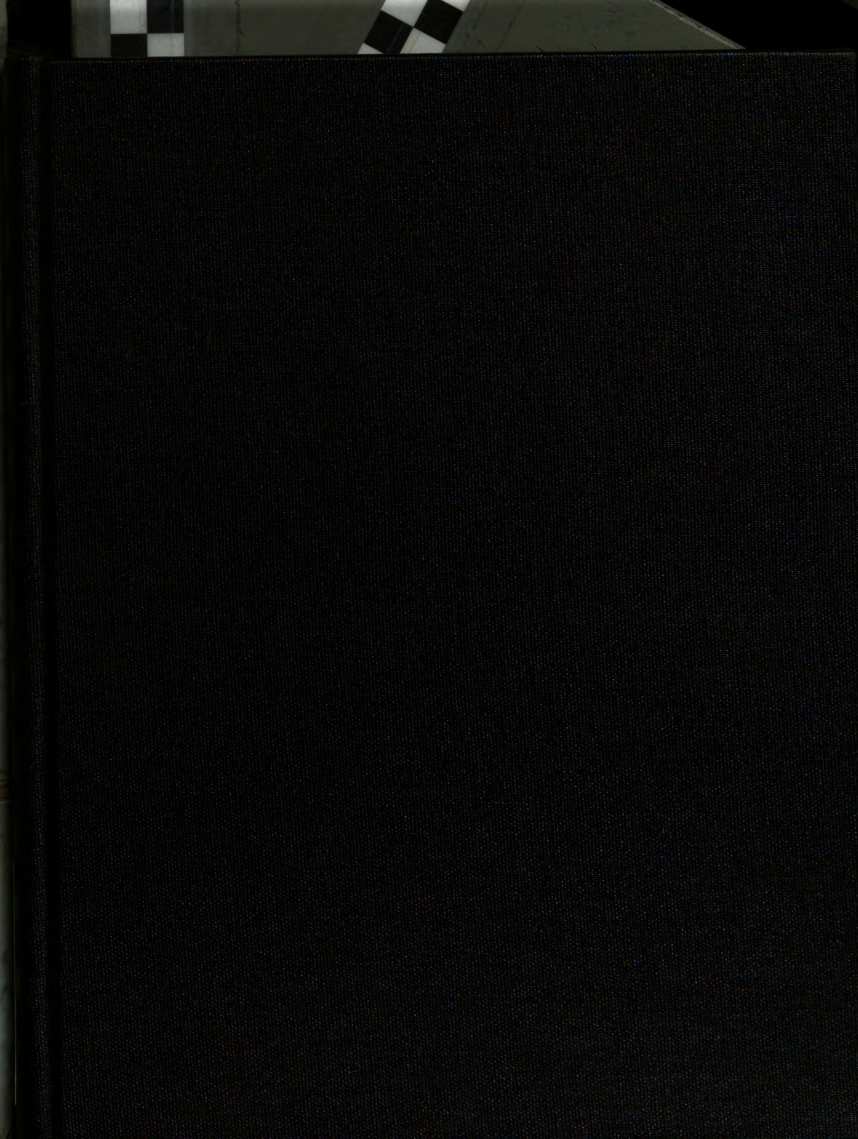




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**CHOICES FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT:
*A CRITIQUE OF INDIVIDUALISM AND PSYCHOLOGY***

By

Angela YH Pok

A THESIS

**Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

CHOICES FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT: *A CRITIQUE OF INDIVIDUALISM AND PSYCHOLOGY*

By

Angela YH Pok

This project examines why survivors of sexual assault, particularly females, are so apt to turn to psychology, especially therapy and self-help. At the center of the discussion is the impact of capitalism and patriarchy in both promoting and maintaining the way society views and deals with both sexual assault/abuse survivors and offenders. I call for an integrated theory using critical sociological theory and socialist-feminism in order to critically analyze the impact of individualism and psychology, on sexual assault and abuse survivors. Furthermore, I argue that the integration of these two theories is necessary in order to recognize sexual assault and abuse as a public issue rather than a personal trouble. Data were collected by conducting in-depth interviews with counselors and therapists who work with survivors of sexual assault and abuse. A critical analysis of self-help books is also included. Findings are numerous and varied. They indicate that psychology (including self-help and therapy) views women as a homogenous group of *individuals* who need to be *treated* within the ideology of psychology and individualism. Indications such as this demonstrate that perhaps broader social forces limit the choices and alternatives that survivors of sexual assault and abuse have, especially in the consideration of structural change and transformative collective action.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1895, Durkheim wrote *The Rules of the Sociological Method* where he made the argument that “every time a social phenomenon is directly explained by a psychological phenomenon, we may rest assured that the explanation is false” (cited in Lukes 1982: 129). Today we continue to see social problems and issues addressed by psychology. More specifically, sexual assault and abuse in our society has been psychologized, medicalized, and individualized. Clearly, evidence points to the fact that sexual assault and abuse is a social problem. Indeed, sexual assault and abuse statistics are alarming. In addition, it must be kept in mind that these statistics only give a partial picture of the reality of sexual assault and abuse since they are often based on self-reports. In determining the extent to which sexual assault and abuse is a structural, rather than a psychological issue, it is useful to acknowledge the most current and most cited statistics:

- In the United States, the FBI estimates there is a rape every six minutes (Lorber 1994)
- About a third of men say they would rape women if assured they would not be punished (Briere and Malamuth 1983)
- For the past ten years [1983-1993], according to the United States Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, rape has been the *only* crime that has continuously increased and has been the fastest growing violent crime in the country (increasing 48 percent in 1991 alone) (Funk 1993: 7)
- The U.S. Department of Justice’s most recent report on sex offenses and offenders reported the following (Greenfeld 1997):
 - Overall, an estimated 91% of the victims of rape and sexual assault were female. Nearly 99% of the offenders they described in single-victim incidents were male
 - Per capita rates of rape/sexual assault were found to be highest among residents aged 16 to 19, low-income residents, and urban residents
 - In 1994 and 1995, a third of the victims said that the rape/sexual assault victimization was reported to a law enforcement agency.

Statistics, such as the ones above, have been useful in illustrating the realities of sexual assault and abuse versus the ideology. For example, as discussed by Parrillo et al.:

A common image of rape is of assault by a stranger, acting under cover of darkness, usually in the parks, parking lots, or streets of a large city. The facts are these: although two-thirds of all rapes do indeed take place between 6p.m. and 6a.m., almost 60 percent take place in the victim's home or at the home of a friend, relative, or neighbor. In four out of five rape cases, the victim and the offender know each other, and 53 percent of the incidents involve so-called date rape.

(1999: 135)

It is important to bring attention to the statistic that in four out of five rape cases, the victim and the offender know each other because it challenges popular beliefs and myths about sexual assault and abuse. Based on these statistics, one is compelled to ask: how many women, children, and men have been affected by sexual assault and abuse?

Furthermore, what impact does the pervasiveness of sexual assault and abuse have at both the individual and societal levels?

Despite the pervasiveness of sexual assault and abuse (of which statistics present only a partial picture), many survivors and victims of sexual assault and abuse are *treated* individually through the means of psychology, specifically therapy, counseling, and self-help. As a result, society has turned what is a social problem into a private trouble or issue for *individuals*. How has this happened and what are the consequences? I argue that there are several interrelated forces that impact how sexual assault and abuse is viewed and treated in our society: American individualism and the ideology of psychology and self-help. Furthermore, these forces are embedded in the capitalistic and paternalistic society in which we live. Indeed, these forces and their relationships to the current social structure affect how sexual assault and abuse is viewed and subsequently, the options available for victims and survivors.

In today's society, survivors of sexual assault and abuse lack alternatives in dealing with their common experience. The ideologies of psychology and medicine have worked against the creation of large-scale social movements, particularly a social movement to end abuse and exploitation, whether it be sexual assault and abuse, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, etc. As a result, self-help, psychotherapy, and counseling have become the most popular and accessible mediums by which survivors understand, react to, and deal with being sexually abused and/or assaulted.

This paper begins by reviewing the literature on individualism, psychology and self-help as well as addressing current questions and issues in the sexual assault and abuse literature. Following the literature review is a discussion of current rape theories. In formulating an integrated, structural theory of sexual assault and abuse, critical sociological theory and socialist-feminism are analyzed to see how they fit within a critical theoretical model of sexual assault and abuse in our society. The last half of the paper focuses on research findings, beginning with a discussion of the methodology. The primary findings are based on in-depth interviews with counselors, therapists, and social workers who have worked with sexual assault survivors. Additional findings, based on a critical analysis of self-help books for sexual assault and abuse survivors, are included as well.

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INDIVIDUALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

Although the origins of individualism is still debated¹, the type of individualism that presently exists in the United States—modern day individualism—evolved from the movement in Europe. According to Bellah, et al., “Modern individualism emerged out of the struggle against monarchical and aristocratic authority that seemed arbitrary and oppressive to citizens prepared to assert the right to govern themselves” (1996: 142). With the development of capitalism in the United States, individualism grew to be the dominant paradigm. Since that time, the United States continues to pride itself on notions of self-reliance and individualism so much so that “The American Dream,” based on notions of hard work and self-motivation, is still widely believed to be attainable despite evidence to the contrary. For instance, according to Blau, upward mobility has declined (1994, cited in Henslin 1999). So, what exactly is individualism? Miller gives us the following definition:

Individualism is a theory which maintains that selves or persons are the loci of human-value dignity and worth, and that as individuals they constitute the source of new ideas whose practical application is necessary for the growth of society and for the emergence of new values. . .

(1967: 76)

¹ Arieli (1964) argues that the term and concept of individualism was introduced in 1840. Miller (1967) asserts that the theory of individualism emerged between the time of the Renaissance and the present, giving acknowledgement of John Dewey and George Herbert Mead's ideas as part of a paradigm of individualism. Lastly, Jansz ((1991) discusses how the origins of individualism have been traced as far back as classical Greece, England in the 13th century, or during the Renaissance in the 15th century.

With a more critical perspective, Bellah, et al. argue “some of our deepest problems as both individuals and as a society are also closely linked to our individualism. . . individualism has come to mean so many things and to contain such contradictions and paradoxes that even to defend it requires that we analyze it critically. . .” (1996: 142). Indeed, critics of individualism assert that it has become alienating and self-absorbing despite its premise that it is based on individual dignity and sacredness. Sampsom argues that “our culture emphasizes individuality, in particular a kind of individual self-sufficiency that describes an extreme of the individualistic dimensions” (1977: 769).

Bellah, et al., in their bestselling book, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (1996), discuss a specific form of individualism—bureaucratic individualism²—that, although not the dominant form of individualism, is particularly relevant to life in the latter half of the twentieth century. This form of individualism can best be seen in the roles of managers and therapists. In their discussion of its impact, Bellah, et al., argue the following:

. . .the ambiguities and contradictions of individualism are frighteningly revealed, as freedom to make private decisions is bought at the cost of turning over most public decisions to bureaucratic managers and experts. A bureaucratic individualism in which the consent of the governed, the first demand of the modern enlightened individualism, has been abandoned in all but form, illustrates the tendency of individualism to destroy its own conditions.

(1996: 150)

Therefore, paradoxically, individualism, in all its various forms, often leaves individuals with limited choices. As nicely stated by Bellah, et al., “individualism alone does not allow persons to understand certain basic realities of their lives, especially their interdependence with others” (1996: ix). Indeed, individuals are not encouraged to act

collectively and publicly or to acknowledge their connections and commonalities with others. Rather, people are encouraged to enact “individual responsibility” by, ironically, handing over their ability to make decisions and act freely. Oftentimes when searching for notions of self, autonomy, and meaning, other individuals (e.g., therapists and counselors) are given the power and influence. Thus, within a paradigm of individualism, it comes as no surprise that survivors of sexual assault and abuse are not only held responsible for what happened to them but they are held responsible for “dealing with it” on an individual level. That is, survivors of sexual assault and abuse are relegated to therapy and counseling and are encouraged to read self-help books.

Based on individualism, there is a traditional notion of rape prevention that is still widely believed. That is, rape prevention is viewed to be the responsibility of individuals, particularly women and children. In particular, women are purported to be able to prevent rape by doing such things as carrying mace, not dressing provocatively, taking self-defense classes, not walking alone, etc. The list of “Dos and Don’ts” for women and children are endless. Whether it be a woman “asking for it,” or a man “who couldn’t control himself,” the fundamental premise still remains: it is *someone’s* problem and responsibility. Individualism in the United States has been extremely successful at making sexual assault and abuse a personal problem. As a result, individualism negates a critical analysis of the social structure and broader social forces. It becomes clear that issues surrounding gender stereotypes and sexism (both inherent to patriarchy) are intimately linked to the values and norms of a society that prides itself on individualism.

² MacIntyre, in his book *After Virtue* (1981), was the first to coin this term.

PSYCHOLOGY/SELF-HELP

Psychology and the self-help movement are deeply embedded in American individualism. Cole argues, “The therapeutic ethos. . .is the way in which contemporary Americans live out the tenets of modern individualism; for psychology is the only or main form of reality” (1980: 137). Cole’s argument gives support to the relationship between the growing impact of psychology and self-help and the dominance of individualism in American society. Furthermore, Bellah, et al. argue the following:

While we have no accurate statistics on the number of people using psychotherapy in twentieth-century America, there is reason to believe that there has been a steady increase, particularly since World War II, with three times as many Americans seeing “mental health professionals” now as did twenty years ago. Young, urban, well-educated people from professional backgrounds are the most likely to have actually sought professional therapeutic help, but by 1976 all sectors of society turned more frequently to professional care.

(1996: 121)

Some scholars argue that “this concern with one’s personal psychological reality has led to a negli[g]ence of communitarean values, responsibilities, and goals” (Jansz 1991: 4).

For instance, Sampson asserts the following:

[Individualism] is the extreme of independence; the self-contained individual needs nor wants no one. . .The price to be paid for the ideal of self-containment is high, because it leads to a conception of health in which the individual has to possess personally all good and desirable qualities. This will be hard to accomplish for the individual and it will, most probably, result in alienation and isolation from the community.

(1977: 769)

Through the model of psychology, it becomes evident that individualism’s paradoxical nature propagates alienation and isolation. As a result, the detachment from what Sampson refers to as the community makes it difficult, if not impossible, to make broad

change within the dominant social, political, and economic structures. Cushman, in his recent historical critique of psychotherapy, argues on similar lines as Sampson.

According to Cushman,

The individual is portrayed as standing outside the communal, sociopolitical world. One's allegiance is to oneself in the striving after individual health and revitalization. A liberation is promised, but it is an entirely isolated, apolitical, individuation liberation, which at bottom, of course, it is not liberation at all.

(1995: 69)

Based on the fact that psychology is grounded in individualism, it is not surprising to see the relationship between psychology and the medical model. Cushman (1995) argues that psychology, in order to gain and maintain popularity, prestige, and status, is forced to consider itself a medical technology³. That is, psychology allies itself with what is given scientific validity. In order for psychology to consider itself a valid branch of medicine,

[it] had to position mental processes as a proper object of scientific study and operation; it had to reify the ego, make it into a 'thing', something concrete, real, describable, consistent, understandable, and fixable. . .the ego was considered a worthy object of study in its own right, the key to proper mental functioning and mental illness, and in fact the most important element of the internal world of the self-contained individual.

