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SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL SERVICE: A CASE STUDY OF A FEMINIST BATTERED WOMEN'S SHELTER

by

KATHRYN M. BARKLEY

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of Sociology
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

June 1996

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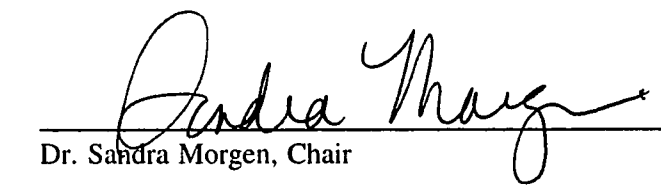

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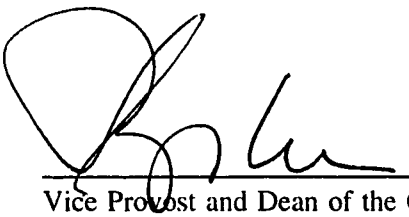

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Title: SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL SERVICE: A CASE STUDY OF A FEMINIST BATTERED WOMEN'S SHELTER

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This study examined how battered women's activists in the United States balance commitments to social change and social service. Analysis was based on in-depth interviews with 23 activists from a feminist battered women's organization in a mid-size Western city. Interviews were analyzed in terms of what they suggested about the structures, practices and politics of feminist shelter organizations.

In terms of structure, activists constantly redefined their organization's orientations to change and service. Activists described recurrent feminist tensions concerning the organization's structures of decision-making, supervision, and pay. Activists also described politically self-conscious changes in the structure of the organization's racial and ethnic diversity.

The study also demonstrated practical ways in which change and service orientations were incorporated in activists' work. Activists identified case

management services, batterer treatment, a possible change in the population of shelter residents and alcohol and drug treatment as current issues that in an ongoing way challenged the boundaries and relationships between service and change.

Finally, analyzing activists' politics also suggested a balance was constantly being renegotiated. While a majority of activists referred primarily to women's empowerment in describing their politics, several activists of color drew from broader visions that included emphases on local community networks. Many subjects also described recently expanding community work with state and local councils and a proposed community center. Although those expansions were probably unrelated to the local family and community empowerment described by several subjects of color, a growing emphasis on community change seemed to be replacing a narrow focus on empowering women. Still, the importance of shelters as sanctuaries for feminism was emphasized by all activists. Analysis suggested activists have not "watered down" their feminism, but that the terms of their feminist politics may be changing, particularly in terms of expanding definitions of what is social about a social analysis of violence against women.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As a community educator representing a feminist battered women's shelter, I often use psychological concepts like the "cycle of violence" and "battered women's syndrome" in describing the dynamics of abuse in adult intimate relationships. At the same time, I try to communicate a feminist analysis of battering, to underscore that abuse is overwhelmingly used by men towards women, that the causes are rooted in social conditions, and that solutions lie not in finding individual cures for a "syndrome," but in changing the social and material conditions that create "battered women." On the one hand, I say that we can help battered women by understanding what happens emotionally when confronted with and surviving an abusive husband, boyfriend, or partner; on the other, I emphasize the need to go beyond individual psychology to look at how social conditions create and maintain violence against women.

The dual roles in which I find myself as a community educator, part psychology instructor, part social movement advocate, reflect the larger dual roles of shelters in society; they are both social service and social change organizations. As social service organizations, shelters provide countless services for victims, or survivors, of violence: safe shelter, advocacy, and counseling, to name a few.[1] As

[1]I will use the terms victim and survivor interchangeably throughout this study. Although the battered women's movement has politicized the term survivor to

social change organizations, shelters have changed and continue to challenge social norms around domestic violence; offering an alternative, safe space for creating new ideas, impacting the institutional response of courts and police, and educating in many different settings (i.e., schools, churches, and workplaces) about rights and responsibilities in intimate relationships.

Both the social service and social change aspects of shelters are firmly rooted in their history. The first battered women's shelters, created mostly by women who had survived batterers, were in part a direct result of women's experiences in the consciousness raising, or "rap," groups of the late 1960s and early 1970s feminist movement. Organized to equally value and encourage each women's participation, consciousness raising groups offered a setting in which survivors of male violence and their supporters could break through the shame and isolation typically experienced by those who had experienced domestic violence. Sharing their very personal experiences in these all-women, egalitarian settings, women realized the very political or social nature of intimate assaults. They also realized what they could do to help: provide safety, support, and options to victims, and try to change the social norms and conditions that make domestic violence so prevalent.

In their early organization and practice, many battered women's shelters reflected the egalitarian and participatory structure of the consciousness raising

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empower women who have been victimized by abusive partners, as one activist recalled a "survivor's" understanding of the word: "She said that she was tired of being labeled a survivor. That we have made this terrible word out of victim, and the truth was that she had been victimized."

groups that preceded them. Like countless other grassroots organizations that emerged during the same period, however, as shelters developed and struggled to survive over time many confronted pressures to move away from their grassroots, liberatory practices and ideas, and toward more mainstream orientations and models of organization. In other words, in order to gain legitimacy and funding, and in order to make their movement more accessible to all women, many shelters confronted the need to de-emphasize the social change aspects of their work and to accentuate their social services. As a result, many shelters adopted more traditional, hierarchical structures, and started placing greater emphasis on the psychological needs of battered women.

As battered women's shelters continue to grow, in number and social influence, a balance between commitments to social change and individual needs continues to be a problematic balancing act. Take, for example, the question of mandatory arrest and prosecution. Academic research has shown that arrest and prosecution do deter future male aggression towards wives and partners, albeit typically only for a short period of time (Sherman & Berk, 1984). Reasoning that this short period of time may be all that a woman needs to escape an abuser and that pressing charges herself is likely to put her in more danger, battered women's organizations have advocated for mandatory arrest laws, and for changes in District Attorneys' practices in following through with prosecution. However, while these changes may have worked to lessen the reported occurrence of battering (the number of times the police are called to "domestic disturbances"), it is not clear

that these laws have necessarily affected the actual occurrence of battering. Assuming that police act on the new mandate, many women--especially women of color or women dependent on abusive men for housing and financial support--may in fact be more reluctant to call for police when in danger. Likewise, what are the implications of using concepts like "battered women's syndrome" and "learned helplessness" to defend individual women who have fought back against abusers? While admissibility of these concepts in court has prevented some women from going to jail for using the only means possible to escape their abusers, the concepts are also medical concepts that label battered women as sick and deviant in the general public mind. Concepts like battered women's syndrome may obscure the fact that most battered women kill only in self-defense and only after turning to a number of different agencies and support services that were supposed to help defend them but failed to do so. What are the implications, especially in the context of a movement that purports to "empower" women, of taking away individual responsibility for arrest and prosecution and putting it into the hands of the state (the community?)? What are the implications of using individual pathology to explain the behavior of women who kill their batterers in self-defense?

The above questions speak to the broader questions of what individual and social changes are necessary to end domestic violence. My own research on the battered women's movement explores those questions in terms of how battered women's activists negotiate commitments to both social change and social service. After working as a volunteer for a shelter while in graduate school, I recognized

several gaps between the existing sociological literature on the battered women's movement and my experience as a movement participant. The first of these gaps concerned the subjective experience of shelter workers. While the diversity of different types of shelters (i.e., feminist, traditional social service) is apparent in academic literature, discussions concerning this kind of tension or conflict within a single shelter are lacking. Another gap concerned the social change and social service roles of shelters in society. Most sociological literature assumes a more or less linear trajectory for shelters, starting as grassroots, egalitarian organizations, emphasizing a social analysis of battering, and becoming more formal, hierarchical organizations, emphasizing a more individualistic or therapeutic approach. My own experience at Abri House, a pseudonym used to protect the confidentiality of the shelter organization in which I worked, suggested that not only was there too much diversity within the shelter to easily label it as either traditional or feminist, its history, as I experienced and studied it, suggested neither grassroots beginnings nor an hierarchical, therapeutic end. Abri House seemed to be becoming both more and less of a typical social service agency.

To address these gaps, I undertook in-depth interviews with 23 activists who worked or had worked with Abri House. Activists interviewed for the study stretched back to the original organizers of the shelter, and included women and one man who had played a variety of roles for the shelter, as counselors, volunteers, directors, and board members. Our discussions included topics such as activists' motivation for work in the battered women's movement, their experience

of work in the shelter organization and specific questions about the priorities of and balance between social change and social service. My general purpose was to explore the ways in which battered women's activists negotiate commitments to social and individual change in ending domestic violence.

Chapter II will describe my goals for the research in more detail, in the context of a review of relevant literature. Chapter III will describe the methods used in my study, and Chapters IV, V, and VI are the basis of my analysis of how Abri House activists negotiated their multiple commitments and agendas. Chapter IV describes issues relevant to the structure of the organization and provides a context in which to understand the views discussed in the following chapters. Chapter V explores some issues specific to individual work with battered women and battering men; Chapter VI describes a changing role for feminist and community politics in defining the work of Abri House activists. My conclusion, Chapter VII, summarizes the research findings, discusses the limitations of some social and political analyses, and suggests directions for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

As a body of literature reviewed later in this chapter will suggest, Abri House is not unique in being an organization that both offers services to people in need and advocates for social change. Therefore, my decision to connect Abri House to sociological literature on social movements, and to label the women and men who work for shelter organizations as activists, is not all that unusual. It is also important to note that my decision to study Abri House from a social movement perspective was also the result of my personal experience with the shelter.

When I started volunteering for Abri House, I was trained by shelter staff in both general domestic violence issues and in the specifics of the volunteer position that I chose. Being a graduate student, one of the most significant things that I remember from the general training is the extent to which the dynamics of abusive intimate relationships were related to broader relationships of unequal power, i.e., sexism, racism, heterosexism. As one activist interviewed for this study recalled, at that time the volunteer coordinator began the general training with the greeting, "welcome to a feminist organization." Having volunteered for other, more social service oriented organizations, always for shorter periods of time than I have worked with Abri House, I am certain that a political understanding of the

organization is part of what motivates my continued participation. My decision to focus exclusively on social movement literature, then, is the result of the political self-consciousness of the staff who trained me, my personal motivation as a researcher and volunteer, and connections already made in the literature.

An Overview of Literature on Social Movements

Until the 1960s, sociologists approached the study of social movements primarily from the perspective of mass society theory. The underlying assumption of mass society theory is that social movement participants are isolated, irrational actors, adrift in modern society. In the 1960s, Smelser's (1962) structural strain theory and relative deprivation theory emerged, challenging that underlying assumption. Since the influence of Smelser and relative deprivation theorists, dominant sociological paradigms have regarded social movement activity as a rational response to understanding socially structured inequality. This perspective has taken for granted that movement participants have good reasons for subjectively experienced grievances. Structural strain and relative deprivation theorists did not, however, adequately answer the question of why social movements emerge when they do; after all, at least some discontent exists among most people at all times. Resource mobilization theory responded to this weakness and grew in popularity during the 1970s (Morris, 1984; Tilly, 1978; Zald & McCarthy, 1979).

Resource mobilization theorists point out that while grievances are important, they are not sufficient to explain the emergence or absence of a social

movement. Rather, a more complete explanation needs to emphasize the actual and potential resources a group can mobilize for its support at a particular historical moment. Since the rise of resource mobilization theory, much sociological literature on social movements has focused on social movements' abilities to attract and keep resources like money, human labor, office and communication facilities, social contacts with influential community members and the mass media, and legitimacy in the public eye. Whereas mass society theory emphasizes the subjective experience of isolation and alienation in creating social movements, resource mobilization theory looks at the way social movements emerge from pre-existing networks of human and social resources.

Resource mobilization theory redirected attention away from the psychological experience of activists and towards the physical and social resources needed for an alternative social movement to gain support and legitimacy and to affect social change. This was a direct reaction to mass society theory and relative deprivation theory's strong emphasis on psychological or subjective motivations for social movement participation. The rise of a social movement, according to resource mobilization theory, is related not to a rise in the psychological experience of discontent, but to a rise in the level of resources needed to sustain a movement. In this sense, the classical distinction between mainstream political activity and social movement participation is weakened. Both are rational attempts to forward collective, political interests; they differ primarily in terms of the amount of resources normally available to each. Mainstream politics reflects the interests of

those with enough power and resources to be regularly included in political processes, social movements reflect the interests of those typically excluded. Since the interests of battered women are not typically reflected in mainstream politics, the political organization of battered women's advocates through shelters and coalitions is best understood from a resource mobilization perspective as a social movement.

Probably because the most recent peak of the women's movement emerged somewhat concurrently with resource mobilization theory, much research on the women's and battered women's movements uses a resource mobilization perspective. Work by Freeman (1975) and by Hole and Levine (1971) are early examples of the women's movement analyzed in terms of a resource mobilization perspective. Much research also exists, and will be discussed later in this chapter, on various organizations of the women's movement (social movement organizations, or SMOs), organizations like battered women's shelters, that work from a resource mobilization perspective (Martin, 1990; Matthews, 1989; Potuchek, 1986; Staggenborg, 1988, 1989). This body of research is largely concerned with the relationship between growing SMOs and the state; whether or not the ideology and structure of movement organizations are "co-opted" as organizations vie for necessary resources, namely legitimacy and funding.

On the other hand, less research exists on the women's and battered women's movement from the perspective of "new" social movement (NSM) theory. In its "new"--or, more accurately, renewed--attention to the subjective motivations for and

experiences of social movement participants, NSM directs attention away from the relationship between movement organizations and the state and has been identified as an "identity-oriented" approach to social movements (Cohen, 1985; Pizzorno, 1978; Touraine, 1985). NSM theorists call into question the basic and common assumption that social movements are unified phenomena. Melucci (1989) points out that social movements are the result of "multiple processes" and "various types of action and elements of structure and motivation" (p. 19). As such, he further explains, the problem becomes "to explain how these elements are held together, and how a `collective actor' is formed and maintained" (p. 20).

Both resource mobilization and NSM theories informed my study of Abri House. Consistent with a resource mobilization approach, I assumed that activists had rational reasons for joining the movement organization of Abri House, and that the organization's relationship to the state--to resources such as legitimacy and funding--was a defining aspect of activists' experiences and successes. On the other hand, my interest in using Abri House as a case study was in part a response to the lack of material on feminist organizations like Abri House from a NSM perspective--from the perspective of how "various types of action and elements of structure and motivation are held together." As Ferree and Martin (1995) point out in their introduction to Feminist Organizations, NSM theorists "have singled out some types of feminist activism for attention (especially the identity-centered small groups) but discounted those organizations that cooperate with the mainstream as

co-opted or inconsequential" (p. 11). Since Abri House does cooperate with the mainstream it was a good place for study from a NSM theory perspective.

The Waves and Branches of Feminism

The women's movement is generally seen as having emerged in the United States in two "waves." The first wave dates back to the 1840s and culminated with the passage of women's suffrage in 1920. The second wave, on which I will focus here since it was during that wave that a battered women's movement became visible, emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. According to the most popular analyses, the re-emergence of feminism, its second wave, was rooted in social and economic changes of the 1950s and 1960s (Buechler, 1990; Daniels, 1991; Ferree & Hess, 1985; Freeman, 1973, 1975). During this time, women's daily lives began increasingly to contradict proscribed norms for women as full-time wives, mothers, and consumers. While ideologically the "Donna Reed" image predominated, in fact large numbers of women were achieving higher levels of education and women's participation in the paid labor force was growing rapidly, bringing more and more women face to face with gender discrimination. Further, the re-emergence of the women's movement is related to women's participation in other peace and justice movements, namely the anti-war, student and civil rights movements, in which they also came face to face with gender discrimination. As activists in these movements, women learned organizational skills and an ideological understanding of justice, both necessary resources for their own movement. Increasing numbers

of women working together, in the paid labor force and in other social movements, created the networks necessary to mobilize support for a women's movement. Social and economic transformations and an ideological understanding of justice made possible success in the political arena, an emphasis of most research that reflects the influence of resource mobilization theory.

A further emphasis of the popular approach to the women's movement is on two different "branches" of feminism that emerged with the second wave. Again, the explanation is typically described in terms of resources. According to Freeman (1984), these two branches were almost two separate movements. An "older branch" emerged first from women's experiences and dissatisfactions with the state commissions formed to address inequalities identified by President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women in 1961. After working several years with the commissions, women recognized the strengths and limits of their work and created organizations like the National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) and Federally Employed Women (FEW). The organizations are generally characterized by a high degree of internal structure and organization and by relatively traditional forms of activism using existing legal, political and media institutions to achieve gains in the overall status of women. In keeping with their hierarchical structures and organization, the ideology of "older branch" organizations is usually identified as pretty reformist or liberal, concerned primarily with women's rights.

A "younger branch," comprised of activists with a slightly younger median age emerged in 1967 and 1968 and is usually associated with a women's liberation ideology. These activists drew resources from their experiences in the social and political movements of the 1960s, specifically the civil rights movement. The politics and sexism they encountered in these movements made many women weary of traditional, male forms of organization and activism. As a result, they formed organizations that avoided formal structure and centralized leadership in their political activism. Working with more experimental forms of political action, the younger branch is probably best known for "rap" or "consciousness raising" (CR) groups--the coming together of women into small groups to share their experiences, creating a recognition that one's personal troubles are political issues. Again consistent with their organization, the "younger branch" feminists are identified as having a more radical political vision than the older branch.

The history of the women's movement as described so far has run into criticism (Taylor, 1989). For example, Rupp and Taylor (1990) challenge the assumption that feminism "died" between the passage of suffrage and the re-emergence of feminism in the late 1960s by pointing to continuity in the women's movement made possible by "social movement abeyance structures," such as Alice Paul's National Women's Party (NWP). Likewise, Ryan (1989, 1992) challenges the standard view in suggesting no such distinct liberal and radical approaches to feminism existed in the early days of the movement's second wave. She stresses instead that early in the movement, most groups "considered themselves part of a

movement going beyond limited conceptions of women's rights" (Ryan, 1992, p. 66). Ryan further points to the need to understand the changing or maturing nature of movement activists and ideals, and the fact that movement ideals were never as clear-cut as they have been represented in much scholarship on the movement. The long-time activists Ryan interviewed refused to be categorized as liberal, radical or socialist and looked instead to similarities among feminists: "As more than one activist put it, `radical feminism is a redundant term'" (p. 88). In sum,

> Distinctiveness in ideological thought constitutes a smaller proportion than similarities. . . . Ideological overlap reveals a core feminist belief system with variance between levels of support in particular applications of thought and practice. For instance, socialist feminism and radical cultural feminism share an orientation for communal living with no hierarchy; socialist and liberal feminists share the activist practice of working in the political arena; and, liberal and radical feminists would overlap to a much greater extent than socialist feminists on a perception of women's higher values. (pp. 89-90)

Research on the women's movement provides valuable insight for any study of a battered women's shelter, or, for that matter, of the battered women's movement. Although the idea of distinct waves and branches of feminism should not be reified, as Ryan (1992) and Rupp and Taylor (1990) suggest, the metaphors are helpful in defining Abri House as a feminist organization. Initially organized in 1975, Abri House was part of the second wave of the women's movement in the United States. Including women with both liberal and radical politics, Abri House dealt with issues central to various branches of a "feminist belief system." Recent research such as Ryan's (1992) suggests that Abri House activists will include both liberal and radical political approaches. The structure of the organization, the

practices engaged in to help individual battered women, and the politics of activists may include elements of both "branches" of feminism described in this section.

Social Movement Organizations

As part of the women's movement, Abri House is one of many "social movement organizations" that endured the peak of the second wave. Another body of research important to studying Abri House is that on the women's health movement, the pro-choice movement, the anti-rape movement and other local feminist movements that created organizations that engaged in political work and often served individual women as well (Ferree & Martin, 1995; Martin, 1990; Matthews, 1989; Morgen, 1986; Potuchek, 1986; Staggenborg, 1988, 1989). This body of literature generally looks at recurrent tensions for feminist organizations as they try to remain true to their feminist ideals and endure as organizations effective in the public political arena. While feminist ideology and the origins of grassroots organizations typically reject professionalism and hierarchy, in order to sustain themselves, feminist organizations also typically need to compete for funding and public legitimacy--pressuring them to conform to at least a certain amount of professionalism and hierarchy. To what extent are innovative feminist activities and ideals co-opted as organizations try to endure and be effective in the public political arena? Or, as Staggenborg (1989) puts the question, what is the relationship between "stability and innovation" in feminist movement organizations?

Most research agrees that feminist organizations do compromise to some extent their ideals and practices as they vie for success in public politics. The relationship between stability and innovation is not simple, however, as activists working in feminist movements are conscious beings who are making choices, shaping the future of their own movements just as funding sources and bureaucrats pressure them to conform to formal, hierarchical models of organization. Morgen (1986), for example, discusses the pressures a feminist health clinic faced in its decision to secure state funding. While the decision initially worked to undermine collective decision making, to emphasize service delivery and de-emphasize political demands, and to erode the clinic's political autonomy, it brought more diversity to the clinic's staff, eventually forcing them to seriously address contradictions in the clinic's ideals and practices. While not unchanged by the decision, the staff at this clinic managed to find creative and effective ways to undermine the constraints posed by state funding. Similarly, Matthews (1989) describes how the typically conservative force of state funding was not entirely constraining for the Los Angeles anti-rape movement. In this case, state funding promoted the expansion of racial and ethnic diversity in the movement.

In sum, the tension between innovation and stability in feminist social movement organizations has been as much a source of complex and creative tension as an obstacle. Martin (1990) has recently rephrased the problem from looking at this tension as a flaw, to looking at it as an inherent part of how alternative social movements become part of mainstream, institutionalized consciousness. Her work

suggests that in defining a feminist organization we look less at the collective structure and ideology of an organization and more towards the actual impact that an organization has on individual women, the women's movement and society as a whole. Likewise, Staggenborg (1989), while acknowledging an inevitable trade-off between innovation and stability, recognizes that feminist organizations can become highly formalized--meeting many of the needs of funding sources and community bureaucrats--without highly centralizing the control of power, therefore remaining consistent with feminist ideals. And finally, Taylor and Whittier (1992) question whether centralized and formal structures are even necessary for organizational stability and survival. They point out that many women's organizations are typically characterized by a mixture of bureaucracy and democracy, a mixture that has provided for continuity in the women's movement--far more continuity than resource mobilization theory would predict.

