any other comments that might help us in our study, please provide them below (and on the back if needed):

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your help.

Jerry Gross
VITA
Waymon Gerald Gross

EDUCATION

M.S., 1994, Department of Family and Child Development, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Major Area: Marriage and Family Therapy.

M.A., 1990, Department of Philosophy, Southern Illinois University
Major Area: Philosophy
Thesis: The Moral Status of the Unborn

M.A., 1976, Harding University Graduate School of Religion
Harding University
Major Area: Pastoral Ministry

M.Th., 1975, Harding University Graduate School of Religion
Harding University
Major Area: Pastoral Ministry and Counseling

M.S., 1968, School of Engineering
Vanderbilt University
Major Area: Civil Engineering

B.E., 1967, School of Engineering
Vanderbilt University
Major Area: Civil Engineering

OTHER EDUCATION

Doctoral studies, Department of Philosophy and Religion
University of Georgia (1979-1982)
PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1994             Counseling Associate, Vienna Family Therapy Center  
                 Vienna, Virginia

1988-1993        Minister of Involvement and Pastoral Counseling  
                 Fairfax Church of Christ  
                 Fairfax, Virginia

1985-1988        Minister of Church Life  
                 Campus Church of Christ  
                 Norcross, Georgia

1983-1985        Minister of Education  
                 Olive Street Church of Christ  
                 Marietta, Georgia

1978-1983        Teacher  
                 Southeastern Biblical Institute  
                 Atlanta, Georgia

1975-1978        Minister  
                 Carbondale Church of Christ  
                 Carbondale, Illinois

1970-1975        Minister  
                 Church of Christ  
                 Clarksburg, Tennessee

1968-1970        Corps of Engineers  
                 U. S. Army

PUBLICATIONS

Abilene, TX: Quality Publications.
PRESENTATIONS

"Faith Shaping in Christian Education"
paper presented at the Ministers of Education Workshop
Abilene Christian University
Abilene, Texas (July, 1993)

"The Absence of the Feminine in the Worship Assembly"
paper presented at the Christian Scholars Conference
Harding University
Searcy, Arkansas (July, 1993)

"On Worshipping the Gods of a Beaten Enemy"
paper presented at the Christian Scholars Conference
Oklahoma Christian University
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (July, 1992)

"Moral Development among College Students"
paper presented at the Christian Scholars Conference
Pepperdine University
Malibu, California (July, 1988)

"The Ethics of Commitment for College Students"
paper presented at the Christian Scholars Conference
Pepperdine University
Malibu, California (July, 1987)

"Faith Development in Adolescence"
paper presented at the Christian Education Conference
Atlanta, Georgia (January, 1985)

Waymon Gerald Gross

April 12, 1994