(Cushman 1995: 190)

Psychology is centered on healing and treatment. Like medicine, psychology's focus is not prevention but rather, *curing individuals*. For psychology, the ego has become an organ in and of itself that can be diagnosed, treated, and cured. As an example, more and more psychologists work in conjunction with psychiatrists and medical doctors in the

³ It is interesting to note that Cushman's book, *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy* (1995) does not have listings under the regular Library of Congress *Subject* headings; rather, in order to search for his book, one has to look under the subject heading, "Medical" (ms= rather than s=).

regulation and distribution of drugs, especially anti-depressants. Furthermore, oftentimes, the lines between medical doctor and psychologist are blurred. That is to say, doctors freely give prescription drugs such as Prozac and Zanax while at the same time, psychologists are often called upon to cure physical ailments and addictions such as smoking. These examples illustrate how well psychology has been integrated into the medical model, in the pursuit to gain legitimacy and prestige.

In critiquing the basic tenets of psychology, a more specific analysis is useful. Psychology has an ideologically-specific language based on such things as symptoms, identification as a victim, and the subconscious. Like medicine, psychology has its own language which it uses to establish itself as scientific and valid. What is most problematic about the language of psychology is that it becomes a trap for many individuals who are or have been in therapy and/or counseling. That is, their lives become completely defined and described in psychological terms. Everything becomes a symptom and there is, invariably, a subconscious motive for every person's behaviors. Such high levels of self-consciousness can be problematic. Bellah, et al. say it best when they assert that "the relentless insistence on consciousness and the endless scanning of one's own and others' feelings while making moment-by-moment calculations of the shifting cost/benefit balances is so ascetic in its demands as to be unendurable" (1996: 139). In addition, Bellah, et al. (1996) discuss how there is simply a lack of a non-therapeutic vocabulary for discussing issues. The authors also cite a large-scale study by Veroff, et al. whereby the authors analyzed the patterns of help-seeking from 1957 to 1976. Veroff, et al. argue the following:

Psychoanalysis (and psychiatry) is the only form of psychic healing that attempts to cure people by detaching them from society and relationships. . . . Modern psychiatry isolates the troubled individual from the currents of emotional interdependence and deals with the trouble by distancing from it and *manipulating it through the intellectual/verbal discussion, interpretation, and analysis.*

(1981: 6-7 emphasis added)

To give further evidence to the power of the ideology of psychology, one needs only to look at the self-help movement which is embedded in both the ideologies of individualism and psychology. In recent decades, the self-help movement has gained in popularity. One only needs to go to a bookstore and browse the shelves to see books such as *Women Who Love Too Much: When You Keep Wishing and Hoping He'll Change* (1985), *My Enemy, My Love: Man-hating and Ambivalence in Women's Lives* (1992) (with chapter titles such as: "The Seducer," "The Slave," "The Prick," and "The Beast"), *The Wounded Women: Healing the Father-Daughter Relationship* (1982) (with chapters such as, "Sacrifice of the Daughter," and "Redeeming the Father"), and *Women in Therapy: Devaluation, Anger, Aggression, Depression, Self-sacrifice, Mother, Mother Blaming, Self-betrayal, Sex-role Stereotypes, Dependency, Work and Success Inhibitions* (1988) by Harriet Goldhor Lerner, Ph.D. who also wrote *The Dance of Anger* (1985) and *The Dance of Intimacy* (1989). One of the chapter titles in *The Dance of Intimacy* (1989) is "Our Mother/Her Mother/Our-Self". And of course, there is Forward's book, *Men Who Hate Women and the Women Who Love Them* (1986) that has been given much public attention. This particular author was recently interviewed on a major television network to publicize her newest self-help book. Despite the absurdities of some of the titles, books such as these can often be found on the *New York Times' Bestsellers List*.

It is important to analyze why self-help books, which are based on a psychological therapeutic model, are so popular at the present time. Crawford, in his article, "Individual Responsibility and Health Politics," (1990) provides a critical discussion of the self-help movement:

The ideology of individual responsibility threatens to incorporate and use the self-help movement for its own purposes. Self-help initially developed as a political response to the oppressive character of professional and male domination in medicine. As such, the self-help movement embodies some of the best strands of grassroots, autonomous action, of people attempting at some level to regain control over their lives, and a response to the overmedicalization of American life. However, because the movement has focused on individual behavior and only rarely addressed the social and physical environment, and because it has not built a movement that goes beyond self-care to demanding the medical and environmental prerequisites for maintaining health, it lends itself to the purposes of victim-blaming. Just as the language of helping obscured the unequal power relationships of a growing therapeutic state (in other words, masking political behavior by calling it therapeutic) the language of self-help obscures the power relations underlying the social causation of disease and the dominant expectations of rights and entitlements for access to medical services.

(1990: 394)

Based on Crawford's critique, it becomes apparent that the initial impetus for the self-help movement and what has happened with this movement have widely diverged.

Today self-help is used to support conservative, individualized notions of responsibility.

Self-help books written specifically for survivors of sexual assault and abuse, like self-help books in general, have gained popularity in recent decades. While it is important to recognize the increased awareness and acceptance to publicly acknowledge sexual assault and abuse, it is essential to examine what these books suggest and recommend. Therefore, this project examines, through a critical analysis of self-help books, how self-help is used to maintain the ideologies of psychology and individualism in a way that limits choices for survivors of sexual assault. In many respects, the

academic literature on sexual assault and abuse has helped shaped the development of self-help as it pertains to sexual assault and abuse survivors. Therefore, before presenting a critical analysis of self-help books, it is important to discuss the sexual assault and abuse literature. Following is a review of this literature with a focus on notions of sexual assault and abuse prevention as well as conceptualizations about eliminating sexual assault and abuse.

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND ABUSE LITERATURE

Much of the sexual assault and abuse literature has been written by psychologists and social psychologists. Many academic articles and books focus on such topics as: how survivors of sexual assault and abuse cope and adjust, the impact of sexual assault and abuse on interpersonal relationships, the importance of disclosure, and why some men rape and others do not (Reynolds 1974). While these are important issues, for this particular paper, the concern is with scholarship that analyzes and discusses sexual assault and abuse from a macro-structural perspective. Two related questions that are raised again and again in the sexual assault and abuse literature are the following: 1) what are notions of sexual assault and abuse prevention, and 2) how do we eliminate sexual assault and abuse? Indeed, these are thought-provoking questions that have generated a tremendous amount of disagreement. In academic and scholarly articles and books that examine sexual assault and abuse from a macro-level perspective, there is oftentimes an underlying question: is sexual assault and abuse a man's problem, a woman's problem, both or neither—in other words, whose responsibility is it to prevent and eliminate sexual

assault and abuse? Depending on the theoretical perspective and type of analysis, theorists and researchers have drawn different conclusions.

What are scholars and other professionals saying about prevention and elimination of sexual assault and abuse? Have views changed over time? How have these views impacted those who work closest with survivors of sexual assault and abuse—social workers, counselors, and therapists? These are all critical questions to consider when thinking about such challenging concepts as sexual assault elimination and prevention. Even when interviewing counselors, therapists, and social workers, the question, “Can we eliminate sexual assault and abuse?” generated much contemplation, uncertainty, and often a qualified response of “no.” Can we, as a society, eliminate and prevent sexual assault and abuse? As stated by one respondent, “I don’t know. I wish that we could but feasibly, I think it’s always going to go on.”⁴

When consulting the literature, it became evident that scholars saw sexual assault and abuse prevention as different from discussions of elimination of sexual assault and abuse. Those who took a structural analysis of sexual assault and abuse more often than not raised the issue of prevention with most of the discussions centered on conservative notions such as those discussed under the section “Individualism in the United States.” That is, often they referred to what females should and should not do. The challenging subject of eliminating sexual assault and abuse has been most often tackled by feminist scholars. Therefore, the following literature review, which addresses the question of whose responsibility is it to prevent and eliminate sexual assault and abuse is divided into

⁴ For a detailed analysis of findings from in-depth interviews with counselors, therapists, and social workers, please refer to the section, “Findings: In-depth, Face-to-Face Interviews.”

two sections, “notions of sexual assault and abuse prevention” and “eliminating sexual assault and abuse.”

Notions of Sexual Assault and Abuse Prevention

Most writing about sexual assault and abuse prevention still focus on what women should or should not be doing. Essentially, this means that women are still the ones being blamed for not preventing sexual assault and abuse. In a recently published book by a psychiatrist who is Professor Emeritus at the University of Colorado, *Rape: Controversial Issues* (1995), MacDonald discusses rape prevention by using a drug-buying analogy. He argues:

If men or women go into high crime neighborhoods to buy crack cocaine, they are involved in the commission of a crime and should be prosecuted for their illegal activities. The thugs who rob or sexually assault them should also be prosecuted. Their victims do not have clean hands.

(MacDonald 1995: 197)

Upon reading this, I was reminded of Paglia’s book, *Sex, Art, and American Culture* (1992) whereby she uses the analogy that a woman who gets drunk at a fraternity party and is raped should be held accountable just as a drunk driver is held accountable when getting into an automobile accident. Anti-feminist views such as these only perpetuate the extremes of the ideology of individualism whereby a critical analysis of structural factors is completely ignored.

Hirsch, author of *The Trouble of Rape* (1977), also presents suggestions for rape prevention. Her list includes: drive with car doors locked; have your car keys read when you approach your car; choose your living quarters with security in mind; refuse to work alone in a deserted building; don’t use deserted enclosed stairways; and take a self-

defense course for women. Hursch's suggestions and viewpoints on how to prevent rape do not differ from traditional notions of rape prevention. What was striking to me as I read her chapter, "Avoidance, Prevention, Escape" was her class and race biases in assuming all women have access to do the above listed suggestions. Secondly, Hursch (1977) does not provide a critical analysis of what sexual assault and abuse prevention even means. For instance, if women do not do what she suggests, does that mean they are to blame if they are sexually assaulted? Her notions fit nicely within the status quo of putting the responsibility of sexual assault and abuse prevention onto women rather than society.

Another scholar who wrote about rape prevention in the 1970s, Brodsky (1976), uses a psychological approach to discuss sexual assault prevention. He discusses responses, techniques, attitudes, and traits of both victims/survivors and assailants that influence prevention and what he calls deterrence. Brodsky (1976) even asked convicted rapists what would have deterred or prevented the sexual assault. He uses the information obtained by rapists to compile a list of suggestions for women on how to prevent sexual assault and abuse. For example, Brodsky writes, "If the rapist approaches with great verbal or suggested physical aggression or antagonism, then crying, signs of weaknesses, protests about body difficulties, and open exhibition of great personal distress may be useful" (1976: 88). Again, I find myself asking, if women do not react in the manner(s) recommended by these authors, what does that mean? More broadly, how do notions of rape prevention continue to be connected to blaming women for sexual assault and abuse?

Ward and Inserto (1990) provide a more enlightened discussion of sexual assault prevention. They, like most other authors on this topic, include a list of what they call “precautions.” In their overview though they do give a critique that goes beyond psychological and individual aspects of victims/survivors and perpetrators. Ward and Inserto recommend changes in the social structure that promotes sexual equality which include: implementation of laws to ensure equal opportunities and benefits for men and women; non-sexist curricula in the schools; and elimination of sexism in the media (1990, 135). Ward and Inserto should be commended for acknowledging socio-structural influences and for giving specific suggestions for sexual assault prevention that do not focus on individual responsibility. At the same time, their suggestions are not elaborated upon; that is, they do not inform us how society eliminates the sexism in the media or how a non-sexist curricula in schools is achieved.

While most scholars have been telling women what to do and what not to do, Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1983) have taken a different approach. They analyzed rape and its connections with economic and other forms of inequality. Thus, Schwendinger and Schwendinger’s (1983) notions of rape prevention include social policies “aimed at changing the conditions that generate higher incidences of direct interpersonal violence among marginal members of the labor force as well as among men whose livelihoods are at least partly based on illegal activities such as pimping and robbery” (Swendinger and Swendinger 1983: 215). It is important to note that Swendinger and Swendinger (1983) are not implying that sexual assault and abuse is a problem only for “lower status men” (to use their terminology). Rather, they are calling

for a variety of structural changes that decrease dependency, subordination, and chauvinism. Of all the books and articles on sexual assault and abuse prevention, Schwendinger and Schwedinger's book was the most critical, structural, and specific.⁵

In similar regards, Reynolds advocates for a different kind of sexual assault and abuse prevention. Based on her hypothesis that "rape is a means of social control aimed at constraining the behavior of women. . ." (1974: 63), Reynolds calls for the following:

It is important, I believe, that women do not support and advocate rape prevention tactics and measures that ultimately limit the freedom of their fellow women. The ultimate preventive measure would be for many women to express themselves freely, to walk, drive, drink publicly, and meet with men so that it becomes so usual to see women doing these things that they cannot possibly be defined as unusual in any way from all women.

(1974: 67)

Eliminating Sexual Assault and Abuse

There is a varied yet similar response when it comes to discussions about eliminating sexual assault and abuse. There is, of course, a continuum of diverse possibilities. As will be discussed under the subsection, "Evolutionary Theory," there is the belief that sexual assault and abuse (specifically rape) will always exist among humans beings because it is part of evolutionary factors of natural selection (Ellis 1989). Sociological and psychological analyses do not hold such a doomed view—much of the scholarship speaks optimistically of an end to sexual assault and abuse (e.g., Brownmiller 1975, Connell and Wilson 1974, Gager and Schurr 1976, Funk 1993).

Yet even with the optimism among academics that sexual assault and abuse can be eliminated, the discussions of how are often vague. Radical feminists recognize the

⁵ For further discussion of their analysis, refer to the section, "Socialist-feminist theory."

institutional sexism in our society yet, within this paradigm, there is a divergence in where the responsibility of sexual assault and abuse lies. For instance, some radical feminist scholars, such as Funk (1993), see sexual assault and abuse as a man's problem and therefore, men are the ones who need to take action. In his book, *Stopping Rape: A Challenge for Men* (1993), Funk candidly calls for the following:

. . .the men who are raping the women in our lives are the men in our lives. We [men] need to stop looking at 'those' men, 'those sickos', 'those weirdos' as the rapists and to take full responsibility for rape. We need to begin looking at our own selves—for it is us. Acknowledging that it is our friends and maybe ourselves who sexually victimize women. . .

(1993: 23)

In Funk's discussion of the year 2000 and beyond, he asks, "What will the world be like when we are finally successful in our efforts to eliminate men's violence?" (1993: 151). He concludes by painting a picture of a world without gender roles, where men are involved in day care and bake sales, people have respect, dignity, and integrity, and children and people are put first. "We can create this kind of world—a world free of rape! It's up to you, it's up to us. It's time we began!" is Funk's final hopeful refrain (1993: 153). My question for Funk, after reading this particular chapter, is: how does this happen? Throughout his book, he argues that it is men's responsibility to eliminate rape, but we are not told how men are to accomplish this goal.

On the other hand, there is a position within radical feminism that asserts that women are the ones who need to take responsibility—that women cannot rely on men since men are the ones in power. In their well-known book, *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women* (1974), the authors, who go by the title, New York Radical Feminists, make it clear that it is women's organization and action that will be responsible for combating rape. As illustrative of this point, chapter five of their book is titled, "Feminist Action:

Women Must Begin Taking Responsibility at All Times for the Survival and Well-Being of Other Women” (Connell and Wilson 1974). With regards to eliminating sexual assault and abuse, the authors argue for the following:

What this means is that we must combat rape on many different fronts. . . Each action taken by itself—whether it is self-defense, changing emergency ward procedures, or starting a rape crisis center—is an attempt to reform the system, but when they are combined they are a series of demands for a radical change, for ultimately we are not demanding better treatment of rape victims or more protection, but an end to rape and other forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.

