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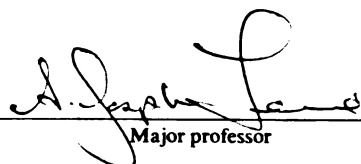
The Role of Adult Learning in Helping
Domestic Violence Victims Make Personal Change

presented by

Paula E. Yensen

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in Educational
Administration


Major professor

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**THE ROLE OF ADULT LEARNING IN HELPING
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS MAKE PERSONAL CHANGE**

By

Paula E. Yensen

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to

Michigan State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Department of Educational Administration

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF ADULT LEARNING IN HELPING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS MAKE PERSONAL CHANGE

By

Paula E. Yensen

The purpose of this study was to explore the role learning plays in helping domestic violence victims cope with their problems. Domestic violence victims, like other adult learners, use a variety of learning strategies to meet their learning needs. Very little research has dealt specifically with the adult learning experiences of domestic violence victims.

In this study, qualitative research methodology was used to select, describe, and interpret data. The grounded theory was systematically obtained, analyzed, and grounded in the data itself. The theory was derived from the data rather than being deduced from an existing body of theory. The experiences of the eleven women interviewed were different, but common categories describing their learning emerged, and those provided the basis for the study.

The women interviewed indicated that their experiences contributed to their personal growth. They also felt that helpers (friends, family members or professionals) assisted in their learning. The women said that they had previous experiences with domestic

violence in their lives and found it difficult to move away from those kinds of relationships. The women said that they learned from each other, domestic violence support groups, other counselors, and family and friends to facilitate this process. The women were self-directed in their learning. They sought ways to learn more about domestic violence. The women were pathfinders who took considerable risks to find new directions for their lives. They also had a sense of vision and hope, which gave them the impetus to move on to a new phase in their lives. The women made intentional changes in their lives so that new learning could occur. The women identified triggering events that propelled them into adult learning activities. The women said that they had to “feel” safe before they could learn. A process of reflection and action was yet another learning strategy identified in the interviews.

The information included in the study can be helpful to professionals in a variety of fields. This study suggests that the use of time, contemplation and mutual learning techniques helped domestic violence victims to gain new understanding of their lives.

*“My current view of the world is that
life is braided streams of light and darkness,
joy and pain, and I just accept them.
They both exist and I walk them both.
But now I know there is a choice about
what I do with them.”*

Arisika Razak

Interpretive Dancer

**This study is dedicated to
my daughter Jamie,
my son Jason,
and my husband Michael.**

**Without them, I would not have had the motivation
and inspiration I needed to continue.**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to many for their support and assistance with this research project. I would like to thank my committee, the committed professionals at the domestic violence program, the participants in my study, and my family — especially my husband. Without all of them, this dissertation would not exist.

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I want to thank the professionals at the domestic violence program. They provided wise counsel and educated me during their hectic workweek. Patty Ahting, the Assistant

Executive Director, was instrumental in the successful completion of this project. Without her permission, the study would not have occurred.

Because of the limits of confidentiality, I cannot name the women who participated in the study, but I do want to thank them. All of them gave freely of their time, were open and honest in the sharing of their experiences and truly wanted to contribute to the research in this field.

To my family, I also am indebted. My daughter Jamie and son Jason provided the courage for me to continue my studies. They also listened to me when I needed to talk about my project and encouraged me when I felt too tired to finish this process. I appreciate their support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Domestic violence victims, like other adult learners, use a variety of learning styles to meet their learning needs. How domestic violence victims acquire knowledge while they are in a state of crisis may better help professionals in establishing prevention and intervention programs.

This study explored learning and the role of learning in assisting domestic violence victims in dealing with their problems. In addition, the study examined whether domestic violence victims have common learning styles and are willing to accept responsibility for their learning.

This study included four broad areas of inquiry that helped guide the research areas so that categories could emerge from the data. They were:

1. Do domestic violence victims believe learning can change their lives?
2. Does learning help domestic violence victims cope with their crisis?

3. Do domestic violence victims accept responsibility for their own learning?
4. Do domestic violence victims have specific learning styles in common with each other?

In addition, this investigation attempted to contribute to the current body of research about self-directed learning and the problems associated with domestic violence. The review of literature from previous studies was helpful in adding meaning to this study. This review of literature and the four broad areas of inquiry assisted in the development of categories while the data was collected.

The areas of inquiry were intended to be general so they would yield valuable insight into the varied role of learning with domestic violence victims, but specific enough to provide direction for this study.

PROBLEM AREA

Studies focusing on self-directed learning characteristics of the general population by Knowles (1984), experiential learning by Rogers (1979), and triggering events by Aslanian and Brickell (1980), serve as “entree” to the identification of learning characteristics of the domestic violence victim.

Knowles (1984) developed an andragogical model for the adult learner which helps in understanding the framework of adult learners in non-formal settings. Andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn. This model describes a process in which

individuals take the initiative in the formulation and development of strategies, learning goals and outcomes of the adult learner that meet their needs. His framework about adult learning focused upon self-directed learning.

Rogers (1979) looked at experiential learning in the shaping and movement of an adult to being fully functioning. It was his view that through experiential learning an evolution occurred within the internal being of the individual. This range of experiences is brought to the learning environment.

Aslanian and Brickell (1980) investigated why and when people learn. Their study stated that a person seeks a learning experience because of a transition in life that can be pointed to — a specific event — that is a trigger or signal for the learning. More than 50% of these triggering events are family triggers, e.g. divorce, domestic violence, or loss of a job (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980). This research suggested a cause and effect between how adults spend their time and the life changes that cause them to learn (Aslanian, 1988).

Some research has focused upon barriers to learning. Cross (1987) explained why adults do not learn. She concluded that there are three barriers prohibiting a person from learning which are situational, institutional, and dispositional. The definition of a situational barrier is a barrier where a learner may feel that the cost of tuition is expensive, there is no child care or no transportation. An example of an institutional barrier to learning is when no information is available about the learning opportunity.

Dispositional barriers are based on attitudes and feelings. This could mean the person may feel too old to learn and not feel confident based on prior experiences. Dispositional barriers are internally focused within the adult learner. Learners may feel too old to learn

or they may feel they do not have enough energy. These are perceived barriers to learning.

Alan Knox believed (1986) that adult learning ability and style changes throughout the life process. He believes that intelligence, personality, age, formal education and previous specialized experience all contribute to the great variety of learning styles within the adult population (Knox, 1986). Knox states, "Adults tend to evolve from unquestioning conformity, to recognition of multiple viewpoints, to deliberate commitment to application of universal principles and appreciation of relationships, both human and cognitive."

Levinson's research (1979) looked at the individual life structure, which he said was divided into transitional periods, or "seasons," that flow from one phase to the next. These transitional periods are hierarchical, sequential, and linked to age. Each phase provided a significant time for growth or renewal.

Gilligan (1982) indicated that developmental theories have been built upon the observations of men's lives. Women's motives, moral commitment, their viewpoint and psychological growth are different due to socialization differences. Women speak "In a Different Voice" because of these differences.

Rotter (1972) and Phares (1965) studied locus of control as a concept for learning. It is derived from social learning theory. This process attempted to integrate two modern trends in American psychology. The stimulus-response or reinforcement and the cognitive or field theories were combined into one theory called Social Learning Theory. Rotter (1972) discovered that the learning situation occurred when the teacher arbitrarily decides the right response regardless of the reason of the subject. The response of the

subject produced a different kind of learning than one in which the subject believed the behavior determined the outcome. The locus of control is based on internal and external factors.

This theory included behavioral constructs and the internal or subjective constructs (Rotter, 1982). This concept states that behavior is a function of expectations about the effect of behavior. If a person believes that fate and chance will control the outcome, they are external. When a person believes their behavior will control the outcome, the locus of control is internal.

Many questions about the adult learning of domestic violence victims remain unasked. First of all, how do domestic violence victims learn? It is of interest to see if they learn from each other, counselors or others. What are the characteristics of learning of the domestic violence victim? They may have common characteristics in their learning. This could mean that needed time to think. Does the domestic violence victim accept responsibility for her learning? Knowles suggests that an adult learner accepts responsibility for his/her learning. A woman may decide to read a book, or call a crisis line. In what ways is learning used to cope or deal with their situations? Learning or new information can facilitate new ways of coping. Do domestic violence victims see learning as a way to change their lives? Learning may be a way for the women to make changes in their lives.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study was based on the methodology of grounded theory research as described by Strauss and Corbin(1990). This methodology is “one

deductively derived from the study it represents,” Strauss and Corbin (1990). This methodology uses a constant comparative method for analyzing qualitative data and is a general methodology for generating a theory. Grounded theory is systematically obtained, analyzed and grounded in the data itself. The theory is derived from the data rather than being deduced from an existing body of theory.

This method begins by coding each incident in the data into as many categories as possible, as categories emerge or as data emerge that fit an existing category. While coding, each incident is placed in the appropriate group to generate properties of the category. As the coding continues, the comparative units change from comparison of incidence to incidence of comparison with properties of a category.

Grounded theory methodology is well suited for descriptive studies such as this one, which is a topic for which very little formal study or theory exists. Grounded theory provides the data that is needed to develop initial hypotheses from which formal theory can occur later. This study will result in a set of conclusions derived from the information offered by the study participants.

A basic premise of grounded theory is that the hypothesis is evolving and not perfect. Because this study’s conclusion is based on data rather than formal theory, it is unlikely to be completely refuted or replaced by another theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Later research will be able to add to, expand or refine these conclusions.

The end product of grounded theory research is a set of hypotheses that are grounded in the data. Grounded theory methodology has been demonstrated by Glaser and Strauss (1965); Strauss and Corbin(1990); as effective for generating theory or hypothesis in little-known areas of study. It is important to avoid over-generalizing these findings, as

this study did not test theories but only generated them. It is expected that the theory that emerged will continue to be redefined, and refined through further studies.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions have been used in this study for the purposes of clarity and consistency:

Learning: "...a change in human disposition or capability, which can be retained and which is not ascribable to the process of growth."

(Gagne, 1970, p. 3)

Learning Style: The characteristic and preferred way in which an adult engages in learning activities (Claxton & Ralston, 1978; Dunn & Dunn, 1972; Cross, 1981).

Self-Directed Learning: "...a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their needs, formulating learning goals, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating outcomes," (Knowles, 1975, p. 18).

Domestic Violence: Attempts or actions used by a man to dominate or control a woman with whom he is, or has been in an intimate relationship (Shattmaier, 1987).

Coding: The process of analyzing data. It is described as providing a link between data and theory. The data is dissected in categories and properties. Coding is the process

(Strauss and Corbin, 1990) in which open coding, axial coding, and selective coding are generated.

Open Coding: The process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Axial Coding: A set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. This is done by utilizing a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interaction strategies and consequences (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Selective Coding: The process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Theoretical Saturation: No new or relevant data seems to emerge regarding a category with further data collection (Strauss and Corbin 1990). This means that data becomes consistent in its themes and it is not necessary to engage in the collection of data as no new information would be learned.

ASSUMPTIONS

There were three assumptions that impacted on the design of this study. The first assumption was that domestic violence victims are active adult learners and that they will discuss the nature of their learning in this study. The second assumption was that the domestic violence victims were able to remember the types of learning that they have

experienced and that they will be able to describe these learning experiences. A third assumption was that one extensive and probing interview with each domestic violence victim would be adequate to gather the vital information related to the selected areas of inquiry. These assumptions were necessary to identify study participants and have served as a basis for gathering data.

It should be stated that domestic violence is only one variable that has affected the learning experience of the women interviewed. The women may differ as to the conditions or situations of their lives. No attempt was made to control other variables (intelligence, personality type, etc.).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The self-reporting nature of the interview used in this study was an inherent limitation. Interviews are subject to concerns of reliability and validity. Attempts were made to manage reliability by using the researcher as the only interviewer. This study attempted to manage validity by tape recording the sessions along with using notes to maintain the accuracy of the conclusions of the study. To increase reliability, the study included four trial interviews with domestic violence victims to refine the interview process and perfect the recording of the responses.

Another limitation of this study was that domestic violence victims were reporting their thoughts and feelings about learning, possibly affecting their willingness and ability to talk. The study sample size was limited to eleven interviews.

The issue of trust of the domestic violence victims was another inherent limitation. The domestic violence victims may have felt that they could not disclose information, because their safety might have been jeopardized. However, this was dealt with by conducting all interviews at the domestic violence shelter or another location agreeable to the subjects, and stressing to the subjects the confidentiality of the interview. The domestic violence shelter is located in a confidential location to insure the safety of the women and children.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in four areas of adult learning. First, this study sought to identify the types of learning experiences of the domestic violence victim. Secondly, this study attempted to contribute to the current body of research on self-directed learning. Thirdly, this study investigated the characteristics of adult learners who are domestic violence victims. Finally, this study attempted to show how descriptive data may allow hypotheses to emerge that are grounded in qualitative data. Very little quantitative data was used in order that this could occur. The findings of this study were not meant to be conclusive but to provide a basis for further research on adult learning.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter I of this study provides an introduction to the basic problem with which this study is concerned. Chapter II reviews the literature with the intent of establishing background information and support for the assumptions made in this study. An outline of the grounded theory methodology and the specific implementation of the study is presented in Chapter III. Chapter IV presents the major findings of this study and a

discussion of the findings and methodology. The conclusions, implications and recommendations for further study are outlined in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since there is very little literature that specifically deals with domestic violence victims as learners, and research surrounding adult learning strategies, other related literature has been reviewed for relevance and impact on this topic. The purpose of this study was to explore the learning characteristics of domestic violence victims. The review of the literature was drawn from six primary sources.

The literature review included the following areas:

- 1) an understanding of the definition of adult learning,
- 2) ways that adults learn,
- 3) adult developmental stages or phases and the relationships of life transitions to learning events,
- 4) the characteristics of domestic violence victims,
- 5) the cycle of violence,
- 6) domestic violence programs' response to victims.

THE DEFINITION OF ADULT LEARNING

Eduard Lindeman, 1924, popularized the word andragogy, which is the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles, 1970, p. 38). His views about adult education were heavily influenced by the Danish *volkshochschulen* (folk school for adults), which he studied while living in Denmark. Lindeman (1924) proposed that adults are self-directed, their learning needs change as they age and learning is a lifelong process. (1926, p. xviii). It is a process that is based upon the experiences that a person brings to the learning environment. Lindeman witnessed educational opportunities brought to adults while they were working the farmlands. These people were from all ages and walks of life who wanted to learn. Lindeman brought some of these ideas such as life-long learning to the United States.

Malcolm Knowles (1984) developed the andragogical model for adult learning. He believed the adult learners need to know why they need to learn. His premise was that adults believe they are responsible for their own decisions. The adult learner comes to the learning setting with a set of experiences, a readiness and orientation to learning and motivated to learn. The learner initiates or is well directed in learning.

