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## Overview—Scope of the Problem

by Del Martin\*

A problem—in this case, wife battering—becomes significant and of public importance when it can be proved that it affects millions of people. Consequently, many of us have been forced to play the numbers game in order to make the public aware that wife abuse is, indeed, a very serious social problem. Accurately determining the incidence of wife beating, of course, is nigh unto impossible—not only because obvious sources of statistics (police, courts, doctors, social workers, and mental health professionals) do not keep such records, but also because of differences in defining the problem.

The police term “domestic disturbance” is not synonymous with “wife beating.” A domestic disturbance may or may not involve actual physical violence. Even agreeing on a definition of “violence” poses a problem. Police seem to think that few domestic disturbances are really violent. They tend to define violence in terms of its effect. In the absence of blood and visible injury, they are apt to discount the wife’s report of her husband’s brutality.

To me, any physical attack by one person upon another is a violent act and an instance of aggression. The law, however, defines violence by the degree of its severity, and social scientists tend to measure violence by the degree of its acceptance. The fact that one-fifth of American adults in a Harris poll approved of slapping one’s spouse on “appropriate” occasions<sup>1</sup> is seen by the latter as “legitimizing” a certain amount of violence.

For our purposes marital violence will be described as “an act carried out with the intention of, or perceived intention of, physically injuring one’s spouse.” The act can include slapping, hitting, punching, kicking, throwing things, beating, using a weapon, choking, pushing, shoving, biting, grabbing, etc. And the cast of characters includes men and women who live together in an intimate relationship, whether or not they are legally married.

I deliberately called my book *Battered Wives*<sup>2</sup> to focus on marriage as the institutional source and setting in which the violence is initiated and carried out. Although many try to avoid its implications, to me marital violence cannot be fully understood without examining the

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<sup>1</sup> Rodney Stark and James McEvoy III, “Middle-Class Violence,” *Psychology Today* (November 1970), pp. 30-31.

<sup>2</sup> Del Martin, *Battered Wives* (San Francisco: Glide Publications, 1976).

institution of marriage itself as the context in which the violence takes place. The power relationship between husband and wife is culturally determined, and its imperatives necessarily affect other man-woman relationships despite attempts to avoid or escape their legalization by the marriage ceremony.

Another problem in gathering statistics on wife beating, besides the fact that it is one of the most unreported crimes, is that language in police reports and research studies often describes assailants and victims in nonspecific terms. Gender is omitted. Although many have rebelled against feminist attempts to de-sex the language, suddenly, for some reason, it becomes the vogue when discussing domestic violence. The Kansas City, Missouri, police study of 1971-72 refers to assailants and victims without specifying either their sex or marital role.<sup>3</sup> And social scientists speak of "family" violence and "intrafamily" murder. It should be made clear that what we are discussing is the battering of women by the men they love and live with.

A national survey of 2,143 couples, randomly selected and demographically representative, was conducted in 1976 by Murray Straus, Suzanne Steinmetz, and Richard Gelles to measure the magnitude of marital violence. From the results Straus estimates that, of the approximately 47 million couples living together in the United States in 1975, over 1.7 million had faced a husband or wife wielding a knife or gun, well over 2 million had been beaten up by their spouse, and another 2.5 million had engaged in high-risk injury violence.<sup>4</sup> The findings showed a high rate of violence for wives, but the data did not indicate what proportion of violent acts committed by wives were in self-defense. Husbands showed a higher rate for the most dangerous and injurious forms of violence (beating or using a knife or gun) and for the repetitiveness of their brutal acts.<sup>5</sup>

Wives reportedly resort to violence mostly as a protective reaction—in self-defense or out of fear. Fighting back, they say, often results in even more severe beatings. Lenore Walker, who has isolated a "three-phase cycle" theory of marital violence, says that many wives, when they recognize the inevitability of an acute incident, may deliberately provoke it in order to get it over with and move on to the "calm, loving respite" stage that follows.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Northeast Patrol Division Task Force, Kansas City Police Department, "Conflict Management: Analysis/Resolution" (original draft).

<sup>4</sup> Murray Straus, "Normative and Behavioral Aspects of Violence Between Spouses: Preliminary Data on a Nationally Representative USA Sample" (paper (VA-2), Department of Sociology, University of New Hampshire, Mar. 15, 1977), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Lenore Walker, "The Battered Women Syndrome Revisited: Psycho-social Theories" (paper presented at the American Psychological Association annual meeting, San Francisco, Calif., Aug. 29, 1977), p. 5.

The practice of wife beating, it should also be noted, crosses all boundaries of economic class, race, national origin, or educational background. It happens in the ghetto, in working class neighborhoods, in middle class homes, and in the wealthiest counties in our Nation.<sup>7</sup> The often held assumption that violence occurs more frequently among lower class families could be due to variations in reporting. Having fewer resources and less privacy, these families are more apt to call police or seek the services of other public agencies. Middle or upper class wives and husbands have greater access to private support services and thus are less apt to come to the attention of authorities.<sup>8</sup>

Women who are treated for physical injuries or for severe depression are often victims who go undetected, since they do not volunteer the information out of fear or shame, and few doctors ask. One psychiatrist, who claimed that he had never encountered a case of marital violence in his practice, was challenged to ask his next 10 female clients. Eight out of the 10 proved to be victims. Elaine Hilberman and Kit Munson, in their study of 60 women drawn from a rural health clinic, found that the history of physical abuse was known by the clinician in only 4 of the 60 cases, although most of the women and their children had received ongoing medical care at the clinic.<sup>9</sup>

Bruce Rounsaville of the Yale University School of Medicine's department of psychiatry, states:

The victims of wife-battering have received little focused attention from medical and mental health professionals. Battered women present to medical facilities with vague complaints, traumatic injuries, or trouble with the children. Most often the busy practitioner deals with the presenting complaint at face value and makes few inquiries about the origin of the complaint.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, many doctors take the position that the problem of the battered woman is out of the realm of their concern. A doctor who treats a battered woman's wounds and hands her back to her assailant may be exercising a kind of professional detachment. But he is also passing up what may be society's only contact with a lonely woman who needs help.<sup>11</sup>

The danger in our inability to identify victims is that violence unchecked often leads to murder. The Kansas City police study, referred to earlier, showed that 40 percent of the homicides in that city

<sup>7</sup> Martin, pp. 11-15, 54-55.

<sup>8</sup> Robert N. Whitehurst, "Violence in Husband-Wife Interaction," in *Violence in the Family*, eds. Suzanne K. Steinmetz and Murray A. Straus (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1975), pp. 78-79.

<sup>9</sup> Elaine Hilberman and Kit Munson, "Sixty Battered Women: A Preliminary Report" (paper presented at American Psychiatric Association meeting, Toronto, Canada, May 5, 1977), p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce J. Rounsaville, "Battered Wives: Very Common but Difficult to Reach" (paper presented at the American Psychiatric Association meeting, Toronto, Canada, 1977).