(Connell and Wilson 1994: 176)

Yet, the authors, besides discussing specific forms of action (e.g., creating rape crisis centers) are never specific in how radical change, to use their term, happens. Without a doubt, the reforms they call for are important for various reasons, but it is unclear how radical feminists envision moving beyond just better treatment for rape victims.

Gager and Schurr (1976) also ask, “An end to rape?” and their answer, like Funk’s (1993) and the New York Radical Feminists’ (1994) is yes. Unfortunately, Gager and Schurr do not go much further beyond answering the question affirmatively. In their chapter, “An End To Rape?: Toward A More Human Society,” they discuss what rights victims should have. In addition, they talk about the need for education (e.g., pamphlets, community resources, and free self-defense classes)—all which seems to address issues related to “prevention” rather than eliminating it from society altogether. They assert that it is important for women to speak out and be heard rather than being forced into silence yet a scholarly discussion of sexual assault elimination is not provided.

Kelly’s oft-cited book, *Surviving Sexual Violence* (1988), based on in-depth interviews with survivors of sexual assault and abuse, takes a feminist approach to discussing psychological, political, and social aspects of sexual assault and abuse in our

society. Her chapter, “ ‘I’ll Challenge It Now Wherever I See It’: From Individual Survival to Collective Resistance,” tackles the difficult topic of eliminating sexual assault and abuse. Unlike most scholars, Kelly provides a specified analysis of what must be done:

It has been the contention of a number of political theorists that an oppositional consciousness and organized resistance can develop out of oppressive social relations and conditions. The precise way in which this process occurs has seldom been specified but it involves at least three stages of understanding and action. Individuals must see that the cause of their personal experiences is oppressive social relations. This understanding must be accompanied by a belief that social change is both necessary and possible. Individuals must then come together in some form of collective organization which is directed towards achieving the necessary change.

(1988: 228)

Kelly (1988) clearly sees collective resistance as the way to eliminate sexual violence.

She continues:

By concentrating solely on the individual survival of abuse women and children. . .we run the danger of losing sight of our ultimate aim: ending sexual violence. No matter how effective our services and support networks, no matter how much change in policy and practice is achieved, without a mass movement of women committed to resisting sexual violence in all its forms. . .women’s and girls’ lives will continue to be circumscribed by the reality of sexual violence.

(Kelly 1988: 238)

Kelly’s (1988) research findings hold importance for what they tell us about what survivors think about collective resistance, the role of feminism in their lives, and notions of sexual violence prevention. These three issues are especially important as they provide the foundations for the theoretical framework for this paper which, coupled with the research findings, helps establish the importance for collective resistance against sexual assault and abuse. Now, the discussion will move to the theoretical conceptualizations for this project.

THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

There are numerous theoretical approaches in which to analyze any particular topic or issue. Therefore, the following is a discussion of various rape theories used to analyze rape and sexual assault. The following questions will be addressed: how have scholars theorized rape and sexual assault; what paradigms have dominated the theoretical discussions; and how are these theories inadequate? After discussing how various theories conceptualize rape in our society, I call for an integration of two theoretical approaches—critical sociological theory and socialist-feminist theory—that I argue are necessary to critically analyze and understand how sexual assault and abuse is embedded in our paternalistic and capitalist society.

RAPE THEORIES

As I reviewed the rape theory literature, it was clear that there was a great variation in the types of theories used to analyze sexual assault and abuse. The more antiquated theories, as discussed by Ellis, include those that “explain rape as due to chronic unemployment and difficulty in finding sex or marriage partners, to inadequate socialization and/or mental illness, or to being raised in a sexually violent subculture” (1989: 9). In addition, there have been symbolic interactionist theories (critiqued by Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1983), numerous feminist theories of rape (Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1983, Baron and Straus, and Ellis 1989), psychoanalytic theories of rape (critiqued by Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1983),

and legitimate violence theories (Baron and Straus 1989), to list just a few. It became clear that it would not be possible nor useful (at least, for this project) to discuss all the theories of rape. Therefore, I chose to focus on macro-structural theories of rape. It is important, then, to note that the following analysis of rape theories is only a partial one at best.

Social Disorganization Theory

Although social disorganization theory has been widely criticized, it was one of the first theories to take a structural level approach to social problems. This theory, which was developed by the Chicago School, can be described as the following:

They [social disorganization theorists] sought to explain differences in the rates of crime, alcoholism, vagrancy, juvenile delinquency, suicide, and mental illness by changes in the social organization of the city.

(Baron and Straus 1989: 125)

This theory is defined as “the idea that the erosion of institutional and informal forces of social control undermines social constraints and frees individuals to engage in conforming behavior” (Baron and Straus 1989: 145). This theory has been used to argue that rape rates are higher in those areas with higher levels of social disorganization. More specifically, as hypothesized within this particular theory, rape rates are often connected with two specific indicators of social disorganization: higher rates of divorce and disproportionate numbers of separated people (Baron and Straus 1989). It would be interesting to know why divorce rates and number of separated people are considered aspects of social disorganization. Frankly, such indicators seem to be based on subjective, moral judgments of what is considered stable versus unstable. For instance,

are the authors contending that couples and parents who stay in abusive relationships are more stable than those who divorce or separate? Moreover, since marriage, divorce, and rates of separation, or living singly vary for a number of different groups, time periods, etc., it is also interesting to contemplate the indirect causal connections Baron and Straus are attempting to make.

Today, social disorganization theory is not widely used, especially in theorizing sexual assault and abuse. For one, this theory does not address gender inequality within the social structure. Since sexual assault and abuse is so gendered, then how can a theory of sexual assault and abuse based on social disorganization not have an analysis of gender inequality? Furthermore, there is no historical context for this theory. As utilized by Baron and Straus, this theory was used to correlate high rates of violent crime, including rape, with unstable societies. Finally, this theory ignores the fact that the vast majority of sexual assault and abuse is not violent nor committed by strangers.

Feminist Theories of Rape

Radical feminists have been well-known for specifically addressing sexual assault and abuse. Most notably, Brownmiller's analysis of rape has been extremely influential in shaping how sexual assault has been discussed and analyzed by radical feminists. Her book, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (1975) is cited frequently in the sexual assault literature (both positively and negatively). Brownmiller's overall thesis is that rape is a mechanism of social control—all men keep all women in a state of fear (1975: 15). The author provides a history of how rape has been used by men in various time periods and the impact it has had on women. Furthermore, Brownmiller played an

important role in popularizing the phrase, “the personal is political.” Yet, in the twenty three years since her book was first published, scholars have developed important critiques of Brownmiller’s book.

In general, radical feminist theories of rape, while acknowledging sexual assault and abuse as a social problem, have often been too narrowly focused. For instance, one particular radical feminist theory of rape—opportunity structure theory—focuses on notions of property. According to Schwendinger and Schwendinger, this theory is based on the following:

Men regard women as owners of salable sexual properties. .
.Female sexuality is allegedly bought and sold in an open market. However, the market is dominated by male conceptions of property and therefore the best bargain a woman can achieve is still restrictive. Furthermore, when bargaining for sex, men reportedly use various forms of coercion. . They may harass women or threaten them with physical harm.

(1983: 78)

Clark and Lewis (1977), who have written about this particular theory, have given the following interpretation:

The tactic of coercion which a man uses will depend on the personal assets which he has at hand. Men who have money and other resources can drive a bargain in their own interests easily. Other men—who are ugly, perhaps, but certainly if they are poor—will take sexuality from women by force, because they have no other means of driving a bargain.

(cited in Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1983: 78)

Based on this interpretation rendered by Clark and Lewis, Schwendinger and Schwendinger consider this theory to be classist, among other things.

Let us critique what Clark and Lewis put forth. While the notion that “ugly” men are more likely to use force and rape women in order to “drive a bargain,” is subjective and unfounded, let us consider it for a moment. As Schwendinger and Schwendinger

(1983) question, does that mean that “good-looking” men do not use force and rape women? Who decides what “ugly” and “good-looking” are—are we to assume there are universal criteria? Lastly, it is unclear what men are bargaining for and why. If power and having resources is an outcome of raping women, how did non-ugly men who are not poor, gain their power? Did they rape women to get to their positions of power? And if so, would they be considered rapists?

Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1983) recognize that most feminist theories of sexual assault and abuse have been too narrow despite the progress they have made in debunking what they consider to be androcentric theories. They argue:

The feminist movement has broken sharply with the androcentric tradition in theories of rape by emphasizing the connections between this crime and sexual inequality. However, more influential feminist writings have not fully exploited the implications of these connections, because they view rape laws merely as property laws and they adopt psychoanalytic, opportunity structure, and naturalistic premises.

(Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1983: 88)

Indeed, they make a valid point. Feminist theories have been inadequate in creating a macro-structural theory of sexual assault and abuse whereby such exploitation is seen as part of a larger picture of inequality. Radical feminist scholars readily acknowledge patriarchy yet do not recognize how patriarchy and capitalism are connected. Most other feminist theories focus on micro-level analyses such as interpersonal relationships and attitudes and beliefs. In the section, “How Best to Theorize Sexual Assault and Abuse: An Integrated Theory,” I outline the integration of critical sociological theory and socialist-feminism as a way to move beyond the inadequacies of past and current feminist theories of sexual assault and abuse.

Evolutionary Theory

At a time when Herrnstein and Murray's book, *The Bell Curve* (1994) and other books trying to link all types of things to genetics and biology are gaining popularity, it is important to consider why the evolutionary theory of rape is being discussed as contemporary, to use Ellis's assertion (1989). Thus, this section is a critique of Ellis's argument that the evolutionary theory of rape is sustainable. According to Ellis, "the evolutionary theory of rape considers rape to be an act emanating from natural selection pressure for males to be more eager than females for copulatory experiences with a wide variety of sex partners, and their use of forceful tactics to satiate their sexual desires" (1989: 16).

Despite both the obvious and not so obvious reasons why this theory is flawed, Ellis attempts to give empirical evidence to support his hypotheses. While it is not within the scope of this paper to argue each hypothesis, a few examples of the problems with this theory should be discussed. In hypothesis two (forced copulations should impregnate victims, at least enough to offset whatever risks rapists have of being punished for their offenses), Ellis does not consider why males rape other males. That is, if impregnation is the goal, then why are boys and men sexually assaulted? Moreover, then why are the rates of males being sexually assaulted as high as they are? For example, in the first national survey of sexual abuse among men and women, a childhood sexual victimization rate of sixteen percent for men was reported (Finkelhor 1990). For this particular hypothesis, Ellis (1989) attempts to support this theory by using studies in Denver, Colorado, Washington, D.C., and even research compiled by Brownmiller (1975) to

argue that pregnancy is a primary motive for rapists. While it is impossible to get extremely reliable data on pregnancies resulting from rape (mainly because so many people do not report being sexually assaulted), the data Ellis uses reports rates of two percent and three percent of all rapes result in pregnancies (1989: 47). Is this statistically significant? We do not know because Ellis does not discuss statistical significance or any other statistically-relevant information—he merely presents the numbers from other studies with no corresponding analysis. Lastly, Ellis proposes that if rapists have both voluntary and involuntary sexual intercourse, their reproductive success increases compared to those who do not rape (1989: 47).

Put simply, Ellis (1989) provides weak support for hypotheses to support a theory that has no scientific basis. While this is not so uncommon, it is problematic considering the current climate. *The Bell Curve* (1994), with its racism and classism, was on the *New York Times' Bestsellers List* for quite some time. Theories such as the evolutionary theory of rape follow in step with the ideas held by Herrnstein and Murray (1994). When Ellis makes the argument, for instance, that predatory rapists lack control over resources, the racism and classism emanating from his arguments are blatant. Related to Ellis's assertions, Amir, in an article entitled, "Patterns of Forcible Rape" "concludes that rape is an expression of a lower-class subculture of violence and aggression" (as critiqued in Reynolds 1974: 66). It is clear that theories such as the ones forwarded by Ellis (1989) and Amir (1971) help maintain dominant ideology.

TOWARD AN INTEGRATED, STRUCTURAL THEORY

The majority of sexual assault and abuse theories has been inadequate in analyzing the most fundamental questions related to sexual assault and abuse: why does it happen, why is it gendered, and how do we get rid of it. The theories discussed above are inadequate in addressing these key questions because they do not take a critical feminist approach to analyzing sexual assault and abuse as a social problem—as embedded within capitalism and patriarchy.

While radical feminist theories have been the most successful at analyzing the impact of patriarchy, these theories have been inadequate. Therefore, I call for an integrated theory of sexual assault and abuse that combines the best of critical sociological theory and socialist-feminism. While both these theories have shortcomings, combined, they are useful for analyzing sexual assault and abuse. Following is a discussion of what I am borrowing from each theory. Included in this discussion are critiques of each theory as well as a discussion of why an integrated theory is necessary in order to adequately theorize sexual assault and abuse.

Critical Theory

Most theories on rape and sexual assault/abuse come from a deviance perspective (e.g. social disorganization theory). That is, many rape theories view sexual offenders and perpetrators as deviant in some way. Whether deviance is perceived to be biological, learned, or a result of socialization, rape and sexual assault is perceived as happening when something or someone has “gone wrong.” Yet, if one looks at critical sociological

theory, one is able to theorize sexual assault and abuse from the opposite perspective—that it does not occur due to deviance but rather, it is part of what is considered a “rational society.” Put simply, sexual assault and abuse is a rational element in a capitalistic and patriarchal society. Critical sociological theorists such as Marcuse, Mills, and Habermas have taken on the topic of rationality as well as made important critiques of psychology.

What role do the ideologies of psychology and individualism have in defining social problems as individuals' troubles? Mills, well-known in sociology as one of the foremost critical sociology theorists, critiques how social structure is often ignored by what he calls ‘psychologism.’ In his book, *The Sociological Imagination*, Mills defines it as:

. . .the attempt to explain social phenomena in terms of facts and theories about the make-up of individuals. Historically, as a doctrine, it rests upon an explicitly metaphysical denial of the reality of social structure.

(1959: 67)

While Mills goes on to discuss psychologism as a direct critique of research policies of the social sciences, it is still appropriate and extremely worthwhile to broaden the application of Mills’s term. Has the label of “individual” been placed over what in actuality is “social structure?” This is an especially pertinent question when considering the issue of sexual assault and abuse. It can be argued that because of the interrelated ideologies of individualism and psychology and self-help, sexual assault and abuse has been psychologized in such a way as to limit alternatives for survivors as well as to impede the development of large-scale social change.

Furthermore, in his well-known discussion of personal troubles and public issues, Mills (1959) addresses how structural issues are transformed into psychological ones. By using unemployment as an example, Mills argues the following:

But when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million men [sic] are unemployed, that is an issue, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual. The very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of the scatter of individuals.
(1959: 9)

Clearly, based on sexual assault and abuse statistics (again, which only give a partial picture of reality) sexual assault and abuse is widespread enough to be considered a social issue rather than solely a personal trouble. Moreover, Mills considers social issues to involve “a crisis in institutional arrangements as well as what Marxists call ‘contradictions’ or ‘antagonisms’” (1959: 9).