WAYS ADULTS LEARN

Knowles (1975, p. 18) defines self-directed learning as “a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning

outcomes.” There are other labels that are used to describe this process such as “self-study,” “self-pace,” or “independent learning.” The learner is self directed in defining their learning needs. Adults ask for help many times. This could mean asking for directions when lost or asking someone to explain a concept that is not understood. Adults help each other as part of the learning process.

Knowles (1975, p. 19) states, “Self-directed learning usually takes place in association with various kinds of helpers.” Helping is a mutual process between learner and helper. It is a relationship that is forged with the following attitudinal qualities.

Knowles (1984) identifies three attitudinal qualities of a helper:

1. Realness of the helper.
2. Non-possessive caring, trust or respect.
3. Empathetic, understanding and sensitive and accurate listening.

These attitudinal qualities of the helper are important so the learner can be free to express his/her concerns.

Knowles (1984) describes the guidelines for a helper. There are ten characteristics in establishing an environment in which learning can be fostered.

1. The helper establishes the initial mood or setting of the learning experience.
2. The helper asks and clarifies the purposes of the learner.
3. The helper relies upon the desire of the learner to implement the strategies that have the most motivational force behind the significant experience.
4. The helper works at creating many possible resources for learning.
5. The helper is a flexible resource to be used by the learner.

6. The helper accepts the responsibility for the intellectual content and emotional attitudes and gives respect to each learner with the appropriate emphasis.
7. The helper becomes a learner when the climate for learning is obtained.
8. The helper takes the initiative in sharing their experiences with the learner.
9. The helper is alert to the expressions of the learner that are deep and with emotion.
10. The helper endeavors to recognize and accept their limitations.

Rogers' (1979) research focused upon experiential learning. This experiential learning model is comprised of five elements. The elements are: a high quality of personal involvement by the adult learner, it is self initiated, it is pervasive, it is evaluated by the learner and its essence is meaning. It is through experiential learning that a fully functioning person can evolve from their experiential learning. Rogers believed a fully functioning person was an individual who was whole and not mentally ill.

The focus of experiential learning is the dynamic, process-based continuum of experiences. Rogers says:

“We see persons moving in this direction from the best of experiences in education, from the best of experiences in therapy, from the best of family and group relationships. But what we observe is the person moving toward this goal.” (1979, p 295)

The main purpose of education is to develop skills of inquiry (Knowles, 1975). With the skills of inquiry, and a problem-solving orientation, adults can engage in the process of learning. Knowles, along with Maslow and Rogers, views the process as a dynamic process of adult action and motivation.

Domestic violence victims may face barriers to accessing information and services. These barriers may inhibit a woman from learning and freeing herself from a dangerous situation. Cross (1987) identified barriers to learning for adult learners. Her study explains that there are three factors that can prevent learning. Disposition is the first barrier to learning. An example of a dispositional barrier is when a person may feel too old to learn or lack confidence to try. This is an internally focused barrier for a learner.

The second barrier to learning is situational. For example, day care may be too expensive or the learner may not have the time to go to school. The third barrier to learning is institutional. The learner may see high tuition, inconvenient class scheduling, or lack of parking on campus as barriers for participating at a school or program.

Cross (1987) states that lifelong learning is a necessity for everyone due to the escalating rate of change in the world. Cross (1987) estimates that as many as 40 million Americans are in a state of transition with their jobs and their careers. The barriers to participation in learning activities that Cross (1987) identified prevents some from accessing learning opportunities and makes them less competitive in the job market.

Paulo Friere (1970, p. 13) defines praxis as reflection and action. He refers to praxis as “an action upon an object that must be critically analyzed in order to understand both the object and the understanding one has of it. The act of knowing involves a dialectical movement which goes from action to reflection and from action to new action.” This means reflection and action are important for individuals so that they can have a greater understanding of themselves. This process is a dynamic one that moves from reflection to action, action to reflection. Friere (1982) believes that in order for empowerment to occur, the praxis of reflection and action are integral.

Allen Tough (1980) says an intentional change must have two characteristics. First, the change must be definitely chosen and intended. Second, an individual then takes one or more steps to achieve the change. A person chooses the change and then takes the steps to follow the change.

The change as Tough (1980) describes must be highly intentional. That means a person makes a decision that is specific. A person must choose and strive for this change in their life. It is a conscious choice and an intended one of which the person is aware.

Tough also states that these choices are voluntary. These choices are not forced on a person or required by circumstances. Important intentional changes are common in four areas: 1) job, career, and training; 2) human relationships, emotions, and self perception; 3) enjoyable activities; and 4) residence location. These four areas account for 75% of all intentional changes. All the subjects interviewed made intentional changes based upon human relationships, emotions, and self perception.

Viktor Frankl's, *Man's Search for Meaning*, (p. 77) states, "Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for the individual." Frankl observed this while in one of Germany's concentration camps during World War II.

In the concentration camp, cigarettes were used as money. They were traded for extra food, clothing or privileges. The suicide rate was very high in the camp. Frankl would notice some men smoking all their cigarettes within a very short period of time. The next morning Frankl would find them dead from suicide. From his observations, he discovered that the people who committed suicide were the ones who no longer had a sense of vision and hope for themselves.

Gilligan (1982) believes that developmental theories have been built only on the observations of men's lives. Women's motives, their moral commitments, their psychological growth and their view of what is important have been misunderstood (Gilligan, 1982, p 164) states:

“Since women, however, define their identity through relationships of intimacy and care, the problems they encounter pertain to issues of a different sort. When relationships are secured by masking desire, and conflict is avoided by equivocation, then confusion arises about the locus of responsibility and truth.”

Gilligan (1982) believes that the transition from adolescence to adulthood is the same for both sexes — conflict between integrity and care. But the two sexes approach the conflict differently, which means they have different moral ideologies.

Morality of rights and the ethic of rights are the two different ideologies. Gilligan (1982) says the morality of rights is based on equality and fairness. The ethic of rights is fostered from equal respect, balancing the claims of other and self, compromise, compassion and care. Gilligan (1982) maintains life's transitions are different for males and females. They speak a different language but they think it is the same. Due to differences in socialization males and females speak in different voices through life transitions.

Locus of Control is a concept of learning derived from social learning theory. Social learning theory uses a historical approach to the study of personality (Rotter, 1972). It was an attempt to integrate the two modern trends in American psychology. The stimulus-response or reinforcement theories and the cognitive or field theories were combined into one theory.

This theory included both behavioral constructs and internal or subjective constructs (Rotter, 1982). The locus of control concept maintains that behavior is a function of expectations about the effect of behavior on the behavior itself (Lefcourt, 1965). If for example, a person believes their behavior will decide the outcome, the locus of control is considered to be internal.

If the person believes that they have no control over the consequences of their actions, the locus of control is external. People who attribute the outcome of personal actions to factors beyond their control, such as fate or chance are externally controlled.

Rotter (1972) was interested in the variable that might correct or refine prediction of how reinforcement change expectancies. The basic hypothesis is that if a person perceives a reinforcement as contingent upon their own behavior, then the occurrence of either a positive or negative reinforcement will strengthen or weaken potential for that behavior to recur in the same or similar interaction. If the person sees the reinforcement as being outside their control, that is, depending upon chance or fate, than the preceding behavior is less likely to be strengthened or weakened.

A learning situation would occur where the teacher arbitrarily decides the right response regardless of the response of the subject. The response of the subject will produce a different kind of learning than one where the subject believes the behavior determines whether or not the reinforcement will occur, learning under is skill conditions is different from learning under choice conditions.

A series of studies provides strong support for the hypothesis that the learner who has a strong belief that she can control her own destiny, takes steps to improve her environmental condition, places greater value on skill or achievement, and has more

concern for her ability and failures, can be resistant to subtle attempts to be influenced. Phares (1965) concluded that subjects who feel they have control of the situation are likely to exhibit perceptual behavior that will better enable them to cope with potentially threatening situations than subjects who feel chance or other uncontrollable forces determine whether or not their behavior will be successful.

LIFE'S TRANSITIONS

Adult learning is process or journey that is based upon experiences that are dynamic and maturing (Dewey, 1917, 1938, 1969). Adult learning takes place in a powerful environment whereby adult development is evolving actions that grow in depth and richness based upon respect and support for others and support for other and in support of the social environment.

Maslow's (1970, p. 80) *Theory of Human Motivation* may be called a holistic-dynamic theory. Maslow said that basic human needs must be met before focusing on higher goals. Physiological needs, i.e. the air, food and water that are essential to survival, must be met first. If the physiological needs are met, the need for safety and security then becomes most important. Some examples of this second level need include feeling safe from criminal assault, murder, attacks by wild animals, etc.

After the physiological and the safety needs are fairly well met, the person's need for affiliation will emerge. A person at this third level has the need to belong to a group or have relationships with friends or family.

Maslow (1970, p. 90) states that the fourth level, which is self-esteem, means “that all people in society have a desire for a stable, firmly based, usually high evaluation of themselves.” The final or fifth need is self-actualization, or achieving what a person can and must be to be at peace with herself.

Aslanian & Brickell (1980) investigated why and when people learn. Most adults learn because they want to use the knowledge. There are transitions when learning occurs for the use of this knowledge. These learning transitions are uneven. Every adult who learns because of a transition can point to a specific event in their life that signaled or triggered the learning to occur at that time. Triggering events occur unevenly in several parts of an adult's life. More than half of these triggering events are family triggers, such as divorce or loss of a loved one. While the topic an adult chooses to learn is always related to the life transition requiring that learning, the topic is not always related to the triggering event.

More than 90 percent of the events triggering adult learning occur in career or family lives (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980). This suggests a cause and effect between how adults spend their time and the life changes that cause them to learn. Transitions create the reasons for learning, while triggers set the limit for that learning (Aslanian, 1984). Life transitions are the times of learning, and specific events trigger the decisions to learn at particular points of time.

Knox (1986) indicates that learning ability and style change throughout life. The shift in learning style also reflects developmental trends in personality during adulthood. Adults tend to evolve from unquestioning conformity to recognition of universal principles and appreciation of relationships both human and cognitive (Knox, 1986). Learners tend to choose educational settings that fit their preferred learning styles. This praxis is a process

where learners alternate between current proficiencies and search for increase levels of understanding and mastery.

Daniel Levinson (1979) focused upon the concept of the individual life structure. The transitional periods are within the life structure. These transitional periods are sources of stagnation or renewal for learning. The combined perspective of eras and periods is a means of exploring the total life and the process of development at specific times. A season is the metaphor for a period, and "the continuum of life's specific transitions are eras. Life structure evolves through a sequence of alternating periods. A stable structure building period is followed by transitional, structurally changing period. Structural building is defined as making crucial choices, creating a structure, and enriching the structure and pursuing the learner's goals within the framework.

Pathfinders are those who face a treacherous transition. They find a detour that usually turns out constructively. Sheehy (1981) says that life crises are a certainty for everyone. The life crises are stressful but an individual finds the internal energy to move forward and to grow in new ways. The willingness to risk is the master quality of path finding. It is the cornerstone.

The pathfinders that Sheehy describes are those who took action that resulted in some outer change to their environment. The pathfinder who willingly risked began with an inner change that propelled the person to risk a different direction in their life.

The people Sheehy identifies as pathfinders are those who gave up self-limiting behaviors, have the spunk to risk changing roles, or shift emphasis within their value systems. The willingness to risk can challenge the basic belief system and values of an

individual. The willingness to risk means change, growth and learning for those who decide to do this.

CHARACTERISTICS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

There are several definitions of domestic violence. Ganley defines domestic violence as assaultive behavior between adults in an intimate, sexual, theoretically peer and usually cohabiting relationship. Assaultive behavior includes verbal threats of assault and behavioral threats. Gelles and Straum (1979) define domestic violence as an act that is carried out with intention or perceived intention of causing physical pain or injury to another person. Shattmaier (1987) refers to domestic violence as to attempts or actions used by a man to dominate or control a woman with whom he is, or has been, in an intimate relationship. This includes such behavior as physical attacks, threats of physical attacks, and psychological attacks. This includes repeated derogatory remarks, deliberate destruction of a woman's property, confining her to limited area, or stalking her.

A feminist perspective views domestic violence as a result of and reflection of a male-dominated society (Fleming, 1979; Schechter, 1982; Stark and Flitcraik, 1983). As long as the institutional structures; e.g. government, religion and family; systematically oppress and devalue women economically, sexually, and socially, violence against women will continue.

Primary prevention and intervention is through education. This is coupled with enactment and enforcement of laws that help protect women. Prevention programs in schools, social service agencies, in the home and church are now in place. Intervention programs such as support groups, police awareness programs which advocate for victims,

all help in solving this societal problem. Studies by (Gardner & Reisman, 1982; Peterman, 1981; Schwartz, 1975; Spiegel, 1979) claim that information from these programs increase the participants coping skills and problem solving skills (Gottlieb, 1981; McGuire & Gottlieb, 1979; Powell, 1975; Tietzen, 1980).

Inequality between women and men affects upon the perception of violent behavior for the woman so that they are unable to develop adequate skills to escape from the relationship (Walker, 1984). Walker's research discovered that a domestic violence victim will not attempt to escape when the victim believes her situation is hopeless. The common characteristics of domestic violence victims are low self esteem, belief in traditional roles of males and females, acceptance of responsibility for the batterer's behavior, feelings of guilt, denial of the terror and anger she feels, presenting a passive face to the world, use of sex to establish intimacy, belief that no one can help her, and severe stress reactions (Walker, 1979). She becomes helpless and defenseless due to the continuous cycle of violence.

Learned helplessness behavior is another characteristic of a domestic violence victim. This theory (Walker 1978) maintains that when a domestic violence victim's attempt to escape from a threatening situation is blocked, she will stop trying to escape. Consequently, she remains in the relationship and the learned helplessness is reinforced.

The Shube and Barbour (1984) study examined the influence of social support. Women who ultimately left battering relationships were more likely to have filed assault charges and obtained restraining orders. Women who had exhausted resources were more likely than those seeking outside help to leave the relationship. The results of their research also indicated that women who stayed in battering relationships were more likely to be Caucasian, married and raising children at home.

THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

The first time that the three-phase cycle of violence was described was in 1978 by Walker. Phase I is the period of tension building, where the woman attempts to please the man with the hope of avoiding an attack. This phase culminates with a battering incident, which marks the beginning of the next phase. In Phase II the man is totally out of control. Phase III is commonly called the “honeymoon period.” In Phase III the batterer is repentant, loving, and often declares his need for his partner. The batterer begs for forgiveness and promises that the abuse will never happen again. At this stage, the domestic violence victim wants to believe her batterer because during this phase everything in the relationship is the way she imagines it should be. The domestic violence victim hopes that this time she can prevent the cycle from repeating itself by trying harder to meet the batterer's needs. As the domestic violence victim continues to try to meet the batterer's needs, the tension building Phase I starts in motion again. The cycle of violence is sequential and continuous.