<sup>11</sup> Martin, p. 128.

in 1971 were cases of spouse killing spouse. In 85 percent of these cases the police had been called at least once prior to the homicide, and in almost 50 percent of these cases police had been summoned five or more times within a 2-year period before the murder occurred.

The husband in domestic homicides is almost as often the victim as the wife.<sup>12</sup> Since a woman does not have the physical strength of a man, she may—out of desperation to put a stop to the beating—pick up the nearest object and let her assailant/husband have it. The object may turn out to be a lethal weapon. In the last year the news media have reported a sizeable number of trials in which the wife murdered her husband after years of being subjected to constant beatings.

The sheer number of violent male-female relationships indicates that we would be foolhardy to regard domestic violence solely in terms of the personal interaction between the two parties involved. To understand why it is happening we must also examine the social imperatives that influence husband-wife behavior. This includes a review of the history of marriage, prevailing attitudes towards women, sex role stereotyping, the expectations versus the realities of marriage, and the response of helping agencies in times of crisis. All of these factors have a powerful influence on what we usually think of as a “private” and very “personal” relationship.

Wife beating is not a new phenomenon. It has been going on for centuries. Frederick Engels placed its beginning with the emergence of the first monogamous pairing relationship and the patriarchal social and economic system.<sup>13</sup> Prior to the pairing marriage, women, as the only discernible parents, were held in high esteem among the clans. The new arrangement came about because women sought protection from what Susan Brownmiller called “open season on rape”<sup>14</sup> and because men wanted to authenticate and guarantee their identity and rights as fathers. But the cost to women for their husbands’ “protection” from other male predators came high. The new “father right” brought about the complete subjugation of one sex by the other. Although polygamy and infidelity remained men’s privileges, the strictest fidelity was demanded of women, who were regarded as their husbands’ property. Women were confined to certain parts of the home, isolated, guarded, and restricted from public activity. A woman was duty-bound to marry, satisfy her husband’s lust, bear his children, and tend to his household. If a woman showed any signs of a will of her own, the husband was expected by both church and state to chastise her for her transgressions.

<sup>12</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports* (1973).

<sup>13</sup> Frederick Engels, *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State* (Moscow: Progress, 1948), p. 42.

<sup>14</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), p. 16.

Women were burned at the stake under many pretexts, including scolding and nagging, refusing to have intercourse, miscarrying (even though the miscarriage was caused by a kick or a blow from the husband), and for sodomy (even though the husband who committed it was forgiven).<sup>15</sup> Too numerous to mention here are the worldwide accounts of the inhumane and barbarous treatment of women in the name of the law, religion, and social custom—treatment that clearly indicates how deeply entrenched sexual inequality, at the least, and woman-hating, at the extreme, is in human history.

Peter the Great instituted some reforms in Russia during the late 17th century, ordering that women be invited to public gatherings and that individual consent be required before marriage. He also gave married women the right to full ownership and control over their own property.<sup>16</sup> In England the law was changed in the 1800s to allow a wife who had been habitually beaten by her husband to the point of “endangering her life” to separate from him, though not to divorce him. British husbands were also prohibited from selling a wife into prostitution if she was under 16 years of age and from keeping a wife under lock and key.<sup>17</sup>

In our own country a husband was permitted to beat his wife so long as he did not use a switch any bigger around than his thumb.<sup>18</sup> In 1874 the North Carolina Supreme Court nullified the husband’s right to chastise his wife “under any circumstances.” But the court’s ruling became ambiguous when it added, “If no permanent injury has been inflicted, nor malice, cruelty, nor dangerous violence shown by the husband, it is better to draw the curtain, shut out the public gaze, and leave the parties to forgive and forget.”<sup>19</sup>

The latter qualifying statement has become the basis of the American legal system. Laws against assault and battery are rarely invoked against husbands because the criminal justice system (which is male dominated) and victims of domestic violence (who are primarily female) differ in their interpretations of “serious injury,” “malice,” “cruelty,” and “danger.” The police, mental health practitioners, emergency room attendants, prosecutors, and judges deal with isolated cases and the interrelationship of a particular couple. In this light it is not surprising that they tend to view wife abuse as a personal dispute in which one or both individuals are to blame. This attitude, coupled with the concept of family as the basic unit of society which must be preserved at all cost, fosters the belief that mediation or professional

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Gould Davis, *The First Sex* (New York: Putnam, 1971), p. 255.

<sup>16</sup> William Mandel, *Soviet Women* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1975), pp. 13–14.

<sup>17</sup> Davis, p. 311.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Calvert, “Criminal and Civil Liability in Husband-Wife Assaults,” in *Violence in the Family*, p. 89.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

counseling will restore peace and harmony and thus enforcement of laws against assault and battery will serve no useful purpose.

Police often say that they are called out of "vindictiveness"—that the caller tries to use the police as a counterpunch and get an authority figure to take her side in an argument. Police officers feel they have neither the time, competence, nor social mandate to deal with domestic disputes. Consequently, such calls receive a low priority. In a sample of 283 calls over a 2-month period in Vancouver, B.C., Donald Dutton and Bruce Levens found that a car was dispatched 53.8 percent of the time for man-woman fights. In only 10 percent of the cases did these calls receive priority one attention. If the caller mentioned violence, the probability of a car being dispatched went up to 58 percent. If weapons were involved, the probability went up to 67 percent; this was true also if alcohol was mentioned. If violence and children were involved, a car was dispatched 73 percent of the time. The mention of these variables improved the chances of immediate police response—a decision which was not based on the availability of police personnel or vehicles, the researchers said, because the dispatch rate did not fluctuate with the time of day or the shift.<sup>20</sup>

The arrest rate in this study was about 7 percent.<sup>21</sup> The reluctance of police to make arrests is a common complaint of the wife/victim. When a woman calls the police, it is an act of desperation. She expects immediate response and protection. At most the officer, if and when he does show up, may get the husband to leave the home for a cooling off period. Police, of course, can only make felony arrests on "probable cause" and must witness the offense in order to make an arrest for assault and battery misdemeanors.

The onus then is on the victim to make a citizen's arrest; but she may not be aware of that right, and police, because of their reluctance to interfere with marital disputes, may not inform her of her right to make the arrest herself. Additionally, she may be in a state of trauma (having just been beaten) and incapable of making that decision or fearful of reprisal if she is the one to initiate criminal proceedings against her husband. Should she be insistent upon her right to have her assailant arrested, the wife/victim is likely to be discouraged from doing so by the police.