Marcuse, although he did not address the specific topic of sexual assault and abuse, put aggression within a structural analysis of advanced industrial society. His thesis is the following: “the strains and stresses suffered by the individual in the affluent society are grounded in the normal functioning on this society (and that of the individual!) rather than its disturbances and diseases” (Marcuse 1968: 249). Most research and writing about sexual assault and abuse support the notion that it is a myth to think that only “loonies” commit what society deems to be deviant acts. In other words, the vast majority of perpetrators of sexual assault and abuse did not just escape from the local mental hospital. For instance, in *Victims of Sexual Assault*, Ward and Inserto state, “. . . it is clear from victims’ descriptions of their assailants that the offenders are not psychotic, mentally deteriorated or deranged and that in many ways they are

unremarkable, coming from all ethnic, educational and occupational backgrounds” (1990: 133). Brodsky, in his article, “Sexual Assault: Perspectives on Prevention and Assailants” also addresses this myth:

Sexual assault is assumed to be the product of individual, deviant assailants, inappropriately driven by overwhelming lust and aggression. Such assailants acquire labels of ‘criminal sexual psychopath’ or ‘character disorder’. . . Picture in your mind what it would be like to sit in a room full of convicted rapists. A mental picture is probably evokes of brutal, aggressive, angry, and physically imposing men. In actuality such a group is composed of quite different individuals. . . A search for a single psychological type of assailant is futile. . .

(1979: 3-5)

Other writers and researchers have also given recognition to the fact that the majority of those who commit sexual assault and abuse are not mentally ill or incompetent (see Reynolds 1974, Brownmiller 1975, Schwendinger and Schwedinger 1983, The London Rape Crisis Center 1984, Porter 1986, Kelly 1988, Funk 1993).

In addition, Marcuse’s discussion of the “sick society” can be applied to sexual assault and abuse. To fully understand the connection, it is first necessary to define Marcuse’s term. He asserts that a society is sick “when its basic institutions and relations, its structure, are such that they do not permit the use of the available material and intellectual resources for the optimal development and satisfaction of individual needs” (Marcuse 1968: 251). Based on this definition, we can see that sexual assault and abuse is part of a “sick society” because it does not permit females, children, and some men to fully develop themselves, whether, as stated by Marcuse, it be by use of material or intellectual resources. Put simply, as referenced in much of the sexual assault and abuse literature, females in our society are limited and constrained by the fear and threat of sexual assault and abuse.

Related, Marcuse critiques the role psychology and therapy play in advanced industrial society. As a result of living in a “sick society,” it comes as no surprise that the release of aggression is an outcome of what Marcuse (1968) refers to as individual repression and the containment of potential individual and social freedom—a mutilated human being. While psychology and therapy is often used to deal with such releases of aggression, Marcuse contends that:

this situation cannot be solved within the framework of individual psychology and therapy, nor within the framework of any psychology—a solution can be envisaged only on the political level: in the struggle against society. To be sure, therapy could demonstrate this situation and prepare the mental ground for such a struggle—but then psychiatry would be a subversive undertaking.

(1968: 254)

Here Marcuse makes an important point about the true goals and objectives of psychology and therapy. Indeed, it is true that the model of psychology is inconsistent with a movement toward structural change since psychology is so firmly embedded in the status quo of advanced industrial society. And of course, the struggle against society that Marcuse refers to will not come easily since, according to Marcuse, “containment of social change is perhaps the most singular achievement of advanced industrial society” (1964: xii). With this in mind, we can see how sexual assault and abuse survivors truly lack alternatives outside of psychology and self-help. Advanced industrial society is set up in such a way that those who do not reap its benefits are constrained and limited both in living within the structure and moving beyond it.

Socialist-feminist theory

While sexual assault and abuse has been recognized as being the domain of radical feminism, socialist-feminists have always acknowledged that women's sexuality has been and continues to be restricted and controlled by men in patriarchal societies (e.g., Eisenstein 1979, Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1983, Hartmann 1989, and Ehrenreich 1990). Furthermore, within a socialist-feminist framework, the impact of the interconnectedness of capitalism and patriarchy and how such a relationship impacts women's oppression, is given critical analysis. Within the framework of socialist-feminism, there has always been a call for fundamental change in the social structure including the economic, political, and social institutions that currently exist. With this in mind, this section will begin by giving socialist-feminist critiques of radical feminism. The second half of the discussion will focus on establishing arguments for why a socialist-feminist framework, combined with critical theory, is necessary in order to build an integrated, structural theory of sexual assault and abuse in our society.

Socialist-feminists have provided important critiques of radical feminism. One of the most well-known socialist-feminists, Eisenstein (1979), argues that radical feminists have separated power into different, non-related forms. Eisenstein contends:

It is impossible to develop an analysis of woman's oppression which has a clear political purpose and strategy unless we deal with reality as it exists. The problem with radical feminism is that it has tried to do this by abstracting sex from other relations of power in society. . . Class and race struggles are necessary for the understanding of patriarchal history; they are not separate histories in practice, although history is often written as if they were. Unless these relations are taken into account, male supremacy is viewed as a disconnected thing, not a process or power relation.

(1979b: 42-43)

By not acknowledging structural relationships and processes—such as the interconnectedness of racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism—radical feminists have become so focused on issues of sexuality that they have not been able to see the larger picture. The goals of transforming the social structure become narrowly focused if sexuality becomes the center of all struggle.

Related, radical feminists put forth the position that sexual assault and abuse benefits individual men. For example, Schwendinger and Schwendinger, in their critique of radical feminist theories of sexual assault and abuse, assert, “most of the widely circulated and book-length explanations of rape identified with the women’s movements assume that men subjugate women simply to serve their own interests” (1983: 77).

While socialist-feminists would not disagree that sexual exploitation benefits individual men, they would further the argument by contending that sexual exploitation of women also benefit the goals of capital. Ehrenreich, in her article, “Life Without Father: Reconsidering Socialist-Feminist Theory” argues the following:

In theory this work [domestic labor] included everything women do in the home, from cooking and cleaning to reading bedtime stories and having sex. Radical feminists were quick to point out how women’s efforts, whether serving coffee in a movement office or polishing the coffee table in a suburban home, served the interests of individual men. Socialist feminists, coming along a few years later, asserted that women’s domestic work served not only men but capital.
(1990: 270)

To illustrate Ehrenreich’s argument that sexual exploitation serves the interest of capital, women as consumers is an ideal example. Because women are both told to fear and in reality, do fear the real threat of sexual assault and abuse, they become consumers of all sorts of “safety” products whether it be pepper sprays, cellular telephones, security systems in the home, special whistles, etc. The market for such products seems to be

increasing every year as a whole slew of new products is introduced to the public. What is especially interesting and ironic about the connection between sexual exploitation and how it benefits capital is the falsity of its premise. That is, most “safety” products are ineffective against sexual assault and abuse for a variety of reasons. First, as stated repeatedly throughout this paper, most sexual assault and abuse is committed by acquaintances in private domains. Does one have pepper spray in hand while she/he is at home, watching TV or enjoying a meal with a date or loved one? Should women wear special whistles around their neck when they are at a party or putting the kids to bed? Secondly, research has shown that “self-defense” products are often used against victims/survivors by the perpetrators. Finally, it needs to be recognized that the market of “safety” products also benefits capitalism in general because it supports the idea that all women have to do is buy these products in order to be *protected*. Related to this is the idea of assumed control—another fallacy—that women believe they have once they purchases these products. Such advocated consumerism goes against the recognition that broad-based structural change is necessary in order to prevent and eliminate sexual assault and abuse.

The consumer market of safety products is an ideal example of how consumption create false needs whereby “goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear” Marcuse (1964: 8). Related, the consequence of establishing such false needs is what Marcuse (1968) terms the “psychological habituation of war.” Marcuse’s concept is explained as the following, using the Vietnam War as an example:

The people are conditioned to live 'with the hazards, the brutalities, and the mounting casualties of the war in Vietnam, just as one learns gradually to live with the everyday hazards and casualties of smoking, of smog, or of traffic'. The photos which appear in the daily newspapers and in magazines with mass circulation. . . show rows of prisoners laid out or stood up for 'interrogation'. . . They are nothing new ('such things happen in a war') but it is the setting that makes the difference: their appearance in the regular program, in togetherness with the commercials, sports, local politics, and reports on the social set.

(1968: 259-260)

Marcuse's concept of the "psychological habituation of war" is useful when thinking about how safety products geared toward women help sustain control over women's lives in that people, particularly women get used to daily expectations of brutality. Society turns "images" of danger into the everyday experience.

Yet, at the same time that capitalism benefits from selling safety to women, there are clearly ways in which capitalism suffers from women's oppression and lack of safety. For instance, according to Eisenstein (1979a), women are essentially viewed by the bourgeois as instruments of production. If women are restricted in everyday behaviors, due to both perceived and real fears related to sexual assault and abuse, the ability to use women as instruments of production is reduced in that capitalism cannot fully utilize women whether it be for their labor or otherwise. Therefore, it can be argued that women's oppression and lack of safety has both consequences and benefits for capitalism. Considering the needs and contradictions of capitalism, it is clear to see that capitalism both profits and is hindered by the sexual exploitation of women.

With the connection between sexual exploitation and capitalism established, it is important to discuss why and how socialist-feminists connect capitalism with patriarchy.

Eisenstein, in the beginning of her well-known book, *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, states the following:

I choose this phrase, capitalist patriarchy, to emphasize the mutually reinforcing dialectical relationship between capitalist class structure and hierarchical sexual structuring. . . Although patriarchy (as male supremacy) existed before capitalism, and continues in postcapitalist societies, it is their present relationship that must be understood if the structure of oppression is to be changed.

(1979a: 5)

Hartmann gives a more detailed discussion of this relationship:

The material base upon which patriarchy rests lies most fundamentally in men's control over women's labor power. Men maintain this control by excluding women from access to some essential productive resources (in capitalist societies, for example, jobs that pay living wages) and by restricting women's sexuality. Monogamous heterosexual marriage is one relatively recent and efficient form that seems to allow men to control both these areas. Controlling women's access to resources and their sexuality, in turn, allows men to control women's labor power, both for the purpose of serving men in many personal and sexual ways and for the purpose of rearing children.

(1979: 318)

How socialist-feminists have conceptualized patriarchy and its role in a capitalist society is integral to an analysis of sexual assault and abuse. If we recognize that most sexual assaults are committed by an acquaintance in combination with the fact that more and more women are reporting marital rape (an issue that just a decade or so ago was not discussed or acknowledged), we can establish a relationship between patriarchy, sexual assault, and capitalism. We cannot ignore the relationship between the most common types of sexual assault and abuse and women's subordination in both the home and workplace. Furthermore, women's subordination is part of the larger picture of exploitation and oppression based on class, race, and sexual orientation.

In addition, the sexual exploitation of women is connected to the economic basis of capitalism because, as articulated by Hartmann, “. . .control is maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting women’s sexuality” (1979: 321). Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1983) also discuss how economic dependency within capitalism impacts sexual assault survivors and victims. They contend that “the reduction of female dependency at home and in the labor market is extremely important because it provides individual women with the power to dictate the basic terms on which men must relate to them” (Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1983: 217). They cite findings from research that reported the following:

. . .wives who were primary breadwinners when their husbands first raped them were more likely to take effective action. . .[The] study further showed that 100 percent of the wives who were providing the total family income when they were first raped were no longer married to their rapist husband. Economic independence and workplace experiences give wives greater strength to assert their own rights against abusive men.

(Russell 1982: 329)

(cited in Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1983: 217)

With this in mind, it is difficult to ignore the connection between economic conditions and sexual assault and abuse. Yet, the relationship is not as clear cut as Russell’s research indicates (i.e. if a woman is the primary breadwinner of her household and she is raped by her husband, she will just get divorced). Hartmann (1979) makes the point that even with the increase in the labor force participation of women in combination with the increased feasibility of divorce, incentives for women to divorce are quite limited.

Furthermore, sexual exploitation, inherent within the structure of patriarchy, has helped reproduce capitalism. That is, socialist-feminists have argued, “in the absence of patriarchy, a unified working class might have confronted capitalism, but patriarchal

social relations divided the working class, allowing one part (men) to be bought off at the expense of the other (women)” (Hartmann 1979: 324). Furthermore, Eisenstein adds that “capitalist patriarchy as an hierarchical, exploitative, oppressive system requires racial oppression alongside sexual and class oppression” (1979b: 49).

Based on how socialist-feminist conceptualize the relationships between capitalism and patriarchy, what do they call for in the way of social change? Hartsock, in her article, “Feminist Theory and the Development of Revolutionary Strategy” (1979) addresses this issue with specific strategies. I quote her at length:

First, we must ask how our work will educate ourselves and others politically, how it will help us to see the connections between social institutions. Second, we must ask how a particular strategy materially affects our daily lives. This involves asking: How does it improve our conditions of existence? How will it affect our sense of ourselves and our own power to change the world? How will a particular strategy politicize people, make people aware of problems beyond individual ones? Third, we must ask how our strategies work to build organizations—to build a collective individual which will increase our power to transform social relations as a whole. Fourth, we must ask how our strategies weaken the institutions which control our lives—patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism. Our strategies must work not simply to weaken each of these institutions separately but must attack them on the basis of an understanding of the totality of which they form parts.

(1979: 72-73)

Furthermore, feminist theory can work to bridge the gap between theory and practice in order to accomplish the goals as just outlined (Hartsock 1979). Based on Hartsock’s analysis, what does it mean to fundamentally transform the social structure and social relations? While there is no blueprint, there is the recognition that certain, fundamental objectives, through revolution, must be met. As discussed by Hartsock (1979), we must develop consciousness, we must become political, and we must be committed to forging knowledge with action.

An Integrated Theory: Critical Theory and Socialist-Feminism

Now that the main premises and critiques of each theory have been discussed, it is important to bridge these theories. By applying critical theory and socialist-feminism theory with research, some gaps in sociology and in feminist sociology can be filled. That is, each theory helps challenge the myths and stigmas still held about sexual assault and abuse that have been supported through much of the academic literature. For instance, by challenging what is “normal” and rational, we can go beyond an individual analysis of sexual and abuse to a macro-structural one. Furthermore, by using a gendered analysis of sexual assault and abuse, we can begin tackling fundamental questions about sexual assault and abuse.

While neither Mills nor Marcuse (or other critical sociology theorists, for that matter) take on the specific topic of sexual assault and abuse, their analyses of social problems and social structure have important contributions to make in creating an integrated, macro-level theory of sexual assault and abuse in our society. By providing necessary critiques of advanced, industrial society, Mills and Marcuse help establish the foundation for critiquing any social problem because they put it within a historical and structural context. Yet, it is necessary to recognize that critical theory does not adequately focus on race/ethnicity and gender as macro-structural forms of inequality. Therefore, it is necessary to combine critical theory with socialist-feminism in order to help fill some of these gaps.

Socialist-feminism, unlike critical theory, uses a gendered analysis that critically examines sexual exploitation within our capitalist and patriarchal society. This theory puts gender as a social construct at the center of its analysis. Moreover, socialist feminism understands that gender is part of systems of inequality that provides advantages to people as well as to the structure as a whole. By doing putting gender as the center of its analysis, socialist-feminism, unlike critical theory, can better analyze issues such as sexual assault and abuse within the larger picture of inequality.

Most importantly, socialist-feminism calls for social change and action that are necessary in order to work toward eliminating and preventing sexual assault and abuse. One of socialist-feminism's strongest aspects is its call for social action. As already discussed above, within a socialist-feminist framework, ending sexual exploitation (as well as other types of oppression and exploitation) can only happen with the radical transformation of the social structure and social relations. In this regard, socialist-feminism is especially useful when conceptualizing social change.