Power and control tactics are used by batterers, including psychological abuse, verbal threats, involving the children in spousal power struggles, sexual abuse, intimidation, humiliation, isolation and economic deprivation. Walker's research (1978) found that psychological humiliation and isolation were the worst forms of abuse that women reported experiencing, whether or not they had been physically abused. Even when they had never been physically abused, all reported they feared for their lives.

Gelles (1976) research discovered that the less frequent and less severe the violence, the more likely a domestic violence victim is to remain with the batterer. Domestic violence victims who were victimized as children are more likely to stay in battering relationships

than women who had not been exposed to violent role models. Domestic violence victims with fewer resources are more likely to remain with the batterer.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

Today experts believe that over 1000 domestic violence shelters exist in the United States (Gelles, 1986). Domestic violence shelters provide a safe refuge for a domestic violence victim and her children. It is here that the domestic violence victim can take advantage of an educational experience that will help her understand her situation.

Many women who call the shelter are not necessarily seeking housing (Loseke and Berk 1982). Many desire information, advice or referral. Loseke and Berk concluded that shelters provide a great many services that may be overlooked when attention is directed solely at shelters for refuge.

Another study by Gelles (1985) revealed the best predictor of a domestic violence victim going to a social service agency is how much violence the woman experienced as a child. The less violence she experienced, the more likely she is to seek a social worker's help. It appears that victimization as a child raises the domestic violence victim's tolerance for violence. Women who do not seek out intervention are less likely to have completed high school and more likely to be unemployed.

Berk, Newton, Fenstermaker, Berk (1986) predicted that domestic violence shelters will have beneficial effects for domestic violence victims who already taking control of their lives. This study focused on the role of domestic violence shelters in aiding domestic

violence victims in breaking the cycle of violence. The beneficial effects of the shelter stay depended upon whether the victim had begun to take control of her life.

Another study by Labell (1979) collected data from domestic violence victims. The research found that few of the women admitted to the domestic violence shelter had sought professional assistance. Relatives and friends were more likely to be sources of assistance. No data were reported about the domestic violence victim's responses to the professional assistance they received.

Hughes (1990) examined 47 shelter programs in California to determine what components are essential to a domestic violence shelter's effectiveness in facilitating lasting change in learned helplessness behavior. Hughes discovered there appeared to be no standardization of shelter stay timelines or programs among long term and short term shelters. The shelters reported offering specific interventions, but there appeared to be no method of measuring outcomes and no criteria for measuring the effectiveness of shelter programs.

SUMMARY

The assumptions upon which the methodology of this study rested were adequately supported in this study. The literature referring to adult learning cites the significance of adult learning in transitional periods. It may have significant effect on the acquisition of knowledge for domestic violence victims.

The literature reviewed the locus of control within a learning environment. The locus of control is a concept of learning derived from social learning theory. This theory argues

that people who attribute the outcome of personal actions to factors beyond their control, such as fate or chance, are externally controlled. If a person believes their behavior will decide the outcome, the locus of control is considered to be internal.

A series of studies indicates strong support for the hypothesis that the learner who has a strong belief that she can control her own destiny takes steps to improve her condition, places an increased value on achievement, and her ability and failures, can be resistant to be influenced. This can be a convincing methodology in understanding how domestic violence victims learn.

The domestic violence literature included background information about domestic violence and the effectiveness of domestic violence programs. The research defined domestic violence, the characteristics of domestic violence victims, and power and control issues, The cycle of violence was briefly discussed.

Very little research about the effectiveness of domestic violence programs has been initiated. Hughes (1990) discovered there appeared to be no method of measuring outcomes and no criteria for measuring the effectiveness of shelter programs.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study was based on the grounded theory methodology described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). This methodology is “one deductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents,” Strauss and Corbin (1990). Grounded Theory methodology has four central criteria for judging the application of the theory to a situation: fit, understanding, generality, and control. The reason for using the grounded theory approach was to shed new light on this area of inquiry.

BACKGROUND TO GROUNDED THEORY

Grounded theory is especially suited for descriptive studies such as this one, which is on a topic for which very little formal study or theories exist. This methodology can be used in a multidisciplinary study with each researcher bringing their expertise to a research problem.

This methodology uses concepts. These concepts are related by statements of relationships, and may be organized by themes. These themes may be summaries of

words taken from the data (Strauss and Corbin). There is little interpretation of data. The several themes are not interpreted into a more general conceptual theme.

There are several steps in conducting a grounded research study. The researcher needs to identify and define the problem and develop the research question. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p 38) state “the research question in a grounded theory study is a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied. Questions in grounded theory studies also tend to be oriented toward action and process.”

There are ten steps that Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify in the process of organizing the research project.

- 1) Identify a general research area.
- 2) Review the literature in areas related to the area study.
- 3) Collect research data.
- 4) At the same time, with collecting of data, code and analyze the data.
- 5) Generate memos with as much theoretical saturation as possible.
- 6) Decide what data to collect next.
- 7) Continue data collection, analysis, coding and memoing — focus on emerging core theory.
- 8) Write memos on data, memos on memos until theoretical saturation is achieved.
- 9) Sort memos to develop a theoretical framework.
- 10) Write and rewrite the report.

Theoretical sensitivity refers to the personal quality the researcher brings to the research problem (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This theoretical sensitivity can come from the literature review, personal and professional experience, and the analytic process. This

sensitivity to meaning is important because the researcher can interweave data selection with data analysis. This is a dynamic process in which a praxis is forged between the data selection and data analysis. Each gives insight and parameters to the evolving theory.

This study used theoretical sampling. In grounded research methodology, the aim of theoretical sampling is to sample events — incidents that are indicative of their properties and dimensions — so that a relationship is built between the categories. This theoretical sampling must have proven theoretical relevance because certain concepts are noticeably present or absent when comparisons are made. Through the coding procedure the concepts earn the status of categories. Questions and comparisons evolve during the analysis. This process helps to discover and relate appropriate categories, their properties and dimensions.

Theoretical sampling is cumulative. The concepts and their relationships accumulate through the praxis of the data collection and analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Sampling creates depth of focus due to concentration on the development, density and saturation of categories. A systematic approach to gathering data on each category will ensure consistency (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This procedure must be planned, while being flexible to enhance theory generation. Sampling and analysis must occur at the same time with data analysis giving guidance to the data collection. The sampling process is based on the evolving theoretical relevance of concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). It is not planned like quantitative studies.

In grounded theory methodology, theoretical sampling continues until there is theoretical saturation. This means there is no new or relevant data to emerge, the category

development is dense and the relationships between categories are well established (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Data analysis is implemented through open coding which examines and compares, conceptualizes and places data into categories. These new categories and their relationship provide a basis for expanded inquiry. Axial coding is the secondary procedure, where the data is put together making connections. Subcategories evolve and are placed into a system related to the other categories. At this point the study begins to focus on the missing areas of categories where refinement and development is needed. This is selective coding.

As the problem is being explored, certain concepts are present or absent in the sampling. The praxis of questioning and analysis, the relationship and interconnectedness of the concepts become apparent. Data analysis is initially approached through selective coding. The goal of selective coding is to integrate the categories along the dimensional level to form a theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). It is also to validate the integrative statements of relationships and fill in any categories that need more development. The selective coding process is directive and deliberate. It is made with conscious choices about who and what to sample in order to obtain the needed data. The sites, persons, and documents are chosen to increase the opportunity to verify the story line, relationship between categories, and for filling in any category that needs filling (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

The process of selection of sites, persons, and documents that will maximize opportunity for verifying the storyline, relationships between categories and filling in poorly developed categories is called the process of discriminate sampling. This may mean returning to old sites, or going to new sites where data can be obtained. This is not a

random process but a planned process of selection based on some knowledge. The final step was to write the research findings.

BROAD AREAS OF INQUIRY

This grounded theory methodology study focused on the role adult learning plays in the lives of domestic violence victims while receiving services from shelters. The investigation attempted to discover what learning styles domestic violence victims use. These four broad areas of inquiry helped guide the research areas so that categories could emerge from the data.

1. Do domestic violence victims see learning as a way to change their lives?
2. In what ways is learning used by domestic violence victims to cope or deal with their life's crisis?
3. Do domestic violence victims accept responsibility for their learning?
4. Do domestic violence victims have specific learning styles in common with each other?

THE GENERAL POPULATION

This study focused on women who were receiving services from domestic violence shelter programs. For the purpose of this study the participants were called domestic violence victims.

There are over 1,000 domestic violence shelter programs throughout the United States. One purpose of domestic violence shelter programs is to provide a safe refuge for victims in time of crisis. The services include emergency shelter for the domestic violence victim and her children, 24 hour crisis lines, support groups, court advocacy, confidential counseling, and non-formal education programs about the problem of domestic violence in families.

SELECTION OF THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

The study's interview participants were selected from a domestic violence shelter program in southwestern Ohio. The domestic violence victims were receiving residential services or attending the support groups, or were identified by other social service agency personnel. A haphazard selection of participants was chosen by the shelter staff to insure the confidentiality and safety of the subjects. None of the subjects were selected by the researcher. Eleven subjects were selected and interviewed for the study. The professional staff at the domestic violence shelter continued to select participants until theoretical saturation was achieved. Once theoretical saturation was achieved, the domestic violence program staff were notified to discontinue the selection process.

The professional staff of the domestic violence program discussed the research project with potential research subjects. If the potential subjects were interested in being interviewed, a staff member of the domestic violence program would call to arrange an appointment. The researcher attended the domestic violence support group to briefly discuss the research project. A sign-up sheet was circulated with dates, times and phone numbers to arrange the interviews.

ASSUMPTIONS IN DEFINING THE INTERVIEW SAMPLE

Strauss and Corbin (1990) state the more interviews, observations, and documentation obtained, then the more evidence will accumulate, the more variations will be found, and the greater diversity will be achieved.

Categories and their properties were derived solely from the domestic violence victims who were receiving services from the domestic violence shelter program. Whatever potential existed for theoretical saturation within categories of learning approaches of domestic violence victims was examined. This research studied domestic violence victims' learning styles and behavior, and asked the subjects to reflect on their learning behavior prior to the program. In this context each individual's set of experiences became a special sample group. This research tried to discover categories of the learning activities that domestic violence victims have used and properties associated with the categories.

The main data gathering was through the interviews of subjects and depended on an evolving process whereby an emerging theory determined areas and focus for exploration through further interview and further literature review to complement field data.

An additional source for data was a literature review prior to conducting the research to gain theoretical sensitivity, and to build a foundational knowledge on the learning process and the adult learner, the issue of domestic violence, and domestic violence programs.

The literature review included the following areas:

- 1) an understanding of the definition of adult learning,
- 2) ways that adults learn,
- 3) adult developmental stages or phases and the relationships of life transitions to learning events,
- 4) the characteristics of domestic violence victims,
- 5) the cycle of violence,
- 6) domestic violence programs' response to victims.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

Interviewing and data analysis proceeded through a preparatory stage and three phases. The preparatory stage provided an opportunity to become comfortable with the interview setting and to learn about the subjects of the study. Four women were interviewed during this preparatory stage. The establishment of this preparatory stage enabled the refinement and adjustment of the interview process during the preparatory stage. The actual collection of data began with Phase 1.

Phase 1 consisted of open coding with some axial coding and initial selective coding. This phase of the interview procedure was refined and defined, with increased skill in the facilitating of the interview and managing the analysis process. In Phase 1, four subjects were interviewed.

In Phase 2 open coding continued and there was a shift away from new category formation toward the uncovering and validating of relationships between categories. Axial coding was the focus of the analysis of data in Phase 2. In Phase 2, four subjects were interviewed.

Phase 3 shifted the focus toward integrating the conceptualization of the central theme of the study. Three subjects were interviewed to achieve theoretical saturation, and the interviews became more focused and deliberate. By Phase 3, categories were established with their properties, dimensions and relationships understood. Information continued to be gathered to develop richness and density to proceed with coding.

During the Preparatory Phase, the first four interviews were conducted in two weeks. Time was allowed to reflect immediately following each interview, to become comfortable with the interview setting, and to develop a frame of reference to interact with the subjects.

During Phases 1, 2, and 3 of the research project, 11 subjects, which were enough to achieve theoretical saturation at each phase, participated in interviews during a two month period. Time was allowed between each interview to reflect on the previous interview, do analysis and consider strategies for the following interview. The writing of notes, the use of memos and analysis of data was ongoing as the interviews proceeded.

Following Phase 1 of interviewing, more analysis occurred to incorporate literature exploration to enhance theoretical sensitivity in preparation for the second interviewing and analysis phase.

Data analysis for Phase 1 provided the information and experience to engage in open coding and axial coding. More selective analysis to close Phase 1 approached selective coding.

The interview process allowed the subjects latitude in their response. The role of the researcher was to maintain the focus of the interview on the topic of learning. In advance of the interview, general open-ended questions were developed around the research questions. (See Appendix E.) There was no structured interview format. The interview process was allowed to evolve. Initial questioning encouraged the interview participant to reflect on learning.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS OF CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Two steps were taken to develop trust with the subjects, in order to overcome the subjects fear and distrust of strangers:

1. Volunteer training was mandatory for those who wanted to participate in the program as volunteers. The volunteers learned about domestic violence, the law, and domestic violence policies and procedures. This ensured consistency in the implementation of the program, and sensitivity to the needs of those who used the services. The volunteer training was held on two Saturdays and one weeknight.
2. The researcher attended the weekly domestic violence support group to discuss the research project and be a visible and familiar face to potential subjects so that trust could be fostered. Potential subjects also spoke to others about the project.

Thus they recruited others to be interviewed. The attendance at the weekly domestic violence support group started in October and ended in January.

Communications for the purpose of identifying subjects was accomplished by phone and by attending the domestic violence support group. Court advocates and counselors affiliated with the domestic violence program identified subjects for the study. These communications clarified the intent of the study and secured permission from the shelter coordinator and other staff of the domestic violence shelter program. These communications, e.g. phone calls and meetings, were coordinated via the shelter. At the initial meeting with the subject, a commitment was made with a scheduled appointment for interview date, time and location. A phone call to the participant was made to confirm the interview. This ensured the safety and confidentiality of the client. A note of thanks was sent after the interview to an address stipulated by the subject.

Written field notes, diagrams and memos, and tapes were used in conjunction with the data gathering. Field notes were used in combination with a tape recording of each interview. Field notes were used to make observations, to note reactions, thoughts and anything relevant to the interview for information gathering and analysis. These records were a reference point for sample coding.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) define memos as a general term for written records of analysis that support the theory. Code notes are used for coding purposes. Theoretical notes record inductive and deductive analysis in establishing relevant categories. Operational notes are memos used for future direction.