At the training academy in Michigan officers are told to avoid arrests and to appeal to the woman's vanity. They are told to explain the whole procedure of obtaining a warrant, that she is going to have to sign it and appear in court and should consider the loss of time and court costs. Police are also told to explain that victims usually change

<sup>20</sup> Donald Dutton, "Domestic Dispute Intervention by Police," in *Report on United Way Symposium on Family Violence*, (Vancouver, B.C., March 1977), p. III-23.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. III-24.

their minds before going to court and perhaps she really ought to postpone any decision about making an arrest.<sup>22</sup>

The training bulletin of the Oakland, California, Police Department warns of the danger to the officer if he arrests the husband, who is apt to turn on him to save face in front of his family. The bulletin also states that when no "serious" crime has been committed but one of the parties demands arrest, the officer should explain the ramifications (like loss of wages and bail procedure) and encourage the parties to reason together.<sup>23</sup> This policy has made the Oakland Police Department the defendant in a suit brought in Federal court by four battered women on the grounds that the nonarrest policy is a denial of their right to equal protection under the law and a breach of the duty of police to make arrests. A similar suit is pending before the Manhattan supreme court not only against the New York Police Department, but also the clerk and probation employees of the family court. This suit was brought by 12 battered women, and 59 more have filed affidavits—a clear indication that many victims would follow through on their complaints if the criminal justice system were more responsive and less obstructive in its procedures.

One incident cited in the complaint against the New York police shows clearly that even when an officer witnesses the crime and is thus authorized to make the arrest himself, he may refuse to do so. According to the complaint, the neighbors called the police and when they arrived the fight was still going on. The officers had to pry the man's fingers from around his wife's neck. The neighbors shouted, "Arrest him! He's going to kill her." But the officers shrugged, saying they could not interfere in a domestic fight, and left.

In recent years family crisis intervention training for police has been highly touted as the means and mode of handling domestic violence cases. The concept, or at least the words, sound impressive, but the effectiveness solutionwise is questionable. The officers are taught how to break up the fight, calm down the parties involved, mediate the dispute, and possibly make some referrals for counseling. While a reduction in repeat calls is attributed to this training, it may be that victims do not call back because they feel it would be useless to do so.

Most police crisis intervention training guides refer to family disputes and rarely make direct references to wife beating. I did manage to find this single example under the heading "Illustrations of Dispute Situations Involving the Use of Authority, Negotiation and Counseling Approaches": A married couple had an argument resulting

<sup>22</sup> Sue Eisenberg and Patricia Micklow, "The Assaulted Wife: 'Catch 22' Revisited" (unpublished, University of Michigan, 1974), p. 112.

<sup>23</sup> City of Oakland Police Services, "Techniques of Dispute Intervention," Training Bulletin III-J (June 19, 1975), pp. 2-3.

in the wife's nose being broken by her husband. The officer asked the wife for her story, if she wanted her husband arrested, if she still loved her husband, and where he could find the husband. After locating the husband, the officer informed him that his wife was in pain, and asked him if he loved his wife and what had happened. He then brought the two together and asked them to talk and apologize to each other. He reminded them that their child would never forget incidents like the present one, and suggested that if one spouse began to argue, the other should remember her or his responsibilities and leave. He said that if they both acted like children there would be no one to govern their child. Reminding them that they were lucky this time—the husband had no charges brought against him; the wife had only a broken nose—the officer left."<sup>24</sup>

The benevolent non-arrest policy might be satisfactory in some instances if the husband/assailant responded to leniency and kindness by resolving never to resort to violence again. Unfortunately the man is more apt to see this leniency as reinforcement for his abusive behavior. He quickly learns that lesser injuries, like a broken nose, are tolerated by the system and the probability of his being taken into custody is remote. In the Oakland case against the police, one complainant stated that her husband repeatedly handed her the phone and dared her to call the police, knowing full well he was safe from arrest and prosecution.

Equally disconcerting is this reference in the training guide published by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration of the U.S. Department of Justice: "Although the prevailing American culture tolerates a minimum of physical force as a reaction to anger, such physical force is the common response among certain ethnic groups. Therefore, whether or not the use of such force can be considered serious depends in part on the cultural background of the people using it."<sup>25</sup> The guide goes on to say "In some cultures the dominance of the father is especially noticeable. In Puerto Rican families, for example, the need to assert masculinity ('machismo') is very important to males and taught to them early. . . ."<sup>26</sup>

Such an approach possibly reflects some racist assumptions. But, if indeed, some communities *are* more tolerant of wife beating, that situation is part of the problem and should not obviate enforcement of the law. The values and perceptions that become the excuse for doing nothing are those of male culture, which is, by and large, shared by

<sup>24</sup> Morton Bard and Joseph Zacker, *The Police and Interpersonal Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: Police Foundation, 1976), p. 58.

<sup>25</sup> Morton Bard, *The Function of the Police in Crisis Intervention and Conflict Management* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, 1975), p. 6.9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.10.

male police officers. It does not necessarily reflect the perceptions of nor the acceptance by women who are victims of both the subculture and the dominant culture.

Much of the crisis intervention training is to teach the officers how to protect themselves—and rightfully so. The FBI statistics for 1974 show that one out of five officers killed in the line of duty died trying to break up a family fight.<sup>27</sup> Yet ironically, police still dismiss domestic disturbances as mere “family spats.” If they are dangerous to trained police officers, they must certainly be dangerous to a defenseless woman and her children.

Male prosecutors react in much the same way as the police. District attorneys count stitches and witnesses before deciding if they have a “winning case.” We challenged the district attorney in San Francisco, saying that with more practice in trying wife beating cases, his deputy prosecutors might learn how to win them. A couple of months later I received a copy of a letter addressed to the police chief in which an assistant district attorney praised the way in which the police had handled the investigation which allowed her to win her case.

The odds that a marital violence case will ever reach the courtroom are about 100 to 1, according to Sgt. Barry Whalley of the Oakland Police Department. Deputy Chief James Bannon of the Detroit Police Department said in an address before the American Bar Association in 1975:

The attrition rate in domestic violence cases is unbelievable. In 1972, for instance, there were 4,900 assaults of this kind which had survived the screening process long enough to at least have a warrant prepared and the complainant referred to the assault and battery squad. Through the process of conciliation, complainant harassment, and prosecutor discretion fewer than 300 of these cases were ultimately tried by a court of law. And in most of these the court used the judicial process to conciliate rather than adjudicate.