A final, and most recent, emphasis of research on feminist movement organizations is on the race, class, and cultural politics that shape how feminism is constructed within the context of feminist organizations. As Ferree and Martin (1995) point out, "In the 1990s we are discovering that being a social movement and being an organization with social and political power are not mutually contradictory alternatives but complexly interrelated processes, which we have barely begun to study (p. 17). As a result, their collection, Feminist Organizations, tries to encompass differences in "organizational expressions of feminism" (p. 18). Spalter-Roth and Schreiber (1995), for example, describe a tension between

"claiming to speak for all women while facing limited success in trying to recruit a more diverse membership" (p. 120) as fundamental to Washington D.C.'s women's policy network in the 1980s. Also, Barnett (1995) points out that Black women organizing in south in the 1940s and 1950s used what is commonly considered a feminist process but did not have what is commonly referred to as a feminist identity.

The recent research therefore highlights the importance of politics other than those based in ideals for women's empowerment in feminist organizations. It points to what a majority of this review and a majority of academic literature has taken for granted, that feminist organizations also have specific race, class and cultural identities. Most "feminist organizations" (those typically identified in academic literature as such) were created as white, middle-class organizations. Despite feminist analyses that recognize the ways in which all systems of oppression are interconnected, only a limited amount of existing research that addresses issues of race, ethnicity, class and sexuality as central to feminist organizing.

In the context of literature on various organizations of the women's movement, questions concerning Abri House's structure can be specified: How have Abri House activists incorporated both collective and hierarchical elements in their organization? How did race, ethnic, class or sexual identities inform how they constructed feminism and negotiated their commitments to helping individual women and changing the social circumstances that create battered women?

Question can be defined further in light of literature on the battered women's movement and shelters in particular.

The Battered Women's Movement: Social Change and Social Service, Grassroots Activism and Professionalism

In Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, Linda Gordon (1988) discusses how the first wave of feminism shaped women's responses to family violence during the period from 1880 to 1960. She describes how during the first wave of feminism that constructed femininity with a particular emphasis on the superiority of women's peacefulness and domesticity, husbands who were violent toward wives were not challenged directly. Instead, domestic violence was challenged indirectly through the temperance and social purity campaigns, and through child welfare and protection efforts. In the Women's Christian Temperance Union, for example, "drinking was a veritable code word for male violence. Indeed, putting a temperance frame around criticisms of male behavior allowed feminists to score points obliquely, without attacking marriage or men in general. Male brutality, not male tyranny, was the target" (p. 254). A battered women's movement did not emerge during this period and women seeking protection from brutal husbands were more likely to seek help from social welfare agencies by claiming non-support for their children, a more "legitimate" claim for assistance, than by pointing out the often more severe abuses they themselves experienced. Even this avenue for help began to disappear, however, as the influence of feminism waned in the post-1930s period.

Gordon's (1988) study provides an important back-drop for understanding the direct challenge to male violence posed by feminists of the "second wave" in the 1970s. Unlike their predecessors, feminists of the second wave challenged domestic violence as a form of domination between people of unequal power and as a mechanism of male control; they also exposed as untrue the ideas that victims are to blame for their abuse, that they ask for it or like it, and that men who use violence to control women are unlike the majority of men--or, just a few deviant, depraved individuals (see Martin, 1976 and Pizzey, 1974 for examples of early feminist analyses of battering). Second wave feminists rooted male violence in social relations of unequal power and in the socialization of men and women into "appropriate" masculine and feminine roles.

According to Susan Schechter's (1982) Women and Male Violence, women were able to directly challenge domestic violence largely because of their experiences with women's consciousness raising groups (those typically associated with the younger, more radical branch of second wave feminism). Bringing the notion that the "personal is political" to public consciousness, many women recognized the political nature of deeply personal, individual experiences in the safe context of small, informal "rap" groups. According to Schechter, these groups were central to women's abilities to transform pain and silence about male violence into the anti-rape and battered women's movements. Consciousness raising groups, organized to equally value and encourage each women's participation, encouraged survivors and their supporters in the feminist movement to identify domestic

violence as a feminist political issue. Although the movement was to draw feminists from a variety of different perspectives, consciousness raising groups, particularly in terms of their egalitarian and participatory ideology and organization, were the predecessors to the battered women's movement. Like other organizations of the women's movement discussed in the last section, however, battered women's shelters experienced pressures to move away from their grassroots, liberatory practices and ideology and towards more mainstream orientations and models of organization as the movement grew. Schechter points to tensions caused by diverse ideological orientations, by a dual commitment to social change and social service, and by the presence of grassroots activists and professionals in the movement.

Walker (1990) addresses the same tensions in terms of ideology. Her book, Family Violence and the Women's Movement, describes the process through which the Canadian battered women's movement framed battering as a legitimate, actionable political issue. Using Dorothy Smith's (1987) method of institutional ethnography, Walker (1990) describes the process as one that,

> . . . gathers up the local and particular threads, homogenizes and co-ordinates them, and then allows for the re-application of the definition or diagnosis and standardized solutions to the local level through appropriate divisions of the social-problem apparatus. . . . Feminist concerns about the coercion and abuse of women and children in the context of oppression and inequality are subsumed under theories of a sick society in which individuals can be prosecuted but basically need treatment and cure. (pp. 214-15)

In other words, according to Walker, a feminist analysis that rooted domestic violence in male domination and control was transformed into an analysis that deplores violence as violence but does not hold accountable the social attitudes and

behaviors that trivialize feminism and support male violence. In much the same way that the feminist organizations discussed in the last section experienced pressure to become more hierarchical and formalized, Canadian feminists in this study found their political analysis "watered down" into a social service orientation. Walker (1990) explains,

> To call what happens to women at the hands of their husbands or boy friends an instance of `family violence' or `spouse abuse,' `wife-battering,' `inter-spousal violent episodes' or `domestic disputes' is to enter the actual experience into a set of conceptual practices and bureaucratic processes that do a particular kind of work. (p. 11)

Dobash and Dobash (1992) also address the process by which domestic violence is framed and acted upon by battered women's advocates. Drawing from the work of NSM theorists, Dobash and Dobash describe the development of battered women's movements in the U.S. and Great Britain with specific attention to "how the movement identifies itself, who or what is in opposition to the desired change, and what is at stake or being sought (goals, the totality)" (p. 21). In discussing tensions between grassroots activism and professionalism in the movement, Dobash and Dobash point out that new social movements are characterized by these tensions since they are characterized by the presence of members of a "new class," professional social and cultural workers:

> From the beginning, there has always been some combination of grass roots and professionals in the movement. . . . A characterization of the changing combination reveals that the initial discovery of the problem, the establishment of the primary response of shelters, the pressure for changes in legislation and the explanation of the problem came from activists. While some lawyers, social workers and researchers were involved, it was usually as participants using their respective skills, and not as wage earning employees engaged in their occupational work. As participants in a social

> movement, they used their particular skills to assist in the process of change, including shaping reforms and mounting criticisms within their own professions. This process involved using what they have gained from their own profession to help create new forms of responses and relationships within it, instead of adopting the traditional stance and status of their professions to colonize the new social problem for the purpose of expanding the profession itself. (p. 47)

Resembling Schechter's (1982) analysis, Dobash and Dobash (1992) go on to explain that the role of professionals in the movement changed as battering became recognized as a legitimate social problem and funding became available. In turn, this created a distinction between what they call activist or "visionary" professionals, and "occupational" professionals who have a more conservative influence. They identify tensions between grassroots and professional workers, between social change and social service, as defining issues for the movement:

> At stake for the movement is its identity, membership and purpose: Whether it is a charity helping the poor, a professional service providing therapy for the sick and deviant, or a modernizing, democratic, participatory social movement seeking change for all. (p. 49)

In contrast to Great Britain where,

> . . . the emphasis has been on social and material conditions. . . . [In the U.S.] a cultural orientation of individualism and therapy and powerful and influential therapeutic professions have provided the climate in which the wider orientation to women's consciousness and its social consequences could be shifted within some groups towards greater emphasis on women's psychological characteristics and the perceived need for therapy. . . . By securing mental and emotional strength, as opposed to material and social means, women will be able to escape and will, thereafter, be better equipped emotionally to avoid choosing another such male partner. Thus, the solution to male violence lies in women's transformation through therapy. (p. 74)

Dobash and Dobash (1992) do not suggest that a shift toward psychological solutions has taken place unilaterally and completely. In addition, many scholarly

articles support the idea that the movement's identity and activities are constantly being negotiated and adjusted in light of different goals and ideas within the movement, as well as to the limits to and possibilities for the survival of the movement (Bentzel & York, 1988; L. V. Davis, 1984; N. J. Davis, 1988; Davis & Hagen, 1988; Epstein, Russell, & Silvern, 1988; Ferraro, 1983; Johnson, 1981; Loseke & Cahill, 1984; Rodriguez, 1988a, 1988b; Srinivasan & Davis, 1991; Tice, 1990; Tierney, 1982; Wharton, 1989). In short, while a mainstream, individualistic or therapeutic understanding of the solutions to battering may prevail in the dominant culture, the balance between social service and social change is still being reconstructed and understood by shelter activists.

And, as Reinelt (1995) points out, it is important not to look at things like social service and social change as dichotomous choices. In "Moving onto the Terrain of the State: The Battered Women's Movement and the Politics of Engagement," Reinelt throws new light on old tensions by questioning the reifying dichotomies that typically frame studies of battered women's activism; dichotomies such as feminist/patriarchal, grassroots/professional, collective/hierarchy and confrontation/co-optation. As an alternative, her study provides a framework that can include a mixture of various processes and organizational elements. Consistent with recent work on feminist organizations in general, Reinelt suggests the possible diversity in organizational expressions of feminism, even within the relatively narrow context of the battered women's movement.

Conclusion

Ann Jones (1994) concludes her book, Next time, She'll Be Dead, with suggestions for future research.

> Most helpful of all might be information to tell us how to break our peculiarly American habits of studying individual psyches and tabulating statistics. We must search for structural solutions to structural problems, find social answers to social questions, and think about things like safety and equality and justice as if we were in fact members of a *society*. (p. 232)

As the origins of the battered women's movement suggest, the very existence of shelters and other resources for battered women came out of a "break" with our "peculiarly American habits of studying individual psyches and tabulating statistics" (p. 232)--consciousness raising groups were decidedly not about providing therapy for a few sick women who were not psychologically equipped to ensure their own safety. However, while much literature has addressed how that "break" is currently negotiated by movements and organizations, less addresses how that break is rationalized and subjectively understood by battered women's activists. How that break is negotiated by activists in the context of a recently multi-racial, somewhat traditionally structured feminist organization is the focus for this study.

In reviewing the literature on social movements, women's movements, feminist movement organizations, and the battered women's movement, some recurrent issues for research arise. Namely, the issue of to what extent politics are self-consciously determined by movement activists, and to what extent they are a response to and dependent upon the availability of resources (money, good press,

office space, etc.). More specific questions arise in the context of issues highlighted by academic literature on the battered women's movement. Have battered women's activists traded collective egalitarianism for hierarchical bureaucracy? Have they traded a social analysis of domestic violence for an individual one? Do they identify less with a feminist social change vision than they used to? And finally, what do race politics have to do with all this?

I undertook a case study of Abri House in light of academic research reviewed in this chapter for several reasons. First, while some research exists concerning how a break with individualism--or a consistent focus on social change--is negotiated by the battered women's movement as a whole, less research looks at the various ways it is negotiated by activists within the context of a single organization like Abri House. Second, from what I knew before I started the research, Abri House had never been a collective. Its history threw into doubt the assumption that more conservative aspects of the organization were the result of pressures to conform and compete for legitimacy and funding; Abri House seemed, therefore, an interesting place in which to look at feminist tensions around collectivity and hierarchy. Further, having worked as a volunteer with the shelter for five years, my impression was that the organization was becoming more oriented toward social change, rather than less so, as much of the literature would suggest. Finally, looking to how Abri House had changed in six years since I was working there, the organization seemed to present an opportunity for research into

one of the least well-researched aspects of feminist organizing, becoming a multi-racial organization.

Research on the battered women's movement has described a movement rooted in the egalitarian and supportive nature of consciousness raising groups. Abri House departs from that picture in having never been a collective. And seemingly expanding its role as a racially diverse, social change agency, Abri House is an ideal organization in which to study the relationships between social service and social change described in this literature review. The Methodology chapter will describe exactly how those relationships were studied.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In addition to informing my review of the relevant literature, described in Chapter II, my experience as a movement participant informed my choice of methods. From the perspective of the battered women's movement, for example, Ann Jones (1994) points to the need for domestic violence research that has "application to the real experience of survivors and advocates trying to help real abused women and children" (p.156; and Dobash & Dobash, 1990). Likewise, feminist scholars in academe criticize positivist assumptions about objectivity and neutrality in research and point to the need for research that more accurately reflects the partial and complex nature of diverse social experiences (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Harding, 1986). Both sets of criticism underscore the need for research on the battered women's movement that originates in and is relevant to subjective experiences of activists and survivors.

I used in-depth interviews with Abri House activists in an effort not to "objectify" my and others' experiences with the shelter organization. I wanted my research to reflect the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of human experiences. Using a method that encourages people to talk freely and at length about their experiences helped me to not treat the activists who helped with my research as the objects of study. Further, I hoped that my research would have

some practical application for survivors and activists, and therefore chose a method that would allow activists to define as much as possible the focus for research. The remainder of this chapter will describe theoretical and practical reasons for using Abri House as the context for interviews, how activists were chosen for interviews, the interview process, how interviews were analyzed and organized for discussion, and ethical considerations related to my methods and politics.

The Context of Abri House

Activists interviewed for the study were drawn from the activists who created, had worked in and were currently working in Abri House. I chose a case study of Abri House activists for both practical and theoretical reasons. Before describing those reasons, a note on the usefulness of the case study.

The case study has long been a legitimate analytic approach, viewing the single case as an heuristic device, as manifesting general abstract processes (for an early example, see Znaniecki, 1934). Concerns about the legitimacy of the case study are usually voiced in terms of representativeness; how representative of battered women's activism in general is the activism of Abri House activists? Smith (1987) responds to this concern by explaining that the single case provides a "point of entry" into the larger process; the case study "is not a conceptual or methodological issue, it is a property of social relations" (p. 157). In other words, the single case is meaningful in the context of the social relations in which it is embedded. Mitchell (1983) addresses the same concern by defining the single case

as a "manifestation of some general abstract theoretical principle" (p. 200). The case study uses logical, not enumerative, inference; its strength lies in its power as an analytic tool. As a "point of entry" to the movement as a whole, in-depth interviews with Abri House activists can be used to analyze the battered women's movement. A case study of Abri House activists is useful not because it is representative of a larger population, but because it can be theoretically understood in relation to a wider context--that context defined by literature reviewed in Chapter II.

My most obvious reason for studying Abri House was my role in the organization. Shelter organizations and domestic violence coalitions are typically very careful, for safety reasons and in an effort to influence the nature of research about the movement, about giving outsiders access to their workers. Particularly in light of so much research done by "experts" who have spent little time inside shelters, my experience with the organization was important to gaining access to and legitimacy with the activists interviewed for this study. My "insider" status undoubtedly created trust and rapport for the interview process, and helped me to define relevant interview questions.

Still, my specific role in the organization may have presented problems for my research. Having initially experienced Abri House as part of a political movement, the majority of my work for the organization has been oriented more toward the social change than the social service aspects of the organization. Though I started working in the shelter as an advocate, I have worked mostly in

community education for the organization. My distance from direct service, and the social change emphasis of a lot of the education I provided (i.e., educating police on effective domestic violence interventions) probably made me more sensitive in the research process to social change aspects of the organization. Further, my association with the administrative staff (with whom I mostly worked) may have made me an unlikely confidant for activists, particularly direct service workers, who had negative things to say about the organization and how it was run.[1]

Overall, however, my specific role in the organization probably benefited my research and analysis. As a community educator, I was trained to "speak the same language" as many of the activists I interviewed. At the same time, I was an "outsider" in not being a survivor and in having little recent experience working directly with battered women. As Collins (1986) and other "standpoint" theorists suggest, my dual roles probably offered me the benefits of having enough background to ask relevant questions, and enough distince to question what is taken for granted by "insiders." On the other hand, my social background--being a "straight," white, upper-middle class, "WASP,"--deserves consideration.

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[1]Given that only four women talked very critically about the shelter, it may be that my position negatively affected activists' honest disclosure. On the other hand, given the limits of my sampling method (to be discussed more fully in a later section of the chapter), and an inevitable amount of bias against criticism associated with all social research, the bias against criticizing the organization may simply have been inherent to the voluntary nature of the method--assuming those most happy with their work are more likely to participate in the research--and not the result of my position in the organization.

My own social location is not very different from that of most of the activists interviewed for this study (see next section). Still, particularly in the context of issues concerning race, ethnicity and class described in Chapter II, the fact that I am a member of so many privileged groups compounded the dangers of my posing irrelevant questions and making incorrect interpretations in interviews with women from less privileged groups. Additionally, some activists may have experienced--in the context of so much research that ignores and distorts the experiences of working class women, women of color, lesbian women--a certain amount of legitimate distrust of the research and the researcher. However, race, class, ethnic and cultural differences did not appear to create barriers to smooth communication during any of my interviews. My greatest problems with differences occurred after the interviews were over, in recognizing places where I did not ask all the questions, or follow up on all the points that I should have.[2]

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[2]For example, in trying to analyze and write about "cultural diversity," I realized I had little information on which to base a discussion. Although many activists that I interviewed used the term in describing changes associated with Abri House becoming a more racially diverse staff, when I tried to actually write about cultural diversity I faced significant problems. I had no information about anti-semitism in the organization, even though at the end of their interviews four women identified their ethnic identity as Jewish. One Jewish woman had commented earlier in her interview that while she was at the shelter anti-semitism was "never dealt with as well as it could be," and I did not follow up on the comment. In contrast, three of the five women of color I interviewed made similar comments about racism, in the organization or in general, and I followed up with the expected, "what do you mean?" or something to that effect, in all three cases. Likewise, although four women identified as lesbian at the end of their interviews, I had little information regarding cultural issues they associated with the specific experiences of lesbian women.

Regardless of considerations related to my specific role in the organization and my social location, Abri House provided a good case study for theoretical reasons, as mentioned in Chapter II. To specify some of the relevant literature, Dobash and Dobash (1992) categorize possible orientations for shelter work into four types: philanthropic, organizational and bureaucratic, therapeutic, and activist. Given a natural "blending of traditions" from ideal types, Dobash and Dobash describe several continua for the provision of services to battered women:

> From self-help to enforced therapy; from notions of women's independence to practices reinforcing dependence upon new `masters'; from viewing woman abuse as a problem linked to a wider political struggle for social change to that limited solely to service for the victims; from emphasis on the community and/or the individual; from advocates working with abused women to therapists working on clients. (p. 77)

Abri House was an ideal setting for research precisely because it occupied many different positions on these continua, a good mixture of philanthropic, organizational and bureaucratic, therapeutic, and activist orientations.

Since being established in 1975, Abri House existed as a feminist-identified shelter organization in which some activists worked mostly in providing direct services to survivors, some primarily in administrative and community change work, and some in a mixture of both types of work. The shelter was organized hierarchically with a volunteer Board of Directors over-seeing the organization's paid director, assistant director, program coordinators and shelter staff. At the time of interviewing, the shelter employed 17 paid staff who were, except for the entry-level positions, mostly college-educated, middle-class women. The organization relied on the unpaid work of roughly 150 active volunteers, drawn mostly from a

nearby University and also from the general local community. The staff and volunteers were active in a number of different projects relating to domestic violence; for example, therapy with individual women, county and state council work, and high school and community education. As members of an organization working on both social and individual solutions to domestic violence, activists experiences could reveal the limits to and possibilities for synthesizing change and service orientations.

Another reason for choosing Abri House for study was because the organization had begun to address battering in terms of its relationship to other systems of oppression, namely racism. Almost exclusively white in 1989, Abri House's staff now includes approximately equal numbers of women of color and white women. In light of the dearth of literature addressing how predominantly white feminist organizations become multi-racial, the fact that Abri House took any steps to remedy its white dominated legacy made it an important place for research.

Selection of Subjects

Since social service and social change were central to my research interest, my priority in choosing activists to interview was to include an even distribution from both types of work (services and political/administrative). Consistent with my interest in how the relationship between social service and social change changed over time, I also wanted to include an even distribution of activists from throughout the organization's history. My final sample included 23 activists; roughly half of

the activists had worked or were working primarily in direct services for the shelter, half were or had been in administrative positions that required more community change work. I also interviewed proportionate numbers of activists from throughout the shelter organization's history. Dividing activists into three cohorts, according to when they started working with Abri House, there were eight women interviewed who started with the shelter by or before 1984 (including one of the organization's earliest organizers); seven women from a middle cohort that started between 1985 and 1990; and eight activists who started working with Abri House after 1990 (including one man who was working with the organization by way of participating with a county Domestic Violence Council). Since the size of Abri House's staff has increased dramatically since the late 1980s, my sample was weighted toward the later period (see Table 1 for an outline of demographic characteristics by cohort).

Two of the most problematic aspects of my sample have to do with the inclusion of volunteers and women of color. Former volunteers were immediately excluded because they were too difficult to locate. Current volunteers also presented a problem. Because many volunteers stay at the shelter for such a short time (six months) and are likely to be involved in only a limited sphere of activities, volunteers were significantly under-represented in the sample. I interviewed only four activists who had worked as volunteers for the shelter (including one of the earliest organizers, a board member, and the only man interviewed, who worked on a Council). On the other hand, 12 of the staff women

TABLE 1. Characteristics of Cohorts
(N = 21)

Selected Characters	Cohort I (n = 7)	Cohort II (n = 6)	Cohort III (n = 8)
	1975-1984	1985-1990	1991-1995
Age			
20-29		1	2
30-39			3
40-49	2	5	3
50 +	5		
Ethnicity			
White	5	5	2
Black, Hispanic or American Indian			5
Jewish	2	1	1
Education			
High School	1		
Some College	1		4
Bachelor of Arts		1	1
Some Graduate		1	1
Master's or higher	5	4	2
Household Income Per Year			
Below 15,000	2		3
16,000-25,000	2	1	3
26,000-35,000		1	
36,000-45,000			1
46,000-55,000		1	
56,000-65,000		2	
66,000-75,000	1		
Over 75,000	2	1	
Not Ascertained			1
Living Status			
Single	4	1	4
Married or living w/ partner	3	5	4

TABLE 1. Continued

Selected Characters	Cohort I (n = 7)	Cohort II (n = 6)	Cohort III (n = 8)
	1975-1984	1985-1990	1991-1995
Type of Work with Abri House			
Direct Service	3	2	2
Administrative	3	3	3
Volunteer	1	1	3
Identity as Survivor of Abuse			
Childhood	1	2	1
Adult Intimate	1	1	5
No Perssonal Experience of Abuse	5	3	1
Not Ascertained			1

Note: Characteristics are provided for only 21 subjects from my sample. I was not able to get complete demographic information for two subjects interviewed for the study. Characteristics that vary over time (i.e., age) represent statistics at the time of interview. Since the majority of my sample was not working at the organization when interviewed, these statistics are not relevant to describing current shelter activists.

interviewed had originally started as volunteers in the battered women's movement before becoming paid staff. Still, the views of recent, active volunteers were significantly under-represented. As a result, my analysis was limited in terms of analyzing differences in terms of volunteer and paid positions within the organization. While I looked for patterns according to differences between the viewpoints of volunteer and paid staff (see analysis section below), they were probably impossible to see in the context of how under-represented current

volunteers were. Then again, I am a volunteer. In that respect, the views of volunteers were soundly represented.