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The names of the women have been changed to protect their identities and confidentiality. Eleven women were interviewed for this study. One subject was Hispanic, one was African-American, and the remaining nine were non-Hispanic white. The women's ages ranged from 19 to 50. Six of the women were receiving some form of government assistance. Five of the women had fewer than 12 years of education. The women had contact with the domestic violence program either through the court advocacy program, the residential facility, domestic violence support group, or the volunteer program. The sample was haphazard but was representative of the population. Following is a brief biography of each subject.

Annie

The rural location where Annie grew up did not provide her an easy childhood. She lived with her grandparents, who taught her the value of hard work. Her grandfather died when Annie was still quite young. Her grandmother took the loss very hard, becoming so emotionally distraught that she was unable to manage the household. Eventually her grandmother was forced to sell the property and move to a large urban area.

Annie adapted well to the new surroundings. A pretty, outgoing teenager, she naturally attracted the attention of young men, and Annie felt ready for marriage. Among young women in the Appalachian community, it was not unusual to have several children before the age of 18. She married her boyfriend when she was only 16.

Annie's dream of building a new life with her husband soon turned out to be a nightmare. She discovered that he was a drug addict; eventually she realized that the only way out was to file for divorce.

Annie moved into an apartment and tried to put her life back together. She began a new relationship, but that soon failed. She was at an emotional low point when she met a man named Wyatt. He was kind and generous. He helped her pay her bills when she was in financial difficulty.

Annie and Wyatt married three years ago and began a family. But after Wyatt lost his job, his personality soured. He became emotionally and physically abusive toward her. Annie knew she needed help, and called the domestic violence shelter. At the age of 38, with four children to raise, Annie is once again facing the prospect of starting over.

Corrine

A driving snowstorm did not stop Corrine from walking away from an abusive relationship with her boyfriend. She bundled up her three small children and trudged through snowdrifts to get to the safety of the domestic violence shelter. They took what few possessions they could carry and left the rest behind. The biggest threat they faced on their journey was not the cold, but that her boyfriend might discover them before they made it to the shelter.

Thirty-six-year-old Corrine is once-divorced. The boyfriend from whom she once had to escape has become more violent. He has isolated Corrine from her family. He moved her and her children to a city far away from her mother and other family members. The

only income Corrine has is ADC. Her attitude is positive and she looks forward to completing nurses training when her life is less traumatic.

Darcy

In spite of the violence Darcy endured during her six-year marriage, she can still laugh. Forty-two year old Darcy is a chain smoker, extremely bright and speaks in a strong voice. She can still remember how the cycle of violence began. It started out as a slap across the cheek. Within a few years, her husband grew accustomed to using his fists. The physical bruises have healed, but the emotional scars remain.

On weekends her husband would rip the phone out of the wall, effectively cutting Darcy off from the outside support she needed. One of the few people she was allowed to have contact with was the landlord. Her mother-in-law provided no help for Darcy, explaining, "You made your bed, you lie in it." Darcy has had five children, but her daughter died after a long illness.

Even though she suffered much tragedy and financial adversity, Darcy decided to leave her husband and start a new life. Since then Darcy has contributed much of her time and energy to the domestic violence movement in the community.

Edie

Soft-spoken Edie, 41, says she was rebellious in high school. Perhaps that was in response to her strict upbringing — her mother believed strongly in corporal punishment — or the incidents of sexual abuse she suffered as a child. When Edie was five years old she was sexually abused by a 16-year-old neighbor; at seven her grandfather abused her.

Those early experiences may also help explain why she feels so dependent on men for her sense of self-worth.

Since then Edie has been in three abusive marriages. Now Edie is living with her boyfriend. Sometimes he doesn't speak to her for days. Edie is very bright, and has completed two years of college. She realizes that her back injury is making it difficult for her to make significant changes in her life.

Frannie

To the outside observer, it looked like Frannie had it all. She was a corporate executive's wife who helped her husband restore a beautiful Victorian home. Frannie was college educated, intelligent, and the mother of two children.

The deeper truth was that she spent 18 years of marriage enduring economic and emotional abuse. The cycle of violence actually began with the temper tantrums her future husband threw while Frannie and he were dating in college. During her marriage, the police responded twice to domestic violence complaints at her home.

Now 47 years old, Frannie looks back on her marriage with intellect and objectivity of her life. College educated, she is now making decisions in her life on her terms. She has one child living at home and another in college. Frannie works part time and writes in her spare time.

Heidi

Her two-year relationship with a violent boyfriend has left deep wounds in Heidi's emotions. Her boyfriend hit and beat Heidi for two years. Then, after accusing her of sleeping with his best friend, her boyfriend pulled a gun on Heidi and put it in her mouth. The fact that he didn't pull the trigger did little to mitigate the damage done to Heidi's psyche. Although she puts up a brave front, she finds it difficult to cope and has suffered two mental breakdowns. Her two children are in foster care while she is recovering.

At 26, Heidi wants to create a new life for herself and her children. She speaks with deep conviction that she wants her children to have peace in their lives. Heidi has tried hard to become a better parent by participating in special programs that are tailored to meet her needs.

Janice

Janice says she has been immersed in domestic violence since she was a child. Her parents divorced when Janice was 12 years old. Her mother's next relationship was abusive. When Janice was 15 she met a man and had a baby within a year. By the age of 21, Janice had four children. At 23, she met the man who would become her current husband. A whirlwind courtship led to broken promises, which led in turn to cruelty and abuse. The night before their first Christmas together Janice's husband burned her with a cigarette lighter. The domestic violence continued for five years. Now 28 years old, Janice is trying to piece together an existence for herself and her children that is stable, quiet, and violence-free.

Katie

Her second husband's alcoholism figures prominently in the domestic violence Katie has endured. At the time she began dating her second husband, Katie was raising two children from her first marriage. She became pregnant, and since she believed that her children needed a male role model, she agreed to marriage, even though she knew he had a drinking problem. Katie felt the influence of her values would "change" him.

But the domestic violence escalated as the drinking became more severe. The marriage lasted 14 years, through numerous separations and reconciliations. She finally divorced him in 1993. Even after the divorce, he continued to harass and intimidate Katie, leading her to file a Civil Protection Order in 1994.

Now 50 years old, Katie is thinking of leaving the state. She plans to request a transfer within the company that currently employs her so that she can once again be near her family and friends.

Mona

Mona's ex-husband said he sold his own blood because that's the only "work" he could get. His frustrated need for control led him to terrorize Mona through economic deprivation and rape.

It was not until a neighbor called police that Mona became aware of the protection available at the domestic violence shelter. She was able to escape the immediate threat of injury or death, and eventually saw her ex-husband convicted of aggravated assault.

Although Mona says she did not experience violence while growing up, she had been in three abusive relationships prior to her marriage. These past years have been difficult as she is receiving government assistance while trying to feed two children.

Nanette

On the same day that Nanette learned her father had been murdered, her husband told her he was having an affair. There had been past infidelities, but Nanette's father had always covered for her husband. Ironically, her husband later became a born-again Christian, and began accusing Nanette of fooling around.

The day after their 15th wedding anniversary, Nanette's husband severely beat her. The violence took its toll; at 43, Nanette's health deteriorated to the point of being hospitalized on several occasions. There is still a sadness in Nanette's eyes that reveals the loss she feels toward the end of her marriage. Nanette has three children and two of them are still living at home. Nanette believes it has been her children and the people she works with that helped her to survive this nightmare.

Rachel

If her husband decided the bread wrapper was not tied properly, or the roast wasn't done the way he liked, Rachel knew she was going to be beaten. If she tried to defend herself, he would push her down the stairs and call her vile names.

Rachel dropped out of school after the seventh grade. Formal education never seemed important to her. Being part of a family was what mattered. She was just 16 when she met her husband — he was 40. After two years of marriage she divorced him, but then

she lived with her ex-husband for another year. When she finally did make a permanent break, she was forced to leave her only child behind with her ex-husband. Now 19, Rachel plans to move in with her parents while she gets her life back on the right track. She is very sad she had to leave her child behind, but she knows that her ex-husband will never give up custody.

TABLE I
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

NAME	AGE	YEARS OF EDUCATION	TOTAL CHILDREN	CHILDREN STILL AT HOME	PERSONAL MONTHLY INCOME	FAMILY MONTHLY INCOME
Annie	38	11	4	4	\$ 650	\$ 650
Corrine	36	12+	3	3	ADC	ADC
Darcy	42	12	5	4	ADC	ADC
Edie	41	14	2	1	Work. Comp.	\$ 2,083
Frannie	47	16	2	1	\$ 1,917	\$ 1,917
Heidi	26	9	3	2	\$ 100	\$ 100
Janice	28	11	4	4	\$ 800	\$ 800
Katie	50	15+	3	1	\$ 1,667	\$ 1,667
Mona	24	GED	2	2	ADC	ADC
Nanette	43	12+	3	2	\$ 483	\$ 7,500
Rachel	19	7	1	1	\$ 0	\$ 0

TIME FRAME

The research was conducted from October 1993 to January 1994. The interviews were completed in January 1994. Writing was completed in August 1994. Formal presentation of the findings took place in August 1994.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The findings and interpretations presented in this chapter are based on interviews with eleven female domestic violence victims about their adult learning experiences. The data-gathering process was designed to illuminate the ways female domestic violence victims learn to deal with their problems. The interview process also sought to identify a number of learning themes, or categories, common to women struggling to cope with domestic violence. The study also attempted to define the degree to which domestic violence victims are able to accept responsibility for their own learning. The learning themes are identified and explained in this chapter, and are illustrated with excerpts from the interviews.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The text describing the shelter uses actual names and locations, with the permission of the administration of the shelter. It was felt that revealing the name of the facility did not

violate any issue of confidentiality. However, the names of all 11 women interviewed for this study have been changed to guarantee their privacy.

BACKGROUND OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER

In 1979, the Hamilton-Fairfield YWCA's Crisis Shelter for Battered Women and Children opened its doors. Located in Hamilton, Ohio, the shelter remained at its original quarters until moving to its current location in 1989. The new facility can house between 15 and 19 people at a time. The shelter was renamed Dove House in 1992.

Dove House provides a full range of services to domestic violence victims. Its exact location is kept secret to protect the women and children who use the shelter. Dove House works in cooperation with the courts to help women who need advocates to guide them through the legal system. The shelter also coordinates a weekly domestic violence victims support group for the community. Finally, the residential facility provides a safe and secret refuge for women and their children. The Hamilton-Fairfield YWCA provides the oversight and economic funding for Dove House.

The Hamilton, Ohio YWCA was organized in 1900 by Julia Goodman. At that time, Hamilton had 23,914 residents; today Butler County is home to 291,479 persons, making it the eighth most populous and fourth fastest growing county in the state of Ohio. The YWCA and Dove House are meeting the challenges of the problem of domestic violence in the community by providing vital and life-saving services. The Butler County Sheriff's Office recorded 351 cases of domestic violence in 1992, and 323 cases in 1993. Previous research has shown that domestic violence is under-reported, thus the magnitude of the need for services in the county is actually larger than indicated by the figures.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study focused on four broad areas of inquiry about learning behavior of domestic violence victims. They were:

1. Do domestic violence victims believe learning can change their lives?
2. How do domestic violence victims learn to cope with their crisis situation?
3. Do domestic violence victims accept responsibility for their own learning?
4. Do domestic violence victims have specific learning styles in common with each other?

These four broad areas of inquiry were used to guide the interviews. As the study progressed, ten themes evolved.

Each of these themes is presented in this chapter in full detail and is supported by reference to the data gathered during the interviews.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMES

The first theme, *From Safety and Security to Belonging*, turned out to be the most significant one identified in the study. The women interviewed described the fear they felt while in their domestic violence relationship. They said that they had to feel safe

before they could begin to interact with other people. Clearly, before learning could occur, safety needs had to be met for these women.

The second theme, *Triggering Events*, posits that domestic violence victims will typically recall a crystallizing event that enabled them to take decisive action to end the abusive relationship. Aslanian and Brickell's (1988) research indicates that adults learn in order to cope with change in their lives. Regardless of the demographics, almost all adults point to their own changing circumstances to explain why they continue to learn. Adults learn what they need to know to cope or be successful in a new situation.

Many of the women interviewed could point to a specific event that triggered the transition to a learning-receptive state. One woman said something "clicked." For these women in transition, this triggering event set the stage for learning.

The third theme, *The Praxis of Reflection and Action*, says that women developed a greater understanding of their lives by first examining their situation and then acting on that analysis. Friere (1979) wrote that the praxis of reflection and action is a way to humanize the world. It is a process of transformation to personal growth.

The Praxis of Reflection and Action creates new freedom for the individual. The praxis is based upon the person being conscious of their own effort. This action anticipates results. The women made statements such as, "I thought about it," or "I needed time to think." Then they recalled the actions that they took as a result: "This is what happened," or "I did this." This two part process was part of the women's strategy to gain greater understanding of themselves and their situation.

The fourth theme, ***Breaking Old Habits***, reveals that prior learning was hard to put aside and that entrenched lifestyles are extremely difficult to break away from. Maslow (1975) wrote that habits are roadblocks to learning. Most people find it easier to continue as they have in the past. Habits can also get in the way of solving problems or considering new choices. Maslow stated, "There are many habits which release the mind for other activities. At the same time, other habits formed early in life and never re-examined, limit the individual's development." Most of the women interviewed had suffered some prior family or sexual violence in their lives. This violence included being in repeated relationships that were abusive, growing up in a abusive home, or being abused sexually, physically or emotionally as children.

Theme five, ***Reliance on Others for Help in Learning***, details how the women relied on others to help them learn about domestic violence issues.

An environment conducive to learning has several characteristics, which include physical comfort, mutual trust, respect, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression and acceptance of differences. This environment must be nurtured by the learner and the helper. The helper assists the learner in discovering new possibilities and clarifying the learner's goals. Each woman interviewed could identify their helpers. Helpers could be relatives, counselors, court advocates, clergy, police officers, domestic support group members, or friends.

Mutual Learning was the sixth theme identified by the interviews. Knowledge sharing among equals replaces the more traditional teacher/student environment. An identifying aspect of this paradigm is the helper, who takes the initiative in sharing their experiences with the learner. The guidelines that Knowles (1984) described for a helper include

mutuality and respect between helper and learner. Not only did the women learn from their helpers, but the helpers learned from the women.

Experiential Learning was the seventh theme that evolved from the data. Prior life experiences served as learning stimuli for the women. Learning based on experience is self-initiated, and it makes a difference in attitudes, behavior and personality.

Vision and Hope, the eighth theme, demonstrates that in order for the women to accomplish their life's tasks or goals, they must first have a sense of vision and hope. Frankl (1959) said that a person first needs to take responsibility to find their own right answers. Identification of their life's tasks would then follow. These life tasks differ from person to person. All the women interviewed had developed a sense of vision and hope toward the completion of their life's tasks.

Pathfinders, the ninth theme, reveals that the women interviewed faced a treacherous transition in their lives, and in response, found novel ways to meet those challenges. The pathfinders that Sheehy (1981) described are those who took action to change their environment. The pathfinder risked making internal changes to create a new direction in their life. Each woman identified the ways in which she took novel action to change her life.