Once the wife/victim reaches the courtroom she often finds that the judge is no more apt to take her case seriously and deal with it effectively. Judges, when the husband is found guilty, are likely to let him off with a warning, a suspended sentence, probation, or a small fine on his worthless promise that he won't do it again. A classic example was the case in New York City in which a woman brought charges against her former common law husband for beating her savagely on five different occasions within a year and a half. Although she had been beaten so severely that she had been hospitalized on at least two occasions, had lost an eye and part of an ear, her assailant

<sup>27</sup> Robert B. Murphy, Ed McKay, Jeffrey A. Schwartz, and Donald A. Liebman, “Training Patrolmen as Crisis Intervention Instructors” (unpublished), p. 1.

was released each time on his promise to the judge that he would not repeat the offense.<sup>28</sup> The victim, I am told, finally solved the situation herself. She committed suicide.

Although studies show that domestic violence, when it becomes an established pattern, often escalates and sometimes leads to homicide, police and others in the helping professions persist in viewing the violence as resulting from an argument or communications breakdown—a dispute that can be mediated or a problem that can be solved by teaching the woman a few communication tools. The danger is all too often overlooked. Well, not entirely. There are social scientists who are speculating on what makes the difference between the man who merely wounds his wife and the man who kills her.<sup>29</sup> One researcher sees the murderer as a man less experienced in violence who can go too far when he loses control. Another says that alcohol could affect his judgment of the degree of battering a woman could take without dying.

Most research into the cause of marital violence concentrates on external influences on the husband's behavior. He was under stress, he lost his job, he drank too much, his mother had an extramarital affair. Whatever the rationalization, it serves to excuse the husband's behavior and remove him from responsibility for his own acts. The reality of the wife's condition is not seen in its totality, but only in terms of what she may have said or done to provoke her husband's anger. But triggering events (she wore her hair in a pony tail, she prepared a casserole instead of fresh meat for dinner, she said she did not like the pattern on the wallpaper) are trivial in the extreme and do not warrant a violent response. As one woman expressed it, "No one has to 'provoke' a wife beater. He will strike out when he's ready and for whatever reason he has at the moment. I may be his excuse, but I have never been the reason."<sup>30</sup> Clinical approaches that attempt to change the wife's behavior in order to change the husband's behavior only further victimize her.

Social service agencies are no more effective than the criminal justice system in offering battered wives help and protection. They are not open at night or on weekends when the violence usually occurs. Emergency housing for women with children, until recently, was virtually nonexistent. A 1973 survey in Los Angeles showed that there were 4,000 beds available for men, but only 30 for women with children, and none for mothers with sons over 4 years of age.<sup>31</sup> This is an indication of how outdated our social service system is. The

<sup>28</sup> Adolph W. Hart, "Thomas Promised That He Would," *New York Times*, June 10, 1975.

<sup>29</sup> J. J. Gayford, "Battered Wives," *Medical Science Law*, vol. 15, no. 4 (1975), pp. 243-44.

<sup>30</sup> Martin, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Trude Fisher, with Marion P. Winston, "The Grim Plight of Destitute Mothers Who Need Free Rooms on a Stormy Night," *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 12, 1973, part II, p. 7.

assumption is that men may be transient and in need of shelter, but that women always have a home—with their husbands or their parents.

A woman who flees from a violent home in the middle of the night is usually without funds and has only the clothes on her back. If she seeks welfare, she may be turned down because her husband's salary disqualifies her. Unless she has filed for divorce or has established separate maintenance, technically she is neither homeless nor destitute. In St. Louis, Missouri, I am told, it takes from 4 to 6 weeks for the first welfare check to come, during which time the woman must have established a permanent residence, been cleared by a social worker who makes a home visit, and provided the department of social services with proof of birth and social security numbers for herself and her children. To rent a place the woman needs money, and rent vouchers are difficult to obtain. If she is lucky enough to get one, however, she finds that most landlords will not accept rent vouchers. They want cash on the line. Without a place to go or means of support until she can become independent, the wife/victim is often forced to return to her violent husband.

A study of 100 battered wives in England revealed that 89 had fled their homes, 36 having fled 4 or more times, and some having left 10 or even 20 times.<sup>32</sup> They had returned home because: (1) they were found by their husbands who either threatened them with further abuse or promised to reform, or (2) none of the agencies they turned to for help could offer them protection or a roof over their heads. Also, many of the women married right out of high school, and had no job experience or marketable skills.

If a woman does manage to get away and obtains a divorce, she still has no guarantee of safety. Some ex-husbands continue to stalk and hunt down "their" women for years after a divorce, forcing their victims to move and change jobs continually. Despite the danger, judges continue to grant violent fathers visitation rights, and thus the opportunity to further intimidate their ex-wives.

When a woman concludes that her husband is not going to change and that she has no alternative but to leave him, she is forced to face the cold, hard facts of the poverty of her existence. How is she going to support herself and her children? Even if she had worked before marrying, her lack of recent references counts against her. In all likelihood she will have to take a menial job at low pay to reestablish herself as a member of the work force. Discrimination against women in employment often precludes her from advancement in position and salary.

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<sup>32</sup> J. J. Gayford, "Wife Battering: A Preliminary Survey of 100 Cases," *British Medical Journal* (Jan. 25, 1975), pp. 194-97.

It is often said that a wife is one man away from welfare. Despite myths to the contrary, studies show that alimony is rarely awarded and most fathers do not even make child support payments as ordered by the court. In the first year after divorce, 62 percent fail to comply fully, and 42 percent do not even make a single payment. By the 10th year, 79 percent are in total noncompliance.<sup>33</sup> Without child support or child care, the divorced working mother may find that her "take home pay" is less than the minimal subsistence offered by welfare.

Instead of asking the all too frequent question, "Why does a woman stay in a violent marriage?" we should be asking, "What is it about marriage and society that keeps a woman captive in a violent marriage?" I have already alluded to historical attitudes toward wives as property of their husbands, to acceptance of lesser violence, like slapping, as "legitimate," and to public agency policy which offers victims no alternative. But the basic problem, as I see it, is the institution of marriage itself and the way in which women and men are socialized to act out dominant-submissive roles that in and of themselves invite abuse. Husband/assailants and wife/victims are merely the actors in the script that society has written for them.