The representation of women of color in the sample presents other problems. Before discussing those problems, however, a note on race and ethnic identities and my decision to use the terms "women of color," "Black," and "Hispanic." I use the term women of color even though there was some evidence to suggest that I should not. For example, Susie, a Black women, explained that she did not like the term women of color by asking, "What are the rest of you then, women of no color?" Still, Susie suggested the usefulness of the term when she observed about racism that, "what they really want to know is what color your skin is." However, while "women of color" is convenient in identifying the common interests of all women whom racism affects, the term has the potential to obscure differences among women of color from different ethnic, class, and cultural backgrounds.

Of five women of color interviewed, two identified as Black, two as Hispanic, and one as American Indian; three identified as from poor or working class economic backgrounds, two identified as from the middle class. Despite debates over what the correct labels should be, in the context of such a small sample, and in the context of certain similarities in self-definitions among women of color in my sample, I used activists' own self-definitions in describing their ethnic identities. Both Black women were careful to point out that they did not identify as African American. Dianna explained, "My point of view on an African American is a person who came from Africa, and then started making a new life

here. That's an African American." Likewise, other women of color were sensitive to how their ethnic identity was defined. Responding to the question, "how do you define your race or ethnic identity?" Carmelita said, "I'm considered Mexican American." I further asked, "what do you consider yourself, how do you define it?" and she replied, "I consider myself Hispanic. I'm kind of a mixture of French, Irish, Indian, Jewish, Spanish. . . ." Likewise, Kim and Veronica identified as American Indian and Hispanic, respectively, and offered caveats describing diversity in their ethnic histories.

All of the five activists of color included in the study were from the latest cohort, and four had worked or were working primarily in direct services for survivors and victims. The skewed way in which women of color were included in my sample presents obvious limits to generalizations concerning their views. However, the skewed representation of women of color in my sample reflects the historical realities of the skewed way in which they were included in Abri House. I was not able to interview any of the few women of color who worked at Abri House before 1991. Further, although Abri House was, at the time of my interviewing, in many ways a multi-racial organization, women of color worked mostly in direct services. In other words, as with the distribution of activists from different times in the organization's history, the distribution of women of color reflected patterns in the organization as a whole.

Activists were included in the study with an eye to the sampling concerns described above. However, I actually interviewed just about everyone who would

let me. Activists from early in the organization's history were discovered using a "snowball method." Equipped with the names of a few "key" players in the shelter's history, names that I had heard talked about around the shelter, or had discovered through asking questions, I was able to get the names of more potential activists with every interview. People talked about people, not just the organization, in their interviews. Simply asking, "do you know what happened to her" and "do you think she would mind being interviewed," helped me locate the majority of interviees who had started with the ogranization before 1989. While this type of "networking" to find subjects can introduce obvious sources of bias--that subjects will share the same viewpoint as the subjects who suggested them--it was the only method available to find activists who had not worked with the shelter in years. Although I made a conscious effort to follow up on names that had both positive and negative associations for the people mentioning them, limits to locating potential activists from early in the organization's history presented obvious problems.

More recent shelter workers were selected with more attention to what they were doing with the shelter (i.e., social service or social change), and to whether or not they could add a perspective that might otherwise be missing from the sample. The missing perspective issue was particularly relevant to my choice to interview every woman of color who worked with the shelter and would consent to an interview. The fact that only five women of color were interviewed may reflect some distrust of a white researcher, and it may reflect the fact that most women of

color who worked with the organization were direct service workers, who as a group seemed least enthusiastic about participating in the research than were social change and administrative workers. Direct service workers' apparent "lack of enthusiasm"--in terms of initiating and following through with interviews--may be the result of the intense nature of direct service work. Perhaps direct service workers simply have less time and desire to sit around and talk than do administrative workers. On the other hand, the apparent lack of enthusiasm may simply be the result of my role in the organization, who I know and who knows me as a community educator, as described above.

Although I mention that current direct service workers seemed as a group least enthusiastic about my research, many direct service workers, all of the activists interviewed, were very supportive of my research. Many current staff contacted me to be interviewed after I attended a staff meeting and told them about my project. Their initiative, especially in light of the long hours and low pay associated with their work, was heartening. Other activists who were contacted by phone were equally as receptive to being interviewed. People fit me into busy schedules, welcomed me into their homes, offered me food, and in a number of other ways supported this research.

The Interview Process

In order to elicit conversations about social change and social service, politics and psychology, collectivity and hierarchy, the interview process needed to

be flexible enough to make different people comfortable. I wanted activists to talk as freely as possible about their experiences at Abri House. The interview setting, therefore, was determined by what was convenient and desirable for interviewees. Interviews took place in subjects' homes or offices, in my home, or, for one interview with a activist who lived out of town, in a hotel room. A couple of interviews took place with children on laps, or running occasionally to and from the room, and food or drink was often shared during the one to two hours that the interviews typically ran. My goal was to create an interview setting that was a positive experience for the interviewee, and an effective research tool.

As activists defined where interviews would take place, I also wanted them to define as much as possible the content of the interviews. Consistent with my choice to use in-depth interviews to get as much as possible of activists' subjective views, the interview schedule (see Appendix) was a flexible guide for interviews, not a defining document. Hoping relevant issues would arise from what activists were interested in talking about, questions specific to my interest in social change and social service were asked later in the interview. Interviews began with more general questions about why activists worked with Abri House and what they liked most and least about the work. In perhaps a third of the interviews activists talked so much about social change and social service by way of answering the early interview questions, there was no need to ask the more specific questions designed to elicit that information.

In fact, the more specific questions that came later in the interview (questions seven and eight on the interview schedule) were not as helpful as were the general questions that stimulated people talking about their experiences with Abri House. When it came time for analysis, most of the useful information was drawn from peoples' descriptions of the work, not from their responses to questions about prioritizing social change and individual services. Many of the most important parts of activists' narratives were offered with caveats like, "I forgot what your question was, but . . . ," and "This might not be relevant, however. . . ." The stories and descriptions that followed those caveats often included the concrete detail that was most useful for analysis.

Analysis

Analysis was an ongoing process of listening to and reading the viewpoints expressed by activists, and looking for patterns. I looked for patterns according background information asked about during the interview, common sociological variables like age, ethnicity, class background, and for patterns according to type of work (direct service or administrative), the organization's history, and personal experience of violence. I did not ask about sexual orientation during interviews, although four women identified themselves as lesbian during their interviews and I also looked for patterns on that basis. My analysis included contextualizing activists' viewpoints in terms of the case study--how they reflected the particularities of Abri House--and in terms of the interview process itself--how they

reflected a particular interaction between me and the interviewee. Reviewing and amending categories for analysis, identifying emerging categories and creating new categories when needed, and critiquing problems and successes with the interview process were constant parts of the process of analysis.

The use of Ethnograph, a computer software package designed to facilitate analysis of qualitative data, helped systematize my process of analysis. As more than one researcher pointed out to me during my research, however, Ethnograph is only as helpful as the coding scheme a researcher employs with it. In other words, while having a computer software package that sorted and grouped relevant material together was helpful, it was only helpful after a laborious and non-systematic process of reading and listening to interviews to come up with relevant categories. Three general categories were suggested by the questions specified in Chapter II. My first step was to code interviews in terms of what was said about the structure of the organization, an analysis of domestic violence, and the role of a feminist political vision in shaping activists' experiences with the organization. Those categories, however, were obviously broad and over-lapping. So, after reading through and listening to all interviews several times, I developed a more specific coding scheme that generally reflected what were to be specific topic headings within each chapter. Ethnograph was then used to sort and contextualize material used in the final write-up of the research.

Consistent with the goal of qualitative methods, and especially feminist efforts to give voice and power to research participants, I wanted an analysis to

emerge as much as possible from the research, and not from my own template. Therefore, foci for analysis were not specified until well into the research process. Drawing from the general questions defined in Chapter II, I started interviewing. By the time most interviews were complete, the issues that would become relevant to answering my general questions were clarified. The following, more specific questions formed the basis for my coding scheme:

1. In terms of how activists experienced the structure of the organization, has Abri House become more like a traditional social service and less like the collective, consciousness raising groups that provided the basis for a battered women's movement? What do the organization's structures of supervision, decision-making, pay, and racial diversity say to this question?

2. In talking about their work with victims, survivors and batterers, do Abri House activists use more socially or individually-based analyses of domestic violence? From an initial distrust of therapeutic methods to a perceived change in the population of shelter residents, have more recent activists embraced a more psychological approach to domestic violence? What do the issues of consciousness raising, case management, alcohol and drug treatment, victim accountability, batterer treatment, and early childhood education say to this question?

3. What is the role of a feminist or social change vision in informing the work of Abri House activists? What are the roles for local and well established community networks within that vision?

Ethical Considerations

The most obvious ethical issue affecting my study, apart from an obvious responsibility to accurately reflect activists viewpoints in my final analysis, is the issue of confidentiality. Since Abri House workers form a small community, it is likely that they could identify each other in my analysis. To protect confidentiality, I used pseudonyms and changed distinguishing information that could make activists identifiable. The fear of violating confidentiality prevented me on several occasions from using certain sections of interviews to support points basic to my analysis; it often meant providing the reader with less than all the relevant information about a given narrator. Further, although in light of the feminist methodological concerns already described in this chapter I would have liked to provide readers with more background about activists, respect for confidentiality and privacy often prohibited my doing so. In introducing sections of narratives and analyzing viewpoints, information that could have made the activists interviewed come to life as real human beings was left out. While no activists seemed to fear others' knowing what they said--many said things like, "this is no secret," especially when criticizing the organization--I still made every attempt to respect activists' privacy.

My relationship to the activists interviewed presents another ethical problem. Stacey (1988) analyzes the relationship in her article, "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" She writes that feminist ethnography, based on a commitment to further the voice and power of research "subjects" may actually exploit research

participants in a more deep and dangerous way than traditional, positivist methods. Because in-depth interviews rely on a close yet, by definition, imbalanced relationship between the researcher and narrator, and because there are inherent distortions and limitations in transcribing and using oral testimony in written text, ethnographers can not help but betray some of their own commitments. Stacey concludes that despite serious moral costs, a "partially" feminist ethnography is worth the effort. This includes an ongoing, self-conscious and critical examination of representing "self and other," and an honest recognition of and attempt to reconcile the power imbalance inherent in authoring the research. Although only a partial solution to the ethical dilemmas of using in-depth interviews, a "rigorous sense of partiality," as Stacey quotes Clifford, "can be a source of representational tact" (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, p. 7).

Using data from in-depth interviews requires at least some recognition of the partial and context-specific nature of how we write and tell about others' lives and viewpoints. It also, therefore, implies that there is likely to be more than one "correct" understanding or interpretation of the meaning of a given interview. Borland (1991) addresses the question:

> Personally, I continue to be concerned about the potential emotional effect alternative readings of personal narratives may have on our living subjects. The performance of a personal narrative is a fundamental means by which people comprehend their own lives and present a 'self' to their audience. Our scholarly representations of those performances, if not sensitively presented, may constitute an attack on our collaborators' carefully constructed sense of self. (p. 71)

So that participants would not experience differences in meaning as attacks, I made a conscious effort to include sensitive discussion of differences in my analysis. I also talked with several activists about my analysis during its process and when writing this final report; one activist read early an early draft of the analysis and provided extensive feedback. Although I made distinct efforts to fully understand and sensitively represent differences, however, my control over the research and my power in the context of interviews was distinct. I was the one who decided what to ask, what to follow up on and how the analysis would take shape. Particularly in context of my high level of education and my role as a long time volunteer, the activists interviewed for the study had an inevitably limited amount of control over the research process.

Conclusion

I used in-depth interviews with Abri House activists to try and understand the complex and non-dichotomous nature of the relationships between social change and social service, politics and psychology, and collectivity and hierarchy described in the Chapter II. Being highly interpretive, my study of the viewpoints of Abri House staff and volunteers was designed to allow activists themselves to define as much as possible what was important to them about Abri House as a social change and social service organization. Although there are obvious limits interviewees' control over the analysis, given that I am authoring this study, the following three

substantive chapters quote extensively from interviews as part of an attempt to reflect the subjective understandings of activists interviewed.

The following three chapters (Chapters IV, V, and VI) address the foci specified only after many interviews had been completed. First, in Chapter IV, the issue of whether Abri House has increasingly become like traditional social services in terms of its structure is addressed. The primary purpose of Chapter IV is to further define the context of Abri House as an hierarchical and collective feminist organization. Chapter V addresses activists' uses of social and individual, or psychological analyses of domestic violence. In that chapter, I explore some "treatment" and counseling issues that emerged from my interviews with activists providing individualized services to battered women, and relate those specific issues to broader social and psychological explanations for domestic violence. Finally, Chapter VI addresses the role of politics in shaping activists' experiences of and expectations for Abri House and points to broad political concerns that are increasingly playing a role at Abri House.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUCTURE OF ABRI HOUSE

Unlike the shelters described in much literature on the battered women's movement, Abri House was never a true collective and was not started by a women's consciousness raising group. Organized and run with the help of many women who were comfortable in mainstream, hierarchical organizations, Abri House has never been very "radical" in its structure. Nevertheless, over time the shelter's structure has become increasingly "traditional"; roles and responsibilities within the organization have become more specialized and hierarchical. Still, Abri House is not your average hierarchical bureaucracy. At the same time that Abri House has developed a mostly vertical and differentiated structure, it has remained oriented as a social change agency in a number of important ways.

One of the primary ways in which Abri House has remained oriented toward social change is that it has consistently struggled with issues of collectivity. Structures of supervision, decision-making and pay have been the subjects of recurrent debate and negotiation among Abri House activists. Relating those issues to feminism, Abri House activists have struggled with the extent to which they are part of a traditional and non-traditional agency. Also important to a social change orientation, Abri House activists have struggled with racism and expanded their organization's racial diversity. Including only one woman of color in 1989, Abri

House's staff included almost equal numbers of women of color and white women by 1995. As part of a self-conscious feminist effort, recognizing the relatedness of all kinds of oppression, the full participation of women of color in the organization is essential to Abri House as a non-traditional, feminist organization.

This chapter describes three periods in Abri House's history; concerns about the structure of pay at Abri House; changes in Abri House's structure of diversity; and, limits for women of color in Abri House's current structure. The viewpoints analyzed in this chapter suggest that Abri House activists constantly redefined the organization's structural orientations to social change and social service. In terms of the non-dichotomous thinking suggested by recent literature reviewed in Chapter II, my research suggested that Abri House activists incorporated collective, bureaucratic, grassroots and professional elements in the structure of their organization (Reinelt, 1995). Further, descriptions suggested that a collective/ hierarchical continuum should not be the only axis on which the question of "traditional" structure is examined (Ferree & Martin, 1995).

The Early Organization, 1975 - 1985

Abri House was organized initially in 1975 by a core group of seven women from different political backgrounds.[1] While two women started providing help for

[1]Information about the early stages of Abri House's history is drawn from an interview conducted for the present study, and largely from research conducted several years ago by me and three other "graduate student activists" who were concerned that Abri House's history be accessible to current and future Abri House residents, staff and volunteers. During that time, all but one of a core group of seven of the earliest organizers were interviewed. It should be noted that what we

battered women as part of a more grassroots effort, from their homes and because they had recognized the need through their own personal experiences, another three women in the earliest organizing group became involved only after attending a state-wide Political Women's Caucus meeting, and with the intent of building an enduring institution. Carrie described divisions in the early organizing group between those "on the front lines," or those answering calls and assisting women, and those who "just wanted to get the board going, you know, and the nuts and bolts." When asked what images she remembered of her time organizing the shelter, Carrie recalled:

> Well, it's not all a very positive experience. We certainly were able to get it going. We got a lot of community support around it. We were never a collective, we were never close. There were some of us that were close. But, I guess what we had hoped for was that it would be a group of women that would be supportive of each other, and that didn't happen. So, a lot of us that were on the front line really had no where to go to talk about what it was like. Because others just didn't want to hear it. You know, they just wanted to get the board going, and the nuts and bolts, and really had very little concern for the people that were out there on the front lines. So there was a little--well, a little--there was a lot of hard feelings that evolved out of that.
>
> I think that we tried to be something we weren't. We tried to be a collective and we weren't. We weren't a support group. And if we had been able to say, that is not what we are, we are something else. . . . But we couldn't say that. It just came out in negative feelings toward each other, a lot of frustration.

Although Carrie recalled trying to be a collective, as her description suggests a collective was probably not a commonly shared goal. For example, in hiring the first director, Carrie, along with two other women who had been "on the

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defined as a "core" group of seven could be problematic. In fact, there was some disagreement among those involved about the exact nature and extent of their own and others' participation in opening the shelter.

front lines" wanted the job to go to someone from within the existing group. Their support for this kind of internal hiring was undoubtedly in part based in their belief in collective ideals that the workplace need not be devoid of people's personal needs and concerns, ideals already documented in research on feminist movement organizations (Morgen, 1994). One member of the group that advocated an internal hiring was in fact a qualified candidate for the position and in need of the job. Apparently a majority of the group, however, supported opening the job to a community-wide search, assuming the dominant framework that greater access insures higher quality and more fairness. As the work grew in impact, conflicts like these became more immediate. Conflicts also developed over who would serve on the board ("figure-heads" or those actively engaged helping battered women) and who could represent the shelter to the media.

Despite conflicts, perhaps instead strengthened by a combination of activists with both traditional and non-traditional orientations, Carrie's early organizing group was able to open the first shelter and resource crisis line for battered women in their county. The crisis line, originally answered from one activist's home, was moved to an independent office. Shortly after, in January 1977, a shelter was opened. A three-bedroom, one-story rental, the organization quickly outgrew the first shelter and by July, 1977 had moved to another rental house, this one with seven bedrooms. By the time the move was complete, the organization was run by three paid staff and many volunteers. All of the original organizers had by that time resigned from their volunteer work with the shelter. In addition to all the

work necessary to opening the crisis and shelter services, the original group had also conducted media interviews, gathered statistics from and educated local police about responses to domestic violence, and talked to the District Attorney.

After the first group moved on, conflicts persisted. Mary, who had started with the shelter by 1980 remembered, "two or three times when the agency actually split apart. There were people who just could not reconcile their differences." Carol and Ann, who also joined the organization after Carrie's earliest group split, in 1977 and 1978 respectively, recalled bad feelings and frustration. Ann described an early coordinator who was "having affairs with some of her staff" and "an organization that was really in chaos. People were trying hard, but they were really distressed all the time, and, like you said, working with battered women is distressing enough in itself." She continued,

> There were literally no clear job descriptions for people so that there was no clarity about what each person needed to do. There was absolutely no limits in terms of helping them to establish a sense of this is what you need to do and you can't do more. Because the burn-out and getting overly invested was tough. There was no training for new staff coming in. So people were just hired and thrown on the job. And it is complex stuff. So on the staff level, there was no clarity. There were staff members on the board, so they were wearing two hats at the same time. And I don't think you can do both at the same time, but they didn't know that at the time--that there are conflicting demands on these people! And I don't think anybody knew what hat to wear.

She described the process of reshaping the organization as one of, "making the bylaws workable, making the rules clear, giving everyone their appropriate role; separating the staff, from the board, from the volunteers."

Echoing Carrie's description of the earliest group, Carol recalled that even after appropriate board and staff roles had been defined and separated, "there were problems with, you know, they didn't want to have a director with a certain kind of authority, i.e. to hire and fire and stuff, and there was a large group of women who were really fighting for a collective." Explaining that a collective was "not the set up that was there," Carol recalled that there were also, "those of us who felt that you needed to have a director with the authority and the responsibility." As director, Carol described "looking to really shape things so they could function,"

> We could have a democratically managed organization, we could have a consensus model, we could have certainly participatory management. And, if you have trust set up, and a good working relationship, and a really kind of team effort, you don't have to have a consensus model. So there were those of us who felt that you needed to have a director with the authority and the responsibility. And in a sense, once you have the authority, you don't really have to use a sort of top down management. I think they call it a humanistic model, as well, in management. But a lot of people felt that, you know . . . suddenly I was sort of the bad guy, I kind of felt like Weyerhauser.
>
> The structure that was in place was not really well defined. There was still a group of volunteers who very strongly wanted a collective. And there were those of us who felt that, that given the pace of the organization, the way funding sources were heading--you know, United Way where you need a director--that it really needed to evolve into something that was more acceptable, in a sense. And yet you didn't want to lose that other element.

Carol went on to describe how conflict continued and was resolved with the firing of a volunteer coordinator who took a majority of, probably 20, volunteers with her. Though the organization had to "build up a new volunteer core," Abri House soon had "a smooth running internal organization," that "really did have a consensus model."

Carol also suggested the importance of feminist expectations for support and equality in defining conflicts, even among those who rejected the need for a collective, when she described problems over an early director:

> But they did hire a woman who was a mental health professional, who really was a family therapist. And she got into problems, real problems. I was chair of the board at that point, and one thing led to another and she resigned. There was a lot of conflict between her and the staff. She had her own views of how things should be done, and some of them were different from the feminist models or views on battering. There came a lot of dissension around it, and she ended up resigning. Rather suddenly, I think.

Although Carol did not elaborate on what specific issues, or "views of how things should be done," defined this conflict with a family therapist's approach to running the organization, she brought up the conflict in the context of a discussion of collectivity and mutual respect in the organization. Her descriptions point to a preference for the kind of mixture of organizational forms that is already well documented in the literature (Morgen, 1994; Rothschild-Whitt, 1976; Ryan, 1992).

Cheryl, also from the earliest cohort of Abri House workers, described early conflicts as "identity crises or issues." Starting with the shelter in 1981, "after a lot of that [conflict] was resolved," Cheryl was interested in developing skills and continuity in the Abri House staff, and in "getting an identity together, establishing ourselves in the community, solidifying ourselves as an entity that was identified as reputable and worthy of getting money." Cheryl described the organization in the early 1980s as going through a transition and as becoming more dependent on community fund-raising. In contrast to earlier in her career, "where if you provided a service, the government paid you to do that," Cheryl explained that when she was

director it "was a period of transition when more of your money would come directly from the community and you would have to go out there and pitch it."