The ***Intentional Changes*** category was the tenth and final theme identified by the study. It describes how change occurred for the women and the purposeful steps they took to achieve change. Allen Tough (1980) says there are two characteristics of intentional change. It must be chosen and intended, and the person must take one or more steps to achieve the change. All the women interviewed made intentional changes based upon human relationships, emotions and self-perception.

THEME 1 — FROM SAFETY AND SECURITY TO BELONGING

Maslow's (1970, p. 80) *Theory of Human Motivation* may be called a holistic-dynamic theory. Maslow said that basic human needs must be met before focusing on higher goals. Physiological needs, i.e. the air, food and water essential to survival, must be met first. If the physiological needs are met, the need for safety and security then becomes most important. Some examples of this second-level need include feeling safe from criminal assault, murder, and attacks by wild animals.

After the physiological and the safety needs are fairly well met, the person's need for affiliation, or a sense of belonging, will emerge. A person at this third level has the need to belong to a group or have relationships with friends or family.

Maslow (1970, p. 90) states that the fourth level is that "all people in society have a desire for a stable, firmly based, usually high evaluation of themselves." The final or fifth need is self-actualization, or achieving what a person can and must be to be at peace with herself.

All the subjects interviewed spoke of their need to feel safe and secure, the second level in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Many of the women also stated that they had to feel safe before they could move on in their lives.

The next hierarchical level identified by Maslow, the need for affiliation or belonging, could only be reached when the women felt they had achieved an adequate level of safety and security. As Maslow (Goble, 1975, p. 60) indicated in his research, "There is the strong negative influence of the lower needs for safety and security. The growth process requires constant willingness to take chances, to make mistakes, to break habits."

“Anything that increases fear or anxiety tips the dynamic balance between regression and growth toward regression and away from growth.” said Maslow. The women could only move forward when safety needs were met.

An example of a woman moving from being concerned with safety needs toward satisfying the need to belong was Janice, who called 911 for help because she was afraid of her husband. It was the only thing she could think of to do that might provide her with some sense of safety and security. After her husband moved out of their home, she felt safe enough to file a restraining order against him, which further increased her sense of security. She said, “I was petrified with fear. It wasn’t until I got a restraining order that I could start living again. Then I started visiting my family and friends.”

Heidi also confirmed the need to progress from Maslow’s level of safety to belonging. Once at the domestic violence shelter, Heidi began to feel safe. She said, “The surroundings were important in making me feel safe.” Heidi lived in the shelter’s residential facility, the location of which is confidential. Her boyfriend could not find her. Once Heidi’s safety needs were met, she started attending the domestic violence support group so she could interact and feel connected to other women.

Darcy articulated the same theme. Meeting her safety needs was a primary factor in Darcy’s ability to move toward the level of belonging. After three days at the shelter, Darcy started feeling safe and could start to think again. Darcy said, “Until then, I felt numb and I couldn’t think.”

Similarly, Edie said she was in a constant state of fear until the police rescued her and took her to the domestic violence shelter. After two days at the shelter she started to feel

safe. She said, "After I started feeling safe, I could do other things, like attending support group."

Annie said that after she started feeling safe, she started taking the initiative to make decisions for herself. Once she came to the shelter, she made a number of phone calls to her friends, schools, and her daughter's employer. This was an indication of her emerging sense of safety, and her movement toward satisfying Maslow's third level, the need to belong. Annie described how she talked with the counselors and how they began to help her feel safe. At the beginning, she said, "I felt afraid and unable to move beyond my fear. Once I arrived here and started feeling safe, then I could connect with my family."

Corrine was very frightened while walking to safety during one of the year's worst snow storms. She said she was afraid her boyfriend would find her walking with her children. Corrine said, "We were afraid we might pass him on the road and he would get us." Once she arrived at the domestic violence shelter it took her some time to adjust to the peace and quiet. Consistent with the movement from meeting safety needs to satisfying the need to belong that Maslow predicts, Corrine is now renewing her contact with her family and friends.

Katie, who is now involved in the court advocacy program, also followed the pattern of first meeting her safety needs and then moving to fulfill her need for affiliation. Katie filed a protective restraining order against her ex-husband because his violent behavior started to escalate and she became frightened. She said that her ex-husband came to her front door in a rage and tried to forcibly remove her from her home. Katie said that the incident prompted her to file legal action and work with a court advocate to ensure her safety. After this she said, "I can now have friends and move on in my life."

Maslow described how an increase in fear or anxiety can tip the balance towards regression and away from growth. Mona's situation fits this description very well. The police were called to her home often because her husband frequently choked her and ripped her clothes. She was paralyzed with fear of her husband, which kept her from seeking safe shelter. Finally the police brought her to the domestic violence shelter after a very violent altercation with her husband. Mona said, "Once I got there (shelter) and started feeling safe, I could start being with other people. I started making decisions."

The need for safety and the need to belong are two levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The women interviewed said that once they met their safety and belonging needs they were able to move towards personal growth. All stated that they needed to feel safe before they could expand their experiences.

THEME 2 — TRIGGERING EVENTS IN THE LIVES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

Aslanian and Brickell (1980) investigated why and when people learn. Their study revealed that a person learns because of a transition that can be pointed to, a specific event, that is a trigger for the transition. More than 90% of these triggering events are family triggers, e.g. divorce, domestic violence, or loss of a job (Aslanian and Brickell, 1980). This research suggested a cause and effect between how adults spend their time and the life changes that cause them to learn (Aslanian, 1988).

There are transitions that follow the triggering event. While learning occurs because of the triggering event, the subject of this learning may not appear to be related to the triggering event. That is true for the women interviewed for this study. The women

could identify the triggering event and the resulting transition that occurred. Each woman could also discuss what they learned during their transition.

Frannie identified the event that spurred her into a new plan for her life. When she noticed how her husband snarled at her, she thought, “I don’t want to spend the rest of my life with this person who snarls, with that kind of soul.” This realization triggered her to learn by seeking legal help and reading books about domestic violence. After seeking out new information, Frannie started planning a new direction in her life.

Katie could recall exactly what event propelled her into action. She said that while working as a volunteer at a domestic violence shelter, and listening to the stories told by the victims, “it clicked” when she realized she was also a domestic violence victim. Soon after, she asked her husband to leave their home so she could move on in her life. Katie is now making plans to move back to her home state and live in the house that she always considered her home.

“I gotta get out of here. No more.” said Corrine, as she described the final straw. Corrine pointed to her chin and said, “My eyes were black to here. You know I am a light-skinned woman, but my face was purple and blue. You know it was really bad.” After that final beating, the event that finally made her say, “no more,” Corrine left her boyfriend and went to the domestic violence shelter.

Darcy spoke in a strong voice describing the event that moved her to action. When Darcy was taken to the hospital after a beating from her husband, she knew that she would never go back to him. She said, “I thought I was going to die. It took this to put me in the hospital. I was grateful for that last beating. I knew it would be the last time.” It was this experience that forced Darcy to seek alternatives in her life. Darcy went to the

domestic violence shelter after her hospitalization. Thereafter she started making plans so she would never have to go back to her husband. She rented an apartment, became a volunteer at the shelter, and learned more about domestic violence by reading books. Aslanian and Brickell state that the learning activities occur during the transition.

Another example of a triggering event was Annie's vivid description of that situation that propelled her into action. Annie described a dark and cold evening when she was forced to go on a short trip with her husband. He started complaining about the dirty windows in their truck as they made their way down a lonely dirt road. Her husband started yelling and calling her names. Right then and there, Annie realized that she could no longer take his threats of shooting her, the yelling and the physical abuse. Annie said, "When he started complaining about the windows in the truck, that was the last straw." After this incident Annie decided to make some plans for her life that did not include her husband.

THEME 3 — THE PRAXIS OF REFLECTION AND ACTION

Paulo Friere (1970, p. 13) defines the praxis of reflection and action as, "an action upon an object that must be critically analyzed in order to understand both the object and the understanding one has of it. The act of knowing involves a dialectical movement which goes from action to reflection and from action to new action." This means reflection and action are important for individuals so that they can have a greater understanding of themselves. This process is a dynamic one that moves from reflection to action, action to reflection. This praxis is a way to humanize life's events.

Friere (1982) believes that in order for empowerment to occur, the praxis of reflection and action is integral. It is a way to develop power within the human psyche. This power of reflection is extended into action. The women interviewed expressed the importance of having time to think and look back at their experiences. They stated that this process helped them to make decisions and to create a better understanding of themselves and their lives.

“What do I want to do about it?” was a question all the women interviewed had asked themselves at some point. The women could also point to specific situations that resulted in their taking a new direction. This could have been anything from writing poetry, to calling an attorney. Whatever the action, they learned, grew and reached beyond themselves to a larger world.

Annie said that she looked at the past and asked the question, “What do I want to do about it?” She said that she looked at her mother’s life and realized that she didn’t want to be like her mother. Through this reflection she came to terms with her mother’s strengths and weaknesses. Annie said, “I saw the family history and could see my life played out the same way.” Annie, through the praxis of reflection and action, is now living independently.

Edie reaffirmed the importance of contemplation. Edie said that after she came to the shelter, she had time to think about her experiences. Edie said, “This started triggering memories and helped me understand everything.” Edie began to write poetry, talked to other women, and realized that she was not alone. After the time spent just thinking, she said, “This process helped me regain my self-esteem so I could do something with my life.”

Frannie was thoughtful in reviewing her past relationship with her ex-husband. Frannie said that while married, she took a step back and looked at her marriage. She said it was this thinking process that helped her realize the level of inequality in her life. She said that because of taking the time out to think she could start making connections in her life.

Similarly, Darcy said, “It was like watching a movie. I knew it wasn’t me. Watching that movie in my head was like gaining a new understanding. I was thinking about that movie.” Darcy believed this process helped her to move forward in her life.

Janice saw “patterns” in her mind when thinking of her past experiences. Her husband left their home for a while. When he came back home for two days the same pattern of violence began again. Janice said, “I think a lot. I ask the question, ‘What happened in the past? What is it I want to do?’ ‘Why is this happening again?’”

THEME 4 — BREAKING OLD HABITS

There was a strong tendency for the subjects to “stay the course.” It was not easy for them to break away from entrenched lifestyles, because prior learning was hard to put aside. The subjects either were in repeated abusive relationships, or there was a family history of domestic violence. Malcolm Knowles (1980) states there is no inherent pattern for adult learning. Adults have to shape their own frameworks. Since old habits are difficult to break, it is much easier to stay entrenched in current lifestyles. Maslow wrote that habits can be roadblocks to learning. These habits can get in the way of solving problems or creating new choices. Maslow states, “There are many habits which release the mind for other activities. At the same time, other habits formed sometime early in life and never re-examined limit the individual’s development.” Most of the women talked

about having some prior contact with domestic violence in their lives. The following descriptions demonstrate how easy it is to stay within familiar territory and how difficult it is to learn new behavior. Old habits do indeed die hard.

Rachel talked about the difficulty of ending a relationship. She married her husband when she was 16 and he was 40 years old. They were married for 2 years and then they divorced. But then they decided to live together. Rachel continued to stay within the relationship because it felt comfortable.

Edie was very aware of her tendency to become involved in relationships that were abusive. She seemed at a loss as to how to stop the repetitive cycle of being attracted to men who are abusive. Edie stated, "I wish I would have come to the shelter in 1979 when the abuse initially occurred. Maybe that would have helped me to not get in this situation again." Revealingly, she has been in three abusive relationships since then.

Mona realized that she also finds herself in relationships with men who are abusive. She talked at length about this pattern in her interview. Mona said that she has had three relationships that were abusive, even though she was conscious of domestic violence issues. "I knew about domestic violence when I was in my second relationship." Mona said that she continues to be involved in relationships that are abusive but somehow she thinks this pattern is difficult to break.

Another woman whose situation illustrated how difficult old learning is to unlearn was Katie. Katie met her husband in 1980, married him in 1983, separated in 1988, reconciled in 1989, separated in 1991, and divorced in 1993. The old habits were indeed difficult to break.

Heidi had a long and repeated history of domestic violence in her relationships with men. She said all of her boyfriends were abusive to her. Heidi admitted that she keeps getting into abusive relationships and it is difficult to break that cycle. Heidi continues to question this pattern and is trying to find ways to break her old habits.

Annie kept getting into the same kind of relationships over and over again. “I was married at 16. My first husband was into drugs and was mean,” said Annie. “I later divorced him and married a biker. We had been married 3 years when he lost his job.” She said that he would go crazy when the bills came in. Now Annie is at the shelter trying to sort out her life and trying to figure out why she continues to get herself into similar situations.

THEME 5 — RELIANCE ON OTHERS FOR HELP IN LEARNING

The women interviewed demonstrated a reliance on others to assist them in establishing a plan for learning. However, this may be a self-fulfilling finding since only women from the domestic violence program were interviewed. The subjects were involved with the shelter’s programs, e.g. residential program, legal advocacy, domestic violence support group, etc., so they were already getting help to facilitate their learning.

Knowles (1984) describes the ideal learning environment as characterized by physical comfort, mutual trust, respect, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression and acceptance of differences. The learning process is facilitated by both the learner and the “helper.” The helper may assist the learner in discovering new possibilities. The helper also helps the learner to clarify her own goals.

Knowles (1984) also states that the learner accepts a share of the responsibility for planning and conducting a learning experience. The helper shares in the formulation of the learning strategies in which the needs of the learner are considered. The helper works with the learner to organize a process of inquiry.

Frannie was one of the women who relied on others for learning. She was a paid staff person in the shelter working with domestic violence victims. While in this professional role, she gained increased awareness of the problems in her marriage by helping other women at the domestic violence shelter come to terms with their problems. The other women were her helpers in identifying the domestic violence in her marriage. Frannie says, "I realized I could have also used these services and I was a victim of domestic violence." As a paid staff person she demonstrated a reliance on others in helping her develop a plan for her own learning.

Darcy described the counselor who helped her to identify a strategy for learning. Darcy said the counselor asked her, "What are you going to do?" She said that the counselor helped her understand the problem and suggested ways for Darcy to learn more about domestic violence.

Similarly, Annie confirms that shelter counselors helped her learn about her abusive relationship. Annie said after she arrived at the domestic violence shelter the counselors helped her make connections between her husband's family history and how it had affected her husband and their marriage. A counselor encouraged Annie to ask new questions and find the answers so she could make the connections between her husband's past and the impact it had on her life. Annie was reliant on the counselors in helping her gain new information and learning.

Heidi felt that the help she received from the counselors to learn about her life was some of the most important help she received. Heidi came to the domestic violence program via the residential facility. She believed very strongly that the counselors and the other women were very helpful in helping her learn about domestic violence. “The counselors helped most,” said Heidi. “They helped me see things and put a label on it. I am thankful for them helping me understand things.”