Yet, despite socialist-feminism's call for social action and change, it has its inadequacies. Like critical theory, socialist-feminism does not adequately address issues of racial oppression/exploitation. That is, although socialist-feminism acknowledges the presence of racial inequality within capitalism, when addressing issues related to sexual exploitation, there is little discussion of race as a form of macro-structural inequality. There is a clear distinction between recognizing racial inequality versus employing this as an analytical construct in which to theorize about sexual assault and abuse. Within the U.S. context, race and the system of meanings and ideologies which accompany it, is a fundamental organizing principle of social relations (Omi and Winant 1994, as cited in

Baca Zinn and Dill 1996: 324). Unfortunately, socialist-feminism does not adequately acknowledge this. That is, while socialist-feminism acknowledges how racial inequality is an integral part of capitalist-patriarchy, it fails to acknowledge how different racial groups are differentially situated.

Although socialist-feminism has been an important contribution to feminist theory, it is clear that it has shortcomings. These shortcomings are now being addressed by new theoretical frameworks, specifically multiracial feminism. As discussed by Baca Zinn and Dill, multiracial feminism acknowledges “how race both shapes and is shaped by a variety of other social relations” (1996: 325). The distinguishing features of multiracial feminism, as discussed by Baca Zinn and Dill, in their article, “Theorizing Difference from Multiracial Feminism” address the shortcomings of socialist-feminism. Specifically, socialist-feminism has been inadequate in explaining how “people experience race, class, gender, and sexuality differently depending upon their social location in the structure of race, class, gender, and sexuality” (1996: 326-327). In addition, socialist-feminism does not analyze how “women’s differences are *connected* in systematic ways” [emphasis in original] (Glenn 1992, as cited in Baca Zinn and Dill 1996: 327).

Socialist-feminism is most often critiqued for its analysis of gender and the economic structure. For instance, according to Lorber (1998), the political solutions put into practice based on socialist-feminism in former communist and democratic welfare states have fallen short of true gender equality. “[T]he Marxist and socialist feminist solution to women’s economic inequality—full-time jobs and state-provided maternal and child welfare benefits—does not change women’s status as primarily wives and

mothers and men's status as the primary breadwinners. The gendered social order has been reformed but not significantly changed" (Lorber 1998: 43). Other feminist scholars such as Baca Zinn and Dill discuss the influence of socialist-feminism in their scholarship but also acknowledge its limitations. Specifically, "socialist feminism's concept of capitalist patriarchy, with its focus on women's unpaid (reproductive) labor in the home failed to address racial differences in the organization of reproductive labor. As feminists of color have argued, 'reproductive labor has divided along racial as well as gender lines, and the specific characteristics have varied regionally and changed over time as capitalism has reorganized'" (Baca Zinn and Dill 1996: 325). Therefore, it is important to recognize that while socialist-feminism has helped fill gaps left by other theories, there are still gaps to be filled with future research and theory.

In order to bridge theory with research, the remaining part of this paper will focus on the data I collected through interviews with social workers, counselors, and therapists. Going out into the field, so to speak, helped strengthen the theoretical foundation for this paper. By interviewing mental healthcare practitioners, I was able to further analyze and address the role of psychology and individualism in limiting the choices of survivors of sexual assault and abuse.

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

THE EXTENDED CASE METHOD

The extended case method is not as widely recognized nor used as other qualitative fieldwork methods yet it is of particular importance because it integrates qualitative methodology with critical frameworks (in this case, critical sociological theory and socialist-feminist theory). Burawoy (1991), based on his experiences in the field, has written on the extended case method as a necessary method for social scientists to utilize in order to reconstruct theories of advanced capitalism. According to him, this method allows for the reconstruction of existing macro-based theories by analyzing their influence on qualitatively-analyzed and derived micro situations (Burawoy 1991). Thus, the extended case method lends itself well to the critique of such things as individualism and psychology and their impact on sexual assault and abuse as a social problem.

In my analysis of why sexual assault survivors are relegated to psychology and self-help, it is essential to critique the dominant power structures. Thus, Burawoy's extend case method is ideal. For example, Burawoy states, "...significance of a case related to what it tells us about the world in which it is embedded; here significance refers to *societal significance* [emphasis in original]" (1991: 281). A focal point of my project is precisely that: the social significance and impact of individualism and psychology and self-help. Why is it that these are so popular and widespread in our society today?

The extended case method also holds importance because it is one of the few research methods that views social change coming from social movements. As nicely stated by Burawoy:

. . .—from capitulation to the creation of alternative organizations, from negotiation within limits to the negotiation of limits, from anarchic outbursts to self-conscious collective protests—demonstrates the varied interplay between system and lifeworld, showing that the lifeworld is not an inert body but a source of continual contestation. But the struggle is an unequal one. We should not overestimate or romanticize the capacity of the lifeworld to fight back. The forms of resistance are constrained and continually challenged by new and more effective forms of domination. Still, resistance there is. We have tried to document its diverse forms, its sources, and its limitations.

(1991: 287)

In the current academic environment, qualitative methodology has often been criticized for not meeting the same “standards” as quantitative analysis. The qualitative vs. quantitative debate is still very much alive in the academy and oftentimes, quantitative research is seen as being superior. For example, qualitative research is viewed as not being generalizable to the broader population. In response to this critique, it is important to turn, again, to Burawoy’s discussion of the extended case method. He asserts:

The extended case method looks for specific macro determination in the micro world, but how does it measure up to the criticism of generalizability? It seeks generalization through reconstructing existing generalizations, that is, the reconstruction of existing theory.

(Burawoy 1991: 279)

The example Burawoy uses to illustrate his point is that of Van Velsen’s research of deviant marriage patterns among the Tonga in Nyasaland. While it was widely believed that, among the Tonga, primordial ties were primary to return migration, Van Velsen’s qualitative research showed that “migration was shaped by the policies and institutions of

the colonial administration and the South African mining industry” (Burawoy 1991: 279).

Based on his research, Van Velsen was able to develop a post-structuralist theory of kinship whereby he was able to generalize from his single case study (Burawoy 1991).

Indeed, Burawoy makes important arguments for the importance of qualitative research methodology, specifically the extended case method. Without a doubt, this method is an important tool for social scientists, particularly sociologists, to bridge the gap between what Burawoy (1991) calls, “technique and theory.”

IN-DEPTH, FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

For this project, I interviewed a variety of professionals who help survivors of sexual assault and abuse. The interviews took place between the Fall of 1995 and the Winter of 1998. The respondents self-identified themselves as counselors, therapists, social workers, and crisis workers. The twenty, in-depth, face-to-face interviews took place at various organizations, agencies, and universities from Mid-Michigan and Southeastern Michigan. The majority of the respondents are White, straight women, who self-identified as being part of the middle-class. Most of the women have advanced degrees, including Master of Social Work and Master of Arts. In addition, most of the respondents work for the government in some manner (usually at the county level).

In selecting respondents, I went through a variety of avenues. I began by looking-up sexual assault and abuse crisis centers in phonebooks. Once I had gained a few contacts, I used a snowball-type sampling procedure whereby I asked respondents for referrals or for information about other people who might be interested in participating.

At certain locations I had personal contacts that helped facilitate me in finding respondents.

All the respondents were enthusiastic about being interviewed and enjoyed talking about their experiences. A typical interview began with me asking some general questions such as how the respondent identified with her/his social class and race/ethnicity. I then asked about professional experience, some general background questions (e.g. education and family), motivations for becoming a therapist/counselor/social worker/volunteer. The next set of questions was about therapy and counseling in general. The last set of questions was specific to sexual assault and abuse and focused on structural issues. Interviews usually lasted an hour, were tape-recorded, and usually held at the respondent's place of work.

While I did not have any research money for this particular project, I did a variety of things to show my appreciation. On most occasions, I gave a small gift as a token of my appreciation. On several occasions, I gave money or gift certificates to respondents as well as made donations to particular organizations. Because the sample size was relatively small, it was within my means to do so. I felt that it was important to give back to both the respondents and various organizations since they had given me their valuable and oftentimes, limited time.

After interviewing the respondents, I went through a process of what I have termed, "respondent-friendly and respondent-involved" qualitative research. This was a multi-step process that involved the following: (1) I transcribed the interview, verbatim, (2) I edited the initial copy, (3) I gave a copy to the respondent to make changes, additions, answer additional questions, etc., (4) made changes, (5) returned second copy

to respondent. This process involved multiple contacts, multiple visits, and continued discussion of interview content. I found this method to be particularly satisfying as I felt that it allowed me to establish a relationship based on professionalism which helped me gain validity of both my research and my position as a doctoral student with the people I interviewed. In addition, I did not want the respondents to feel that the interview itself was the only medium in which to express their views—that it was not an “all or nothing” situation. Furthermore, this process created a feeling of working together rather than the feeling that the researcher and participants had completely different and separate roles.

In analyzing the impact of the related ideologies of psychology, self-help, and individualism, it would have been useful (perhaps ideal) to talk with survivors of sexual assault and abuse. For a variety of reasons, I chose not to interview survivors. First and foremost, unfortunately, it is still difficult for both society and individuals to openly discuss sexual assault and abuse. As already discussed, the ideology of individualism has pushed survivors into therapists’ offices or kept them at home, with self-help books. Thus, it is difficult to ask survivors to talk openly with researchers/academics. Furthermore, because trust has often been violated, it is not likely that survivors of sexual assault and abuse will readily talk to a researcher. It is much easier, for a variety of obvious reasons, to solicit survivors of sexual assault and abuse when conducting anonymous and confidential survey research whether it be by paper questionnaire or telephone interview. Another concern for me—a much more personal concern—was whether or not I could handle the emotionality connected to candidly discussing the topic of sexual assault and abuse with those who have or continue to experience these abuses. From my familiarity with the sexual assault and abuse literature as well as my previous

research experience as an honors student, survivors, without a doubt, have the right to be angry, self-blaming, emotional, etc. I had to decide whether I was able to respond effectively to those I interviewed.

With much contemplation and advice, I chose to interview counselors, therapists, psychologists, and social workers. Interviewing these professionals was not necessarily a second choice for me though. As my project became more focused, it became clear that with my critical analysis of psychology, self-help, and individualism, it would be useful to examine how those directly involved in helping survivors viewed issues related to sexual assault and abuse. What impact do they believe they, as helping professionals, have on sexual assault and abuse survivors; how is psychology (i.e., the therapeutic model) both useful and harmful; how are individuals' experiences tied to the broader social structure—these are just a few of the many complex questions I asked those I interviewed (refer to Appendix A to see a copy of the most frequently asked questions).

Respondents discussed issues and topics ranging from their own motivations for joining their particular profession, psychology and self-help, structural issues, gender and power, etc. Because it is not possible to include and discuss all the findings from these in-depth interviews, specific topics will be discussed. They include the following: who uses therapy; critiques of psychology/therapy/counseling/social work; sexual assault and abuse prevention; eliminating sexual assault and abuse; and why survivors turn to psychology (e.g. therapy and counseling). Discussion about self-help, generated from the interviews, are included in the section, "A Critical Analysis of Self-Help Books."

When asking about who is more likely to use therapy and the like, respondents noted a variety of differences related to who is most or more likely to use therapy and counseling. All the respondents reported that women were more likely to use therapy and counseling than men. For instance, Renee⁶ said, “I think women. . . Sometimes I have women come in and say, ‘I want you to do marital counseling but my husband won’t come’.” Respondents cited a variety of reasons for why women are more apt to use counseling and therapy. Most of the explanations related to gender socialization.

Claudia, a social worker, gave the following analysis:

I think probably socialization. I think women—I think there’s much more of an emphasis on inter-relatedness and talking and. . . I don’t know that it’s always so natural for men to think of talking to a stranger but certainly they do, certainly I have male patients. I think males sometimes, if they’re married, rely on their wife for, you know, support. Often men come in when their marriages are ending or they’re having some kind of loss in that way. They’re not as connected socially with intimate relationships that they can turn to where women, it’s kind of ironic, women tend to have more of a network of intimate relationships but are also more inclined to seek psychotherapy so I don’t know exactly what that’s about.

Karen also talked about socialization being a primary factor in why women use therapy and counseling more. She told me, “I feel like probably the women are more. . . you know, the whole socialization thing where women are more apt to talk about how they’re feeling. We have had a few men go through our short-term counseling program but it’s. . . it’s usually much harder for them to get going.”

Several social workers also discussed how cultural differences impacted who was more likely to use their services. One social worker, in her thirties, discussed her experiences working in a community with a large Hmong and Cambodian population:

⁶ For confidentiality purposes, all respondents have been given pseudonyms.

That particular population was very unlikely to use counseling. In fact, sometimes when there. . . it was a small enough community that if a doctor, for example, a medical doctor had a client who came in who the doctor thought really needed mental health treatment, sometimes we would go to the doctor's office because there was such a huge resistance to coming to the mental health center. So, I think it's a real cultural issue and I also think it has to do with immigration. These were recent immigrants from places where mental health treatment was provided by physical therapists and practitioners. So, I mean, there are certain community groups who are less likely.

Cynthia, a social worker who self-identifies as White and upper-middle class, also discussed how certain Asian populations may also be less likely to utilize therapy and counseling.

Now, I just met a woman about, actually about two weeks ago who is the only Japanese-speaking psychologist in the area. And I don't have any experience with this, but what she. . . told me is that in her experiences, Asian people do not come to treatment unless they are in severe trouble, not just in crisis, but in severe trouble of if they have a severe diagnosis. . . the reason why this came up is because she is just over-whelmed with all of the referrals she's getting because she's the only Japanese-speaking. . . I can tell you that when I was on the adolescent service, and I was on that for five years, I don't even remember one Asian family. We had some American Indian families, we had African-American families, some Jewish. . . I don't remember any Asian families.

Cynthia also talked about why she think Blacks are less likely to use therapy and counseling. When I asked her, "you said Blacks are more likely to use therapy in more of a crisis situation. Is that opposed to Whites and why do you think that is?", Cynthia had the following to say:

I think because therapy is. . . is kind of part of the establishment. It's like. . . I don't know how to say it any better than that. It's like, if the system works for you, if the system, if the political system works for you, you're going to tend to reach out for therapy because it's a kind of a system. . . it's almost a social system thing. And I think for some ethnic groups, the social system doesn't work for people and so I think therapy is kind of lumped into that. . . I will say that Black patients do tend to want to go to Black therapists. . . it's uncommon for a Black patient to see a White therapist unless they were kind of put together with that person in a crisis. I don't think they seek out White therapists very often.

Other social workers, therapists, and counselors I interviewed also discussed how Blacks are less likely to use their services.

Throughout the interviewing process, it became clear that some of the respondents had thought critically about psychology and therapy. At the same time they recognize that they are part of a profession dedicated to helping others, they are also keenly aware of the profession's limitations, as illustrated by Jeanette's comment:

I have a lot of ambivalence about the counseling profession or the therapy profession because I feel like it's. . . we're taught to help people to adapt to bad situations instead of looking at the structural issues that create those bad situations so I really preach. . . that we need to look at people's strengths and issues of agency so that we aren't assuming that they're all victims and assuming that they need to just put up and shut up.