As a backdrop to the need to "go out there and pitch it," was the notoriously over-crowded and under-funded shelter. By the early eighties Abri House was run by five or six paid staff and anywhere between 35 and 90 volunteers. The shelter, the second in the organization's history, was described as "shabby" by two of the women who worked there, other women described it as over-crowded and sometimes chaotic. When Carol was director (1978-1980), the shelter ran on a budget of roughly $60,000 a year. The work was difficult--because working with victims and survivors is never easy--and made more difficult by cramped office space and lack of decent wages.

Karen, who started working with the organization in 1982, described the organization at that time as "kind of in its adolescence": "It was a shabby house, and very inadequate space, and all of the offices and the counseling, and all the women living there were all in one house. So, it was both cozy, homey, and chaotic at the same time." Describing her goals for her work with Abri House, Karen also described how important the shelter environment was to the organizational structure.

> And I also always have goals around how people on staff relate to each other, the kind of workplace environment is always real important to me. Challenging and hard at the old shelter because it was such a dump. You could clean the thing for four days and it would still look dirty. So when we got into the new shelter it was nice even though all of us were in the basement, until they finished remodeling the offices out in the garage. Talk about chaotic. We had the crisis staff, plus we had six staff members, plus we had a live in house manager with a two year old baby.

The cramped working conditions Karen described meant that everyone who worked at the shelter did a variety of jobs. Although Carrie described early divisions between those on the "front lines" and those dealing with the "nuts and bolts," the limitations on shelter resources have always meant a certain amount of overlap in direct service and administrative work. Lynn, who started working with Abri House in 1984, after Abri House's "adolescence," commented on doing both types of work. In describing what she liked most about her work with the shelter, Lynn recalled her experience as director:

> I really loved the opportunity to be able to do so many kinds of things, the flexibility of the work. To go from changing diapers and defrosting refrigerators, to the work in the classrooms, into the courtroom to testify, or to grant-writing. The variety really made it a very meaningful work experience. It was an opportunity to really test your metal because it wasn't something you went to school and learned, you were making it up as you went along, and making it up together. So all of that growth was really exciting.

The Expansionist Years, 1985 - 1990

Growth is an important word in describing Abri House after the middle 1980s. As Karen described, the organization moved to a new shelter, the organization's third and current crisis shelter, in 1982. Activists then began to put more attention and resources into transitional services for battered women and community education. The organization has since opened transitional housing and support programs, located at another site; moved the administrative offices to a separate location; opened a rural outreach office; and provided education and training about domestic violence in numerous settings throughout the community.

The period from 1985 to 1990 was characterized by the same feminist tensions described in the last section. In this period, however, tensions became perhaps more relevant in the context of so much growth. Chris, who started with the shelter in 1989 described some growing pains:

> That's when the offices were in the shelter and we were in those incredibly crowded conditions in that horribly crowded office space in the garage. It was pretty awful, it was pretty dreadful. And we were taking a lot more direct service calls, doing a lot more assessments at that point. So it was really chaotic.

And, in the midst of that chaos,

> There was an expectation in the shelter at that time around non-hierarchical staff arrangements that wasn't necessarily true. And so it was hard to work around those expectations. How to have a reasonable work place with everyone doing their job and getting respect? Not worrying about their position all the time? It was hard.

The contradictory expectations that Chris described were particularly apparent in activists' concerns over issues of supervision, decision-making and pay. Concerns suggested that although activists like Carrie and Carol from the first cohort recognized that Abri House never became a true collective, the issue of collectivity remained an important political issue for activists. Brenda and Beth described some of the tensions they identified in Abri House's structure of supervision during the 1985-1990 period. As Brenda explained,

> When do you give up on someone? When you are working in a social change and in a social service agency like this, your whole purpose is to help people get to be better. And when do you get to that point when you say, no, this person is not going to make it? I tried to work with them, and I tried to figure out how to work with them--which is the first hard thing to do, is how do you actually work with people so that they can improve, to convince them that they should and then help them do it? And then finally

> give up on them and say, this is not the job for you? You're not making it here?

And, as Beth recalled:

> We had a supervisory structure, though nobody half the time listened to the supervisors cause it was so loose. But I saw that change in the time that I was there. And I feel that there was more of a collective, sort of feminist model, yet there was supervision. It was a real contradiction. And so then the supervision was weak, because the supervision wasn't done really well, cause you're never sure how much of a supervisor you should be in a politically correct organization. And then by the time I left it had really gotten much harsher--about what the expectations were--and people did supervise people, and they did do evaluations, and it really got more traditional in that way.

Activists' conflicts with supervision reflected a struggle with feminist and bureaucratic values. Making decisions in a way that really includes everyone affected by them can be time consuming and frustrating. Likewise, coping with workers' personal needs and concerns often conflicts with needs to be efficient or timely. On the other hand, including the personal concerns of all workers is an important feminist value. In their attempt to eliminate the kind of hierarchical relationships that characterize abuse, activists have to be careful not to model those same imbalances of power in their work practices. Abri House activists were careful, as the descriptions in this section suggest.

Still, imbalances in power among the staff were becoming more relevant as the organization became larger and its work more complex. Beth described a growing separation of direct service and administrative work. Working on a lot of community education for the shelter, Beth had a very politically oriented administrative job. She recalled, "I had a lot of the glamor of it. I did a lot of the

out in the public, out front, name in the newspaper kind of stuff." And, she described some minor tensions associated with her distance from direct service:

> I think that where some people were really happy that it was me and not them, and were really confident in what I was doing, there was also some, well, I don't think jealousy is the right word, but . . . they are doing the front line stuff and I'm getting my name in the paper. You're getting dressed up and I'm in the shelter cleaning children's pee off the floor, you know?

Beth's comment points to the distinctly hierarchical nature of specialization, particularly in the separation of direct service and administrative or political work. While Beth notes that many direct service workers were happy not to be in her position, she also accurately reflects the unequal status associated with the two types of work. Her descriptions also suggest how specialized work had become within the shelter. In contrast to Lynn, who concluded the last section by describing the "flexibility" of going from "changing diapers and defrosting refrigerators, to the work in the classrooms, into the courtroom to testify, or to grant-writing," Beth described committing herself to a weekly, two hour advocacy shift at the shelter to have "some kind of contact with the women":

> That for me was good. It was short, because I didn't have a lot of time in my job to do much of it. But it was a weekly thing where I knew the women in the shelter and what kind of issues they were having. And, frankly, it was usually three hours, because you would schedule two but it would be three or four. I'd know what the issues were in their lives, and I would be reminded . . . well, reminded of the reality of what the violence was to them. And the reality of the system that they were working in which is set up to totally alienate women who are experiencing violence in their lives.

Continuing Conflict, 1991 - 1995

Hierarchy and specialization became even more relevant when administrative offices were moved to a separate location in 1991. Beth described some of the possible dangers of that move in its potential to create a class of women running the shelter who have little direct knowledge of the issues and concerns relevant to battered women's lives. Joanna also described some of the effects of that move when she recalled starting as a volunteer crisis line worker before the move.

> I did one of the day shifts. And I think I worked like Friday mornings. I liked that shift because at that time the phone lines were in the same place as the administrative offices, so you were more sort of in the middle of the operation of the shelter, as opposed to the way it is now where the administrative offices are separate--though the crisis line is still in the shelter, so you're still in the shelter. But you then had that sense of the whole which has now been broken up. At the time, I really enjoyed being around all the different aspects of the agency.

Likewise, Beth described a growing division in a "sense of the whole." In describing her experience of trying to recruit interested staff for a political action, Beth indicated just how specialized political and service work had become by the early 1990s:

> And I had all these direct service people sign up and say that they were going to help. And not one of them came to any meetings. Because they couldn't. They couldn't possibly do both, they couldn't possibly work residential hours, and sleep over-night, and then come and do all those political things the next day. They just couldn't possibly do it. So they looked to those of us who had that more as part of our job to do it.

Beth's understanding of the growing separation between service and political work was also suggested by other information. Where most activists from throughout all cohorts, 15 women, talked about doing both administrative and

service work when working at Abri House, three activists from the most recent cohort described making conscious decisions not to do both types of work and to do only administrative work. The fact becomes particularly relevant in light of the fact that only five staff members were included in the final cohort, other activists in the group were volunteers. As another example of how roles have become increasingly differentiated, the shelter recently eliminated the assistant director position in favor of dividing the job into two separate positions for community education and future planning.

Still, elements of feminist and traditional orientations were being re-negotiated by activists. Kim, a Native American woman from the most recent cohort explained,

> I think it is that not knowing yet where you fit. You know, if I go work now at IBM, I'm going to know pretty much what that is like, and what are the expectations and everything. And I think a lot of women's organizations are still trying to figure out that balance. The balance between being a professional, working organization, and being a feminist organization that supports other women, and is supportive of other things. Like some of the things that I see as conflicts are being supportive of things like child care issues, women who have children taking time off, self-care stuff, you know. And, at the same time, you have a business to run, and when does that become taken advantage of? Someone's out six weeks, or they are out a week of every month because of the kids' stuff? Those are the struggles I see, and they are not clear, where at other organizations they might be. Still trying to do that balance of being a supportive organization of women who want to be different, and at the same time we want to have accountability and integrity and be able to expect certain things of people.

Marty, a white woman from the most recent cohort, saw mixed messages about elements of hierarchy and equality in the organization's structure during the

1991-1995 period. Unhappy with her work at Abri House, Marty described problems not with the supervision process, but with the decision making process:

> I think it would be so much better if they just said no, we are not consensus, we do not block, we try to get three-fourths to go along with it if we can, and if we can't, I make the final decision, or she makes it, or the board does. I think just a lot of that, go ahead and lower the expectations for it. That we aren't all going to have equal power and that is okay. I don't know any agency where people do.

Marty also made particularly clear how feminist expectations for mutual support framed her conflicts with the organization. She recalled going to work with knots in her stomach, taking two potential death crisis calls on a holiday and finding no staff person would debrief with her, and wondering if the emotional toll and lack of support she found at Abri House were going to cause her to quit the job. Because of those things, Marty said she contemplated what was feminist about the organization and described what she called a "macho ethic":

> It is very much, whoever works 60 hours a week is good, whoever works under is a slacker--you're not carrying your weight, you're not dedicated to the cause. If you are taking lunch, you can't cut it. If you call in sick, it is because you are not one of us. And we can cut it, and you can't. And there is no crying. And, I don't know, no even being feminine. I mean, you take a crisis call and it is terrible, and you feel like crying, oh!, that is horrible. And it is like, oh, come on, buck up. And so none of that feels particularly feminist.

Marty's feelings may suggest more broad divisions--lots of hard feelings and a walk-out--like those in Abri House's early history, described earlier in this chapter. Excluding volunteers, who were disproportionately represented in the latest cohort, examining the level of support described by current staff suggests some broader divisions. Of the only five staff members interviewed in the latest

cohort, two described feeling unsupported in their work and three mentioned the need for more communication among staff in the organization. In contrast, from the 14 staff members interviewed in the two earlier cohorts, only two described feeling unsupported, and one the need for more communication. Although it is difficult to generalize from these comparisons, the differences are striking. So that they are not misleading, however, it is important to consider the descriptions of other staff from the latest cohort.

Kim, the American Indian activist who earlier described how activists were still negotiating their balance between feminism and professionalism, worked in the organization at the same time as Marty and seemed to feel very supported and communicated with in her work. She explained,

> One thing that I like about Abri House is that it is run by women. I like the fact that we do things by consensus, that we try. I've worked for other DV [domestic violence] organizations, like I said, and I also like that we don't get into group think, that it is okay to question something. When I worked at [another DV organization] that wasn't okay, we all had to think alike, and if you didn't then you were a bad person, or you weren't for the cause, or whatever. And, I've heard people say things or ask questions, about racism, or sexism, or homophobia, and not feel like they were going to get slammed. You know, people really trying to get information. Like someone saying, I might be really ignorant about this, but what does this mean? And to not be laughed at, or looked at like you are an idiot. I really like the fact that it is a safe place to talk about . . . the politically correct stuff. And sometimes, feminist organizations, I think that we have a tendency to go too far, and we expect everybody to have this knowledge base. And, some people don't have all the information, or have different opinions. I like that.

Likewise, Carmelita, a Hispanic woman, seemed to feel very supported in her work. She said that after working with Abri House, "I don't think that I could ever work in a place again where that kind of support is not going out to the staff." Carmelita

described, "Just being able to come in and spout off. Or just coming in to say, this is what happened, and I'm pissed!"

Without deciding definitively how broad are current divisions over the amount of support for staff, the fact that the issue of support kept recurring in the descriptions of activists from throughout the organization's history is important. While there was no longer talk of a being a collective, the need for a place to come to cry, yell, or laugh was still an issue. Further, feminism played a continuing role in shaping expectations about mutual support, respect and responsibility. From the earliest cohort, Carol described an early conflict over a director who did things "different from the feminist model." And from the most recent cohort, Marty described her recent feelings of being unsupported in contrast to feminism, and Kim talked about an organization run by women, and encouraging political learning. In all these cases, feminist expectations concerning mutual respect and responsibility were deeply intertwined.

While feminism has worked to define activists' expectations about support, it has not always been a boon to that support. Several times activists described feeling that not towing a feminist party line meant being excluded from support. Pete, for example, described an early battered women's movement in the Midwest that had really "closed ranks." Similarly, Carol described a director who resigned when staff perceived her as not feminist. And, in her description of the emotional costs of the work, Marty indicated how rigid party lines could be:

> Sarah tells me that you never used to hear people talking about *defecting*, I guess that is what they call it. But now you hear a lot about, well, once I

> did this [kind of work] privately and I got a lot of money for it. And I think it is the cost-benefit analysis. You know, people used to work here, they got a lot out of it, they were proud to work in an organization like this, to be part of a movement. And I'm starting to wonder if the benefits haven't started dropping, and the costs are too high.

The common feminist framework defining the conflicts described in this section are associated with expectations concerning certain levels of collectivity and mutual support at Abri House. Regardless of whether feminism was used as the basis to include or exclude individuals from the supportive environment feminist activists hoped to create, the assumption of a common understanding of how feminism should shape the internal structure of the organization was made by almost all the activists who talked about conflict with or in the organization. Still, activists created a mostly vertical structure for the organization, and revealed commitments to more traditional structural forms. The following section will explore these apparent contradictions more closely, in the context of the specific issue of pay.

The Structure of Pay

Closely connected to how activists described issues of supervision and decision making, perhaps underlying those issues, is the issue of pay. Although I did not ask any specific questions about wages at Abri House (I asked only what interviewees earned at the time of the interview; most were not then working for Abri House), over half the activists interviewed talked about low wages as a problem at Abri House. A majority of those who talked about issues of pay at Abri

House related problems with wages to more broad feminist concerns. Activists described pay as an issue central to Abri House's identity as a feminist, non-traditional organization.

Cheryl described one of Abri House's priorities as early as 1981 as, "bringing up salaries, so the women who worked there weren't abused by Abri House." Karen described the same period of time in more detail. She recalled not only trying to raise wages for all activists, but also trying to attract professionals to the movement:

> We were also part of that transition of going from movement to agency. And that's an interesting one. You know, there is a lot of ambivalence around that. It started out real grassroots, real seat of the pants--women's homes--and this shelter I worked in was the first shelter that they had. Movement wages, the pay sucked. It was just pretty, just organically happening. In the reorganization, and in bringing in professionals--not *professionals* professionals but, you know--rather than just somebody who was doing it, having x, y, z job, they started bringing in people with master's degrees, and people that had experience in, you know, volunteer systems, and this or that. It started tightening up and becoming more accountable, and more of a social service agency. And pay went up a little bit. It's gone up a lot now.

Karen's description points to many of the important issues concerning pay, namely its relationship to professionalism. While literature and my sample suggest that even early in its history the battered women's movement was not short on professionals, Dobash and Dobash (1992) describe a changing role for professionals in the movement. Originally "visionaries" who used their skills to further the social and political concerns of battered women, Dobash and Dobash identify professionals in the movement as having a more conservative influence as the movement became increasingly mature and domestic violence an increasingly

"legitimate" social problem. In addition to raising wages, professionalism also meant increasing pay differences among the staff, and increasing differences between the staff and shelter residents. Problems associated with class differences between shelter staff and residents are documented in academic literature (Davidson & Jenkins, 1989; Loseke & Cahill, 1984; Schilllinger, 1988). This literature points out that shelter residents, predominantly poor women with few educational and economic options, may experience professionalized shelters as one more branch of a welfare system that fails to adequately take into consideration their needs and concerns. In addition to creating tensions between staff and residents, professionalism obviously created some tensions among staff.

Beth, a Jewish woman from the middle cohort, described tensions associated with a changing role for professionals. She described how the desire to get "better people" in some positions conflicted with feminist goals to value workers:

> When people left the organization, some wanted to raise some salaries in order to get better people in the organization, in some of the coordinator positions. Other people were really angry and felt that all the salaries should be raised, instead of just a couple. I mean, there is a lot of those same old issues that I know from the 70s. Same old stuff.

And Marty, who started in 1994, also described conflict around pay differentials at Abri House. Describing the emotional toll of working for a shelter organization, even as an administrative assistant, Marty suggested:

> I think you have to ask yourself, is it worth it? Is it worth it to me? And for someone like me, I'm an administrative assistant, I make less than anybody else here. I think the agency is least committed to me, out of all the people it is committed to. I am most out of the loop. And yet, I feel the pain, just like anybody else. And at some point, it is going to become not worth it.

Although Marty did not see an increase in pay as the only factor to making it "worth it," her sense that the agency was "least committed" to her out of all its staff suggests one of the dangers of professionalism. Several women talked about how because pay was so low and stress so high, the women who work in shelter organizations must be there for "more than the money," or because they "believe in the work." Staff salaries at Abri House varied from $12,750 per year for entry level positions to $23,000 for the director position in 1992. Feeling undervalued or exploited as a worker obviously makes it difficult to "believe in the work." And while $23,000 may not be a lot of money in the context of other salaries for non-profit directors, it probably tests one's faith a lot less than does earning $12,750. Marty, who was at the bottom of Abri House's salary schedule in 1995 concluded about her experience at Abri House, "I'm treated very much like a traditional secretary" and in that case, "I might as well be in the private sector and earn a decent living."

In describing her treatment as "very much like a traditional secretary," Marty pointed to the same hierarchical status differences among staff that contributed to ongoing debates about decision-making and hierarchy. However, although Marty suggested "we could all be valued as equal partners in the work. Just that we are all working together and doing different sides of it," most activists who addressed the issue of pay differences clearly favored a hierarchical pay structure. Chris, a white woman from the middle cohort explained her support for pay and status differences:

> I don't think that everyone has the skills to write grants and do public speaking and deal with boards, etc. And I think that those are a set of skills that are more valuable in the world, because they are more rare, than working the five to eleven shift in the shelter. But what is really neat is taking working class women in those [5 to 11 shift] jobs and saying, look, I think you are a valuable employee and I would like to see you move up in the organization. And this is what it is going to take. That's what I think is good about a hierarchy, is that you can hire in at an entry level job and learn and advance, and get more money, and get more responsibility. But I think that it does require more education and experience to get jobs with more responsibility. I mean, I sort of don't believe in collectives, I don't. If everybody was the same, maybe, but I don't think they are.

It is interesting that Chris refers to "taking working class women in those [5 to 11 shift] jobs" in describing some direct service workers. There was little evidence from my study that even early in the organization's history many working class women were in direct service positions, as Chris was later to mention and as my sample reflects (see Chapter III). In fact, there was some evidence to the contrary. Even accounting for the fact that women in the earliest cohort were for the most part older than women in the later two cohorts--assuming they had more time to be in school, and perhaps greater access in earlier economic climates--the high levels of education achieved by the earliest activists, particularly in contrast to those achieved by women in the latest cohort, are striking. And, the high levels of education achieved by the vast majority of all activists suggests that historically Abri House's direct service providers may not have been working class women, but ambiguously middle class women earning working class wages. Further, although the administrative workers interviewed were disproportionately middle class, roughly equal numbers of direct service workers identified as having been raised in middle and working class backgrounds. Still, the income and educational levels

characterizing the latest cohort suggest that class differences among staff members may become more relevant. As trends toward specialization and professionalization continue, pay and status differences between Abri House's staff could come to further define differences among direct service and administrative staff.

Brenda described her support for a hierarchical pay structure in terms of the higher levels of responsibility and added complexities associated with jobs at the top of the organization. She concluded that as the organization's director, "I guess I would lie awake at night a whole lot more than the rest of the staff." On the other hand, Brenda also tempered her support for pay differences with a "sense of justice." Describing a time when the board was reviewing salaries, Brenda indicated some of the limits on an hierarchical pay structure in a feminist organization.

> We had raised salaries to a certain level, and the board wanted to raise mine more that year. And they said, looking at other director salaries in the area, you're worth more. But I was making double what the lowest paid people [at Abri House] were making and I didn't feel okay about that. I mean, there was something in my sense of justice that double was too much. That didn't feel okay to me. If there was more money I wanted it spread out, and I wanted the lowest paid people brought up to at least $15,000, which is what we did.

Though she did not tie the issue of pay explicitly to feminism, in the context of the rest of her interview the "sense of justice" that Brenda described was probably feminist. The vast majority of those who talked about issues of low pay at Abri House also related those issues directly to feminism. Beth, like Brenda, described an ideal of moderate pay differences among shelter staff. She made explicit how wages and pay differentials are feminist issues when she asked: "And

how do shelters and feminist organizations keep people working and organizing for long periods of time if they don't take care of workers by providing professional growth, by valuing them financially, and by valuing them personally?" She described "a real contradiction to the feminist model" in "not taking care of your people":

> I think what's happened to places like Abri House is that they're caught. They're wanting to be feminist and progressive, and to do the political work and the social services. And at the same time they're wanting to pay people better, and have people's lives less totally consumed by the work. And, having more traditional structures where there is more monitoring of the work that is happening. I think it was a constant struggle about being feminist and doing the work well, and not alienating any of the people that you work with, and still keeping a presence in the community of being feminist and progressive. You were walking a real tight-rope between the people that you worked with, your own politics, and then the community and what they thought of what you were doing. It's very complex.