Nanette was reliant on her court advocate to help her place a label on the problems in her relationship with her husband. Nanette worked with the court advocate in getting a Civil Protection Order. While involved in this legal process, the court advocate helped Annie gain new knowledge about her situation. Since then Nanette has sought out ways to learn more about domestic violence. She said the court advocate was influential in helping her understand that mental battery was a form of domestic violence.

THEME 6 — MUTUAL LEARNING

Knowles (1975, p. 19) states, “Self-directed learning usually takes place in association with various kinds of helpers.”

Knowles (1984) identifies three attitudinal qualities of a helper:

1. Realness of the helper.
2. Non-possessive caring, trust or respect.
3. Empathetic, understanding and sensitive and accurate listening.

These attitudinal qualities of the helper are important so the learner can be free to express their concerns.

Knowles (1984) describes the guidelines for a helper. There are ten characteristics in establishing an environment in which learning can be fostered.

1. The helper establishes the initial mood or setting of the learning experience.
2. The helper asks and clarifies the purposes of the learner.
3. The helper relies upon the desire of the learner to implement the strategies that have the most motivational force behind the significant experience.
4. The helper works at creating many possible resources for learning.
5. The helper is a flexible resource to be used by the learner.
6. The helper accepts the responsibility for the intellectual content and emotional attitudes and gives respect to each learner with the appropriate emphasis.
7. The helper becomes a learner when the climate for learning is obtained.
8. The helper takes the initiative in sharing their experiences with the learner.
9. The helper is alert to the expressions of the learner that are deep and with emotion.
10. The helper endeavors to recognize and accept their limitations.

Mutual learning played a key learning role in the lives of the women interviewed for this study. All the subjects interviewed stated that they learned from others, whether it was another domestic violence victim, domestic violence support group members, a court advocate, family members, counselor, minister, police, or friends. The “helpers” lives were also enriched and expanded by learning and gaining new insights about domestic violence in the lives of these women.

As a professional staff member, Frannie said, “I learned from the other women while working at the shelter. Frannie shared her time and energy in creating a better world for the women and herself. Janice believed she was helped by friends and the support group. The support group members also gained increased awareness or a different view of

others' problems. Just as Janice learned from others. It is a relationship of learning based on mutuality. Janice says now she speaks her mind so others can learn from her as well. Darcy said, "After two weeks at the shelter I could put a name (domestic violence) on what it is. This is because the counselors and the women helped me while I was at the shelter. After I left, it was the support group." She then decided to help other women as they had helped her. She soon was volunteering at the shelter.

Corrine believed reading books, looking at her kids, and talking with the counselors helped her make decisions. Mutual learning was also used. Corrine talked with the other women so she could learn from them while they learned from her. Edie agreed. She said that the atmosphere of the shelter empowered and helped her regain her self esteem. She said, "Talking to others helped me realize that others were in the same situation." The other women were also helped by Edie's willingness to share her experiences and listen to others in their time of need.

Annie's aunt learned about domestic violence and shared this information with Annie. Annie's aunt helped her understand that she was a domestic violence victim. Annie's aunt told Annie about the shelter. While at the shelter, the counselors provided information that would help Annie better understand her husband's behavior. Annie's aunt also learned more about domestic violence and then shared this information with Annie. They were learning together and helping each other come to terms with this crisis.

All the subjects interviewed learned from others. Each learned from family, friends, professionals or other helpers. It can also be said that the helpers learned from the women. The learning relationship was clearly based on mutuality.

THEME 7 — EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The women interviewed for this study learned from prior experiences, but not at the time of those experiences. Their prior experiences served as a learning stimulus. Rogers (1979) states that humans live in an environment that is constantly changing. The goal of education is to facilitate the change and the learning. Learning is the involvement of the whole person in both the feeling and cognitive aspects of their being. The essence of their experience is its meaning in their life.

Experiential learning is self-initiated, it makes a difference in the learner's attitudes, behavior and personality, and is evaluated by the learner. The learner seeks new knowledge based on the experiences and gives a basis for security of knowing in their lives.

Experiences are what the women shared in the interviews. It is the experiences that gave them their "person" in life. Katie said that the experiences of past years in her marriage had shaped her attitudes. She said, "It took seeing occurrences of the past and seeing the pattern occur again. It made me do things differently now." These experiences were evaluated by Katie and gave her a sense of security in her decision making.

Mona used what she learned from her childhood experiences to help her change as an adult. Mona, who came from a family with no history of domestic violence, said that when she looked at her experiences growing up in a home that was happy and violence-free, she realized that her abusive relationship was wrong. She knew relationships weren't supposed to be that way because of her past experiences when growing up in a happy family.

The meshing of the past and present experiences has given Mona the impetus to start attending the domestic violence support group.

Learning from past experience was important to Janice. She said, “I learned by experience. I observed the cycle of violence with my husband. When I lost my job, I didn’t have money to pay the bills and needed help. My husband was not supportive. When he came back again for two days I saw the pattern occur again. He started doing the same things all over again.” After that happened, Janice ended the marriage.

Rachel described her experiences as a child and how those experiences influenced the judgments she made as a married adult. Rachel said, “Back then I knew it (her marriage) was bad because of what I saw growing up. My mom and dad didn’t beat each other that way. It was the comparison of a bad marriage and a good marriage that helped me know that somehow I have to change this. Now I’m going to check a guy’s background. Not date divorced guys is another thing I’m going to do.” Rachel’s expectations were shaped by her experiences growing up in a violence-free home. That set of expectations has shaped how she reacts to current situations.

The focus of experiential learning is the dynamic process-based continuum of experiences. Rogers (1979) indicated that the experiential learning model is composed of five elements. The elements are: personal involvement by the learner, it is initiated by the learner, it affects the learner pervasively, it is evaluated by the learner, and its essence is its meaning to the learner. The women interviewed came to their situation based upon prior experiences. They took these prior experiences and learned from them at a later time in their lives, just as Rogers defined in his observations.

THEME 8 — VISION AND HOPE

Viktor Frankl's, *Man's Search for Meaning*, (p. 77, 1959) states, "Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for the individual." Frankl came to this conclusion while in one of Germany's concentration camps during World War II.

In the concentration camp, cigarettes were used as money. They were traded for extra food, clothing or privileges. Frankl would sometimes notice a man smoking all his cigarettes within a very short period of time. Invariably, the next morning Frankl would learn the man had committed suicide. From his observations, he concluded that the people who committed suicide were the ones who no longer had a sense of vision and hope for themselves.

Frankl believed that a person is able to live and even die for the sake of ideals or values. He conducted a poll of public opinion in France. The results indicated that 89% of the people believed that people need "something" to live for. Another 61% admitted there was something or someone they would give their own lives for. Frankl argued that these results supported his belief that vision and hope give meaning to a person's life.

Women who are in a domestic violence crisis must take responsibility to find the right answers to their problems and to complete the tasks which they set for themselves. In order for them to complete these tasks a sense of vision and hope is essential.

Although these tasks differ from person to person, all the women interviewed had developed a sense of vision and hope that allowed them to accept responsibility for the completion of their life's tasks.

Even though Heidi had lost custody of her children, she had a sense of vision and hope of what her new life could be. The loss of custody gave her an impetus to actualize a new life with her children. Heidi stated, "The reason I am involved in this program is so I can have more control in relationships and to get my children back." She said, "I want to teach my kids how to live and not be dependent." Heidi expects to get her children back by completing the program and finding ways to be a better parent. That is her sense of vision and hope for herself and her children.

Darcy identified a significant event that she witnessed with her children. This experience helped her view her life a new way — with vision and hope — so she could move forward in her life with a new outlook. Darcy said, "My son opened my eyes when I saw him praying, thanking God for having a home, while I was looking around the apartment thinking we had nothing." Later in the interview she said that watching her son be thankful for what they did have helped her put everything in perspective. She then found the energy and strength to go forward in her life with a renewed vision and hope.

Being hopeful is difficult in time of crisis when one's health is not the best. Somehow Nanette found a way, through vision and hope, to resolve her difficulties. Nanette's chronic health problems were exacerbated by her husband's psychological abuse. Facing this problem and taking responsibility for finding its solution, she discovered hope and a vision that peace could be part of her life. After she filed for divorce and obtained a restraining order, Nanette saw her health problems begin to diminish.

Frannie also had a sense of what her future would hold for her. She planned a way to gain control over her life by seeking out new information. She had faith in what was possible in her life. Frannie saw the connections between inequality and domestic violence through her reading. She said making these connections gave her the courage to

think about the future. Frannie took the initiative and started planning for a future when she could come to an inner understanding of herself and her problems. She now has a sense of vision, a future for her life's work. Frannie has established a path that has given her life greater meaning.

Viktor Frankl (1962) said that in taking responsibility to find the right answers, the person defines their life. Vision and hope are needed to accomplish life's tasks. All the subjects interviewed differed in their hopes, visions, and life's tasks, but each woman took responsibility to find their own answers.

THEME 9 — PATHFINDERS

Pathfinders are those who face a treacherous transition. They find a detour that usually turns out constructively. Sheehy (1981) says that life crises are a certainty for everyone. The life crises are stressful but a person finds the internal energy to move forward and to grow in new ways. The willingness to risk is the master quality of path finding. It is the cornerstone.

The pathfinders that Sheehy describes are those who took action that resulted in some outer change to their environment. The pathfinder who willingly risked began with an inner change that propelled the person to risk a different direction in their life.

The people Sheehy identifies as pathfinders are those who gave up self-limiting behaviors, have the spunk to risk changing roles, or shift emphasis within their value systems. The willingness to risk can challenge the basic belief system and values of an individual. The willingness to risk means change, growth and learning for those who

decide to do this. Sheehy states, "We are most likely to become pathfinders during one of the predictable crises in our own lives, or as a result of an unexpected life accident that acts as a springboard for a developmental leap."

Path finding is a process. It is a movement toward emotional well-being that requires a certain measure of risk for the individual. Path finding also takes courage and conviction for the people who choose to make a difference in their lives.

The women interviewed were risk-takers. They chose to challenge themselves and others in the decisions that were at times contrary to their basic belief and value systems. The women took considerable risks to protect their physical and emotional security for themselves and their children. The transitions they made were at times treacherous and stressful. The women found the strength to change because they knew that was necessary for survival.

One example is Corrine. She faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles in leaving her boyfriend after years of abuse. She escaped suddenly during a snow storm, on foot, with her two children, to seek safe shelter. The fear of being discovered by her boyfriend while walking the streets was outweighed by the fear of what would happen if she stayed. The decision was "now or never" for her. Corrine now says it was all worth it. Leaving all of her possessions behind was an acceptable sacrifice for Corrine, because material possessions can be replaced. It was this one unpredictable turn of events that gave Corrine the courage to change directions in her life. From this experience Corrine found an opportunity to grow, to learn.

Rachel also took considerable risk in leaving her ex-husband. The shelters in her area were all full. Rachel had no money to pay for transportation to an out of town shelter.

She raised the money by telephoning agencies in the area and asking them to help. During her moment of desperation, Rachel gave up her self-limiting behavior and found a new way to solve her problem. In ending an old pattern of helplessness, she gained an increased awareness of herself.

Darcy identified the risk taking and the path finding that occurred in her life. The incident that Darcy described in her interview was one of great courage and growth. Darcy was so severely beaten by her husband that she was hospitalized. While recovering from her injuries in the hospital, she decided she would not go back to her husband. Darcy said, "It was anger. I decided this will never happen again." The internal spiritual change that Darcy experienced led her onto a different path. Before she could accept the risk of leaving, she changed some of her values and beliefs, which in turn created for Darcy an opportunity for growth and learning.

Pathfinders can be found in all walks of life. Frannie appeared to have it all: a successful husband, a beautiful home and the other trappings that conveyed a "Leave it to Beaver" life. Nothing could be further from the truth. Her life was rife with economic and emotional abuse. Frannie decided to take a chance. She left that facade of happiness to find her own real peace of mind. She said, "Education changes the issues. I now enjoy relationships that are based on equality." As a pathfinder, Frannie challenged her basic belief system by reading, talking to friends and starting to make changes in her life.

All the women interviewed described situations that required risk-taking that endangered them physically, emotionally, or economically. They took responsibility for their situations and found ways to create new paths in their lives so learning could occur. Their life's paths were all different but each found a willingness to challenge their basic belief systems and values.

THEME 10 — INTENTIONAL CHANGES

Allen Tough (1980) says an intentional change has two characteristics. First, the change must be explicitly chosen and intended. Second, an individual then takes one or more tangible steps to achieve the change.

The change as Tough (1980) describes must be highly intentional. That means a person makes a decision that is specific. A person must consciously choose and strive for this change in their life.

Tough also states that these choices are voluntary. These choices are not forced on a person or required by circumstances. Important intentional changes are common in four areas: 1) job, career, and training; 2) human relationships, emotions, and self perception; 3) enjoyable activities; and 4) residence location. These four areas account for 75% of all intentional changes. All the women interviewed made intentional changes based upon human relationships, emotions, and self perception.

One example of this is Frannie, who described intentional changes in her life. She then identified the steps she took to accomplish the change. Frannie said that she saw an attorney to find out her legal rights, because she knew divorce was inevitable. To get more of an understanding of her situation, she started watching television talk shows and reading books. Frannie later divorced her husband. Frannie was not forced by anyone to make this decision. She was conscious of her choice, with the intention of ending a bad marriage.

Similarly, Katie discussed the intentional change in her life. Katie consciously made a decision to change a domestic situation that was unsafe into one that was safe and

peaceful. Katie separated, divorced, and obtained a civil protection order against her ex-husband. During that time she took the necessary steps to change her life. She saw a lawyer, talked to a court advocate, and found resolution to her problems through these changes.

Darcy made intentional changes in her life after she arrived at the domestic violence shelter. Darcy chose to leave her husband after he beat her. It was a conscious decision. She said, "I was not going back to him." After about one or two weeks at the shelter, she took steps to act on her decision. She made phone calls to attorneys, talked to potential landlords, and got involved with domestic violence support groups. Darcy left the shelter, divorced her husband, and became a volunteer at the shelter. She made conscious, intended, free-will changes in her life so there would be peace for herself and her children. After making conscious decisions to change, she took one or more steps to achieve lasting change.

All the women interviewed made intentional changes in their lives. The changes were chosen and intended. They took steps to achieve these changes, whether it was to go to shelter, see an attorney or obtain civil protection.

SUMMARY

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is an important paradigm to use in understanding the learning behavior of domestic violence victims, because the women interviewed said they needed to feel safe before they could move on to the next tier of the hierarchy, the need for affiliation or belonging. It is at that level that the subjects could initiate learning.

Aslanian and Brickell (1980) state that more than 90 percent of the events triggering adult learning occur in career or family lives. These specific events trigger the decision to learn at particular points of time. The women interviewed all could identify triggers that propelled them to new learning.