Battered women are often perceived as somehow provoking their husbands to violence in order to fulfill a basic female masochistic need. Such theories evolve from the patriarchal structure of our society, in which the dominant group (men) defines acceptable roles for subordinates (women). The superior role of men is maintained by definition of "masculinity" as strong, active, rational, aggressive, and authoritarian and "femininity" as submissive, passive, dependent, weak, and masochistic. These roles are incorporated into the culture by its philosophy, science, social and psychological theory, morality, and law. The inequality of the roles is obscured by calling them "natural" or "normal" and by training women to dependency upon men in order to maintain the nuclear family as the basic unit of society. Women have been socialized to believe that their greatest achievement in life is marriage and motherhood and that failure of the marriage is the wife's personal failure. If the woman adopts the characteristics and role assigned to her, adapts to her husband's personality and submerges her own, she is called "normal" and "feminine." This was emphasized in the Broverman study in which professional therapists were asked to describe typical male and female behavior and to indicate what is normal adult behavior (sex unspecified). Not surprisingly, they described male and female behavior in stereotypical

<sup>33</sup> Lenore J. Weitzman, "Legal Regulations of Marriage: Tradition and Change," *California Law Review*, vol. 62, no. 4 (July-September 1974), p. 1195.

terms and equated the normal adult with accepted male characteristics.<sup>34</sup> Ruth Pancoast and Lynda Weston point out that men experience no dichotomy between adulthood and manhood because society says the two are identical. But the woman who tries to be a healthy adult does so at the expense of being "feminine," and a woman who adjusts to her "normal" role does so at the expense of being a healthy adult. Society has then constructed a "no-win" situation for women.<sup>35</sup>

Andrea Dworkin says,

There are two definitions of woman. There is the good woman. She is a victim. There is the bad woman. She must be destroyed. The good woman must be possessed. . . . The bad woman must be punished, and if she is punished enough, she will become good. . . . The posture of victimization, the passivity of the victim demands abuse. Women strive for passivity, because women want to be good. The abuse evoked by that passivity convinces women that they are bad. The bad need to be punished, destroyed, so that they can become good. Even a woman who strives conscientiously for passivity sometimes does something. That she acts at all provokes abuse.<sup>36</sup>

In other words, the woman who is "feminine" (passive) becomes a doormat that invites abuse, and the woman who is active ("masculine") needs to be put in her place. Whatever she does or does not do, she invites abuse.

The male, on the other hand, Dworkin says, is always a good man. "He is the patriarch, and as such he is beyond moral law and human decency." All malice originates with the woman, and "men are always good, no matter what they do, or do not do."<sup>37</sup>

By cultural definition and societal role, the good man is in control. When he loses control, or perceives that he is losing control, he is expected to regain and maintain it by whatever means necessary. The husband's authority in the home is reinforced by all of society's institutions: by religious marriage vows that commit the wife to love, honor and *obey* her husband or suffer the consequences, by the Internal Revenue Service that designates the husband as the head of household, by the courts that impose certain roles (the husband as breadwinner and provider and the wife as his domestic servant), by the schools that foster differential potential and achievement according to the gender of the students.

<sup>34</sup> I. K. Broverman, D. M. Broverman, R. Clarkson, P. Rosenkrantz, and S. Vogel, "Sex Role Stereotypes and Clinical Judgments of Mental Health," *Journal of Consulting Psychiatry* (1964).

<sup>35</sup> Ruth Dreiblatt Pancoast and Lynda Martin Weston, "Feminist Psycho-therapy: A Method for Fighting Social Control of Women" (position paper of Feminist Counseling Collective, Washington, D.C., February 1974), p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974), p. 48.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Though we may try to deny it, the feudal system of marriage of early times is still existent today. Aaron Rutledge says, "Despite the age of jets and satellites, some people try to get by on a horse-and-buggy marriage. . . . Individuals who would not tolerate a feudal society still insist upon an owner-tenant type of family structure."<sup>38</sup> The master-serf type of family is characterized by the husband/father as head of household who, as the breadwinner, gives his wife and children what they need, as he defines their needs. This "stay-in-your-place" family depends upon each member following preconceived roles and respecting the authority of the husband/father, who metes out punishment when the wife or children get out of line.

In early English common law husband and wife were considered one person: "The very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection, and cover she performs everything."<sup>39</sup> A 1944 Florida Supreme Court decision verified that a woman's legal status in the 20th century is no different: "A woman's responsibilities and faculties remain intact from age of maturity until she finds her mate; whereupon incompetency seizes her and she needs protection in an extreme degree. Upon the advent of widowhood she is reinstated with all her capabilities which had been dormant during marriage, only to lose them again upon remarriage."<sup>40</sup>

In many States the husband has exclusive authority over "community" property, including all the wife's earnings, and can dissipate the family assets without the wife's prior knowledge or consent. The wife is at the mercy of her husband, whom the State presumes to be a benevolent despot. If he decides to give her no money and refuses to buy her clothing, she has no legal recourse. In 1953 a Nebraska court ruled: "The living standards of a family are a matter of concern to the household. . . . As long as the home is maintained and the parties are living as husband and wife it may be said that the husband is legally supporting his wife and the purpose of the marriage relation is being carried out."<sup>41</sup> The 1962 ruling of a Connecticut court was even more explicit about the wife's obligation to her husband "to be his helpmeet, to love and care for him in sickness, and to labor faithfully to advance his interests." She must also perform "her household and domestic duties. . . without compensation thereof. A husband is entitled to benefit of his wife's industry and economy."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Aaron L. Rutledge, "The Feudal System of Marriage," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 25, 1977.

<sup>39</sup> W. Blackstone, *Commentaries* (1765), p. 442.

<sup>40</sup> Karen De Crow, *Sexist Justice* (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 169.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 164-65.

<sup>42</sup> Weitzman, p. 1187.

In marriage the woman loses her personhood and is identified in terms of her husband. With few exceptions, she takes her husband's name and his domicile. Her labor is a duty to be performed without value or compensation. Since the wages her husband earns belong to *him*, she is totally dependent upon his whim or generosity—a situation that leaves the wife vulnerable to abuse.

Needless to say, the expectations women have about marriage differ significantly from the reality of the marriage contract, which Lenore Weitzman points out is unlike most contracts. Its provisions are unwritten, its penalties unspecified, and its terms are unknown to the contracting parties, who are not allowed any options to its terms.<sup>43</sup> A study conducted by Hernan San Martin in Chile on the reasons women and men marry showed that the women's chief motive stemmed from the desire to get out from under parental control and *be free*. They also married because of the consequences of not marrying. The reasons men gave for marrying were more in keeping with patriarchal imperatives: that marriage should incorporate fatherhood and provide the man with a "companion" to do the housework, take care of his sexual needs, and look after the children.<sup>44</sup>

Adherence to so-called "natural" and stereotypical sex roles and their enforcement by legal and social sanctions obscures the fact that patriarchal society depends upon the subjugation and control of women and uses marriage as a routine means of enforcement. Dworkin defines the nuclear family as the nuclear structure of sexist culture.<sup>45</sup> And it is my contention that the husband-over-wife power relationship must be realized as economically, not psychologically or biologically, based if we are to find any longlasting solutions to marital violence. Manifestations of psychological warfare and violence are reactions to the economic system that socializes men to be powerful and women to be dependent.

Reverend Donald Morlan, who appeared on a panel on "Why Do Men Batter?" at a conference on battered women sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee in New York City, stated that separating out "battering men" from so-called "normal men" is to disregard the fact that virtually *all* men are angry at women and that a batterer is acting out an extreme of what most men feel, at least part of the time. He posed the question "Why are men angry at women?" to quite a few people and found them changing the question to "Why are we all angry?" or "Why are women angry at men?" Some asserted that men are angry at women only because women are so angry at men:

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1170.