Marty also described pay as a feminist issue. She pointed to how important the level and structure of pay may be to the battered women's movements most important contingent, survivors of domestic violence who have used shelters:

> I don't know how particularly feminist it is for all of us to work like dogs and not even be able to make a living. I know for me and others here who are not just the sole family providers, you can't do it. And I think it is not feminist to choose to either work here, or put your kids through school--work here, or feed your family. I think that is pushing people. And that makes me nervous. And it makes me nervous to think about survivors working in the program. I think that is great, on one hand, and then I think wait, isn't there something better? A lot of these women have probably spent much of their life at the poverty level--survivors coming out of emergency programs anyway--why spend the rest that way? Because I haven't heard of a program that isn't operating pretty close to that.

It is important to note that all the women quoted in this section were white and identified as being from middle class backgrounds. They reflected the majority

of women who talked about issues of pay who, with the exception of two white women from working class backgrounds and one Black woman from the middle class, were all white and identified as coming from the middle class. While it is difficult to generalize from this study about differences in perceptions about pay on the basis of race or class differences, that it was mostly white, middle class women who talked about the issue of pay seems significant. However, the women who talked about issues of pay and were quoted in this section were also predominantly administrative workers. Any observed race and class differences may simply be the result of segregation in the organization if administrative workers are perhaps more likely to analyze pay equity (by virtue of their proximity to decisions concerning pay) than are direct service workers. Still, it is remarkable that those most affected by pay inequities, those direct service workers who were at the lower end of the pay scale, seemed less interested in discussing the issue of pay.

Becoming a Racially Diverse Organization

In addition to struggling with commitments to social change in terms of Abri House's structures of decision-making, supervision and pay, Abri House activists have also struggled to meet their social change commitments by including more women of color in the organization. An historically white and middle class organization, Abri House in the past six years has grown to include almost equal numbers of women of color and white women. Brenda, a white woman who

started with Abri House in 1989, explained that bringing more women of color into the organization was a conscious priority:

> When I was first there, for the first two months that I was there, there was one African American woman who was there. And she left because she was on her way out, she was looking for other work . . . it was too hard for her to work there as the only woman of color. And so then we really made, along with increasing staff salaries, our other goal was to diversify the staff, serving all the communities of color. But for those first couple of years, it was all . . . you know, white women with the same values, and it was all very tight in that way. But with missing perspectives. I'm aware now that that's true.

The dual goals of raising salaries and increasing racial diversity demonstrate the political self-consciousness of Abri House activists. Rooting the existence of domestic violence in unequal gendered relations of power, activists also recognized how other systems of oppression, namely those based on class, race, and sexuality, are related to sexism. Six of the seven women from Brenda's cohort, the middle cohort of activists who were all white women that started working with the shelter between 1985 and 1990, when the shelter started becoming racially diverse, talked about the importance of women of color joining the staff; two women from the cohort also talked about diversity in terms of social class. Activists described becoming a more inclusive staff as essential to Abri House effectively serving battered women and advocating for social change. Sarah described becoming a multi-racial organization as basic to defining Abri House:

> A lot of what Abri House is is the experience of Abri House. It's not necessarily what we are doing but, you come into that atmosphere where it is really happening. I mean, you talk about cultural diversity, we have a staff that is culturally diverse, we are right there working that out. We're living together, working together, breathing together, trying to work that stuff out.

Bringing more women of color into the organization was a political decision on the part of Abri House workers. Becoming a multi-ethnic organization therefore expanded in immediate ways Abri House's role as a social change agency. Megan, who started with Abri House in 1985, described the organization as moving beyond the "crisis mode" and into more creative problem solving as more women of color were included in running the organization. She said, "years ago, we were all white, in the same age range," and "mostly into what I call managing the crisis mode." In contrast, Megan explained that more recent staff have expanded the organization's work, specifically to include more of a focus on social change. When I asked if she thought the recently expanded social change orientation was a direct result of more women of color having joined the organization, Megan explained:

> I don't know if I could say that it is a direct cause and effect. But I think that it heavily influences it. I think any time you bring in people with different backgrounds, different experiences, different cultures, you're opening up a whole lot of new horizons, like raising the blinds to a whole new section of your view. And you can't help but be influenced by that.

And, as Brenda described the role of women of color in Abri House's social change work:

> It's interesting, because with the diversification of the staff, I think that we have people now who their whole lives, because they are women of color, have been about changing society. Because since day one, they knew that it had to change. So, it's just more a part of who they are than it is for me who grew up with a fair amount of privilege--educational privilege, white privilege, economic privilege, all of that. And so my belief in the need for change is more theoretical, except in terms of being a woman, and then being a lesbian. But, for them it feels like it is much more a part of who they are. Their actions are constantly being measured against that, is this really changing society. And I don't think they would allow Abri House to become just a social service agency. They are constantly thinking of ways to make the changes.

Megan may be right that "any time you bring in people with different backgrounds" you open up "a whole new section of your view." More precisely, you probably need to bring in numbers of people from different backgrounds, and put them in positions where they have power, in order to really broaden your view. And, as Brenda suggested, it may be that women of color have a more immediate relationship to social change than do white women. Regardless, it is undoubtedly true that in struggling with racism, and benefiting from the insights of women of color, Abri House activists have expanded their potential for social change.

Some activists, however, attributed even more specific changes in the organization to Abri House becoming multi-racial. Several women associated the organization's increasing racial diversity with changes in Abri House's internal organization and relationships. Three activists, all white women, described Abri House's staff as less consumed with the organization's internal dynamics since women of color have been on staff in significant numbers. Brenda explained that when she started with the shelter,

> We were really into process. We could go into a meeting and process something for hours. And when we diversified, I mean, I don't know that I can generalize about all communities of color in this way, but it seemed like that [process] got cut back. There just was, you know, there is work to be done here, there just isn't time for all this. Let's cut to the chase and figure out what we are going to do, and not get all caught up in the process of how we are to decide what we are going to do.

From the same cohort, Joanna also described a changing work culture and the loss of a lot of "process" among staff members. Acknowledging that regular staff "maintenance" meetings had become very "spill your guts" and "touchy

freely," Joanna said she valued them as a way of "knowing what was on peoples' minds, what was up with them, what they were dealing with." When Denise, a woman of color, "who had a very different style," took over a coordinating position, Joanna remembered:

> I think it was a real good decision administratively, so on the whole it was really great. I just want to say that, and stress that. But some of the negative effects of it though, or some of the ramifications were, she makes decisions really quick, and some times I felt like I couldn't keep up. You know, part of making decisions quickly is being able to let go of something if it is not working. And I would sometimes just feel kind of lost in that. Like, wait a minute, what's really important? I sometimes just sort of wondered about people training, volunteers or new staff, people looking for guidance or whatever, that without that kind of grounding in how to make that decision, what is important to consider, a little bit of process, people lose the chance to understand how she made her decision. And instead you just get this kind of change in gears really fast, and your head starts to spin. That's what I had sometimes, was the feeling that my head was spinning.

Like Brenda, Joanna pointed out that it is difficult to make generalizations about women of color from individual experiences at Abri House. Joanna attributed most changes in the work culture to the organization's overall growth. Still, Joanna associated changes in the work culture with at least one women's ethnic background:

> Denise is a woman of color, she is a Black woman, and very grounded in that identity. And in a lot of beautiful ways brings that to her work. That changes our culture, and that is important to think about. It is a hard thing to do. And my experiences are just one small part of those changes. I would never look at her work and say that the way she does things is wrong or that her decisions are wrong. But it is definitely different, and it is something we struggled with, and worked on.

Joanna also observed that Denise's "cut to the meat of it style" was probably good for galvanizing people around a vision in a movement organization like Abri

House. On the other hand, she pointed out, it is difficult to agree on a vision and the danger is that with quick decision making, alternative views will not be expressed or considered. Still, Joanna said she "would not go back," assumably to a smaller, more process-oriented and more homogeneous work culture. She saw her struggle with the changing work culture as part of "uncovering a lot of our racism."

Although three women from the middle cohort shared the view that a more "cut to the chase" attitude was related to more women of color being on staff, it is important, as Brenda and Joanna pointed out, to be careful about making generalizations. Susie, for example, a Black woman from the latest cohort, suggested that the amount of process among the staff and the presence of women of color were unrelated. During her interview, Susie joked about how she and another Black woman on staff shared the attitude that, "if you want something done, give it to me; if you want to sit around and talk about it, I'll see you later." When I asked her if she thought that was related to their shared ethnicity, Susie replied, "Oh, God no. 'Cause I haven't encountered many people like me of any color."

Susie's comment points out that although it seems significant that three of the seven activists who experienced Abri House becoming more diverse perceived a relationship between process and diversity, it is difficult to conclude a relationship exists. First, there is the obvious problem of making gross generalizations about a widely diverse group (i.e., assuming Black, Chicana, and Native American Indian women share a "cut to the chase" attitude). Also, so many changes took place

concurrent to Abri House becoming more diverse--in terms of funding, size, location, etc.--it is impossible to isolate the actual impact of women of color on a "cut to the chase" attitude or a social change orientation. It is entirely possible, for example, that growth, having more money and resources, is the common denominator explaining both the loss of some process and the ability to become a multi-racial organization.

Because white feminism has been noted for its time consuming, process-oriented approach, it is tempting to conclude from the descriptions analyzed in this section that women of color have gotten battered women's activists out of their heads and into the arena of community and social change--at least at Abri House. However, the descriptions analyzed in this section may only be useful in what they say about the perceptions of white shelter workers. In that respect, it is clear that all the white women who experienced and described Abri House becoming racially diverse viewed that experience positively. Although two women also described "struggle" and "spinning heads" in talking about the experience of working in a newly multi-racial organization, activists' typical response was to associate positive and progressive change with more women of color being on staff. In contrast, only one woman of color in my sample was working at Abri House during the time it became more diverse. She did not talk about any structural or organizational changes that she related to the organization becoming racially diverse.

Further, the mostly positive changes that white activists associated with Abri House becoming a racially diverse organization may be relevant to other feminist

organizations that are dealing with racism. White women's perception that the organization was more oriented toward social change and less in the "crisis mode" since becoming racially diverse, for example, is ironic in light of the fact that most women of color in the organization were providing "crisis" or direct services. While women of color may have actually provided more change-oriented direct services than those previously provided by white staff, the fact that positions most directly related to social change work (i.e., community educator and council coordinator) were still held by white women points to the question of exactly how much influence women of color have in defining the organization's social change priorities. If white feminists in newly racially diverse organizations can attribute a social change emphasis to the presence of women of color even when women of color are not in social change oriented jobs, there is still a lot for them to learn about the social change priorities of women of color. Likewise, concerning the perceived relationship between increasing diversity and decreasing process among the staff, the real influence of women of color is uncertain. Perhaps a loss of process is related not so much to a "cut to the chase" attitude on the part of women of color, but to it being more stressful and frustrating to process feelings and concerns in the context of an increasingly diverse group. My research underscores the need for more research on these specific issues.

The Current Structure of Diversity at Abri House

Three of four women of color who started with the shelter after 1993, after Abri House already included significant numbers of women of color, talked about Abri House's diversity. While these women of color recognized that Abri House had done a lot of anti-racism work, they also pointed to some limitations for women of color in the organization. A Black woman, Dianna, pointed to the importance of looking at exactly where women of color are in the organization. Although women of color make up almost half of the organization's staff, the administrative office--excepting the administrative assistant, who is the lowest paid full time staff member--and the board of directors are exclusively white. While women of color have power in their jobs as directors and coordinators of specific programs or services, the top of the Abri House hierarchy is without color.

Dianna described it as a problem of "down here versus up here," and pointed out that where Abri House is racially diverse is, "on the face, for people to see." Dianna described alienating communities and survivors of color as dangerous potential effects of the current structure of diversity at Abri House. Still, she remained hopeful about Abri House's ability to really support women of color:

> They're trying. And if you bring issues up to them, they look into them. I mean, with some people, they are not looking at them, don't want you bringing them up, and that is that. At least they do have their doors open, their ears open, and they are open for suggestions.

Like Dianna, Susie commented on the lopsided structure of diversity at Abri House. She also observed a white bias in the pattern of violence described in much

of the training and education literature used by Abri House. Although the shelter has addressed important issues relevant to making women of color comfortable in the shelter--for example, with food, books and artwork that is not Euro-centric--many tools used for understanding domestic violence were developed when the movement was still almost exclusively white. As a Black woman living in the south, Susie recalled seeing, "a totally different pattern of domestic violence":

> I see all these people who have been married twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years, and . . . he's still carrying the scar from when she got tired of him beating on her. It's like, at the beginning of the marriage, the first two or three years, he gets more and more out of control. And then there finally comes a point when she gets a gun, or a knife, or a bottle of acid, and puts a stop to it! Then they stay married, for another thirty, forty or fifty years. And they fuss and they fight, but it never gets to that point again. So I see a lot of what we talk about at Abri House and in the general literature as being a white pattern.

Although Abri House has been successful in expanding its racial diversity, my interviews with Dianna and Susie suggested some limitations. Regardless of whether Susie's suggestions about differences between white and Black patterns of domestic violence are correct, her comment points out the fact that Abri House and the battered women's movement in general still use theories and tools for understanding that were developed mostly by and for white women. Developing and using new, more racially specific models for understanding would probably happen more quickly if diversity at the top of the hierarchy expanded. In order to really help victims or survivors of color, and to be helped in ending domestic violence by communities of color, women of color need to participate fully at all levels of shelter organizations.

Conclusion

Although Abri House has become fairly typical of traditional social service agencies in terms of becoming more professional and hierarchical, it has remained oriented to social change in a number of important ways. Activists quoted in this chapter, mostly paid staff women--excluding Carrie, the earliest organizer quoted at the beginning of the chapter, and Dianna, the Black volunteer quoted in the last section, all paid staff--described a persistent tension between hierarchy and collectivity in Abri House's history. And current conflicts suggest that Abri House activists are still defining Abri House as a social change organization. The structure of pay, for example, was understood by a majority of activists as a feminist issue. Further, in becoming a racially diverse organization, Abri House has challenged some of the social relationships underlying the problems of individual battered women. Regardless of whether women of color in the organization are directly responsible for the organization spending less time on internal dynamics and more time on community and social change work, their presence is a necessary part of any real challenge to current social norms.

However, Abri House still runs the risk of becoming just another social service. The current structure of diversity at Abri House, for example, suggests that should activists become complacent about racism, Abri House could become yet another white hierarchy that limits not the numbers, but the power of people of color. That would severely limit any real social change Abri House's staff might want to accomplish. Likewise, current conflicts around pay, supervision, and

participation in decision making suggest that there is still room for more of a service orientation in terms of the organization's structure. Beth suggested that Abri House's orientations to social service and social change will depend on the political self-consciousness of its staff:

> I think what happens is that you hire political, feminist people if that is what you want the organization to be. If you get a mix of people that is less prone to that, then you will have a bunch of social service people working in a social service agency. And that is what can happen to places like that.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND INDIVIDUAL SERVICES

As activists are redefining Abri House's structural orientation to social service and social change, they are also redefining the roles of individual and social/ political understandings of violence in their work with individuals, namely battered women. For a movement said to have originated in the feminist consciousness raising groups of the 1970s, the role of therapy, or individual counseling is particularly relevant. Where consciousness raising groups offer a social, egalitarian setting in which women can explore the politics of domestic violence, therapy offers a private, individualized setting marked by a relationship of unequal power between therapist and client. Individual counseling services, particularly long term, case management services, are playing an increasing role in the work of Abri House, and in the battered women's movement in general. On the surface, the increase in long term, one-on-one, counseling and case management services suggests a more traditional, social service orientation. Looking closely at differences and similarities in activists' opinions about specific counseling issues, however, suggests a more complex answer.

Eleven of the 23 activists interviewed for this study had received professional training in counseling and had worked or were working directly with battered women. Almost half of the 11 counselors were from the earliest cohort

and the remaining six were divided evenly between the two later cohorts. Contrary to what academic literature might suggest, there was no evidence that the trained counselors who worked later at Abri House favored more traditional, individual therapeutic approaches than did earlier counselors (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Johnson, 1981; Teirney, 1982). Further, all activists, including those not trained in providing counseling services, favored combining self-help and peer, or consciousness-raising techniques, with more traditional, therapeutic techniques. Activists balanced individual and social approaches in a variety of ways in their understandings of counseling, or "treatment" issues.

This chapter describes an initial distrust of therapy on the part of shelter activists, the subsequent incorporation of therapeutic ideas into shelter work, and some current issues for the counseling and treatment of survivors, victims, and batterers that emerged from my interviews with Abri House activists. Specifically, I will discuss a possible shift in the population of shelter residents; the roles of peer support and counseling in work with survivors; case management and transitional services; alcohol and drug treatment; issues of accountability in treatment programs; issues in batterer treatment; and, early education about domestic violence issues.

An Initial Distrust of Therapy

Five activists mentioned an initial distrust on the part of shelter activists of traditional, therapeutic techniques. All of these five had been working with either Abri House or another battered women's shelter by 1980, three were from the

earliest cohort and were working at Abri House by 1981. Ann, who started working with the shelter in 1978, described her and a friend's desire to provide counseling for battered women.

> I was an undergraduate at the University, and I'm not sure if Mary was an undergraduate or a graduate, but she and I wanted to do counseling there, we wanted to provide counseling for battered women. And they didn't have counseling for battered women. So, we talked with Sue Burn, that's probably a name you haven't heard of. Sue Burn was a feminist therapist who had just moved up here from the Bay Area. This was when radical therapy was just beginning, and there was some consciousness down in the Bay Area around all that. And she said, well, I'll deal with the staff at Abri House and get them so that they will trust counselors, and then you can come in and really do some work. So what happened at the time was that Sue and a friend of hers did six months of in-house counseling free, just helping women. And they built trust with the staff that was there. Because the staff didn't trust counselors, rightfully so. And then at the end of that [time], they sent us to the staff and said here are these two women who want to do support groups, and you can trust them.

When I asked Ann why the staff did not trust counselors, she explained that counselors didn't believe their female clients. She referred to Woman on the Edge of Time, Marge Piercy's (1976) seminal novel about one woman's struggle against the abuse of mental health experts, to describe the context.

> Pretty basic stuff. They would label them, they would throw them in mental institutions. They would blame them. They would see the women as crazy and not understand the root causes. And that book, *Woman on the Edge of Time*, that was the time we were living in, when that book was written. And it was like, that is not going to happen to women anymore. To me, it was very exciting to be of that time when women had said that and then gone out and done something about it.

Likewise, Pete, who became associated with Abri House in 1994 recalled an initial distrust of counselors on the part of early shelter workers in the Midwest. As a case worker for a state child protective service in the late 1970s, Pete worked

often with victims of domestic violence but found little support from the local battered women's movement.

> And maybe this was the era and the state of development of the organization, but some of the folks in the feminist movement at the time--and again, this is a while back, and particularly in the battered women's movement--had really closed ranks, and it was a very closed system. It was, you know, for a male, it was extremely hard to penetrate. What you heard, I mean you heard a lot of stuff from them, you heard a lot of the anger, but there wasn't as much opportunity to educate. And frankly, to a certain degree, some of the messages, which were important messages, were hard to hear through the anger. So there wasn't the kind of collaboration that could have lead to some education.

The initial distrust of therapy did not last, as the development and popularity of Lenore Walker's (1984) Cycle of Violence suggests. As Ann explained, the growing acceptance of therapy by the battered women's movement is undoubtedly in part due to the success of feminist criticisms of the Freudian, repression-based model for psychology, and to the development of feminist therapies:

> In the field of psychology and in the field of abuse, for the last six years, '88 to now, phenomenal strides are being made to really help people. If somebody would have come to me in '78 through '81, I would have done my best in my heart-felt way. They come to me now and I am just so relieved because I know so much more, and everybody else does too. We had to essentially deal with the feminist movement, with the patriarchal society, until a lot of people could say, the established family psychology is wrong. And we need to believe our clients.

With changes in some of the basic assumptions of psychology, the role of therapy in the battered women's movement as a whole, and Abri House in particular, has widened. The widening can in part be attributed to the success of feminist criticisms of psychology and the development of feminist therapies (Greenspan, 1983). Dobash and Dobash (1992) suggest a growing role for therapy in the

movement can also be attributed to highly individualistic and therapeutic orientations in dominant United States culture. It should also be considered, however, that a changing population of clients in battered women's shelters has made individual counseling a more necessary part of shelter services.

Who Is Coming to Shelters and Do They Need Therapy?

Four shelter activists, all trained in counseling, commented on the changing population of shelter residents. Since only 11 of the 23 activists interviewed were trained in counseling and providing direct services to clients while working at the shelter, it is significant, especially in light of the fact that the issue was not part of the interview schedule, that four women initiated discussions about the changing shelter population. Sarah, who started working in the battered women's movement in the late 1970s, explained:

> The population of the shelter has changed a lot. When I worked in shelters early on, it was pretty much women who were regular women, who's only problems were, they ended up with a man who ended up being violent. And all they really needed to do was get out of the relationship, set up their own household, and get on with their lives. They pretty much didn't have, quote, unquote, mental health issues--unless they had been traumatized by the violence. They needed to recover from that and heal from that, and then move on. But, the population that we see now have chronic, multiple problems, from birth. They have alcoholism and drug abuse, almost 100% of the women we are seeing now. They have mental illnesses, they have mental disabilities, they are coming more from families where they were beaten from the day they were born, totally dysfunctional families. So they have had series upon series of abusive relationships, and that's an issue in their lives. They don't know how to parent their own children, they are abusive toward their own children. So, I have seen more of how battering could be a secondary issue for people. Obviously it is a chronic issue, and an important issue, but there is more going on in the picture than just that.

And, in describing why she thought Abri House was becoming more of a social service agency and less of a social change agency, Kim, who worked in one of Abri House's transitional programs, explained that the organization is doing more long term work with women who "have different kinds of needs than they had four years ago." When asked to explain she continued,

> More women with drug and alcohol issues. I don't know if that's different, or if that's being talked about more--that the shame around that isn't such a big deal, even though there is still an incredible amount of shame for a lot of women around that issue. Many more mentally ill women. Many more poverty, I mean, really poverty stricken women. It seems like we are not seeing, middle class, or even upper lower class women. It's people who have no other options. And I don't know where those other people are getting their services, but they're getting them some place else. Or they have other safety nets. But, we're reeling.

Shelter activists provided a range of possible explanations for a shift in the shelter population, including a general increase in the prevalence of drugs in the culture as a whole and the deinstitutionalization of many mentally ill during the Reagan administration. All of the women mentioned that the shift was due at least in part to advances made by the battered women's movement--to the existence of shelters and resources specific to the needs of battered women, and to changes in the awareness of service providers in more traditional settings.