Jeanette, who is pursuing an advanced degree in social work, also discussed how the true mission of social work has been overlooked:

[A colleague of mine] was saying that one of her students said, "I want to be a social worker but I don't deal with poverty." Well, okay, that's the kind of people we deal with, people who are poor and disadvantaged because of those situations. So, there is a lot of people who don't understand what I think is the true mission of social work. . . I think there are ways to work with individuals in that setting but there are ways to look at the structural issues like community organizing and things like that are big pieces of social work history that are typically overlooked today because a lot of people just want to do the individual one-on-one work and help that person instead of, you know, changing the structure.

Erin, a social work counselor, spoke about the debates going on among students and professors within the discipline of social work that question the role of social work in society. In our discussion about who uses therapy and counseling, Erin made reference to the fact that women often come into therapy and counseling with issues that are societally-based. From this discussion, we began talking more broadly about psychology and social work. I asked, "So, you're saying that maybe psychology and social work help maintain the status quo?" Erin replied:

To a degree. . . which is sad. In one of our classes, we were just talking about that. I mean, we perpetuate the system the way it is. If we didn't have people who come to see us, we would be out of business, which is hard to think about.

Furthermore, Renee, a social worker who is pursuing an advanced degree, discussed how psychotherapy is not accessible or desirable for a lot of people. According to Renee, the "psychotherapy model is very, you know, very much based on the White, middle-class verbal model." Similarly, Claudia said that "there's a certain way where psychotherapy isn't consistent with all cultures in terms of what that means to talk to a stranger about your problems, leave your family to do that. . ." These critiques are important in considering, as in the above discussion, who does and does not use therapy and for what reasons. Most of the respondents agreed that there is not equal access to counseling and therapy and where there is access, it is often affected by differential allocation of resources.

When I asked Cynthia, who talked about how certain groups are less likely to use therapy because it is part of the establishment (refer to above discussion), to elaborate on her thoughts about this topic, she discussed the complexities involved. I asked, "you said before that therapy is part of the establishment. So, in that sense, if we're thinking along

those lines, what do you think the goals of therapy are? Cynthia replied, “To basically makes people law-abiding citizens and be nice and polite.” When I queried, “Is that good?”, Cynthia had the following to say:

Well, yea. I mean, the reason I have trouble answering these questions is the same reason I love therapy—is that, nothing is ever as black and white as it seems on the surface. So, is that good, that’s a yes or no [question] but you can’t answer yes or now to that kind of thing. I mean, is it good, I mean, if ***** and ***** are starving and I need to steal food, is that bad? Well, no but yes—it depends on how you look at it.

Clearly, there is ambivalence on the part of those involved in “helping” professions. As with most occupations, there is the bad, the good, and everything in between. Cynthia’s discussion of the complexities in questioning the goals of therapy is indicative of the self-questioning and debates going on within social work as it pursues to help individuals who have been negatively impacted by the larger social structure.

The issue of prevention has various facets to it as well. When I asked how to prevent sexual assault and abuse in our society, the responses were paralleled with discussions of prevention in the sexual assault and abuse literature. For instance, almost every interviewee indicated that education was the best tool in preventing sexual assault. Karen felt that broad-ranging education for everyone was important. She said, “I feel like it’s an education thing. I think it’s. . .back to the whole control issue which is a socialization thing which is a social problem thing so I think trying to educate men and women, not just survivors.” Claudia and Carol emphasized the need to educate children at a young age. For instance, Carol, who is a social work counselor, gave some examples of how to educate young children:

Teaching them about sexual harassment—that young. Bra-snapping, pinching, grabbing, that type of thing. Teaching them about language, teaching them about roles. What are the roles that you see going on in your family? Why do you think that is? How about society, how about the idea that women should be able to be anything they want to be? You know, we teach our kids, “you can be anything you want to be,” but really sitting down and exploring that idea—well, do you know any women in your life who are such and such and that type of education.

Other respondents saw prevention as related to behavioral and attitudinal changes for both men and women. Jennifer made an analogy between washing one’s hands after going to the bathroom and sexual assault prevention. She also discussed the importance of debunking sexual assault and abuse myths and focusing on awareness and choices:

I think my attitude about prevention is, I’m a realist and we’re taking a look at having an impact on behavioral change and attitudinal change. . . I think there may be some sort of correlation between the public health kind of prevention thing—if you wash your hands after you go to the bedroom, you’re not going to spread germs, but it’s more sort of education and increased awareness as a way to lead to prevention. I think being able to give information. . . be able to give choices, not just preach sort of the gloom and doom. . . to dispel some of the myths about why people deserve to be assaulted so hopefully with the presentation there’s going to be some information and some changing of attitudes or beliefs that may exist out there about why sexual assault happens in the first place. . .

Both Lisa (a social work practitioner for over twenty years) and Jeanette discussed how sexual assault prevention can be looked at from various angles. Lisa said that we need to “look at the community and the society and what does the society need to do in order to increase safety for women.” She also pointed to education in schools whereby “we need to teach boys and girls what behaviors are good behaviors to have, what kind of communication to make sure your needs are clearly stated. . . ” Jeanette also spoke about the various ways to address prevention:

. . .you could look at prevention issues around that by looking at lighting, not traveling alone at night and things like that—locking your doors, locking your windows. You can look at prevention issues that way. You can also look at prevention issues in terms of education like when you're out on a date and if you don't want to have sex with the person you are on a date with and how you prevent that and how do you stand up for your rights and things like that.

When I raised the issue of whether it is possible to eliminate sexual assault and abuse from our society, much discussion was generated indicating the enormity of such a question. Paralleled with how this topic is addressed in the sexual assault literature, this was a difficult question for respondents to discuss. Even when the answer was “yes, we can eliminate it,” the discussions often focused on education (therefore, the discussions of prevention and elimination were often the same). And although many respondents talked about patriarchy, sexual inequality, and power issues, a critical analysis of the social structure was often left out in the discussions of how to eliminate sexual assault. An exception was Renee, who said her involvement with the Women's Movement influenced her decision to become a social worker. When I asked her if we could eliminate sexual assault and abuse and if so, how, Renee argued for the following:

I believe feminism is the answer to this problem. Gender inequality is the root of sexual assault/abuse. While we need to continue to offer compassionate services to survivors of sexual assault, the real *solution* is to push for universal human rights. Gender discrimination occurs on individual *and* institutional levels. Sexual assault will continue as long as the condition exists. Why not start with the economic and political system? Socialist-feminists have been telling us for a long time that capitalist-patriarchy is killing us. Maybe that's the answer. Frankly, I believe some of the liberal feminist actions are quietly making the biggest changes right now. The Family Leave Act is very important to the stability of women's (especially working-class) self-support. Even though these sorts of changes seem to have little to do with sexual assault, they are connected because they reduce the power differential between men and “non-men.” (emphasis added)

Indeed, Renee's discussion reminds us of what socialist-feminists argue is necessary in order to eliminate social problems such as sexual assault. Renee suggests looking toward the economic and political systems, addressing broad issues of inequality that will have their impact on a whole range of issues, and looking at the impact of capitalist-patriarchy. Based on Renee's comments, in order to eliminate sexual assault we must turn theory into action in a way that the entire social structure is affected.

Related to the issue of eliminating sexual assault and abuse is the analysis of sexual assault as a social problem. Every respondent said that sexual assault is a social problem. In discussing this issue, most of the interviewees made reference to living in a rape culture that permits sexual assault and abuse. Carol, Jennifer, Erin, Karen, and others talked about how music and the media perpetuate the objectification of women. For instance, Jennifer said the following:

When I do presentations with schools, I kind of go off onto a whole tangent about rape culture, about the kind of tolerance of violence towards women in society. And we see it everywhere—we see it in movies, we see it in songs. . that kind of MTV stuff and that's sort of our reality that gets projected up there. . That's not a message that's a good message to give. It takes away from the whole element about choice, it takes away the whole element about communication because it works on a lot of assumptions and part of the big thing about communication is to get people to talk about each other and recognize. . not telling men you have to be more like women, but people being able to recognize what the differences are. . let's talk about communication, let's talk about consent and what that means.

Lisa also talked about the relationship between violence and sexual assault as a social problem. She said the following:

It's a social problem in that it doesn't just affect the person who was affected. It affects the community, family members and friends—a ripple effect. If we live in a society that fosters violence and fosters a person. . .the abuse of someone or the identification of someone as vulnerable and as a non-person, then we definitely have a problem in our society. If we glorify violence, if we glorify. . .yea, we can get in the. . .you know, glorify violence, glorify war, glorify physical contact. . .glorify football and lots of stuff where violence is condoned. . .so I think it's a social problem.

It became clear that although these professionals are dedicated to helping people on an individual level, they are aware of how sexual assault and abuse is embedded within the social structure. Some respondents discussed how it is necessary to make connections between the individuals who come see them with what is going on in society with regards to sexual inequality, oppression, exploitation, and violence. For example, Joan spoke about her approach:

My practice approach is what I would call an integrated approach which is looking at things both kind of across the board from a micro to a macro level. I don't think you can just institute change on a personal or micro level. I think that for. . .I think it is like. . .treating symptoms. You can get somebody great. . .but is constantly battling social barriers—that's really difficult so I think intervention has to occur on a multi-tiered level.

So, if sexual assault and abuse is widely acknowledged as a social problem, then why do survivors turn to psychology and individualized mediums of help? This was a question I asked all the respondents. Simply put, most agreed that there are no alternatives for survivors. In addition, some discussed the secrecy that still stigmatizes those who have been sexually assaulted and/or abused. Jeanette had the following comments:

Well, I think there's mixed messages in our society that there must be something wrong with you if you were sexually assaulted so I think that's one reason that when people have a problem, they look at individual issues rather as opposed to looking at some societal issues. I think another reason that people may go to psychology when a person is sexually assaulted is that there are some real personal issues they have to deal with, feelings about themselves or you know, feelings, things like that. So, there are some reasons to work on an individual level. But, that's not the only thing you could work on.

Susan, who has been a therapist for fourteen years, also talked about the personal aspects of sexual assault and abuse:

First of all, again, any type of trauma whether it be child abuse or sexual abuse, is deeply personal, so it really lends itself to the sort of one-on-one kind of conversation or group therapy, the self-helps books. It really matters that you work with someone who believes you. So, psychology, social workers, and therapists in general have developed this model of treatment. And I think that there's something very comforting to people. I don't think there is the same, deep-level of resolution and comfort in taking social action, so I don't think taking social action, creating a clinic—that's a different kind of healing. And the very same person can do well with that but I don't think that's enough, that it's satisfying enough because it is such a deeply personal issue, I think people need to process, talk about it, to say it in the many different ways they need to express it.

Joan discussed the multitude of interrelated reasons why sexual assault and abuse is treated as an individual issue:

Well, I think there are a couple of reasons. One, we have, at least in this culture, we have a long standing history of being pretty quiet about things of a sexual nature—that's one. So, we don't talk about sex and we don't talk about what's appropriate sex, bad sex, whatever and everything is sex. So, if it has anything to do with the genitals. . .you know, we don't even talk about appropriate health care, I mean, it's only been recent that we've encouraged women to get their annual pap and pelvic and mammograms because you didn't talk about those things—so, that's one. Two, who's in power? Realistically, power is held by a certain percentage of people, it's a small minority of people and it's generally White male. There's been some inclusion of women, people

of color, and different religious and cultural backgrounds but the bottom line is that the people [in power] in this country are White men and who gets assaulted—women, women of color, children, and people who. . .who somehow have lower status because their skin color or religion isn't appropriate or isn't considered acceptable and who made that decision—White men in this country. . . it's historical, I think it's become accepted because it's been around for so long that we don't. . .it's not part of our daily consciousness. To change that would require changing the power structure.

It was interesting to talk to respondents about changing the power structure. All agreed, for a variety of reasons, that change could only really happen by working within the system. After Joan mentioned changing the power structure, I asked her if she thought we could move beyond the current structure of capitalist-patriarchy. Her response was the following:

Oh, that would make sense to me. I think capitalism basically allows a few people to make a lot of money, a few people who buy into it in order to keep, you know, a certain standard and a lot of worker drones who struggle and make everyone else rich and pay too much money for rent and never get two steps ahead. . . from my understanding, things like medical care, childcare, other countries obviously have been able to incorporate those as part of their social structure and they haven't totally fallen apart, so, to assume that would break us, I don't buy that. I think we could probably spend. . .I think if we can blow up the world five times, we can afford a new daycare center. I figure once you blow it up once, that's all that's necessary [laughs]. I think that a lot of how we get there is that women have to take more active stands and women also have to figure out ways to make connections and coalitions with men because it's impossible. . .you can't just put it on one portion of the society particularly if you're looking at. . . like, I think there's a lot of issues around men. . . oppressors of women are male. . .that was male generated but women also feed into that. Women are the ones raising the men in our society. . .there has to be a meeting which means that women. . .men look for women to help in the struggle, women look for men to do that—who knows whether I'll see it in my lifetime, although it is better, not great, but better than it was twenty years ago. I have a lot more opportunity now than I did twenty years ago but I think it's going to be a long struggle, until we get over the idea of, "if I'm going to have, someone else has to go with less,". . .that's pretty entrenched within our society.

Along the same lines, Erin said that it would take a revolution in order to really change the status quo. When I asked her if this was possible, she responded, “It could happen. . . I don’t see it happening in my lifetime and if it did, I would be really shocked—very surprised and very happy, but I would be shocked.” Cynthia said that while theoretically it is an interesting idea, capitalism is “too successful in this country. There’s too many people that would. . .that couldn’t. . .that wouldn’t take the risk of changing.”

As with most qualitative research, there is always so much rich information provided by respondents that cannot be included in the final paper. This project is no exception. Therapists, counselors, and social workers spoke at-length and in-depth about all sorts of issues related to sexual assault and abuse, women, and broader society. Their insights were integral in my exploration of these issues.

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SELF-HELP BOOKS

Self-helps books have grown to be so popular that bookstores have whole sections on self-help. Since self-helps books are focused on the individual (more specifically, individual symptoms and solutions), it is important to know if they are used to perpetuate the ideologies of psychology and individualism and if so, how. The following discussion is based on a critical analysis of five self-help books for survivors of sexual assault/abuse. They include: *The Courage to Heal: A Guide For Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (Bass and Davis 1992), *The Healing Way: Adult Recovery from Childhood Sexual Abuse* (Kunzman 1990), *Secret Survivors: Uncovering Incest and Its Aftereffects in Women* (Blume 1990), *Recovery: How to Survive Sexual Assault for Women, Men, Teenagers, and Their Families* (Benedict 1994), and *Surviving Child Sexual Abuse: A*

Handbook for Helping Women Challenge Their Past (Hall and Lloyd 1989). These books were chosen randomly and represent a small selection of the many self-help books for survivors and victims of sexual assault and abuse.

Since self-help books are used by an increasing number of survivors of sexual assault and abuse⁷, it is valuable and necessary to see what they have to say. Ideally, it would be useful to answer the following questions: 1) How influential have they been in impacting decisions made by survivors, and 2) Are they trusted and seen as legitimate? Unfortunately these questions are difficult to answer unless one has access to those who use them—sexual assault and abuse survivors. As discussed earlier, there are important considerations to be made in deciding the practical and emotional costs involved in interviewing sexual assault and abuse survivors. Therefore, it is not within the scope of this particular project to analyze the above questions. What is an important aspect of this particular paper is to see what self-help books have to say, how they say it, and most importantly, to analyze whether these books tow the status quo of the ideology of psychology and if so, to what extent.