Paulo Friere's concept of a praxis of reflection and action can be used to explain how the women gained increased awareness of their lives and moved their lives in new directions.

The subjects interviewed demonstrated a reliance on others to assist them in establishing a plan for learning. However, this may be a self-fulfilling finding since the women interviewed were all active in the domestic violence programs, where they interacted with others in the facilitation of their learning.

Five elements comprise the experiential or self-directed learning that Rogers (1979) defines. The elements are: personal involvement by the learner, it is self-initiated, it is pervasive, it is evaluated by the learner, and its essence is its meaning to the learner. The subjects interviewed brought an understanding to their situations based upon what they had learned from prior experiences.

Self-directed learning usually takes place with others who assume the role of helpers. All the subjects interviewed stated that they learned with help from others. These helpers included friends, family members, court advocates, other clients, etc.

Viktor Frankl (1962) wrote that in taking responsibility to find the right answers to their problems and in choosing their life's tasks, the person defines their life. Vision and hope are needed to accomplish these tasks. All the women interviewed had different hopes and

visions, and had chosen unique goals for their lives, and each woman took responsibility for these life's tasks.

All the subjects interviewed were the kind of risk-takers that Sheehy describes in *Pathfinders*. All the subjects interviewed described situations that required taking risks that could have endangered them physically, emotionally, and economically. They took responsibility for their situations and found ways to create new paths in their lives.

Allen Tough (1980) wrote that intentional change must have two characteristics. First, the change must be definitely chosen and intended. Second, an individual must then take one or more steps to achieve the change. All the subjects interviewed chose to be involved with the domestic violence programs. Because the sample was selected from that population, the subjects were already making intentional changes.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Eleven women who had been identified as domestic violence victims because they used services of the domestic violence program were interviewed for this study. All the women were involved in the domestic violence program through the domestic violence support group, residential program, or court advocacy. The experiences they related described their emotional reactions and their perceptions of their learning while in a domestic violence relationship. They also revealed how they dealt with their problems during this traumatic time and the outcomes that resulted.

At first glance there does not seem to be anything unusual about these 11 women. They represent every socio-economic status, race, and age group. Domestic violence does not exempt. What distinguishes these women from others is that they have been victims of domestic violence. Although each of the women had unique stories to tell, their learning strategies all followed a strikingly similar pattern. Examination of the pattern led to the identification of ten learning themes or categories that describe the learning methods used by domestic violence victims when they are trying to resolve their crisis situation.

SUMMARY OF THE TEN CATEGORIES

These eleven women represent a wide range of experiences and educational levels. At one end, Rachel had seven years of education. At the other end of the educational spectrum was Frannie, who had an undergraduate degree. The selection of these women was haphazard, but believed to be representative of the population of shelter users.

A total of ten learning themes emerged throughout the course of the interviews. The themes evolved as the interviews progressed, and the interview structure evolved as the data presented new categories.

The first theme, *From Safety and Security to Belonging*, was the most significant theme identified by the study. This theme indicates that women must first satisfy their need to feel safe and secure before they can consider their need to belong. And it is only at that stage or later that learning can occur.

The women repeatedly described the fear they felt while in their domestic violence relationships. They said that they had to “feel” safe before they could interact with other people. This category documents that before learning can occur, safety needs have to be met.

The second theme, *Triggering Events in the Lives of Domestic Violence Victims*, shows that domestic violence victims typically recall an event that enabled them to take decisive action. The women interviewed could typically point to a specific event that triggered the action. The action led to a transition in attitudes, values or beliefs, which in turn set the stage for new learning.

Contemplation played an important role in the lives of the women interviewed. The ***Praxis of Reflection and Action*** theme describes how the women developed greater understanding of their lives via the praxis of reflection and action. The praxis helps identify the problem by looking reflectively within oneself, which leads to decision and action. Reflection and action is a process of transformation that creates new freedom for the individual. This praxis is part of a domestic violence victim's efforts to gain insight into themselves and the world around them.

The theme ***Breaking Old Habits*** explains why prior learning was hard to unlearn and that entrenched lifestyles are extremely difficult to break away from. Habits can be roadblocks to learning. Most people find it easier to continue to do as they have in the past. Many of the women interviewed had some contact with domestic violence early in their lives. The women tended as adults to repeat the pattern of violence they learned while growing up in an abusive home, or in early adulthood.

Reliance on Others for Help in Learning reveals how the women were helped by others to learn about domestic violence. The helper assists the learner in discovering new possibilities and in clarifying the learner's goals. This helper could be a counselor, court advocate, minister, police officer, domestic violence support group members, friends, or family.

The women and the helpers also spoke of how they learned from each other. The ***Mutual Learning*** theme shows that while the women learned, they also helped others to learn.

People are shaped by their experiences, and experience is integral to learning. The theme of ***Experiential Learning*** implies that prior life experiences served as learning stimuli for the women.

Another theme that emerged from the interviews was *Vision and Hope* . This theme demonstrates that in order for the women to accomplish their life's tasks, a sense of vision and hope is needed. A learner must also take responsibility to find the answers that are right for them. All the women interviewed developed a sense of vision and hope for the completion of their life's tasks.

As the interviews progressed, the *Pathfinders* theme emerged to describe how the women interviewed faced a treacherous transition in their lives and in response, found novel ways to meet those challenges. Pathfinders take action to change their environment, risking both internal and external changes that lead to different directions in their lives. Each woman interviewed identified new paths that she took to change her life.

The final theme, *Intentional Changes* , describes how change occurred for the women and the purposeful steps they took to achieve change. There are two characteristics of intentional changes. It must be chosen and intended, and the person must take one or more steps to achieve the change. All the women interviewed made intentional changes based upon human relationships, emotions and self perception.

SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR BUTLER COUNTY?

This study can shed some new light upon the problem of domestic violence in Butler County. Butler County's population in 1990 (U.S. Census) was 291,479, making it the eighth most populous and fourth fastest growing county in the state of Ohio. It is estimated that one out of four women will become victims of domestic violence in their lifetime, which means there are currently over 37,000 victims or potential victims within Butler County. The problem should escalate as the population increases. Professionals

see the problems of domestic violence first hand. It is not a “secret” behavior to them. Domestic violence cuts through every socio-economic layer, from the inner city to the most affluent suburbs of Butler County. In 1992, the Butler County Sheriff’s Office reported 351 cases of domestic violence. In 1993, 323 cases were reported. These numbers probably do not reflect the true magnitude of the problem within the community because this crime is known to be under-reported.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR WOMEN IN BUTLER COUNTY?

Domestic violence is seldom reported to police. The reasons that it is unreported are many. A woman may fear for her life or feel ashamed. She may have no one that she trusts to talk to about the domestic violence. There may be a perception by the victim that it is a family matter. Or the police may be slow in responding to domestic disturbances which sends a message to the victim that she will not be protected by law enforcement. The message it sends to the batterer is that the community does not care about his behavior.

This study is important because it shows us the similarities in the stories of the women’s lives. Similar threads are woven into a common fabric that conveys an all-too-familiar pattern. Understanding this pattern is the key to seeing how these women learned about their situations, came to terms with them and made changes in their lives.

Their learning experiences are important to examine because they can help practitioners, professionals, family and others to gain new insight about how to help domestic violence victims.

There are three conclusions that can be made based on the interviews of these 11 women and the results of this study. First, allowing adequate time is important, if not crucial to the learning process. Each woman had a different concept of and need for time in their struggle to cope with domestic violence.

Secondly, contemplation or self-awareness plays an important part in giving domestic violence victims control over their lives. The interviews were replete with quotes such as, "I thought about it and then I did what I had to do."

The final conclusion is that domestic violence victims facilitate learning with each other. This may seem like common sense, but for some professionals, family members and others this may be a revelation. The interviews made it clear that not only did the subjects learn from their helpers, but their helpers learned from them as well.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME

Time is important in the lives of the women who were interviewed for this study. A person may think of "time" simply as an external fact: what time is it? Another person may see time as a internal mechanism or feeling.

These two competing viewpoints can complicate the process of helping the domestic violence victim. A professional may by necessity and habit see time as external, while the learner feels time internally. Neither party would ever expect that there could be two completely different perspectives.

Time is important for the learners because they learn only when their internal clocks makes them receptive to learning. Maslow mentioned this in his research. He believed this internal clock moves the person to new learning or awareness of themselves. This internal clock cannot be ignored or hurried. A woman's internal clock should set the schedule for learning and should take precedence over agency rules or governmental standards. On the other hand, a professional may have to adhere to standards or rules that limit time. For example, there may be a limit to the length of time a woman may stay at the shelter. Or a counseling requirement may state that a woman has to start working on personal goals within three days of beginning her stay. These rules may interfere with the woman's need for time for learning. Externally focused rules like these may be necessary, but it is important for shelter professionals to understand that these rules may in fact undermine their efforts to help victims.

Since battered women learn on an internal time schedule that may well be in conflict with the organizational goals of the program, shelters need to review how "time" is defined. Rules that use time as a measure of progress should be re-evaluated to be sensitive to the internal time clock of the women who use these services.

Reflection and action is part of time, too. It is the internal clock that sets the time for reflection and action. As Paulo Friere believes, it is a sense of spiritual, existential time that moves a person to reflect and then act. It is "time" that is required to promote that reflection and action.

Staff members at an agency, family members and other professionals may have a limited amount of time to facilitate this process. An agency must limit the time a counselor can spend with a victim. There may also be competing demands for the professional staff

member's time. Family members' time may be divided between work and children, severely limiting the time available to work on the important issues.

The time for reflection and action was important in the lives of the women. This process enabled the women to explore new possibilities in their lives.

Professionals, family and friends need to understand and be attuned to the internal timing of learning. Rules within shelters that provide timelines need to be re-evaluated. This means reviewing house rules, the intake process, and the policy and procedural manuals that define such issues as maximum allowable length of shelter stay, to time allowed to process clients through the shelter system. The staff needs to be sensitive to the individual time needs that each client requires to promote learning.

Family and friends may not understand the important role of time in the life of the domestic violence victim. They may see "time" from a traditional sense. For example, a family member or friend may say, "It's been six months, don't you think it is time to move on?" Being supportive and attuned to the timetable of their loved one may be the greatest gift of all.

THINKING WOMEN

In our society there is much emphasis placed on producing and creating, even during times of relaxation or recreation. We do not foster opportunities for contemplation. It's hard to imagine a paid employee telling their supervisor they were taking time in their work schedule just to think? Even leisure activities place a priority on creating tangible products. Games have winners and losers, a craft project has as its goal a finished

product, and a vacation must produce photo albums and souvenirs. Merely thinking is not a valued or respected activity in our society.

Time must be allowed for thinking. Introspection is important for domestic violence victims. This process helps them shape their decisions so they can move forward in their lives. Thinking, after all, is part of the learning process. Silent, solitary and invisible, it is nonetheless necessary and real.

Domestic violence programs must create strategies so opportunities for thinking will occur. These strategies could mean developing quiet time within the domestic violence support group time. Another way to “design in” thinking time is to allow time during one-on-one counseling for a moment to think. Day care for children may provide time for busy moms who are in a state of crisis.

Adult learning activities need to incorporate thinking time for the women. This thinking time helps the women gain new ways of doing. Contemplation is integral to women defining who they are and what they want to be.

WE FACILITATE LEARNING FOR EACH OTHER

Many people do not consider themselves as helpers for each other in learning. A more traditional view is that a teacher and student relationship is necessary for learning. This traditional idea even flows into other professional spheres. There is the client, counselor relationship. In business it is the customer and clerk transaction. There is the child and parent relationship. These examples reinforce the old ideas that learning is for the student

only. It is often felt that the teacher knows everything. In other words, what can the teacher learn from the student anyway?

This is clearly not supported by this study. As Malcolm Knowles, the adult educator, points out, the learner and the helper both learn from each other. All the women in the study could identify ways they learned from people in their lives. They also identified ways that these people learned from them, as well.

This study did not try to determine the optimum length of shelter stay for adult learning. Domestic violence shelters establish their own guidelines which vary from community to community, and state to state.

This study could not generalize adult learning in other domestic violence shelters because it was a qualitative study with a small sample. In the future, it would be appropriate to conduct a quantitative study that would focus on the ten themes developed in this study.

Institutions need to recognize and understand this process in order to better meet the adult learning needs of battered women. This mutuality of learning is a positive model. This learning process is based on equality and demonstrates to the women that they have a say in defining and growing in their lives. The helper from this interaction learns more about themselves and the world around them. Each can feel better about themselves, build self-esteem and meet new challenges.

FUTURE AREAS OF INQUIRY

Some future studies should try to discover how formal education might help domestic violence victims make positive personal changes in their lives. These studies should look at the differences in adult learning styles based upon the amount of prior formal education the victims received before using the shelter services. This information could help domestic violence professionals develop adult learning strategies that best meet the individual educational needs of the women who use the shelter services. This is important because such factors as literacy or formal education backgrounds are not often considered when professionals are trying to share information with the victims.

Carol Gilligan's concepts of moral development and gender-based learning differences could also be explored. If women think, learn and make decisions differently than men, then the proper adult learning construct may be in conflict with the usually patriarchal management culture of domestic violence shelters. Some shelters have become a part of larger, more "mainstream" organizations, and their management has tended to adopt a hierarchical structure. Other domestic violence shelters have remained free-standing, and tend to retain the flat, power-sharing management structures typical of "grassroots" organizations. Research should be done in this area to give new insights into the kind of management culture that can best create an environment conducive to learning and empowerment for women.

REFLECTIONS OF THE RESEARCHER

Domestic violence is rooted in the power imbalance in the relationship of two people. This inequality can also apply to society as a whole. For it is the inequality of power within all strata of society, class, gender and race that promotes domestic violence. As Carol Gilligan states in *In a Different Voice*,

“...the ethic of justice proceeds from the premise of equality — that everyone should be treated the same — an ethic of care rests on the premise of nonviolence — that no one should be hurt. In the representation, both perspectives converge in the realization that just as inequality adversely affects both parties in an unequal relationship, so too violence is destructive for everyone.”

In a just society that is based upon equality, domestic violence would be a rare problem.

The Greeks defined democracy as a government by the people. In that definition, everyone is an equal partner in society. Everyone has a stake in redefining how adult learning strategies can be implemented into programs in industry and the not-for-profit sector. A democratic society should work toward the ideal of a community of equals.

In order to reach this goal, we must create a learning environment that accommodates the internal sense of time that determines when a woman is receptive to learning. A woman's internal clock should set the learning schedule, taking precedence over agency rules and government standards.

We must also begin to value the role of thinking. Reflection is important for domestic violence victims. It helps shape their decisions, and is an integral part of the learning process.

Equally important, we must understand the relationship of equality forged between the learner and the helper. If we begin to see this as the ideal learning framework, the roles played by family members, friends and professionals will be based upon giving and receiving in the learning experience side by side with the learner. This restructuring of the learning model can change the expectations of relationships into ones based upon equality. The internal structure of relationships will be forever changed.