<sup>44</sup> Hernan San Martin, "Machismo: Latin America's Myth-Cult of Male Supremacy," *Unesco Courier* (March 1975), p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> Dworkin, p. 46.

that male anger is only defensive or responsive, but not an original anger. Everyone seemed to dodge the issue of men's anger towards women, which Morlan attributes to the restriction of men's emotional life and intimacy only with women, socialization of boys to repress emotion and exercise power, and to men's sense of failure when they find they cannot live up to society's image of masculinity. Morlan said, "Given the few number of men who really get to exercise power and the fact that we are all socialized to be powerful, there are a lot of us walking around who are like pent-up volcanoes." He concluded:

Our present economic system requires its quota of failures to keep us all obediently in our particular assembly line working hard and grumbling little. . . .Men will be angry and find their anger channeled against women as long as all of us shackle our physical and emotional lives to an economic system which values impersonal profits more than whole persons.<sup>46</sup>

What can be done to alter this collision course between men and women? Family crisis intervention training, victim-witness advocacy programs, emergency hotlines, shelters for battered women and their children, and couples therapy are all services that have recently been developed to deal with the immediate crisis. The shelter network, established by grassroots women's groups with its "underground railway" by which battered women can be transported from one State to another, affords the only real protection to the victim. The other measures may stop a particular incident and postpone or reduce further violence, but do not prevent its recurrence. As such they are stop-gap, band-aid measures.

The fact remains that wife beating is a crime. Because of pressure from the women's movement, which has made violent crimes against women a top priority issue, considerable attention has been given to strengthening the law and its enforcement. Many States have dropped the requirement that a woman must be legally married and have filed for divorce or separation in order to qualify for an order of protection. Some States have made provisions for removal of the assailant from the home. In California violation of a court order is itself a crime, and arrest can be made, bypassing the civil procedure which is cumbersome and time consuming.

In Oregon the law has been changed to make arrest mandatory, unless the victim objects, if the officer has probable cause to believe that an assault has occurred between spouses or that one such person has placed the other in fear of imminent serious bodily injury. Accordingly, the Portland Police Bureau is to ask the victim, out of

<sup>46</sup> Donald W. Morlan, "Why Are Men Angry at Women?" The Battered Women Conference Report, American Friends Service Committee (New York, 1977), pp. 16-17.

the assailant's presence, whether the victim objects to having the suspect taken into custody. If the victim objects, the officer is told that he may or may not take the assailant into custody at his discretion.<sup>47</sup>

The International Association of Chiefs of Police, which had previously supported the family crisis intervention policy of nonarrest, issued training keys numbers 245 and 246 in 1976 reiterating that wife beating should be treated as a crime to be investigated and reported. The training keys also stated that unless the police do their job, despite protests from prosecutors and judges about crowded court calendars, nothing will change. In Ohio a bill has been introduced to make a second offense of wife battering a felony rather than a misdemeanor so that police can make arrests for "probable cause," relieving the victim from responsibility for initiating criminal proceedings.

An innovative judge in Hammond, Indiana, has named the wife/victim her husband's probation officer. The rationale is that the man won't hesitate to beat up his wife, but he might think twice about beating up an officer of the court. If the husband should beat his wife anyway, she may call the judge at any time of the day, at work or at home, and he will issue a warrant for his arrest.<sup>48</sup>

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a "first offender" is required to participate in a treatment program or face prosecution. The district attorney warns him that although the incident will be held confidential, the charge will also be held open. A recurrence of the violence results in *two* charges of battery, arrest, and advice to the court that the man had already been given informal probation. Additionally, when a case is set for trial and the woman is under continuing threat of violence, the sheriff's department will provide her with 24-hour protection.<sup>49</sup>

This program seems to be one of the most effective deterrents for first offenders and does take into account necessary safety precautions. The problem has been that most batterers do not seek help voluntarily. Those that have agreed to marital counseling because their wives have threatened to leave them for good tend to reform while undergoing therapy, only to return to their former habits of violent outburst when the sessions end or their wives return home. Long-lasting effects are doubtful if therapy is mandated rather than accepted freely. It is therefore incumbent upon those administering the Milwaukee program to monitor the therapeutic process.

I am reminded of the Framingham Court Clinic in Massachusetts to which 37 men charged by their wives with assault and battery from 1957 to 1962 were referred for psychiatric evaluation and treatment.

<sup>47</sup> Portland Police Bureau, Training Bulletin, vol. XIII, no. 19 (Oct. 5, 1977).

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence Van Gelder, "Giving Battered Wives a Little Legal Clout," *New York Times*, Nov. 13, 1976.

<sup>49</sup> "Needs of Battered Women Receive Special Attention from Milwaukee DA's Office," *Response*, vol. 1, no. 3 (February 1977), pp. 1-2.

The men resisted the psychiatric interviews and tended to deny that any problems warranting outside help existed in their marriages. The doctors took the easy way out and counseled their wives instead.<sup>50</sup>

In Minnesota a bill was passed allocating \$600,000 for use in counteracting domestic violence: \$100,000 for a displaced homemakers program, \$50,000 for public education about violence in the home, and the balance for refuges for battered women and their children. And in West Virginia welfare regulations were recently modified to allow immediate emergency funds for battered women.

Some see therapy rather than law as a solution to marital violence. But psychotherapy is largely based upon patriarchal assumptions. Dorothy Tennov believes that the bulk of women "patients" are not mentally ill, but are afflicted rather with what she calls "the women's situation" in our society.<sup>51</sup> Wife beating, as we have seen, is a traditional practice that has been exacerbated by traditional attitudes and institutions. Traditional therapy is steeped in sex role stereotyping, and reconciliation or "rehabilitation of the family" is seen as the primary goal. Domestic violence statistics indicate, however, that separation or divorce may better serve as a safety valve. Moreover, so far as wife/victims are concerned it is becoming more and more apparent that what they really need is advocacy: first of all, someone to listen nonjudgmentally; secondly, assurance and support; third, someone to help them through the bureaucratic maze of the legal and social services.

Marya Grambs, co-founder of La Casa de las Madres, the shelter for battered women in San Francisco, says that one-to-one therapy is not appropriate treatment for victims. She also claims that intervention by a male therapist, whose authority in the therapeutic process duplicates the power relationship of husband and wife, continues the cycle of the woman's dependency on men. What is needed, she says, is to help the victim make connections with other women and reduce her isolation. Peer group counseling, sharing with other women who have suffered the same experience, is most effective. Some of the best therapy, Grambs says, takes place in the shelter while doing dishes or during midnight raps. The function of the workers at La Casa, who call themselves advocates, is to help the women take power over their lives—to become strong, self-confident, and independent.