> My theory is that women who are pretty self-sufficient and functional--who are in battering relationships now that there is enough support in the social system--that they can get restraining orders, kick the guy out, etc. They can get more help from their families now, because their families are educated about domestic violence, they're not ostracized and shunned like they used to be. They can use the resources that battered women have developed over the years, the laws, and everything they have changed work for those women, and they can pretty much get out with some crisis counseling and support groups, they can do it. I think it is a good sign. I think what we are seeing now is women who never would have had access to that kind of

> help in their lives. Now they are sort of crawling out from under the sidewalks and saying, remember us, we are here too.

Not everyone agreed, however, that a change in the shelter population has taken place. When asked what she thought about the change that four paid staff from the most recent cohort perceived, Ann, who worked with the shelter from 1978 to 1982, responded,

> I don't think that the women coming to us are any more damaged now than they were then. I think that every woman I worked with, when I look back to that point in time, every woman had very, very deep layers of work that needed to be done. But what could be done was the establishing of that structure, the beginning of a connection.

Ann's response points to the important question of what is changing; what actually needs to be done (for a changing population), or the perception of and limits to what needs to be done (by a more highly trained staff). Answering this question is obviously beyond the scope of this study; the fact that so many of trained counselors perceived a change in the population may simply be the result of their being trained to see more problems and associated with the growing professionalism described in Chapter IV. However, regardless of whether or not the actual population is changing, my study did make clear that the perception of change has affected the priorities of those providing counseling and direct services for the Abri House organization. Perhaps, as Sarah and Kim suggested, Abri House is now dealing with women with deeper layers of problems. Or, as Ann's response suggests, the perceived limits on what can be done have simply expanded. Either way, intensive, one on one counseling services, particularly long term, case management type services are playing an increasing role at Abri House. The

following sections will address activists' concerns about the nature of counseling services.

Counseling or Consciousness Raising?

Consistent with Abri House's organizational structure (see Chapter IV) and the political motivation of many of its activists (see Chapter VI), the techniques used in counseling women clients typically included looking at the social causes of violence against women. All three activists from the latest cohort who were trained in counseling discussed the social nature of domestic violence in their work with clients. Sarah explained:

> I don't like the word counseling, because I think of traditional counseling, and I don't do traditional counseling. I would call it feminist counseling, or whatever, where you look at sexism, you look at power dynamics, at power, control and oppression, and how those create battering, but you are doing it with individuals, instead of maybe groups of people. When I hear, let's all get into counseling and it will all be better, I don't buy that at all.

Minding the importance of social issues in their work with individuals, Abri House activists were not predisposed to abandoning individual-based, therapeutic techniques altogether. When asked to compare the usefulness of consciousness raising, or support groups, to more traditional, therapeutic techniques, all of the twenty three activists interviewed saw a place for both in the movement. Claire, who started as a volunteer for the shelter and moved into a staff position in transitional services, explained:

> I think it is different with different women. But I found the work on the one on one basis really effective because a woman could really have all the attention for an hour. And it was her issues, and her questions, everything

> that we were addressing and looking at. Whereas in a support group, she really has to share the floor a lot. In a lot of support groups that I've observed, you can get a couple women who are real comfortable taking the time and really spending energy on their own issues, and I think a lot of women get missed that way. And I know that the best thing about a support group is women can hear, when another woman is speaking and then think, wow, that is what I went through. And there is that really wonderful sisterhood that develops. So that is why I do like both things, and I think pretty much if we left it up to the women they would just gravitate to the one that would benefit them.

And, several activists saw more intense, one-on-one counseling as important in the later stages of a women's healing from domestic violence. Carmelita, who also started as a volunteer and worked as a shelter supervisor before working in one of the transitional programs, explained that consciousness raising was a basic part of the shelter experience.

> That is the kind of thing that would happen at the shelter, you know, women sitting around the table, late at night, and they start talking about their stuff. You know, right there with being really honest with the other residents, about where they were coming from. But also being real supportive.

Concerned about the power dynamics between counselor and client, she suggested that one on one counseling might be most helpful,

> . . . further on down the line with women. It just depends. There are women who say, I don't want to deal with issues around my childhood right now. I know it was bad--I mean, this, this and this--but I can't deal with it right now!

The Case for Case Management

The concern for working "further on down the line with women," was not simply a therapeutic issue for shelter activists. Although not part of the interview schedule, over half of the 23 activists interviewed returned several times in their

interviews to the importance of long-term, transitional services for survivors and victims of domestic violence. Two women who talked about the importance of transitional services were former participants in Abri House programs who had returned to the organization as volunteers, five were women who worked in direct services, and five were in administrative positions. Relevant to the perceived change in the shelter population, 11 of the 12 activists who returned to the subject of transitional services were from the two later cohorts and began working at the shelter after 1988. Their emphasis on transitional, case management type services was influenced by two primary concerns: The structural and practical barriers that cause many women to return to abusers; and, as already discussed, that shelter residents may increasingly have multiple layers of problems that can not be addressed in the average four week shelter stay.

While the overwhelming support for long term, case management for survivors and victims may seem a retreat to more traditional, individual social service, and would therefore seem to indicate a move away from a social change focus, that activists consistently rooted their desire for more case management in their desire to help women with practical, social barriers makes that conclusion difficult. The experience of Dianna, a former shelter resident who was also a participant in one of Abri House's transitional programs, helps to illustrate this point. After leaving the emergency shelter and getting a place of her own, Dianna "kept running back over" to the shelter to get the resources she needed to make a new home. Shelter staff helped her out with beds and clothes, and with other

furniture through networking her with community resources. Eventually, she was referred to one of the case management programs. She recalled,

> And then, you know, I felt safe again, I didn't feel like I was on my own, by myself, going out there and just going for your guts. I felt like, okay, at least they're not letting me go all the way. And that's the good thing about that program, it is like the program that holds your hand after you come up out of all that stuff, that says, look, we're not just going to throw you out on the streets and let you deal with life all on your own. We're gonna walk you through it. And that's what they do, they walk you through it. They stick with you for a whole year, and help you out with the ins and outs, help you make decisions, help you come up with decisions to make, and then help you go about taking care of that decision.
>
> And, say, for instance, references and resources, and things like that. The program could keep you up to date, keep you posted on things that are going on for you. For instance, if I wasn't in the program, I'm not in the shelter, how would I know if they were starting up a new support system? How would I know that they just started up this new Easter program where if you are low income, your family can come and your kids can get a free Easter basket? Well, here is this little organization that helps kids out with school, they help them get a pair of shoes for school, and a nice coat--and maybe a couple of nice pairs of pants and some warm shirts. Well, you won't know about that if you are not connected with the resources.

And, Kim, who provided transitional services for survivors commented:

> When I listen to women who go back [to abusers], or if you ask the women here what kept them going back, it is lack of housing . . . real practical things. A lot of times, I mean, yes, there are feelings involved, or there's children, or whatever. But a lot of times it is real practical things--they didn't have money for groceries, they didn't have access to housing. It is the practical stuff--they didn't have transportation. The practical stuff sent them back. And, I'm kind of a pragmatist. One of the things I like about this job is that I can give women some practical help.

In addition to wanting to help with practical barriers, Abri House activists also argued for more transitional services to help clients deal with the multiple emotional and psychological problems described earlier. Several women described internal, emotional problems caused by long histories of abuse. Claire explained:

> One of the things that I experience in working with women is that a large percentage, over half of the women have been abused as children, have had serious abuse issues growing up. Or, some of them have seen violence growing up. But most of them have been sexually abused, for sure emotionally abused, and a lot of them beaten as children. And so there's this part of it that when--but when part of the public presentation of Abri House is that it could happen to any woman, I completely agree with that, and I also know that partly why it can happen to every woman is because every child isn't safe. And every child is not protected. And so that sets up the dynamic. But I think that the women who haven't been abused, that have been battered, that I've worked with, most of them get through it much quicker. They get back on their feet, they get going, they don't have as much. The battles they fight tend to be more the external obstacles that get in their way. And they get in there and they challenge them and they get through them. The women who have been abused [as children] are fighting those battles, a lot of those battles internally. There are those internal barriers, I think.

Alcohol and Drug Treatment

Childhood abuse is only one of the multiple problems Abri House activists recognized in their clients. Activists also described seeing many more drug and alcohol addicted women seeking services. Veronica's experience when she first left her abuser and came into the shelter testifies to the prevalence of drug and alcohol issues.

> And when I walked in it was like, AGH!!! And I was like, oh God, because the three women I saw, they ended up getting kicked out, because of drug use. And that's what I thought it was going to be, because that is what I saw when I first walked in. And I thought, I'm not like this, you know, I'm not a druggie.

Although not part of the interview schedule, nine women talked about alcohol and drug (A and D) treatment issues at length. It is consistent with the activists' perception that substance abuse is an increasingly important issue that,

with the exception of Cheryl, who worked in an administrative position in the early 1980s and was working in the alcohol and drug recovery field when she was interviewed, all nine women had started working with the shelter after 1988. Again, this may be due either to the fact that more alcohol and drug addicted women are actually seeking shelter, or it may be that shelter activists are simply less naive about drug and alcohol issues. Cheryl explained,

> Ten years ago, it was like you had the A and D people over here and they said battering happens because people use and drink. And you had the women's movement saying, well, battering happens because of all the social dynamics. And, it is like, they were nose to nose. And, since I have matured, I understand things as being a lot more complex, rather than so simple. Clearly, I think substance abuse plays a role. Is it the cause? Maybe in some cases it is. I think it grants permission a lot of times.

More recent shelter activists clearly felt they could no longer afford to ignore substance abuse among their clients. Robin explained:[1]

> It's funny because I am one, a survivor, and I'm also a recovering person. What I can tell you personally is that I don't believe one can be dealt with without the other. I was in other twelve step programs, could not manage to stay clean, and of course had no realization that the reason I couldn't manage to stay clean was because I was getting the shit kicked out of me on a daily basis. There was no way. And, a couple of the women that I have had here in the house were also my clients over at [a drug and alcohol treatment center]. I remember one who was in her abusive relationship when she first came into treatment, and she was trying to get me to help her figure out a way that she could live with this man, and stay sober--while he was drinking and beating her up and everything. And I remember sitting there and saying, you can't do this. And she was just devastated.
>
> I don't believe that a person who is in recovery or trying to get into recovery can stay clean while being beat up. I also believe that if you have someone in the shelter and they are continuing to drink and use, the chances of them going back are real high. They make bad choices, they over-

[1]Robin is a pseudonym used only in the immediate discussion. In order to assure her anonymity, the activist Robin is not so named in other chapters or parts of this chapter.

> sentimentalize things. You're seeing more women and men who use together, so he might be her dealer, he might be her access to the drug. Or her drinking buddy. I believe you have to deal with those things up front.

While current shelter activists unanimously agreed on the need to deal with A and D issues, they also expressed concern over how those issues are incorporated in the shelter organization's work with women. A third of the women who discussed A and D issues also expressed concern over how those issues were incorporated. Their concerns echoed existing feminist criticisms of Twelve Step and self-help programs. Kaminer (1992) sums up those criticisms:

> The self-help tradition has always been covertly authoritarian and conformist, relying as it does on a mystique of expertise, encouraging people to look outside themselves for standardized instructions on how to be, teaching us that different people with different needs can easily be saved by the same techniques. It is anathema to independent thought. (p. 6)

The problem of looking outside one's self for guidelines for behavior becomes particularly relevant for battered women. Joanna, who worked in a number of direct service positions for the organization described her fear that addiction theory can lead to victim blaming: That instead of looking at the social reasons why women end up battered, applying A and D treatment models to domestic violence focuses on individual, co-dependent behavior, and therefore ends up blaming victims of domestic violence for their roles in the relationships. After explaining that "there is a lot of theory out there right now around addiction in relationships and addiction theory in general," Joanna commented that it "definitely dilutes the social change vision somewhat."

> I'm against using addiction theory and applying it to battering, I feel like it does victim blame. It's fine to talk with someone and to facilitate their

> process of thinking about how their own childhood did contribute to the things that they were looking for in a relationship. And how they were vulnerable to certain men, so that they can have power over that and control over it. But just to apply the theory of addiction is just really heavy-handed, and just not very helpful. And really off-base. I mean, I say that from working with women, I think that there is some of both. But I think you really need to err on the side of assuming that a woman isn't to be held responsible for her situation. Because when she is, well, she can come to discover that. You don't want to deny it when it comes up. That is a pitfall, and this is where Abri House and the movement may be at fault; that we do have women who come in and are addicts and need to be in recovery, and we did like to say, oh, you don't have a problem. And we help her deny it. And that's not helpful. And that's where we need to kind of get worked up on this issue, that is the work to be done. But the work to be done is not to change or to just let our philosophy just go over to the way substance abuse issues are looked at.

As Claire addressed the same fears:

> There is a lot of talk right now about alcoholism and drugs, and really addressing that. My fear is that that will take over. And again, it's just like, we've got to make sure that . . . I mean, there has even been some talk about doing alcohol and drug testing, and then, it's again, putting it back on the woman in some way--that there is something amiss here. So I have a lot of fear around that whole area. I really like to see Abri House going into, say, the alcohol treatment programs and bringing them information about domestic violence, so that they can add that piece to what they do. And I'm a little bit concerned about how we're bringing the alcohol piece and the drug piece into Abri House. And I'm just kind of watching that to see.

Two major areas of concern for battered women's activists with the A and D treatment models seem to be around turning over one's fate to a higher power, and making amends, or holding one's self accountable for past wrongs. For activists who are trying to empower battered women, to help them see that they can take control of their lives and that they are not at fault for the abuse inflicted upon them, these steps of the A and D model can be frustrating. In short, battered women already feel powerless enough, and their tendency is hold themselves fully

accountable, holding themselves responsible for abuse inflicted against them. As Carmelita referred to her work with survivors who are also recovering alcoholics or addicts, "it is a really interesting kind of little line I walk on."

My interview with Robin, quoted above, concerning the emeshed nature of domestic violence and A and D issues, revealed the most about how activists can empower battered women and still hold them accountable for their substance abuse issues. Recognizing that most of the women she works with "take too much responsibility for their role, quote, unquote, in a domestic violence situation," Robin also pointed out that, "if we don't hold women accountable for their actions, we are giving them the message that they can't do it." In a lengthy discussion about the dangers and over-use of the word co-dependency, its potential appropriateness when applied to A and D dynamics and its inappropriateness for domestic violence issues, Robin explained:

> You know, if I am living with someone who is over-eating and they are, you know, diabetic because they have been over-eating, or whatever, and I do things that help them continue that behavior when it is not healthy for them, then I have some things that I can look at there that are my behaviors, that I can own, that have contributed to this dynamic. I will not do that with a domestic violence situation. There is nothing you can do to win. There is nothing that a woman can change. Because she has probably changed everything she could change anyway. She's probably changed her hair, she's changed her weight, she's changed her job, she's changed the way she keeps the house. You know, she changes everything and there is no winning that game. Where in another kind of dynamic, maybe with someone who is over-eating, someone who is an addict or an alcoholic, not violent, someone engaging in some other type of unhealthy behavior where the two really are a part of a dynamic, there is something that one person can do and it can have an effect.

Robin went on to address the fact that no one can really make an alcoholic or drug addict stop abusing alcohol or drugs, but that you can affect the consequences that result from their substance abuse if you stop, "contributing to someone else's continuing to do destructive behavior." Whereas with domestic violence, "There is nothing that a woman can do that is going to do anything. You know, if she changes something, the rules change." Still, she believed in holding women accountable. Robin explained that for her, part of holding people accountable was making sure that they received information about the choices for which they were being held accountable. Regarding how she held accountable one resident who was "really just on a run of getting involved with one man after another," or "acting out sexually," Robin recalled,

> It is like, once I give you this information, you know it now. We talked about her pattern, it's been one man right after another. What's going on here? What do you think this is about? Maybe she didn't know that, maybe she didn't really realize that there is a pattern--she feels this way and then there is a new man, and then she feels this way and then there is a new man. But, after we sat down, she knows it now. So the next time, if there is a next time . . . and, holding her accountable still doesn't mean blaming her, but the next time it is going to be, okay, what did we talk about, what are you doing here? And usually what happens here is that they come to the conclusion faster than the next time.

In sum, Robin's belief system for working with clients was, "I know they can change their lives, and I expect them to." However, she adds, "I kind of look at it differently than a lot of people do. And I know that is a tough pill to swallow for a lot of people."

Accountability and the Dynamics of Responsibility

Robin was probably right. The level at which she holds her clients accountable for their actions may, for many in the battered women's movement, be a "tough pill to swallow." Combating the historical legacy of blaming women for men's violence against them, many battered women's activists may err in the direction of granting battered women too little responsibility for directing their lives. Focusing on the social causes of domestic violence, battered women's activists have tried to publicize the message that any woman can find herself in a violent intimate relationship, no matter how educated, savvy or emotionally "together" she is. Compared to a more individualized explanation that might suggest some women are simply too healthy or too smart to be taken in by a batterer, the feminist analysis points to problems with male and female socialization, and with social institutions--not to individual women's problems--in defining domestic violence.

In terms of accountability for life choices, Robin expected different things from people based on how much education and information they had received. She pointed out that she does not "expect the same thing out of a woman who has been here a week as I do my senior member of the house who has been here nine months." Still, consistent with a feminist analysis, she believed that no amount of education and information can insure a life free from domestic violence. When asked regarding her own ability to avoid abusive relationships, "do you really

believe the old phrase, there but for the grace of God go I?", Robin replied with laughter, "again."

> I've looked at that for myself, and I've talked to other women who work in this field. I would hope that I have enough information and enough education and enough knowledge now, have done enough research on batterers myself, I would hope that nine out of ten batterers would not get by me. But that doesn't mean that one wouldn't.

Robin was clearly in the majority in her perspective. Of the 23 activists interviewed, 18 indicated that they agreed with the feminist assertion that domestic violence could happen to any woman. Further, of the five that disagreed, four added that they felt in the minority among shelter activists in holding that position. And, contrary to the view that feminist battered women's shelters have moved toward more individual analyses of domestic violence since becoming more mainstream organizations, four of the five women who disagreed with the view that intimate violence could inflict any woman were from the earliest cohort of shelter activists and had started working for the shelter by 1980. The fifth activist to disagree with the premise that battering can happen to any woman worked in the administrative office for a short time during 1994. She explained her concerns about battered women's accountability in violent relationships:

> On some level, I would never say this to battered women, on some level though there is a personal responsibility. And I've thought about it in my own life and in my work life recently, if you set yourself up as a victim, it does not give anyone the right to victimize you, but, it will open the door.
>
> And I don't blame [victims]. I think we are set up to be victims, by anything that we have survived, and just by being good women, that's somewhat victim-like behavior. But I think that once we realize that there is a victim-like behavior going on, we are responsible for actively trying to change it. It doesn't decrease the batterer's responsibility in any way,

> because you still have the option not to do it. If the door is open, you don't have to go in.

Likewise, Jean, who identified as a survivor of domestic violence and started volunteering for the shelter in 1978, described why she could not locate the causes of domestic violence as completely social: "It's still individual though, you know. I just know that if I hadn't made some individual decisions, if I hadn't made some individual choices, I would not end up where I am in this society right now." And Carrie, an original organizer of the shelter, described her views as "certainly not as militant as a lot of people I knew."

> I guess I don't see women as the victims necessarily that a lot of us did at that time. I think that takes a lot of power away from women, to consider them always victims. And I think that at that time even, I worked more with couples.

Carrie's resistance to seeing women as victims, and her commitment to working with couples points to a fundamental question underlying how responsible or accountable women should be held for their roles in violent relationships: Is battering the result of a dysfunctional dynamic between two partners (in which case, victims or survivors should be held fully accountable for their roles in the dynamics), or is it the result of one partner, the batterer, using manipulation and control to get power in an intimate relationship? Ann, who said she knows people that would never end up in an abusive relationship, who "have too much of an established sense of self. They are too healthy," seemed to fall on the side of believing abuse to be the result of a dynamic.

> You really have to look at the whole system, you have to look at the system of relating. I remember sitting in a group one time and saying, well, you

> know, you hit her. It is like outrageous, why would you do that? And he said, well, you know, when she hit me I just couldn't hold back anymore. And it is not like I believe that women provoke men, but that there is a dynamic that goes on that has to do with bonding in hostility, that each of us are capable of acting out bonding in hostility. Unless we are pretty healthy and we refuse to do it. So, there is just a ton of different ways of doing it. I think that that's what needs to be looked at in this whole movement of people hurting people. Part of what we have to do is look at how bonding is hurtful and how it has been from the beginning for a lot of people that bonding got associated with being hurt, and so that's what is entrained in them, in a physiological way--in a biochemical, neuro-transmitter-wise way. I don't know if you've read any stuff around the biochemistry, biophsyiology of bonding, but it is incredible. It is right there. And each person is individual. So I think we are naive if we don't attend to that in some very basic ways.

Mary used the term codependent to refer to battering relationships. When I asked her if she considered herself a survivor of domestic violence, she explained:

> I would say no, but that is a really fine line because I was in a very traditional relationship, and my husband very typically wanted to be the head of the household. And when our marriage ended we together developed an incident where he hit me. What I see looking back now is that I was trying to free myself and he was trying to make demands and we got into a conflict over one of the children--and it is kind of funny, speaking of the 60s, it was over whether the child was going to have his hair cut. The child was nine years old and wanted to wear his hair long and his father was going to cut it, and I stopped him. And looking back it was what we used to end the relationship. It was ending, and we got into this conflict, and I just left. And I never looked back once even with regret once because I was ready to leave. That's how come I know that I was a part of it. I was, we were in this dynamic where he was trying to pound me into shape and I was becoming more and more rebellious.

When I pointed out that he was then trying to regain control she continued,

> He was. And I'd helped alienate the kids from him, you know, they were on my side. And so the more I look at it, it was a two way street. We were in it together.

Mary also commented that she thought recent Abri House activists would probably disagree with her understanding of domestic violence. In light of how

most activists responded to the notion that any woman could be a battered woman, Mary was probably correct in assuming that most activists would disagree with her. At least in terms of thinking about women's accountability in abusive relationships, most activists seemed to identify more clearly with a feminist political perspective that abuse is the result of socially sanctioned male power in the family, than with a more psychological perspective that abuse is the result of dysfunctional relationship dynamics and poor communication skills (see G., 1994 and Jones, 1994 for examples of feminist approaches; Dobash & Dobash, 1992 for a discussion of differences between feminist and traditional psychological approaches). However, before concluding that the majority of activists therefore supported an understanding of domestic violence rooted in social causes and solutions, the issue of batterer treatment is important to consider.