For democracy to work, there must be a common base of education. Education, through empowerment, can create a just, moral society where power is shared. Education is essential to reducing the prevalence of domestic violence in society, because education reduces the inequality that, in the final analysis, is the root cause of domestic violence.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A FORWARD INFORMATION FORM

Please provide your address so that I can send you information about the study.

Name

Address

APPENDIX B LETTER OF CONFIRMATION

Dear _____

Thank you for agreeing to talk about your learning activities at the domestic violence shelter. This confirms our interview for (date) at (time) at the shelter.

The interview will cover three areas: 1) types of learning you pursued, 2) types of learning you preferred and 3) the types of support you received from the shelter. I will be taping our interview as well as taking notes. Once again, I want to remind you that you will not be identified by name in the study, and the interview will remain confidential. The results will be shared with all the study participants who wish to see it upon conclusion of the research project.

Thank you for your help in this project. I look forward to talking with you on

_____ .

Sincerely,

Paula Yensen

APPENDIX C CONSENT FORM

The purpose of this interview is to learn of your experiences with domestic violence and how you have dealt with it. Your signature on this page shows that you:

- understand that the information that you give will be used for a research study as part of Paula Yensen's doctoral program at Michigan State University;
- are volunteering your time (1 to 1.5 hours) to take part in the study;
- may withdraw or decline to participate at any time with no penalty attached to such action;
- understand that your name will not be connected to this information;
- grant permission to audio tape the interview; and
- understand that the tape recording of the interview will be erased when it is no longer needed, approximately one month after the interview.

Signed _____

Date _____

APPENDIX D LETTER OF THANKS

Dear _____

Thank you so much for allowing me to interview you regarding the learning activities of domestic violence victims. I know how very busy you are and I appreciate you taking a half-day of your schedule to talk with me.

This study is really very interesting and becomes more so with each additional interview. I'll be happy to share a summary of the findings as soon as it is completed.

Again, thank you for your time and your willingness to participate.

Sincerely,

Paula Yensen

APPENDIX E DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET

Identification # _____

1. Age _____
2. Highest level of education achieved _____
3. Total number of children _____
4. Number of children at home _____
5. Personal income _____
6. Family income _____

APPENDIX F INTERVIEW GUIDE

Identification # _____

1. (Discuss the background of the research study and the issue of confidentiality before the interview.)
2. Tell me why you are here or involved with this program.
3. Tell me something about your domestic violence relationships.
4. What people were important to you in coming to terms with your situation?
5. How did you learn about domestic violence?
6. What services were important to you, and why?
7. Was there a history of domestic violence in your family?
8. Did you have other domestic violence relationships?
9. What kinds of things did you do to better acquaint yourself with this problem?

APPENDIX G GENERAL OBSERVATIONS WORKSHEET

Identification # _____

Observations — key words and phrases

APPENDIX H INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

PARTICIPANT		TIME	INTERVIEW DATE
Trial 1			Oct. 16, 1993
Trial 2			Oct. 18
Trial 3			Oct. 19
Trial 4			Oct. 23
1.	Darcy	10:00 a.m. — 11:00 a.m.	Dec. 4
2.	Edie	7:00 p.m. — 8:00 p.m.	Dec. 14
3.	Frannie	8:00 p.m. — 9:00 p.m.	Jan. 5, 1994
4.	Katie	noon — 1:00 p.m.	Jan. 8
5.	Janice	noon — 1:00 p.m.	Jan. 10
6.	Rachel	5:30 p.m. — 6:30 p.m.	Jan. 10
7.	Nanette	noon — 1:00 p.m.	Jan. 15
8.	Mona	noon — 1:30 p.m.	Jan. 16
9.	Heidi	6:00 p.m. — 7:00 p.m.	Jan. 18
10.	Annie	6:00 p.m. — 7:00 p.m.	Jan. 19
11.	Corrine	11:00 a.m.— 12:30 p.m.	Jan. 21

APPENDIX I INTERVIEW EXCERPT

Identification # _____

Corrine

Corrine is identified as C

Interviewer is identified as I

C ...You start thinking about things that were good.

I Is that when you started thinking, when you came to the shelter?

C After the first week you start thinking. The bad memories start to fade and you're just thinking of the good times. In some relationships there's the good stuff and it starts to surface. Then the next thing you know you start thinking about calling.

I Is that what's happening to you now?

C When I first came here I started this note. It said, "I love you, but you have such a bad attitude, and I can not live here with you." Well, my daughter doesn't know. She's sixteen. She doesn't know mom. He went to Middletown to get a vehicle and we were afraid, because we didn't know what time he was coming back. We might pass him in the road. What would we say then, walking down the street with these little tote bags? So she said no, because we decided we would have to

lie and say we were walking to Middletown, because that's where all my people live. We made it here without seeing him. We were careful.

I Can you give me a little background of your situation? Did he emotionally and physically abuse you? It is my understanding that he called you names and hit you. Is that right?

C Yes, that's right. I have had two or three black eyes. He hit me in my face and I was black and blue from my eyes to here. (She points to her jawline) You know I am not a real light skinned woman, but my face got to be purple and blue. You know it got to be so bad that when I went to the doctor she was so upset. I told her a lie because he was right there with me. He always goes everywhere with me.

I He watches everything you say?

C Yes.

I How long have you been in this relationship?

C Three years.

I Is this your first relationship that was violent?

C No. I was married. I was with my husband for almost twenty years. He was abusive.

- I How did you come to the shelter? Did you call the crisis line? The police?
- C I started thinking to myself that I've got to get out of here. I have nowhere to go, and I don't know what to do about my situation.
- I So what did you do?
- C So I called my mom on time because I live in a different city. I called her and asked her if she would look up these numbers to find domestic abuse shelters to get all the information. Better yet, call the people herself so she could tell me. And she did. That's how I ended up here.
- I How did you put a name on it — domestic violence?
- C I saw posters.
- I Where did you see the posters?
- C Well, I would go to the welfare office and saw them there and different places. Even looking in the telephone book.
- I Did you know in your first relationship that it was domestic violence?
- C He was an alcoholic. I knew he had something. He was sick.
- I So when you got into the second relationship, you started putting it together?

C Yes. This was the same thing, only worse. I was going from fire to frying pan.

I So you started comparing the two?

C Yes, I did. Well, my husband. If a person is to be overly protective it seems to me it should be my husband, not my boyfriend. After I got the divorce, this boyfriend began to act like he owned me, like he was married to me, like I was a piece of property to him. He would take me and make me take my clothes off. If I didn't take them off fast enough, he would tear them off. I found out that it was his way to have control over me, so that I wouldn't leave the house. It got to be where I would be in the living room and he would just get mad about something. When I would start to rebel, that's when he would say, "Okay, honey, let's just go to bed." And before I could even think about it he would start taking my clothes off.

I Were friends helpful to you during this time?

C I was isolated. My mom was the only one.

I Really, your mom was your lifeline. Then what happened after she gave you the numbers?

C She was going to come and get me to get out of the house with my clothes. We cooked up this story to say we were doing the dirty laundry. But she really would have come and transported me, but she went out to get in the car, but because of the weather, the car was frozen. Then the only thought I had was that I had this friend from St. Francis school. We grew up as friends. We were not next door

neighbors or anything like that. She could live in Milwaukee, but our hearts are so close together. She loves me and I love her. We're so close. She could always call me or I could call her for anything. Nothing was secret. So I asked my mom to see if she could call her. Maybe she could come and get me and my kids.

What ended up happening is that my friend's car was in the shop. So my mom got her on the line. My mom's got three-way calling. She got on the line, and told me to hold on. Then she told my friend about my situation. She switched back over to me, but my friend didn't tell her what she had in mind to do. I thought afterward when she found out she couldn't get her car, it would probably be dropped. Because all you could do, you do. After I got her, I called my mom to let her know I made it. Me and my kids walked here.

I How did you get your clothes here?

C We carried what we could. We unpacked our things five or six times to figure out what we wanted to take.

I How far did you have to walk?

C We walked from Front Street. It was cold, you know. The snow was deep. There was ice under the snow. Looking back, it was like a light bulb that turned on, remembering something my mom said to me. The last thing she said was that if you can't do anything else, just walk. My daughter said that we couldn't take these clothes. We just took one set of clothes. I went through the entire house and figured out what we needed. I had these pictures that were my life 20 years ago when my kids were babies. I wanted to separate the pictures before we left. I have these drapes I want.

- I It is interesting what a person places a value on.
- C I can never go back and get those pictures again. But you know, I can carry those pictures. One day we will probably get to those pictures. I am not in a hurry to go back there.
- I Does God play a role in your life?
- C I started praying about two weeks ago. I used to do the things that were right to do. Telling lies, you know that's not what you are supposed to be doing. It sends a mixed message to the kids. But I did what I had to do. God helped me to go. I don't know where I am going from here. I am not that afraid of coming here.
- I It sounds like that when you decided to come to the shelter, you thought through about your life. It was a place for peace.
- C I cannot lay down on that couch. I could not leave. I was in prison. To be able to go to that telephone was a big, big deal.
- I So he isolated you?
- C Yes. He was the king. That's where it was at!
- I Since you have been at the shelter you have made lots of decisions.
- C I wanted to make a strong statement to him: "I mean what I say." I analyzed it, evaluated it, went over it, tossed and turned in my sleep before I ever came here. I

don't think anyone deserves to be treated like he treated me. What gives him the right to take away what I have given him? I guess by my saying nothing I thought I was doing right. But it was not doing right at all.

I What makes you think you were doing right?

C Because, my ex-husband cheated on me all the time. He was a whore. He had to have other women. I thought that was the worst thing in life. Now I see it's not. He did hit me a few times, but never like this person. And I was married to that man. And this man, if he died, I would not get a thing.

I So you came to the shelter. What has been good for you while you have been here?

C They have given me this book, *Free To Be Me*. I started reading it and asked for a notebook. I need to remind myself and sort it out. This book talks about how to get a protection order. I found it beneficial to me. I thought I was crazy. I found out I wasn't crazy at all. I found out that I am not the only one. This is happening to a lot of other women.

I Do you realize that it is his problem, and not your problem?

C Yes. Maybe if I could have done something different...but now I know it's not my insecurity, it's his.

I So all of this is helping you make major decisions — reading books, talking to the counselors?

C Really right now my kids are beginning to get on my nerves. Probably right now I want some time of my own. Total quiet. The counselor explained to me that they are unwinding and they are under stress. Like I told you, knowing how he is, like a walking volcano. The kids are now responding to a new place. You don't have to walk on eggshells here. I find myself doing that.

I So it is easy to go back to that habit?

C Yes. Little by little I unlearn it. I look back and realize how dangerous it was, to what extreme he would go to get to me!

I Are you thinking about leaving the city?

C I worked for 15 years in a plant. I have been a clerk, a stocker, in control, and on an assembly line. I had to make sure all these pieces were right. I worked in bonding.

I Two cities in Michigan that may need workers are Grand Rapids and Lansing.

C I used to have it in my heart to help others, like what you are doing. I started nursing school but had to quit because I got married. Then I started again at the end of my marriage, but had to quit. This time I am learning that I can't let anything stop me. My brother was murdered and I had to quit. I just got over that and got to the top of my class. Then I found out my brother had been murdered. I want to be a counselor. All these things that have happened to me, I could use to help others. I think I lost me in my marriage and my relationship with my boyfriend.

- I It sounds like you are taking responsibility for this.
- C Yes. My biggest thing is, where are we going to go? I told my daughter. I talk to my daughter. I have put this weight on her. She was there for me. I told her that I want her to take time in choosing a man. I talk to her about what happened in my life so she can learn from it. She is seeing this boyfriend. She was really happy. When my husband left me, I felt humiliated. He was a minister. He beat me up and then went to church. People didn't believe me because he was the minister. The single women in the church thought he was gorgeous. They said, "You've got a good looking man. The kids' father is gorgeous." Outside appearance means nothing. It is the inside that counts.
- I It sounds like you are making some comparison of your life experiences.
- C The one was so nice looking. The other wasn't that good looking but he had the gift of gab. He used his head when he talked. The police were called nine times. Every time the police were called he snowed them.
- I Did the police ever tell you about the domestic violence shelter?
- C No. I was too scared to talk. All they saw was me crying. They didn't see the physical signs. He used to work in the factory, so a lot of the police knew his family. So the police didn't do anything. He could gab on about it to disguise everything. He could talk his way out of a ticket.
- I Are you thinking about moving to another area?

C Yes. This woman he had a relationship with moved to another city to get away from him. They had an adopted child. They had a gorgeous house. She left everything to be rid of him.

I Do you think this is the same situation?

C Yes. Only he has a spouse in another city. Everybody has been so wonderful. We stay up and talk at night. I am learning so much.. I am looking forward to the future. The fear paralyzes you or you do something. I feel better when I do something. My father never spanked.. I learned to hug and say "I love you." to my children. It is good to talk! Being here, I have learned that if the door is locked, I am going on to the next door.

APPENDIX J APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

September 22, 1993

TO: Ms. Paula Yensen
500 Filley Street
Lansing, MI 48906

RE: IRB #: 93-433
TITLE: LEARNING AS RELATED TO DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE VICTIMS
REVISION REQUESTED: N/A
CATEGORY: 1-C
APPROVAL DATE: 09/21/1993

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects' (UCRIHS) review of this project is complete. I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and methods to obtain informed consent are appropriate. Therefore, the UCRIHS approved this project including any revision listed above.

Renewal: UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year, beginning with the approval date shown above. Investigators planning to continue a project beyond one year must use the enclosed form to seek updated certification. There is a maximum of four such expedited renewals possible. Investigators wishing to continue a project beyond that time need to submit it again for complete review.

Revisions: UCRIHS must review any changes in procedures involving human subjects, prior to initiation of the change. If this is done at the time of renewal, please use the enclosed form. To revise an approved protocol at any other time during the year, send your written request to the UCRIHS Chair, requesting revised approval and referencing the project's IRB # and title. Include in your request a description of the change and any revised instruments, consent forms or advertisements that are applicable. The year, please outline the proposed revisions in a letter to the Committee.



OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

University Committee on
Research Involving
Human Subjects
(UCRIHS)

Michigan State University
225 Administration Building
East Lansing, Michigan
48824-1046
517/355-2180
FAX 517/336-1171

Problems/ Changes:

Should either of the following arise during the course of the work, investigators must notify UCRIHS promptly: (1) problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc) involving human subjects or (2) changes in the research environment or new information indicating greater risk to the human subjects than existed when the protocol was previously reviewed and approved.

If we can be of any future help, please do not hesitate to contact us at (517) 355-2180 or FAX (517) 336-1171.

Sincerely,

David E. Wright, Ph.D.
UCRIHS Chair

DEW:pjm

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