To make her point at a conference on marital violence at Stanford University, Grambs directed these questions to the women in the audience:

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<sup>50</sup> John E. Snell, Richard J. Rosenwald, and Ames Robey, "The Wifebeater's Wife," *Archives of General Psychiatry*, vol. 11 (August 1964), pp. 107-112.

<sup>51</sup> Dorothy Tennov, *Psychotherapy: The Hazardous Cure* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976), p. xiii.

Have you ever backed down from an argument with a man because you felt intimidated by him? Have you ever stayed in a relationship longer than you should have? Was it because of a sense of failure on your part? Or a feeling of responsibility for the other person? Did you stay because of the children? Were you afraid of loneliness? Were you fearful of your ability to make it in the big, bad world? Get in touch with those feelings.

At the same conference Delores Jiminez, clinical psychologist with the California Department of Health, agreed that battered women do not need to be in therapy.

What they need is a friend or neighbor, someone who listens and cares. . . .Most people are insensitive to the emotional trauma the woman is going through. . . .and underestimate the amount of fear involved. Fear immobilizes and often restricts the woman from reaching out for help.

Women have been developing their own support systems for victims based upon the concept of women helping women. Besides hotlines, response to the immediate crisis, emergency shelters, legal aid, and other referrals, these women provide consciousness raising, assertiveness training, self-defense, and feminist therapy—if indeed therapy is called for. The support group works to explore what part is the woman's responsibility and what is imposed on her by society. The wife/victim becomes aware of the options open to her, knowing that whatever she chooses she will have the support of the other women.

What we also need are counterpart programs conducted by men, who are liberated enough to have no need to prove their manhood, to work with battering husbands in much the same way as women are helping wife/victims. If men would stop making jokes about wife beating, if they would let batterers know in no uncertain terms that violence is not acceptable male behavior, if men would offer husband/offenders peer support and programs to help them change their destructive patterns—we would move a lot faster towards ending marital violence.

Barry Shapiro of the East Bay Men's Center in Berkeley, California, says that his and other men's groups affiliated with the National Conference on Men and Masculinity are considering the formation of such programs. The Men's Center in Portland, Oregon, is already offering counseling services to batterers. It is hoped that these men's groups will help to break down the impossible image of masculinity which dooms men to feelings of frustration and rage, and puts women in the role of their projection targets. Men need to learn that it is all right to be vulnerable if they are ever going to be comfortable with their own unique mixtures of strength and weakness.

But coping with man-woman anger and hostility as it erupts is not enough. At the same time we need to deal with problems inherent in the institution of marriage itself and the economic and social structure of the society that creates, harbors, and festers the hostility between the sexes. Monogamous marriage—or serial monogamy, at any rate—is still the accepted and expected relationship. While the divorce rate today is very high, the remarriage rate is also high.

Historically, marriage has four main functions: (1) reproduction and guarantee of the father right; (2) economic provision for family members by the husband/father, who is designated head of household; (3) care of children and household maintenance by the wife/mother in return for bed and board; and (4) psychological security and social acceptance within society so long as the marriage remains intact. Survival needs, the need for a recognized position and status in society, and stigmatization of unmarried women have been compelling reasons for keeping battered wives silenced and locked in violent marriages.

The real problem with existing marriage and divorce law, according to Weitzman, is that it favors "structure, stability and security to the exclusion of flexibility, change and individual freedom."<sup>52</sup> Roles which the courts presently demand of husbands and wives are rigid, archaic, and arbitrary. They stem from material considerations and disregard personal ones. The acting out of these roles (authoritarian husband and servile wife) and the imbalance of power they represent are largely responsible for marital conflict. Balance of power has long been a principle of international relations to prevent strong industrialized nations from taking over or victimizing weaker underdeveloped countries and to stave off war. By analogy, creating a balance of power—both economic and social—between marital partners could be the means of preventing one sex from taking advantage of the other and preventing the violence this imbalance provokes.

Seen in this light, marriage would be a partnership—an egalitarian relationship—in which both husband and wife have equal ownership and share management and control of the income, assets, and liabilities. To effect such a partnership marriage laws would have to be refined to allow the individuals involved to determine and agree upon their own roles and living arrangements according to their own particular needs and lifestyle. These agreements should not be the business of the State; the State's only interest should be to adjudicate disagreements.

"A man and woman could decide, in advance, on the duration and terms of their relationship, as well as conditions for its dissolution," Weitzman points out. "They could specify their respective rights and

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<sup>52</sup> Weitzman, p. 1277.

obligations for the financial aspects of marriage (support, living expenses, property, debts, etc.) as well as those for their more personal relations (such as responsibility for birth control, the division of household tasks, child care responsibilities). Further, they could make some decisions before entering the relationship while reserving others for later (such as domicile changes). They could also specify the process of making a later decision such as an agreement to use an arbitrator in the event of disputes."<sup>53</sup>

Whether these be contracts within or in lieu of marriage, the couple could decide if they wanted to take turns working full time, or they could both work part time, allowing them to share necessary household chores and caring for the children. As Morlan says, "We need to stop being just Mothered and start being Parented from the moment of birth. All of us need a bisexual emotional foundation."<sup>54</sup>

One standard provision, without any option, which I would like to see written into every marriage contract is the restraining order. It should be built into the contract so that it is clearly understood by both parties at the outset that violence will not be tolerated and the restraining order will take effect immediately upon the first violation.

Allowing couples to draw up their own marriage contracts and to exercise options, of course, requires many changes: ratification of the equal rights amendment; passage of the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Act, based on the principle that employment should be available to *all* adults able and willing to work at fair rates of compensation; enforcement of "equal pay for equal work" laws and antidiscrimination employment policies; legislation to create part-time work, flexible work schedules, and shared jobs in civil service and education of the private sector to understand the advantages and value of such work flexibility; and provisions for on-the-job or community child care centers so that single-parent heads of household can earn a living wage and extricate themselves from the welfare system.

The more traditional marriage—having one partner remain in the home and take care of the household, while the other works—should not be precluded as an option. But provisions should be made to protect the homemaker economically in the event of dissolution by social security coverage, divorce insurance, or such programs as the Displaced Homemakers Act, which provides for job counseling, training, and placement for the woman reentering the work force. Child support orders should have cost-of-living escalation clauses and should be backed up by Federal legislation enabling Social Security and Internal Revenue Service to locate missing spouses who renege on their payments.

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1249.

<sup>54</sup> Morlan, "Why Are Men Angry at Women?"

Because laws relating to marriage, family, and divorce differ so greatly from State to State, there have been many suggestions that what we need is a Federal Uniform Family Law Act. In light of the prevalence of domestic violence, perhaps the time has come to consider seriously such a move in order to protect the homemaker both physically and economically.