Batterer Treatment

While battered women's advocates have taken care to point to the social institutions and norms that create "battered women," they have also asserted the need for batterers to take full responsibility for their abuse. In my interviews with Abri House activists, individual psychology and responsibility played bigger roles in describing work with batterers than they did in describing work with battered women. This may point to a more general trend toward individualistic solutions to domestic violence in the context of working with batterers. As one honest activist suggested about finding individual and social explanations, "If I think about

batterers and what causes them to batter, I start to go this way. And if I think about what causes women to be victims, I start to go the other way."

Although in the last sections a majority of activists clearly rooted domestic violence in a feminist political analysis of male power and control in describing issues relevant to working with victims, their views about relationship dynamics and batterer control were more evenly distributed concerning work with battering men. Among 10 activists who talked at length about batterer treatment, half focused on issues of anger and poor-relating skills in their discussions about batterers, and half focused on the effective use of manipulation and control by batterers. Differences in responses on the issue were equally distributed among the earliest, middle and later cohorts of shelter workers indicating no significant differences according to when activists worked in the shelter. While responses were not clearly polarized into two camps, anger vs. control, activists expressed some distinct differences regarding their priorities for batterer treatment. Differences reflected debates that currently frame feminist and psychological literature on batterer treatment (Eisidovits & Edleson, 1989; Gondolf & Russell, 1986; Ritmeester, 1986).

As with issues concerning women's accountability in abusive relationships, differences in opinion concerning batterer treatment reflected the question of whether abuse is the result of dysfunctional dynamics or of one partner's manipulation and control. Discussions concerning treatment for batterers were typically framed in terms of more psychological concerns about anger, which can

be escalated or de-escalated in the context of good or bad relationship skills, or political or social concerns about control, the socially sanctioned expression of one partner's perceived right to have power over intimates.

Mary, who described moving away from looking at the problem as one that existed "completely because men have all the power and have been allowed to hit women," seemed to locate battering more in anger than in control. "Though I never got to the point where the person who hit wasn't responsible for her or his hitting," Mary recalled becoming more firmly convinced that abuse issues concern "a dynamic between two persons." Her conviction eventually led her to work with batterers and couples, with a program called anger management or "interactional dynamics." Mary described some specifics of a treatment model premised on the idea that abuse is "interactional."

> There is a section we call "impulse control" and it includes helping people to become more aware of their feelings, giving themselves permission to have all their feelings, and to express all their feelings, to learn what lies underneath their anger. And anger is almost always a protective emotion. So we throw that out there as a shield, to protect us from hurting. And what we're teaching people is to choose when to and how to express their feelings underneath their anger.

Likewise, Karen rooted much of her understanding of violence in anger and relationship dynamics, and described the direction she would like batterer treatment to take.

> You know that violence is often, and anger is often a secondary feeling to feeling hurt, useless, trod upon, that kind of thing. So, you start looking at the other things. What are the stressors in people's lives that bring them to a place where they are drinking excessively, acting out excessively, where they have this uncontrollable anger?

And Ann described her experience with batterer treatment:

> I think about this one instance of being in a drop-in group when this guy was talking about having his wife bound up in the trunk of his car, all tied and gagged, and he was taking her out to the middle of the woods to murder her. And he was describing this, about how he realized that this wasn't the right thing to do. And it was so funny. He really . . . and he stopped himself and didn't do it. And listening to it, you are not hearing some sociopath, some label. You are hearing a distressed person who is not knowing how to cope with what he was dealing with in his life.

On the other hand, Kim disagreed strongly with the point of view that batterers should be treated as "distressed persons" who use abuse because of their poor impulse control and high levels of stress. Before concluding "I don't know very many batterers who I wouldn't say are sociopaths," Kim described batterers as anti-social, lacking empathy, and as criminals. She also gave some compelling reasons for her distrust of the anger management model:

> Well, I've been with two batterers. I watched the last one, who was an incredibly dangerous man, who went on to abuse one woman after me and nearly killed her--and this was a woman who was like a brown belt in karate and all this stuff, I mean, an incredibly tough woman who could really take care of herself. He nearly killed her twice. Then he moved on to another woman who he nearly killed. She got a stalking order and ended up having to be escorted out of the state by the police. I watched him go through anger management twice, I saw him go through drug and alcohol treatment a couple of times. I know it doesn't work. If anything, he became more dangerous. 'Cause then he had some tools and some words, and he could look real good.

Kim did acknowledge a potential place for anger management, but only after long term treatment; "down near the end, I'm talking two years, I think they need to look at their anger, there is probably an anger piece in there." Interestingly, Carol, who also looked more to issues of power and control than to issues of anger in describing batterer treatment, agreed on a role for anger management but placed it

at the beginning of treatment instead of at the end: "Maybe anger management is the initial prepping the ground. And then you deal with the tougher part." In describing what the tougher part might be, Carol explained that battering must be about more than just anger, that it had also to do with a certain world view.

> Because lots of people get angry and don't hit their wives. You know, we all get angry, it is what you do with your anger. So, they are angry, but they are punching or beating up their wife, or partner. So that is different. It is coming out as rage, but it is focused on her. So it is not just anger. I guess that it was modeled, they saw Dad hit Mom, so it was okay, part of what they saw as normal, they didn't know another way. But not everyone who sees that happen does it themselves. So the other thing has to be some deeply embedded value or view around, you know, if someone challenges them or threatens them in some way, that they have a right, or feel they have a right to retaliate.

The last two points that Carol brought up--that many who grow up in an environment where violence is normalized yet never batter, and that what makes batterers what they are is a deeply embedded view that they have the right to retaliate, particularly against women with whom they are intimate, when "challenged"--get right to the heart of feminist criticisms of the anger management model for batterer treatment (Gondolf & Russell, 1986). Critics of anger management point out that battering is a choice (a choice made viable by certain social values and institutions), and not the result of poor impulse control; in other words, they point to more social than individual explanations. Working from a feminist analysis of domestic violence, critics of anger management point out that batterers do not have higher levels of anger than do non-batterers, nor do they feel entitled to retaliate against just anyone; they are typically violent only against wives and girlfriends. Further, critics point out that batterers effectively use (and do not

lose) control in that most batter only when they know they can not be stopped (i.e., in private, not public, and when anyone who is likely to interfere is not around), and in very purposeful ways (i.e., most assaults are targeted toward the torso and leave no obvious physical evidence). In describing why she thinks batterers make decisions about what they are going to do about their violence, Karen echoed these criticisms.

> You know, there is that old story at Abri House about, oh, he was out of control. And then there is this guy who was abusive, and he is in his undershorts and his tee shirt. And he was abusive and he went to storm out of the house but he stopped to put his pants on. Okay, so how out of control was he? He made a decision to put his pants on, he could have made a decision not to hit her.

A Final Word on Batterer Treatment and the Dynamics of Responsibility

Differences concerning batterer treatment were, of course, not as black and white as they appear here. While activists did fall into two distinct groups according to whether they emphasized batterers' anger and stress levels or batterers' use of manipulation and control, there was a considerable amount of overlap in their views. Almost everyone, for example, acknowledged that there are some batterers who have simply battered too long, progressed too far; who are sociopaths that can no longer be treated for their inability to appropriately express anger, or their poor impulse control. And, almost everyone agreed that batterers are lacking some skills. Most importantly, everyone adhered to a belief in education and information to make a difference.

A significant overlap in opinion that arose from my discussions with Abri House activists about treatment for batterers, survivors and victims was the idea that relationship skills need to be taught early. Twelve of the 19 activists who even mentioned batterer treatment (6 of the 10 who discussed it at length), were concerned that information and education on communication, rights in relationships and non-violent conflict resolution be a part of ciricula for young children. Many thought that education and skill-building needed to start as early as kindergarten. As Lynn explained, "I think kids that age and a little older should start learning how to identify feelings, learn how to deal with anger, conflict, learn pro-social skills--empathy."

But the liberal faith in education and information was also tied to a more radical re-visioning of society. Carol described her desire to see kids taught to "resolve anger in a constructive way that is not hitting." She listed as her first priority in ending domestic violence,

> Some sort of project that would involve how to raise boys and how to raise girls differently. Because you are really looking at, you have to sort of take a piece that you can handle. But certainly, the way that we raise boys and girls, a lot of that hasn't changed. You are still looking at boys where the only feeling they can identify is anger. So they need to learn to be okay with sadness and other feelings, and they need to be raised in a way that they can be more expressive and communicate better. But the other piece of that is how do you get at power issues? How do you get at the issue of hierarchy or a male dominated society? And how do you change some of that? I think you could start in the schools and start to do some roll plays, start to do some stuff about boys and girls together, and focusing on equality, and focusing on respect.

Support for early education reflects one of the happiest yet limited marriages of social and psychological explanations. With early education, developing

programs to teach young children about their rights and responsibilities in relationships, and about non-violent conflict resolution, both social and psychological explanations for domestic violence are addressed. The question of social change is addressed in this type of education's challenge to current male and female social roles; in the possibility of creating, through education, a generation of non-aggressive men and assertive women. And the question of individual change, whether a therapeutic transformation is necessary to staying out of a violent relationship, is skirted in favor of equipping young people with more emotional and psychological skills than their parents had. The only needs not met in the equation are those of the millions of people whose lives are currently affected by domestic violence. With respect to those needs, Abri House activists continue to struggle with providing individualized services for a social problem.

Conclusion

While individual counseling services have become more important to the Abri House program and staff, there has been no simple shift to an individual analysis of domestic violence among shelter workers. The overwhelming concern for long-term, one-on-one services, for example, was supported in part on the basis of practical, social barriers that victims and survivors face. Likewise, exploring the social causes of violence against women seemed to have become an essential part of counseling services. In other words, as the existence of a vast body of literature

on feminist and radical therapies suggests, individualistic therapeutic techniques can be incorporated in ways that are consistent with feminist politics.

However, issues concerning accountability that arise from considering substance abuse and batterer treatment point to some of the difficulty in integrating social and individual analyses of domestic violence. While individual and social analyses should not be thought of as dichotomous choices, they are still sometimes difficult to reconcile. Differences are apparent in different implications for treatment. For example, should batterer treatment prioritize the teaching of skills and the uncovering of pain? Or should batterer treatment emphasize un-learning the values that inform decisions to be abusive towards women? And, in terms of working with victims and survivors, to what extent should shelters emphasize therapy as a way of understanding why individual women end up in relationships with abusive men?

These questions become even more relevant in the context of framing the politics of the movement as a whole. One of the consequences, for example, of a more individualistic or psychological approach to batterer treatment is an emphasis on holding batterers legally accountable for their behavior. While batterers' arrests, prosecutions and punishments may provide some practical help for survivors who are in danger, and some comfort for all those who know how dangerous batterers are, what are broader consequences of prioritizing arrest, prosecution and punishment? Is there not some contradiction in emphasizing the power of social forces (housing, safety, legitimacy) in understanding women's experiences and the

power of individual choice (control, manipulation) in understanding men's? As another example, the issue of the inter-generational transmission of violence raises interesting questions for movement politics. I remember being trained as a community educator to be careful to point out that many who grow up in battering families never as adults batter or are battered. The question of inter-generational transmission was usually used as bait for public speakers, luring them into defining battering as something only relevant to a relatively small group of people with troubled pasts, and pointing to the fact that many can reject their abusive pasts was a good way to get audiences re-focused on the social forces creating domestic violence. Still, as several activists interviewed for this study pointed out, the experience of childhood abuse fundamentally shapes any experience of adult abuse. Still, the movement and the activists interviewed for this study seemed to shy away from the topic, probably because of its potential to de-politicize the issue of domestic violence. What are the consequences of failing to come up with a political understanding of the inter-generational transmission of violence?

The specific treatment issues discussed in this chapter, and their relationships to social and individual explanations, have definite implications for Abri House's role as a social service and social change organization. As with the issues concerning organizational structure, described in Chapter IV, the extent to which Abri House emphasizes a social or individual approach--whether the organization is an agent of change or a more conservative social service--is probably largely dependent on the political self-consciousness of its staff. Chapter

VI will describe the politics of Abri House activists and changing roles for a broader community in the social change visions that shape the organization's work.

CHAPTER VI

FEMINISM AND COMMUNITY CHANGE

Underlying the questions of anger, control and accountability described in Chapter V are broader political questions, most obviously those concerning gender inequality. As Pete explained:

> You know, I do believe that domestic violence is rooted more in gender inequity than in most other things that we associate it with--you know, alcohol abuse, or anger control, or whatever. I think that a lot of it is rooted on a macro level with gender inequity and so my thinking about domestic violence has evolved, in a way, on a parallel course to my thinking about gender issues in general.

In describing how his thinking about domestic violence evolved "on a parallel course" to his thinking about gender, Pete described the sentiments of a vast majority of the activists interviewed for this study. Despite differences on some specific issues described in Chapter V (for example, activists' views about batterer treatment were evenly distributed in terms of emphasizing either control or anger), a majority of activists agreed about the ways in which their thinking about domestic violence were rooted in the politics of gender. Specifically, most activists talked about feminism in terms of empowering women.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the ways in which feminist and other progressive politics have influenced Abri House activists. I will describe the importance of empowering women to shelter workers, differences in the politics of Abri House activists, new directions for the organization's work, and the importance

of the shelter environment in reactivating battered women's movement politics. My analysis will suggest that a narrow focus on women has begun to expand to include more of the local community in Abri House's work to end domestic violence. Contrary to the expectation that shelter workers have "watered down" their politics in the process of becoming more mainstream, the narratives of Abri House activists suggested that while the terms of feminism may have changed, a more inclusive, socially based analysis may have emerged. The emergence of a more inclusive, socially based analysis among Abri House activists is consistent with recent research in the area of feminist organizing that suggests feminist notions of the political are constantly being redefined (Ferree and Martin, 1995).

The Feminist Hook

Probably the most defining feature of Abri House politics is feminism. Usually associated with a more social than individual analysis of domestic violence, feminism has been identified as a touchstone for the battered women's movement. Without feminism's "second wave," women might never have made the direct and radical challenge to male violence that they did in creating a battered women's movement. However, the feminism that informed and shaped the battered women's movement was white and middle class (hooks, 1984; Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Richie, 1985; Schechter, 1982). One of the ways it reflected that bias was in an emphasis on women's sisterhood and the possibility for the empowerment of women among other women, often ignoring important differences among women.

For women with diverse race, ethnic, class and sexual identities, shelters were often not the ideal locations for empowerment that white battered women's activists had hoped. Still, an important emphasis on women's empowerment created and sustained safe resources for battered women and a movement to change some of the social conditions creating domestic violence. It was an emphasis reflected in the majority of activists' narratives.

Nineteen activists interviewed for this study referred to feminism in describing their work with the shelter. Although I typically did not ask questions about feminism, the topic was not part of the interview schedule, most activists initiated discussions about feminism in describing why they wanted to work with the shelter and what they liked most about the work. The emphasis of their feminism was on empowering women. Not surprisingly, since the study included five women who were working in the battered women's movement by 1978, and since the mean age of my sample was 44,[1] 11 activists had been active in feminist politics since the middle or late 1970s. Several activists talked about the "good old days" of feminism and commented on the changing nature of feminist ideas over time.

The prevalence and longevity of feminist thought was also reflected in numerous descriptions of the process of learning feminism. Thirteen women, more

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[1]I was not able to get background information from all the activists interviewed so this mean was determined using the ages of the 21 women from whom I had information. Estimating from what I did learn about the work and educational histories of the activists excluded from this statistic, by way of the rest of their interviews, their inclusion probably would not alter the mean.

than two thirds of the 19 activists who talked about the importance of feminism, also talked about the origins of their feminist politics. Six women tied the development of their politics to the political climate of the late 1960s and 1970s, two rooted their feminism in the experience of getting divorced and turning to other women for support--which, not coincidentally, they both did during the mid-1970s. One woman described her feminism as informed by her identity as lesbian, and another six women identified training and educating for their work at Abri House as a defining feature of their politics.

Sarah, who was a paid staff member providing direct services to battered women, was a strongly motivated feminist. When asked how she at first felt about working with battered women she replied, "When I first learned that women were killed because they were women, I knew that I was going to devote the rest of my life to working against that." Interestingly, Sarah's motivation was sparked not by simply learning that people die from domestic violence, nor by learning that there are some dysfunctional individuals out there who cannot control their anger. Her motivation came from learning that "women were killed just because they were women." To point out the obvious, there are no facts, only interpretations of facts.

Joanna, who started working as a volunteer and moved into a staff position in one of the transitional programs saw a feminist education as essential to the organization's work. She described her experience of getting involved in Abri House:

> I remember just seeing a flyer up in the community for Abri House. And I didn't even know that much about what battering was, really. I just knew

> that a place called Abri House must be a neat place to go and check out. And then in the volunteer training the issue of battering, which I didn't know much about, was connected with some of the goals of the women's movement, which I did know something about. So it was sort of a coming home experience. Because it was seeing things fit together, aha! That makes sense!

The kind of "coming home" that Joanna described was typical of the way many activists described their experiences with Abri House and the shelter movement. Activists talked about everything from getting "hooked" and "getting it," to lightening bolts and awakenings in their descriptions of how feminism informed their work at the shelter. After describing a friend's transformation since training for and becoming a volunteer at Abri House, for example, Carmelita concluded,

> And now she says, you know, I could never go back to where I was before, it is a lot closer. And I too could never go back to where it isn't going to affect me again. That door is closed.

Carmelita's insight that "it is a lot closer" since learning from and working at Abri House may bring to mind the feminist proposition that the personal is political, or the assertion, discussed in Chapter V, that any woman could end up a battered woman. Carmelita, and the majority of activists interviewed, identified as women with the cause against domestic violence. The personal "trigger," the "hook," was not violence, the family, child welfare, or oppression in general. A majority of activists identified the problems of battered women as connected to problems for all women and, therefore, very personal, or close. Activists described things like, "I just had the drive to empower women," and "it was the cause that attracted me." Interestingly, the only man interviewed also described getting

hooked--an experience where domestic violence became a very personal issue. Attending a conference for health care providers on domestic violence, Pete described understanding domestic violence "up here," meaning intellectually. He continued:

> But what lit the fire under me, to kind of take that [intellectual knowledge] and do something with it, was I think the panel that spoke that day. Here was, I think five women, survivors that recounted their stories. And at least a couple of them talked about their attempts to reach out, and talk to other people, particularly people they trusted, like their doctors, their ministers. And I guess it was hearing their stories, coupled with hearing the statistics and lecture information from the woman from Arizona, that motivated me.

More Broad Political Hooks

While the politics of a majority of activists suggested an emphasis on empowering women, the politics of several activists of color suggested a more broad political vision. Specifically, four women of color described political visions that emphasized local family and community networks as solutions to ending domestic violence, and as resources for survivors and batterers. Their emphasis echoed concerns expressed by feminist theorists of color who point out that the feminism of women of color does not exclude men and local family and community networks to the extent that white feminism typically has (hooks, 1984; Naples, 1991). As Richie and Kanuha (1993) analyze the experiences of battered women in particular:

> For a battered woman of color who experiences violence at the hands of a man of color from her own ethnic group, a complex and troublesome dynamic is established that is both enhanced and compromised by the woman's relationship to her community. She is battered by another member

> of her ethnic community, whose culture is vulnerable to historical misunderstanding and extinction by society at large. For the battered woman, this means that she may be discriminated against in her attempt to secure services while at the same time feeling protective of her batterer, who might also be unjustly treated by such social institutions as the police and the judicial system. Most battered women of color are acutely aware of how the police routinely brutalize men of color, how hospitals and social services discriminate against men of color, and the ways men of color are more readily labeled deviant than white men. (p. 292)

Although it is difficult to generalize about women of color from this study--women of color made up only 5 of the 23 activists interviewed, were all from the latest cohort of activists, and as a group included disproportionate numbers of volunteers and survivors relative to the white group--their narratives are relevant in the context this type of feminist theory by women of color.

Veronica, self-identified as Hispanic, did not refer to feminism at all in describing why she worked with the shelter and what she liked most about the work. Veronica mentioned feminism once; and then only by way of discussing her ex-batterer, who thought she was a militant feminist. When asked if she thought she was feminist, Veronica replied: "No. I mean, in a way, but I was raised Hispanic so, you know, I'm very subservient too, and I like being that way." Veronica went on to explain:

> I don't think women should be disrespected, and I think they should be like gold. We have babies, and we create life, and we are the comforters and all that. And men are just so--well, most of the ones I know, they are just so blah. They are not like women, you know, I think women are extraordinary. In that way I am a feminist.
>
> But I think that I have my certain beliefs. Like I think that I want him to be a *man*. I think that he should respect women, but I'm a Christian, so I think men should be the head of the household, and they should be strong, and protectors. And women should be like, the givers of life, and the nurturers.

When asked if she thought the prevalence of domestic violence was related to those gender roles being taken to extremes, Veronica said, "maybe." She further explained that she thought battering was the result of being battered as a child and observed that, "today, you know, in society, the family is falling apart . . . you know, drugs, this, that . . . the mom's not . . . being a mom. And I think that has a lot to do with, you know, why there are so many abusive men." She concluded with stories of two abusive mothers.

Veronica's emphases on ethnic identity, religious beliefs and family relationships distinguish her politics from traditional white feminist responses to domestic violence by stressing the roles of families and communities as sources of empowerment for women. Dianna, a Black woman, suggested similar concerns. Discussing community awareness of domestic violence, Dianna had an interesting response to my suggestion that "if he knows the cops aren't going to do anything, he's not going to stop." With laughter she responded, "But, see, where I come from, we didn't call the cops, we called the neighborhood. I want him out! And they put him out!" Dianna went on to explain how family members or friends could intervene and, with those "connections," be a source of "empowerment."

Like Dianna, Carmelita, who identified as Hispanic, addressed the role of communities of color in protecting battered women. In describing the response of a local Native American Indian community, Carmelita also commented on how different was their response from a typical feminist response:

> They go into the homes the batterers live in. With the partner, they go to the house--hear there is a problem here? What is going on? We will say,

> God, it's horrible, they are both going to go to a support group meeting together? No way would we think of putting them in the same room. But, she's able to go, and she is able to talk about what he's doing. People in the group are able to say to him, what's going on? She goes home, and they say, I'm going to call you up tomorrow, I'm going to come by and see how you're doing. And he hears it, and he knows it.