Without a doubt, it was interesting to critically analyze self-help books. These books provide general information about the specified topic. More specifically, self-help books for people who have been sexually assaulted and/or abused often include a variety of lists and tables that are suppose to help individuals determine whether they (or others such as family members and loved ones) have or have not been sexually abused and if so, what stages they are at or what they can expect. Often these lists are created in such a way though that it can seem that everyone has been sexually abused and/or that any

behavior (or lack of behavior) is a symptom, indication, or result of being sexually abused. Furthermore, the information provided in self-help books are often not informed by research therefore the advice is questionable. Yet, many individuals, including those I interviewed, have many positive things to say about self-help books. Thus, this section is going to discuss the following: (a) problems with self-help books, with a focus on their connection to the ideology of psychology and (b) why self-help books are popular and what are their benefits.

The Catch-22s of Self-help Books

As discussed in the literature review, there is incorporated in the ideology of psychology a specific language whereby everything and anything can be symptoms or indications of any given psychological issue. This is particularly evident in self-help books. In these books, the all-inclusiveness of symptoms is common. For example, in E. Sue Blume's well-known checklist, "The Incest Survivors' Aftereffects Checklist," (1989) the list is so comprehensive that anyone, whether she/he has been sexually abused or not, could check off most of the indicators of being sexually abused. Blume introduces the list by asserting the following, "Do you find many characteristics of yourself on this list? If so, you could be a survivor of incest" (1989, no page number). Most of the list's characteristics are framed as either/or categories that begin at the extremes and include everything in between. As an example, one set of characteristics is the following: "Trust issues; inability to trust (trust is not safe); total trust; trusting

⁷ This is inferred by not only the mass production and sales of these books but also, the fact that these books can be found at almost any bookstore. No longer do survivors have to go to "specialty bookstores" to find these types of self-help books.

indiscriminately.” Based on these characteristics, it would seemingly be difficult to *not* check this one.

Most people, at any given point in time, would be candidates for checking off the majority of these characteristics. Another example includes, “eating disorders, drug or alcohol abuse (or total abstinence); other addictions, compulsive behaviors.” How does Blume explain total abstinence from drugs and alcohol as an indicator of sexual abuse? Put simply, she does not provide an explanation. The list is long, complex, and full of psychological terms like *splitting*, *repression*, *minimizing*, “*sensory flashes*,” *acting out*, “*sexaholism*,” *multiple personality*—the list is virtually endless. In addition, it is not clear what the logic is for some of the characteristics. Blume includes the following characteristics: extreme requirement for privacy when using bathroom; humorlessness; instinctively knowing what the other person wants or needs; and high risk talking or inability to take risks? How many people do you know who like to have privacy when using the bathroom or who do not have a sense of humor or who either take risks or don’t take risks. In essence, while there is some validity to the list (i.e., some parts of the list are consistent with findings in the sexual assault literature), much of the list is subjective. And although one might be able to see the absurdity in the list, it is important to keep in mind that Gloria Steinem endorsed this book. On the front cover, Steinem is quoted as saying, “Explores the constellation of symptoms that result from a crime too cruel for mind and memory to face. This book, like the truth it helps to uncover, can set millions free” (Blume 1989). What is problematic is that most people do not have access or the time to survey all the sexual assault and abuse literature to discern valid findings from subjective declarations.

Moreover, Blume's discussions of all these characteristics are often vague and unsubstantiated. For example, Blume asserts that many incest survivors have a sensitivity to water on the face. After describing this, Blume concludes, "All I have been able to suggest is the *possible* scenario where oral sex was followed by rushed washing of the victim's face, often as she sputtered and struggled to breathe. Oral sex itself could also be the cause—but oral sex *has not always occurred* [emphasis added]" (1989: 196). Based on this insight, what are survivors or those who think they might be survivors suppose to conclude?

Indeed, Blume's checklist would not be so problematic if every set of checklist characteristics was not so comprehensive as to include almost any form of behavior listed under that particular topic whether it be trust, issues relate to sex, physical conditions, etc. Along these same lines, Jeanette talked about how self-help books can be dangerous:

I think sexual abuse is very, very prominent, but the suggestion in some of those books is that you've been sexually abused and you should deal with it in this way and if you don't really know, then you may end up wrecking your life based on a book you've read. I think it's dangerous to do a checklist and say this is how it is. If you read through the DSM IV, do you know what the DSM is? . . . If you read through those definitions of mental illness, you can find yourself in any of those definitions. I mean. . . any given symptom can be real general. What they look at is the syndrome, they look at how many of these you have and how serious it is. You look at the diagnosis for the symptoms and then you look at other stressors and things like that to see how seriously mentally ill you are and, you know, you can pick out any of those symptoms on any given day and we're all mentally ill. And I think of the same with sexual abuse especially repressed memories. Because our society has placed women in such precarious situations, you can say that you've been sexually abused in a lot of ways. You know, some people are really offended by language and you can say, you can feel that you've been violated by language. Does that mean you were sexually and physically abused in your childhood and you don't remember it? I don't know, you know. I think those things are real dangerous.

Jeanette's comment that self-help books often suggest how one should deal with a particular problem brought me back to the list of stages in the book, *The Courage to Heal* (1992). This book, which was mentioned by several respondents, is recognized as one of the best among self-help books for survivors of sexual assault and abuse. Yet, as I will discuss, it too has its shortcomings. For example, the section marked, "The Stages" is prefaced with the following: Although most of these stages are *necessary* for every survivor, a few of them—the emergency stage, remembering the abuse, confronting your family, and forgiveness—are not applicable to every woman [emphasis added]" (1992: 58-59). The list includes at least two stages which I would question as *necessary*: 1) making contact with the child within and 2) spirituality. Bass and Davis write, "Having a sense of power greater than yourself can be a real asset in the healing process" (1992: 59). I argue that the assertion that it is necessary to have a sense of power greater than one's self in order to "heal" is problematic for multiple reasons. Primarily, this reasoning does not acknowledge that sexual abuse is a social problem. Oftentimes, notions of spirituality are forwarded in such a way that structural forces are not considered.

In addition, *The Courage to Heal* is full of psychological terms and phrases such as the child within, being present in one's own body, feeling invalidated, and one's inner voice. While it is well-known that self-helps books are based on the model of psychology, some respondents made reference to the dangers of authors who write self-help books who are not adequately trained. Carol commented that, "coming from people who don't have the proper education who are writing the books or coming from people whose perspective is not one that is beneficial to everyone. I think sometimes we can get

too tied up into what you're being told to do so you think since it worked for one person, it's going to work for everyone." Karen's comments were similar:

you know, in my psychology coursework too they always warned you, "Don't be an amateur psychologist. You're going to see all these symptoms and you're going to think you have every, you know, mental illness in the book." Same thing with people in med. school so I think that that would alarm some people and would send them more into whatever emotion they're feeling. I think an interaction is nicer than a checklist—an interaction with someone who might have some knowledge about it.

As I was going through self-help books, the term amateur psychologist came to mind.

For instance, in Kunzman's book, *The Healing Way: Adult Recovery From Childhood*

Sexual Abuse (1990), she suggests the following about "how to remember":

- *Close your eyes and try on a memory to see how it fits and if it brings anything else to mind.*
- *Write about or tell your therapist about your dreams, particularly any recurrent ones from childhood.* They may be a key to what you have repressed. Recurring dreams may be about someone coming into your room, a monster in the closet, or something trying to hurt you. Pay close attention to these dreams and try to understand what they mean. But remember, since dreams are generally not factual, the images may be symbolizing something else that our unconscious is trying to work out or master.
(1990: 46)

As will be discussed below, it is questionable whether one should be doing these kind of exercises.

Several respondents showed concern that self-helps books were isolating to individuals. For example, Jennifer said, "I think there is some danger in thinking I can sort of go it alone and just read enough books about it and I can become really knowledgeable. . . that kind of gives the message that 'I need to go this alone, I need to do this alone, there's nobody to help me. I'm going to do this by myself, thank you very much'." Renee recounted some of her experiences related to self-help books:

I have had a few experiences where people have said they were reading a book at home and it brought up these memories, and they didn't know what to do, and they were so distraught and it seems to me that if we're talking about something that is serious enough to cause really psychological symptoms, then it's probably not a good idea to put someone alone at home and ask them to deal with it on their own. It seems to me that books always encourage isolation and individual work.

Jeanette, from the previous discussion above, discussed the negative impacts these books can have if one does not do what the books suggest. This is an important issue for several reasons. First, it puts the responsibility on the person who has been assaulted. For example, in *Recovery: How To Survive Sexual Assault for Women, Men, Teenagers, and Their Families* (1994), Benedict says one should do the following if attacked:

- Take a few deep breaths and concentrate on staying calm. If you breathe too fast, as people are prone to do in a panic, you could get dizzy or even faint, which will make you more vulnerable. Deep breathing calms your body.
- Do as the assailant says, calmly.
- Look him in the face, unless he orders you not to. Looking at him makes you seem less afraid, which may make him less afraid and thus less likely to hurt you in a panic. It will also enable you to describe him later.
- Don't stare panic-stricken at the weapon—that makes you seem more vulnerable.
- Try to talk to him, meanwhile looking for avenues of escape.

Based on these suggestions (which obviously do not take into consideration that people are faced with a whole host of differing circumstances and conditions), is it probable that a survivor would blame her or himself for what happened if she or he did not follow Benedict's suggestions? Furthermore, where is the recognition in any of these self-help books that sexual assault is indeed a social problem—directly connected to the sexism, racism, classism, and homophobia in our society? The fact that self-help books use the language of psychology and project the tenets of individualism is indicative of why they are non-critical and non-structural.

Popularity of Self-Help Books and Their Benefits

Of course, there are positive aspects of self-help books. I asked respondents both what they thought about self-help books as well as why they thought they were so popular. Claudia talked about how self-help books can be helpful in combination with therapy. She said the following:

I think people can gain intellectual knowledge from reading self-help books but I really think it's really through relational processes that people truly change, you know and that's where I think individual therapy comes in. But I'm not opposed to recommending books that I . . . with people that I'm working with while they're not with me, especially with people only once a week in therapy, you know, in the in-between times they can do some reading and sort of keep the work going.

Erin not only finds self-help books to be useful for people whom they are written for, but also for professionals such as herself. While she recognizes how they might not always be the best approach, overall, she sees them as playing a positive role:

I think they're very useful, especially within certain circumstances but if the client doesn't read well, or doesn't understand things or doesn't have time to read, that mode of therapy won't be the best way to handle it, but for people who do like to read or who do like to work through workbooks. . . I love self-help books personally and I have a library where I have started buying things in two and three and four copies especially of books that I think are really, really good. So, that way, when I have clients I want to give those to, I can. Specifically, "Courage To Heal," I think is a really good book, "How To Survive the Loss of a Love," "How To Survive Depression"—you know, some things like that. Some good basic self-help books.

Whether one finds self-help books to be useful or not, it cannot be denied that they are increasingly popular. When inquiring about why they have grown to be so popular, Cynthia responded:

I think if. . .to do therapy well, it's difficult. It's scary, it's very frightening, it requires. . .a successful therapy requires trust and a lot of people don't trust and some people don't trust for really good reasons but it removes you from the, kind of human experience and it's really overwhelming for a lot of people.

Simply put, according to Erin, "there are not a lot of alternatives out there." From my own analysis, it is clear that options for survivors of sexual assault and abuse are limited. Therefore, it is not surprising that self-helps books are increasingly relied upon for support, answers, and "healing." The popularity of self-help books is yet another indicator of the primacy of individual reliance and solutions.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

CONNECTING THEORY WITH RESEARCH

This section will be focused on connecting theory with research. That is, now that an integrated theory has been established, it is important to discuss how my research findings help support the importance of utilizing an integrated theory. In addition, my findings also provide important evidence to what has been reviewed in the literature on sexual assault and abuse. To help organize this discussion, four main areas will be discussed: 1) the structure of inequalities, 2) supporting or challenging the system, 3) the maintenance of the ideologies of individualism and psychology, and 4) the role of self-helps books in maintaining ideology.

Structural Inequalities: Who Reaps the Benefits?

Who uses therapy is often connected to broader structural forces, more specifically, the structure of opportunity. Based on lines of gender, class and race, the structure of opportunity gives advantages to some while to others it does not. Therefore, it is important to discuss how various racial groups use or do not use therapy. As discussed by several respondents, there are important differences between how Whites, Blacks, and Asians utilize therapy. Although I found very limited research which reported general, outpatient mental health utilization by race, research does clearly recognize that there are important issues related to the underutilization of mental health services by racial minorities (Cheung and Snowden 1990). Yu and Cypress reported that

“Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders were less likely than Whites to have seen a psychiatrist or made a visit to a nonpsychiatric physician for mental health reasons” (Cheung and Snowden 1990: 280). It has also been reported by Horgan and Sussman, et al. that Blacks have been underrepresented with regards to mental health services utilization (Cheung and Snowden 1990). Cynthia discussed how Blacks are less likely to use therapy because therapy is part of the establishment and the establishment only works for certain people. The argument that Blacks are less likely to use therapy because it is part of the establishment is particularly important if we consider what hooks has to say in her book, *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* (1993). According to hooks, negative attitudes about therapy have been influential enough in the Black community to hinder Blacks from seeking mental health care. Within her analysis of how racism, sexism, and the capitalist economic system impact Black women, hooks contends that “traditional therapy, mainstream psychoanalytical practices, often do not consider ‘race’ an important issue and as a result do not adequately address the mental-health dilemmas of [B]lack people” (1993: 15). Based on my argument that survivors do not have alternatives to therapy and counseling, the issue of whom uses therapy and counseling is a particularly urgent one if marginalized racial-ethnic groups are less likely to use the medium of psychology. One must ask, “if racial-ethnic groups do not use the one avenue available to survivors of sexual assault and abuse, what does that mean for marginalized groups in our society?” One could argue that their options are even more limited.

When I asked respondents, “who is more likely to use therapy?”, most responses focused on gender and racial differences. Yet, as discussed by Bellah, et al., (1996), it is

important to recognize class differences. That is, according to Bellah, et al., therapy and the like is more likely to be accepted and utilized by the middle class. They point to the observation that they found, among middle-class American's mainstream, therapeutic language very prevalent. Related to this, Renee, a White social worker, commented on how psychology and other related mediums, are not accessible for certain groups. Specifically, as discussed in the findings, she said, "the psychotherapy model. . . is based on the White, middle-class verbal model." In the 1970s, young, urban, well-educated people from professional backgrounds were most likely to use therapy yet Bellah, et al. (1996) also discuss how these dynamics have been changing up through the 1990s whereby all sectors of society are participating in psychology, therapy, social work, etc. Such changing dynamics is an important topic for future research. Specifically, what does it mean for all sectors of the population to be utilizing psychology, especially if psychology helps maintain the status quo? Related to this issue is the next topic: do professions such as psychology and social work support or challenge the existing system?

Supporting the System versus Challenging the System

Among professionals who help survivors of sexual assault and abuse, there seems to be ambivalence around the true goals of "the helping professions" whether it be psychology, social work, crisis work, or therapy. Jeanette, a social worker, directly commented on this ambivalence by discussing how people in the therapy profession are often "taught to help people to adapt to bad situations instead of looking at structural issues that create those bad situations. . . ." Furthermore, she commented on what the *true* mission of social work is compared to how it is actually perceived, even by fellow social

workers. That is, social work was designed to look at how structural factors influence individuals but more and more, Jeanette sees social work as becoming individualized and non-structural. In addition, Erin discussed how social work helps perpetuate the system as it is. As stated in the findings, she said, “. . .we perpetuate the system the way it is. If we didn’t have people who come to see us, we would be out of business, which is hard to think about.” While the social workers, counselors, and therapists I interviewed work within the system, they are also able to critique the individualistic model. Their critiques can be an important basis for social change. The idea of such critiques being used as a basis for social change relate well to Marcuse’s argument that therapy cannot adequately serve as a medium of social change because it would be subversive to itself.