These may sound like radical changes, but they really are not. Some of them are already in process or are under consideration. Although individual marriage contracts have yet to be legalized, a few couples are already drawing up their own contracts. In some instances the courts have honored some of the provisions of such contracts, the chief objection being the provisions that apply in the event of dissolution. Legislation to alter inequities in our economy has already been introduced, and some attention is being paid to revisions of family law. What we are faced with is cultural lag and the resistance of bureaucratic institutions to social change.

The long range task, of course, is that of education and the elimination of sexism. The British Select Committee on Violence in Marriage, appointed by the House of Commons in its 1974-75 session, made the following recommendation:

Much more serious attention should be given within our school (and further education) system to the problems of domestic conflict. It may be that traditional domestic science, which has been amplified in recent years by more realistic sexual education, should now further develop to include study of roles of the partners in marriage, and their relationship with their children. We would particularly like to see formal instruction about the law surrounding family life, especially that relating to marriage, and instruction given about the value and use of social services."<sup>55</sup>

Family life classes are conducted in our own country in secondary schools when it is too late—after sexist patterns of behavior have already been firmly established. Tests given to children in kindergarten by Harvard psychologist Marcia Guttentag and a research team revealed that by the age of 5 most children are ripe old sexists. Children of all social classes and economic backgrounds held to the stereotypes of which jobs were for men and which for women, though the boys were more restricted in their opinions of the capabilities of women. This was true whether the boys had working or nonworking mothers. The strongest influences in shaping sexist attitudes, the researchers felt, were television and their peers. Efforts to broaden the children's views of sex roles were more successful with the girls than the boys. The girls were consistently more ready to accept the ideas

<sup>55</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1975), p. ix.

that women could enter a wide variety of jobs, and combine work and family. Boys saw that men have more power and that with power they could have their own way.<sup>56</sup> Thus it would appear that nonsexist education must begin in preschool years.

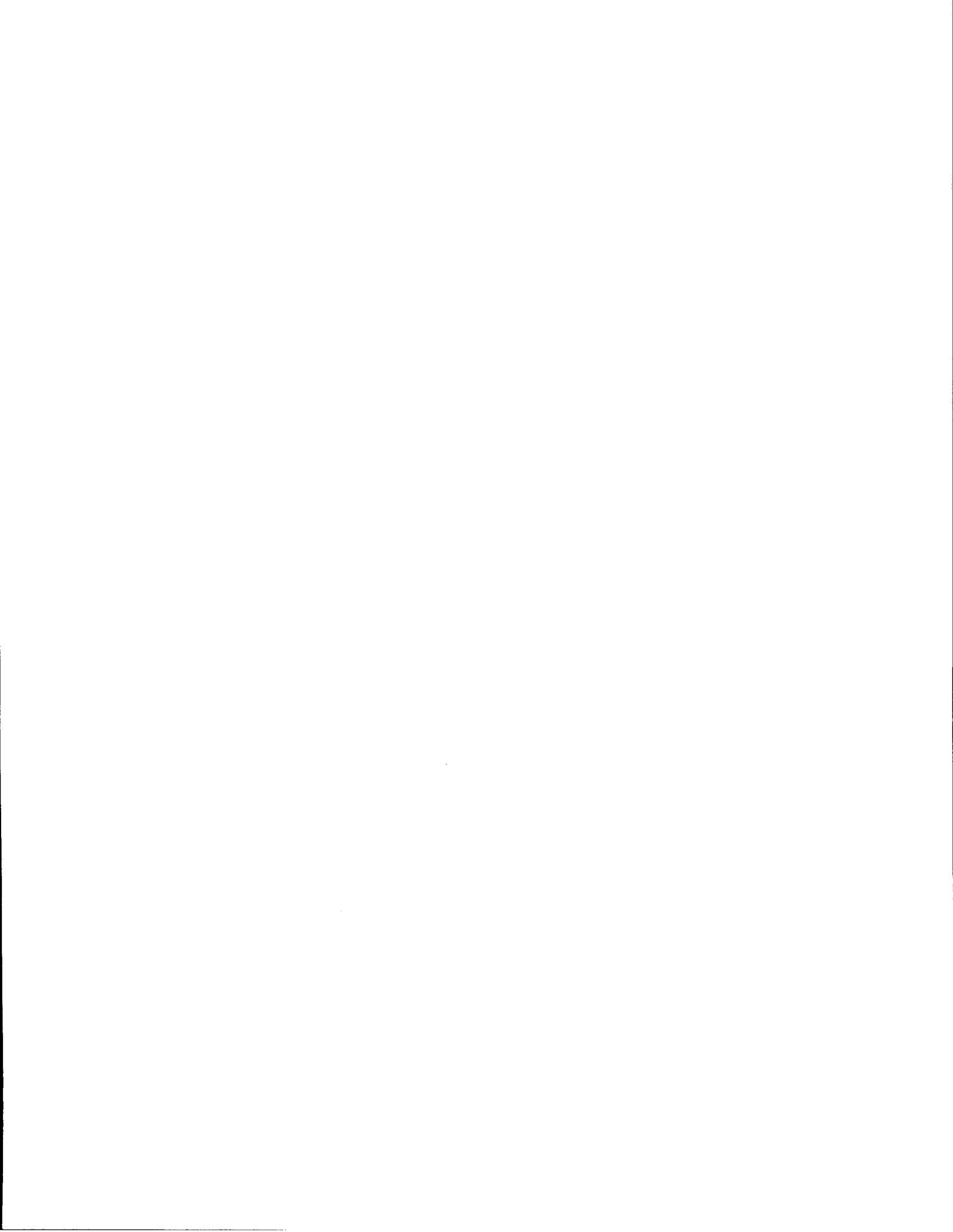
Another study of 15 preschool classrooms by Lisa A. Serbin and K. Donald O'Leary revealed, however, that teachers act and react quite differently with boys and girls, thereby subtly encouraging sex role behavioral patterns.<sup>57</sup> The same is true, of course, with parents who from the beginning treat and handle boy babies quite differently from girl babies.

The role of sexism in the etiology of marital violence must become part of any public education program. Clearly the problem of domestic violence cannot be solved without addressing the economics of marriage or without revolutionary changes in attitudes towards the roles of women and men in our society. Without such changes we cannot ensure women "equal protection under the law," and without such protection wives will remain vulnerable to their husband's abuse.

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<sup>56</sup> Carol Tavis, "It's Tough to Nip Sexism in the Bud," *Psychology Today* (December 1975), pp. 58, 102.

<sup>57</sup> Lisa A. Serbin and K. Daniel O'Leary, "How Nursery Schools Teach Girls to Shut Up," *Psychology Today* (December 1975), pp. 57-58, 102-103.



**END**