Indeed, the ideology of individualism in advanced industrial society has impacted the roles that psychology, therapy, and social work play in society today. The discussions generated in the interviews point to the realization that psychology, therapy, and counseling are part of the establishment; therefore, part of the status quo. As forwarded by critical theory, advanced industrial society is set up in such a way that those who do not reap its benefits are constrained and limited both in living within the structure and moving beyond it. Therefore, when the question, “Choices for survivors of sexual assault and abuse?” is posed, it becomes clear that options are clearly limited. As discussed by Marcuse (1964), advanced, industrial society has been particularly effective at containing social change. Since psychology, therapy, and the like help maintain the status quo, they, too, play an integral role how the system is and is not challenged by those who do not benefit from it. More specifically, as discussed in the findings, psychology is utilized and is more accepted by women who are also disproportionately

impacted by sexual assault and abuse. Therefore, based on both theory and research, we can attempt to make the connection between sexual assault and abuse with how psychology and other therapeutic mediums are used to perpetuate women's oppression.

The Maintenance of the Ideologies of Individualism and Psychology

Directly related to the above argument that psychology is used to maintain and perpetuate women's oppression is the argument that the ideologies of individualism and psychology are maintained through how society perceives sexual assault and abuse. Put simply, myths, stereotypes, and misconceptions that surround sexual assault and abuse are maintained through these ideologies. As already discussed, traditional ideas of blaming the victim (e.g., "she should have been walking with friends instead of being alone"; "she shouldn't have been drinking; and "she shouldn't have been alone with him") still persist despite evidence that clearly points to the realities of sexual assault and abuse that contradict such ideas. For example, as reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Greenfeld 1997), most perpetrators are acquaintances or family members of the victim/survivor. In addition, women and children are encouraged to buy safety products like mace and whistles, which perpetuate the idea that the majority of attacks are stranger assaults. Sexual assault myths and victim-blaming are closely connected to the ideologies of psychology and individualism because it is believed that individuals must take responsibility for sexual assaults. When analyzed as a social problem though, it becomes clear that these ideologies play a significant role.

More specifically, when critically analyzing sexual assault prevention and elimination the ideologies of psychology and individualism are clearly present. Even among educated professionals, notions of prevention still focus on individuals, whether it be individual women or individual men. For instance, one social worker spoke about prevention in terms of what adolescent boys should be doing. She said, "I think rape prevention occurs with young, adolescent males. Rape prevention does not occur with females. . .you really need to be talking with teenage men and boys about their sexuality, their sexual urges, [and] how they act upon them. . ." Such thinking is also present in the sexual assault and abuse literature where it is believed it is either women's responsibility to deal with sexual assault (the "take charge" perspective) or men's responsibility (this thinking based on the fact that the vast majority of sexual assaults are committed by men). By focusing on individuals or even specific groups of individuals in society, Mill's notion of psychologism becomes the reality of how sexual assault and abuse is treated and perceived. Rather than seeing sexual assault and abuse as a social problem (e.g., as a macro-structural issue), it is seen as a personal trouble of sorts.

Related, notions of prevention and elimination were often discussed in psychological terms. For instance, respondents said that sexual assault and abuse could be prevented if: people better understood relationship dynamics, they could talk about their feelings, people felt good about themselves, and if people learned how to take care of themselves. Others also spoke about awareness and self-esteem. Comments such as these are of particular interest. If those in the helping professions (the ones who work most closely with survivors of sexual assault and abuse) are making comments such as

these, we can begin to see how the ideologies of individualism and psychology affect whether or not survivors see sexual assault as a social problem or an individual issue.

Finally, education and the legal system were often mentioned with regards to prevention and elimination of sexual assault and abuse. Respondents discussed educational programs for communities and schools, better laws to deal with perpetrators and to protect victims/survivors, and political involvement like writing legislators and lobbying. Both respondents and the literature spoke about these issues. While it is important to look at these more structural issues in terms of prevention, there still needs to be a critical analysis of how these institutions uphold the ideology of individualism. If these institutions support and perpetuate ideology, it is critical to analyze if sexual assault and abuse can truly be prevented or eliminated by working within these institutions.

The Role of Self-Help Books in Maintaining Ideology

When analyzing the ideologies of individualism and psychology, it is important to consider self-help books. That is, it can be argued that self-help books for survivors of sexual assault and abuse are actually harmful because they perpetuate and maintain the ideologies of psychology and individualism that uphold the status quo. Here, it is useful to refer back to Crawford's critical discussion of the self-help movement. He argues that "the ideology of individual responsibility threatens to incorporate and use the self-help movement for its own purposes. . .because the movement has focused on individual behavior and only rarely addressed the social and physical environment. . .it lends itself to the purposes of victim-blaming" (Crawford 1990: 394). As already discussed above,

such victim-blaming is used to help perpetuate the ideologies of individualism and psychology in such a way that survivors of sexual assault and abuse are negatively affected. For instance, in *Recovery: How To Survive Sexual Assault For Women, Men, Teenagers, and Their Families* (Benedict 1994), the author provides multiple lists that discuss what people should do when being attacked or to prevent attacks. For example, in one of Benedict's lists, the following are included: "If you are tired, stoned, or just feel vulnerable, take taxis or use main thoroughfares"; "carry a whistle or shriek alarm"; and learn some simple self-defense techniques" (1994). Such advice, which is common in self-help books for survivors, focuses on the individual rather than looking at how sexual assault and abuse is a social problem. Also, much of the advice in self-help books assumes that all people have the same access to resources.

Without a doubt, self-help books also perpetuate the ideology of psychology. As discussed by Bellah, et al. (1996), the therapeutic model is full of the language of psychology which focuses on symptoms, identification as a victim, and the subconscious. As already discussed in the literature review, this language of psychology confines both survivors and perpetrators as it looks for individualized explanations for actions and behaviors. Related, respondents spoke about how the language of psychology, which is found in many self-help books for survivors of sexual assault and abuse, can make almost any individual think she/he has been sexually abused. Some respondents discussed how self-helps can be dangerous. For instance, Jeanette related some self-help books to the *DSM IV*, the reference book used by psychologist and psychiatrists to diagnose mental illness: "if you read through those definitions of mental illness, you can find yourself in any of those definitions."

Hooks provides an important critique of self-help books in her book, *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* (1993). She is concerned with the lack of recognition of the importance of social structure in impacting women's mental health.

Hooks argues the following:

[*Women Who Love Too Much*] like many other self-help books for women, disturbed me because it denied that patriarchy is institutionalized. It made it seem that women could change everything in our lives by sheer acts of personal will. It did not even suggest that we need to organize politically to change society in conjunction with our efforts to transform ourselves.
(1993: 4)

In response to what self-help books lack, hooks calls for the development of communities of resistance. Moreover, such resistance can and should incorporate both struggles for personal self-recovery as well as collective organization to bring about broad-based social change (hooks 1993). Indeed, self-helps lack acknowledgment of the role of social change. Rather, these books focus on individual's behavior and psychology. By doing so, the status quo and the ideologies of psychology and individualism are clearly maintained and perpetuated.

ALTERNATIVES FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND ABUSE

Ideally, one day we can eliminate sexual assault and abuse so we do not have to seek alternatives for those who have been affected by it. As nicely stated by Renee, the task is twofold. We must:

continue to offer compassionate services to survivors of assault (rehabilitative focus), the real solution is to push for universal human rights. Gender discrimination occurs on individual (conscious/unconscious) and institutional levels. Sexual assault will continue as long as the condition exists. Why not start with the economic and political system? Socialist-feminists have been telling us for a long time that capitalist-patriarchy is killing us. Maybe that's the answer.

In order to move toward the *real* solution Renee is talking about, we must have a reduced reliance on psychology and individualism. Until sexual assault and abuse is recognized as a social problem and treated as such, the ideologies of psychology and individualism will have full rein over the way in which sexual assault and abuse is dealt.

In addition, feminists, as well as others, cannot be afraid to address a topic that has relied on its secrecy. Sexual assault and abuse continues to be a tabooed topic. It continues to be a tabooed topic precisely because it has not been analyzed as relating to other social problems within our social structure. Several respondents related the secrecy surrounding sexual assault and abuse to the overall repression that exists about anything sexual or related to the body. For example, one respondent pointed to the fact that only recently has society openly encouraged women to get regular paper smears and mammograms.

In order to move ahead, as Hartsock (1979) and Kelly (1988) argue, we must be committed to fundamentally transforming our social relations. That is, eliminating sexual assault and abuse requires broad, structural change. As forwarded by Joan, coalitions and organizing by *both* men and women are necessary in order to create social change. Although sexual assault and abuse has been gendered (i.e. survivors/victims are

overwhelmingly female and perpetrators are almost entirely males), the solution does not have to be. More directly, we cannot rely on a gendered solution to sexual assault and abuse.

If we follow the vision of socialist-feminists, we must forge knowledge with action in order to organize large-scale collectivities in order to radically transform the social structure. The goal is not to focus solely on eliminating sexual assault and abuse from society, but recognizing that capitalist-patriarchy is responsible. Scholars have focused on making reforms within institutions such as education and the workplace. While such solutions are important aspects of progress, it must be recognized that these institutions, as microcosms of broader society, mirror existing social relations. Changing the laws, building rape crisis centers, and education are beginnings but they are not the solution to eliminating sexual assault.

Since capitalism is inherently full of contradictions, the same conditions that cause sexual oppression and exploitation can also be catalysts for social change. For instance, the social workers, therapists, and counselors whom I interviewed, while working within the system, are clearly aware of the system's faults and problems. Their critique and awareness could become a basis for broad social change. While the respondents may call for and work for reforms within the educational system, the possibility to collectively work toward social change against sexual exploitation exists because of the awareness of the problems inherent to the system.

Here, broader social change means fundamentally altering the social structure and social relations – a revolution to end oppression and exploitation. In conceptualizing the move toward revolution, Hartsock (1979) contends that there is no blueprint for

revolution. Yet, in order for it to be successful, we must be knowledgeable and organized. It is useful to refer back to Kelly's (1988) discussion of collective resistance where she discusses how out of oppressive social relations and conditions, oppositional consciousness and organized resistance can develop. To re-iterate, Kelly asserts that "individuals must see that the cause of their personal experiences is oppressive social relations. This understanding must be accompanied by a belief that social change is both necessary and possible" (1988: 228). Thus, a revolution is the only true alternative for survivors of sexual assault and abuse—a revolution led by everyone who is oppressed and exploited by capitalist-patriarchy.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Because sexual assault and abuse has been the domain mainly of psychologists and social psychologists, it is imperative that future research and theorizing focus on how sexual assault is deeply embedded in all aspects of the social structure: economic, legal/political, and social. The fact that we live in a capitalist, patriarchal society cannot be separated from an analysis of sexual assault and abuse. Future scholarship must fully acknowledge how past and present research and theory continue to focus on individual survivors/victims and perpetrators rather than broader social forces. We cannot continue to have academic journal articles and books tell women what they should be doing to stop rape. In addition, it is useful to tell individual men they are the ones responsible for ending rape in our society.

Of particular importance, the topic of sexual assault, like most social problems, has differentially impacted children and women, people of color, people with disabilities, and those who are disadvantaged economically. While some have argued (both scholars and those I interviewed) that anyone can be sexually assaulted or abused, there are clear indications that this is not so. For instance, Schwendinger and Schewendinger (1983) provide empirical evidence that as both victims/survivors and perpetrators, the poor are over-represented. In addition, the most recently published report by the U.S. Department of Justice states that "Per capita rates of rape/sexual assault were found to be the highest among residents age 16 to 19, low-income residents, and urban residents" (Greenfeld 1997: 2). Even if we accept the argument that sexual assault and abuse cuts across class and race lines, it is evident that based on the structure of opportunity and inequality, the choices for marginalized groups are even more limited than for those who have access to various types of resources. Therefore, future research must continue to analyze the structural patterns of sexual assault as well as how sexual assault and abuse differentially impacts various groups.

Finally, the next step in researching and analyzing sexual assault and abuse is to put it within a critical, structural analysis of race and racial inequality. Multiracial feminism has made important strides in recognizing the importance of analyses centered on race, as well as other systems of inequality. As explained by Baca Zinn and Dill, this framework "is an attempt to go beyond a mere recognition of diversity and difference among women to examine structures of domination, *specifically the importance of race in understanding the social construction of gender*" (1997: 23) [emphasis added]. What is both unique and important about multi-racial feminism is that it looks at multiple

sources of gender inequality whereby race is analyzed as a power system that is part of intertwined systems of oppression (Lorber 1998). As feminist sociology progresses, it is increasingly filling the gaps left by other feminist theories. Thus, it is important to recognize the importance of utilizing frameworks such as multiracial feminism to analyze sexual assault and abuse in the future.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Below are the most commonly asked and/or pertinent interview questions I asked during the in-depth interviews I conducted with sexual assault/abuse counselors, therapists, and social workers.

- How do you self-identify with your social class? Race/ethnicity?
- How old are you?
- Are you currently a student? If so, what are your educational goals?
- Do you work? If so, what do you do?
- Could you tell me something about your background—something about your education, where you grew up, something about your family?
- How long have you been a therapist or counselor?
- What are your professional qualifications as a therapist or counselor?
- Why did you choose to be a counselor? What are your personal motivations for choosing your field?
- Are you presently a therapist or counselor?
- Could you tell me about your experiences with counseling? For instance, what issues most affect the people whom you see?
- How long have you been seeing people?
- Who do you think is most likely to use therapy or counseling?
- Do you see or have seen people of color, women, children, etc.?
- What do you think are the goals of therapy?
- Do you think there is equal access to therapy? Why or why not?
- Are there other (alternative) models that could be used besides therapy to help people who have been sexually assaulted and abused?
- How useful do you think self-help books and resources are?
- Do you think sexual assault is a social problem? Can you elaborate on your thoughts about this?
- Why do you think so many people, particularly women, have been sexually assaulted and abused?
- How is therapy not useful for people who have been sexually assaulted and abused?
- Psychology is based on helping the individual. If we consider sexual assault and abuse to be a social problem, why do you think survivors are so apt to turn to psychology and individual therapy?
- What are your notions of rape prevention? How can people prevent sexual assault?
- What should/can be done for people who have been sexually assaulted and abused?
- What should/can be done for people who commit sexual assault and abuse?
- What are your notions about social action against rape and sexual assault? What can and should be done?

- What do you think about the anti-date-rape movement as mainly a campus/university issue; that is, there is not much discussion or mobilization around this issue outside of campuses and universities.
- Why do you think people and groups outside of the universities and campuses are not as organized around the anti-date-rape movement?
- What are the most practical ways to create social change with regards to sexual assault and abuse?
- What types of political activities, collective action, and/or social movements would be helpful in eliminating sexual assault and abuse?
- Can we eliminate sexual assault and abuse in our society?
- How do you tie individual experiences with the larger social structure?
- What impact does the social structure have on sexual assault and abuse? That is, how is social structure related to sexual assault and abuse?

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