Although a woman of color, Carmelita seems to have identified herself and me in terms of feminist politics, and not race politics, in her observation that, "We will say, God, it's horrible, they are both going to go to a support group meeting together?" Carmelita assumed, because she knew that we had both worked at the same feminist shelter for five years, that I would understand the dangers of couples' counseling. Reasoning that couple's counseling presents a threat to battered women's safety, and that it is unnecessary in any event because abuse is not a couple's issue, it is the batterer's issue, feminist battered women's activists have advocated strongly against couple's counseling (Eisikovits & Edleson, 1989). And, the feminist logic against couple's counseling is irrefutable; women's lives are at stake. The only problem with the logic is that it was developed when the battered women's movement was almost completely white, female and urban. With an increasing and more diverse number of women running and using shelters, some basic feminist assumptions about working with battered women should be reconsidered.

The question of couple's counseling is obviously related to other specific issues. Should we stop assuming, for example, that the best alternative for a battered woman is to leave her partner, their home and their community to come to a shelter? Granted shelters are safe, and it is no small point that women are dying

at the hands of abusers every day. On the other hand, it is clear that leaving an abuser and coming to a shelter is not the best solution for every battered woman; namely, not for many rural women, nor for those women of color who would prefer to draw from the strength of extended family and friends, and from local communities in recovering from abuse. But my point is not to develop arguments against shelters or for couple's counseling. I use these specific issues only to suggest how feminist politics might change as the battered women's movement becomes more diverse. As more rural and ethnically diverse women join the movement, feminist battered women's activists may redefine how and to what extent local communities should be involved in the movement.

"Going Upstream to Ease the Flood": Council Work and Community Centers

There was evidence from my study that Abri House activists had begun including more of the local community in their work. Several activists had or were working with newly developed state and local Domestic Violence Councils. Also, a third of the activists interviewed talked about Abri House's recent plan to open a community center. How these expanded involvements with the local community are related to the family, neighborhood, and informal community-based solutions suggested by activists of color in the last section will be discussed in the conclusion of this chapter and is very uncertain. As already discussed in Chapters III and IV, it is impossible from this research to make any conclusions about the effects of women of color being on staff. What is clear is that Abri House activists seem to

have expanded from their focus on empowering women. Instead of simply "pulling bodies out of the river," Abri House activists have started moving upstream to ease the flood.

The logic behind the flood analogy, which was used by several women to describe the limitations of focusing too narrowly on shelter services, is simple. Batterers will keep battering as long as communities keep tolerating it. Beyond sheltering victims, the movement sees the need to look to the community to find the source of the flood. Several activists described the organization's work with county and state Domestic Violence Councils as one way that Abri House has moved upstream. Together with health and human service providers, and with law enforcement, civil and criminal justice officials, activists have worked on coordinated, community responses to domestic violence; issues like civil and criminal justice responses and batterer treatment provide some of the foci for the council's work. In a nutshell, council work is an attempt to work with mainstream institutions to accomplish system-wide changes in how the community looks at and responds to domestic violence. As Beth described Abri House's newly developing relationship to its local community:

> We did organizing things around the community to try and get them to look at the issue politically. We didn't just have them ask: How do you help battered women? We said: How is everyone in this community responsible for violence against women and what do we do to change that? And, how do we get people to get educated enough to understand that that is what we have to do?

Another way in which Abri House activists described Abri House as moving upstream to ease the flood was in its proposed community center. Karen located

the idea for a community center as early as a 1982 "future's" workshop. She explained that at the three day workshop, "board, staff, volunteers, and people from the community that worked with Abri House" envisioned having one day in the community, "a place where people could come for counseling, doing anger management out of that, as well as getting services from there. You know, and rural outreach was a part of that, too." Although Karen traced the origin of the idea for a community center back to the early 1980s, the idea is just now being developed.

The idea of Abri House opening a community center was largely supported among the limited number of activists who discussed it; from seven women, five supported the idea and two did not. Those who supported the community center talked about it being a way to expand the social change vision of the shelter. Megan, for example, saw a community center as a place where, "a lot of community, social change activities [could be] grouped together." And Joanna described a planning session that took place in the early 1990s where they,

> brought up the themes of a community approach, a community based approach versus services and a shelter, the service programs that we have. I would sort of like to see us move towards that community approach. One thing that we talked a lot about as far as funding, and if we had the money, one thing we would have is a center that was open to the community and that anyone could walk into. I think that would be a great first step. It is that question, if we have to decide, our priorities are to keep up the shelter, but then, given a little bit more money I would love to see lawyers completely at our command. So when you needed a lawyer, you would have one. So a community center that had a fleet of lawyers, drop-in advocacy, child care--full-coverage.

While most agreed heartily with Joanna's "full coverage" assessment, two women expressed concern over the proposed community center. Kim explained concerns related to the issue of a changing population of shelter residents described in the last chapter:

> I know we're looking at more community outreach. I'm really torn about that. I feel just at the time when everybody knows the women we work with are needing more services, more safety and more services, we're talking about going in another direction. And, you know, I believe in community outreach too. I'm not saying we shouldn't be more out in the community, but . . . housing is a big deal. It just seems that we are getting a more needy population and we're looking at doing something else. I personally would stay with what we do, but that's my bias. I would stay with direct services, and more shelters and more transitional housing programs, and things like that, more intense programs. But, I also realize that there is a need for community based services too.

Although they disagreed in terms of support for a community center, both Joanna and Kim agreed that a community center was a move away from a direct service orientation. Marty, on the other hand, saw a community center as dangerous precisely because of a potentially close relationship to traditional, direct services.

> Now we are moving to a community center, instead of a shelter, in which case there will be no one with you. There will be maybe one person hanging around, like a security guard type, supervisor type. But probably not someone you can really talk to. I'm sure that they will set it up so that person is not there to counsel you, that person is just there to look out for the property. And then, you come into the community center and you go to, the advocacy door, the counseling door, the social services door, the job door. And somewhere lost in all that, granted we will probably reach more women, but somewhere lost is really reaching them. They are coming to us and what are they getting? They are getting service. Meanwhile, we are not reactivating feminism in the shelter. Why don't they leave as feminists? What have we done to make them believe that feminism is wonderful? In what way have we been their sister? We've just been their case worker for 35 days, and that was it.

Despite Marty's perhaps exaggerated pessimism concerning the nature of the proposed community center, her criticisms raise a valid question: Can feminism be reactivated in the gender-neutral setting of a community center? An open community center, easily accessible and identifiable, stands in contrast to the confidential and semi-confidential spaces Abri House has always inhabited. In addition to breaking the "underground" tradition, a community center would be a place for both men and women. In a shelter, women are "empowered" among other women; in a community center, families are supported by communities. That difference, and the fears that Marty suggested raise the question: Is a community center a chance to expand a feminist social change vision, or is it a move away from the intimate female environment that feeds that vision?

Shelters As Sanctuary

Although one woman from the earliest cohort commented negatively on Abri House's secrecy, confidentiality and women-centeredness, noting that it excluded the support of a broad section of the local community, a majority of activists valued Abri House's "underground" role. The underground role was probably first addressed in terms of excluding men from the work. Carrie, one of Abri House's original organizers, remembered that in first creating the shelter it would have made sense to join forces with an already existing family shelter but that, "at that time we didn't want a man involved in it." Likewise, two other women from the earliest cohort described conflict about men joining the board of

directors. Since then, limits on men's participation in running Abri House have been clearly defined and the organization's resources have been consistently focused on safe shelter and confidential resources for women and children.

The importance of a woman-centered, confidential space was emphasized by activists from later cohorts as well. From the middle cohort, Brenda, for example, described her first impressions of the shelter organization. She described an organization that was "less in the community" than the local anti-rape organization, "just because of the nature of the work and how it was done." Although being less visible in the community meant that Abri House was also perceived as less radical than the local anti-rape organization, the "hidden shelter" gave Abri House some opportunities to "come up against the system" in ways the community did not always see. Likewise, Beth described the importance of Abri House's confidentiality and women-centeredness. In describing how she felt when she first started to work for Abri House, Beth emphasized:

> Another thing is that since I knew someone who worked there, and she was very secretive about what she did, that was also very intriguing. Because I remember asking her where the shelter was, and she made me feel terrible and said, I'm sorry, I can't tell you. And I thought, God, do you think I'd tell anybody?! My expectation was that we were doing this underground railroad, saving women. I had all those romantic myths about it, when it of course turns out to be real different from that.

Although careful to point out that the confidential location of the shelter was not as romantic as it might seem, "battered women and violence against women is not very romantic," Beth continued:

> What I think is special about Abri House for volunteers and staff and the people that go there is that it is a sanctuary, and it's not just a sanctuary

> from violence. It is a sanctuary of feminism for a lot of people. And even for people who don't know that that's what it is they want. We became a safe place for women who cared about women. And that in itself, again, is very political. That we created an environment that was safe and protected them, and protected their ideals about how women should be treated in the world.

And, as Claire described the shelter:

> It does provide a safe place, the violence stops, women are secure. It's also an opportunity for women to bond and connect with other women, and to see themselves and each other. I think that there is a real light that goes off for women in the shelter--even though it is a real personal journey for them, that they have been through personal hell--that it has a much broader picture. That it is a much broader picture, it is a political picture, it is a social picture, that what happened to them has happened to millions of other women. There is this real kind of awakening to reality, to what's going on out in our culture. I think the shelter has a real strong piece in stopping violence, in interrupting violence, in that it really helps. I also think that in that awakening process it activates women. Women who have been through it and gotten out become activists themselves. And a lot of them work for social change, so it really multiplies. And then, most of the women I've seen there and worked with over time, have really taken that message down to their children, and their children start growing from that point on with a real different sense of their moms and a real different sense of themselves. So I think that in all those different ways. . . . And then, it's almost like a breeding ground for really creative thinking and ideas, among the staff and the volunteers and the participants. It is incredible to me how often new ideas and new ways of working out in the world would spring up from what we were seeing and hearing and experiencing at the shelter. The work never stayed the same, ever.

The confidential, all-women's environment of the shelter has remained a defining feature of Abri House as an organization, as it is for the battered women's movement in general. In addition to being practical in terms of safety, shelters provide physical and emotional locations for reactivating feminism; as places where women are empowered among other women, shelters provide a solid foundation for feminist ideals concerning support and mutual respect and responsibility. As the

descriptions in this section suggest, shelters provide a model and sanctuary for feminism.

Conclusion

Amidst changes in Abri House's relationship to its community, the question of to what extent the hidden and all-female nature of the shelter is necessary to the survival of a battered women's movement--as distinct from the simple provision of social services for victims--arises. Answering that question is obviously beyond the scope of this study. The study did make clear, however, that although activists appreciated the role of shelters in reactivating feminism, many also perceived expanding from the separatist nature of the shelter as necessary to changing the social conditions that perpetuate domestic violence; in other words, as essential to the survival of a distinct movement. Removed from the local community and being for women and children only, shelters fail to address some of the most important issues concerning domestic violence, batterers and the cultural and community support they receive. Further, as places where individual women seek relatively short-term crisis services, shelters offer individual solutions to a social problem. In order to address the problem of battering more directly, as a social problem, Abri House and other shelter organizations will probably continue to expand roles for local communities in their feminist politics.

So it is important to think about some of the potential costs of expanded community involvement, particularly in its present form. First is the obvious threat

of co-optation; as one activist suggested earlier in this chapter, a domestic violence community center could end up looking very much like a traditional social service by falling prey to the temptation to become impersonal and bureaucratic. Likewise, activists may become weary of some of the very changes they advocate for in their work with state and local councils. For example, some of the same issues that arose concerning batterer treatment are relevant. Council work has emphasized creating consistent and strong law enforcement and criminal justice responses to battering despite evidence that arrest and prosecution are dangerous, if not ineffective, means to eliminate domestic violence (Sherman & Berk, 1984). Years from now battered women's activists may find that the changes they advocated succeeded in little more than creating a new class of criminals.

The prospect that increasing arrest and prosecution will not affect the actual occurrence of battering points to the issue of exactly how the battered women's movement expands to include more of the community: through those found representing mainstream institutions, or through those found in alternative settings (i.e., churches, clubs, kitchens) and grassroots organizations. The council work described in this chapter reflects an obviously expanded role for those representing mainstream institutions. A community center, although providing services to a variety of people and members of different local networks, would also make the Abri House organization--as does council work--a more integral part of how mainstream institutions in the local community respond to domestic violence. Although the proposed community center should--as the existing rural outreach

center does--tap into the kind of neighborhood, family, and informal community networks suggested by some women of color, it is not clear to what extent utilizing those local networks was a self-conscious political priority. While utilizing formal (or institutional) and informal networks are compatible, more formal networks seem to be the current emphasis.

The fact that the actual ways in which Abri House was expanding its relationship to its local community were somewhat different from the more informal, less institutional community connections suggested by several activists of color suggests that expanded community involvement needs to be carefully defined. Descriptions like, "we called the neighborhood," and "they go to the homes--hear there is a problem here," both echo and contradict the kinds of involvement that community centers and council work suggest. While strong and thoughtful police and court interventions and an accessible, comprehensive community center can be understood as neighborhood responses to domestic violence, there is something distinctly institutional implied in council work and community centers that was not implied in the community based solutions described by several women of color in my sample. The difference probably relates to the structure of Abri House's racial diversity, described in Chapter IV. Perhaps as women of color become more fully included in the Abri House organization, and in the battered women's movement in general, an emphasis on tapping into more local and informal family, neighborhood, and community networks will develop.

Models for utilizing more local or informal community networks are already being worked out and suggest how both institutional and informal community ties can be incorporated. Wylie (1996), for example, describes a New Jersey program that incorporates court mandates and local community ties in its services. Offering services for all family members affected by abuse, the program uses a sponsorship system to connect clients with men or women of their own culture, class, ethnicity and age, group sessions for batterers, victims and couples, and an explicit political agenda in its attempt to create a non-violent community. Further,

> . . . 'cultural consultants'--sponsors, or occasional lay volunteers from the community, of diverse ethnic, religious, or racial backgrounds--who participate in group sessions and provide a kind of socially and politically attuned reality test about individual behavior of new clients from similar backgrounds [draw on informal community ties]. The institute staff knows that a cultural consultant who happens to be a fundamentalist Christian is in an unequalled position to challenge a male client who excuses his abusive behavior to his wife and children by saying that the Bible obliges him, as head of the household, to rigorously `discipline' members of his family. . . . An African-American consultant knows better than the white therapist how racism hinders a black male client from getting a job, but can also challenge more credibly the latter's failure to make enough personal effort on his own behalf. (p. 61)

In its attention to the roles of culture and local community in shaping the experience of domestic violence, the New Jersey program offers a glimpse into how some political priorities of women of color could come to shape the battered women's movement.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

It would of course depend on what the social change was and what the social service was, but, in a global concept, I don't see any problem with the two being connected. And I think that sometimes when I was at Abri House, people would talk about social work, which is what my degree is in, and they would talk about it in this kind of scathing tone. And I would think, wait a minute, we are all doing social work here. If the purpose of social service is to make people fit into disempowering structures, and to make them become complacent to that, then social service and social change are not compatible. But, for someone--for us, for me--to be sitting back and suggesting to a woman that she shouldn't get a degree and go and make more money somewhere . . . that isn't very empowering. I think that some sort of purest radicals think of social service as just sort of fitting into society as it is. But, you do have to fit into society in order to make any kind of change. So it just depends on what the relationship is.

I think we were sort of like a push-pull. It's not always the most elegant, but it seems like we will go in one direction for a while--we will seem to be fitting in comfortably to social service, and being very collaborative, and all that. But there will come a point when you will think, ah, oh, what is wrong with this picture? Not that you want to make opponents out of people that you can collaborate with. But sometimes if you are collaborating you may be missing what you should be doing in terms of services, or in terms of social change. And, I think, in general Abri House as an organization is strong at keeping their eye on the vision, moving towards the vision. So that in general, because of that strength of the vision, there's not a lot of times that we fall by the wayside and get caught up with something else. I think that probably the strong commitment to the vision and an understanding of empowerment really helps.

I think sometimes certain staff would have an idea for social change that would be radical, or could make more waves in the community, that people would react more to. There would be a kind of counter-voice saying, well, we don't want to make those waves because the consequences won't be so great. And, in general, I agreed with the kinds of ideas that were coming out of people who wanted to do something different. I sometimes felt that those ideas would ultimately not be very productive--that they almost seemed more from a personal desire to do something a certain way, without a picture of where we're going and why we're going that way. But my

> guess is that there have probably been times, and probably quite a few times, when we could have tried those things and it probably would have been okay. And it could have been creative, we might have learned something new and done something different. One of the nice things about the agency is because of the diversity and the change in staff, you do get an awful lot of new opportunities and ideas. And so the agency does change quite a bit. But all within that bigger vision. --Claire

There was no simple evolution from social change collective to social service agency in Abri House's history. Instead, as Claire so eloquently suggests, activists constantly re-defined their orientations to feminist and traditional elements. They were able to do that, as Claire also suggests, because of the strength of their political vision. Contrary to the assumption made in much literature on the movement that over time activists have been co-opted, or have "watered down" their politics, the interviews analyzed in this research described a process by which Abri House activists shifted and expanded their politics, constantly challenging and redefining their organization's political vision. A shared understanding of "where we're going and why we're going that way" was the subject of ongoing debate and criticism.

However, as Claire's metaphor of pushing and pulling suggests, defining a political vision was not always easy. Her description, ironic for describing the battered women's movement since both pushing and pulling are abusive tactics, hints at some of the real difficulties faced by activists trying to incorporate both service and change commitments in their political vision. Recurrent struggles over the amount of hierarchy and collectivity at Abri House, for example, suggested real difficulties--a walk-out and lots of hard feelings. Likewise, activists' concerns

about accountability and alcohol and drug treatment issues also reflected difficult negotiations. Particularly in the highly individualistic context of the United States, the danger exists that individual explanations and solutions will gain more popularity, and hence more success for the movement, than will social ones. Some issues suggest particularly difficult negotiations between social and individual analyses.

Batterer Treatment

Batterer treatment is one issue for which pushing and pulling unfortunately provides an apt metaphor. Concerning the views about batterer treatment described in Chapter V, for example, activists were evenly distributed between taking a more social approach, emphasizing power and control, and a more individual or psychological approach, emphasizing anger and lack of impulse control. The fact that activists were evenly distributed concerning psychological and social approaches concerning batterer treatment may reflect a tendency toward individualism in the new territory of working with men. Or, perhaps a common "party line" has not yet been developed for batterer treatment where treatment options for survivors have long been thoroughly discussed in movement literature. The finding may also reflect what one activist pointed out about feminist "gut" reactions to individual and social explanations in Chapter V: "If I think about batterers and what causes them to batter, I start to go this way. And if I think about what causes women to be victims, I start to go the other way."

My own experience with the issue of batterer treatment also suggests that pushing and pulling is an apt description for the process of incorporating social and individual commitments in this area. Working with a local Domestic Violence Council, I have participated in its "Batterer Treatment Committee" for over a year (I use the name tentatively, the committee has debated the validity of both batterer and treatment as good descriptions). The committee is made up of Abri House activists, social workers and therapists from private practices and local agencies, and some members of the justice system, namely from the parole office. Meetings have included everything from tears to laughter, from the need for an outside, professional facilitator to the sharing of home-baked cookies.

Meeting twice a month for over a year and a half, the group managed to agree on only three things--a mission statement, some basic definitions, and the need to write a statement of philosophy and treatment models that the group could endorse. At first, the group made no progress. After calling in a professional facilitator to help with the group's process, trust was developed but productivity remained low. The group worked on a statement of philosophy and took five months to reach tentative agreement on 31 lines. To put that into perspective, a group of highly educated professionals needed more than 15 hours to write less than a page and a half.

The issues over which the committee becomes blocked are the same issues central to social and individual approaches to batterer treatment described in Chapter V: To what extent are sexism and male control emphasized, and to what

extent are skill deficits and anger levels emphasized? Take, for example, the following sentence which the committee spent two full meetings, three hours, discussing: "While batterers may experience their behavior as reactive, we find that upon close inspection, battering is a set of learned, chosen behaviors that is practiced to achieve an end." The word "chosen" presented immediate problems. Some, associated with a feminist approach, thought it essential that the philosophy statement include a strong statement that batterers choose to use violence. They wondered if the issue of how batterers feel about that choice was even necessary to the statement. Others in the group felt that battering is a choice but not always experienced by abusers as a choice. A statement about how batterers feel about their abuse was therefore necessary from their perspective for obvious reasons. Still others felt that battering is not a choice. Discussions relating to the sentence included questions like whether or not we should label "people who batter" by calling them "batterers"; and, whether or not all batterers think they have the right to batter.

In general, the labels I have used so far in describing individual and social approaches to domestic violence provide a good guide for understanding debates within the group. On the above questions, for example, those who were more likely to emphasize the individual needs of the abusive people they treat clearly resisted labeling those people as batterers, and felt that not everyone who batters feels they have the right to batter--that many just do not know any better. Those with a more social or feminist emphasis were not concerned about the

psychological effects of labeling, and clearly felt that batterers will not stop battering unless their perceived right to batter (supported by a sexist culture) is challenged. Regardless of whether specific differences are labeled as social and individual, however, broad lines of difference are clear; individuals within the group who disagree on one point, for example, rarely find themselves as allies on other specific issues.

But some of the issues brought up by those in the group I have associated with a more individual approach--those who are more likely to emphasize what is happening emotionally and psychologically for someone who batters--present problems for my analysis of differences on the basis of more social or individual understandings. One member who consistently emphasizes a more psychological approach, for example, was concerned that the statement of philosophy recognize the fact that the vast majority of violence in the culture as a whole is directed at men; that men are the victims of a violent culture to a very important extent, and that the violence directed against men affects their beliefs and senses of identity--and, hence, any attempt to get them to stop battering. The group decided not to include the issue of a culture of violence against men in the philosophy statement, with the support of the member who brought it up. It was pointed out that while men may most often be the targets of violence in the culture as a whole, it is also most often men who are inflicting that violence. We decided that while it may be important in therapy or treatment to look at men's personal experiences of violence

and the confining nature of male role expectations for "fight-readiness," the issues were not essential to a statement of philosophy.

While a consensus was reached on the issue of violence against men and the group was able to move on, as one resolution in the continuing social-individual tug-of-war, its exclusion raises some important questions about what is social about a social analysis. Aware of their accountability to a movement of battered women, those who thought a statement of philosophy about batterer treatment should exclude the issue of violence against men wanted to discourage men from seeing themselves as victims. They pointed out that addressing the issue of violence against men may threaten to detract from important issues associated with domestic violence--that many men are violent only towards women, that batterers who function in otherwise healthy ways in terms of communicating and relating with friends, co-workers and bosses target systematic rage at their partners, and that the position of women in society makes them vulnerable targets for batterers. But while the aforementioned points may be central to a social analysis of sexism, they are perhaps too specific to offer a more broad or fundamental challenge to violence. hooks (1984) explains that although she agrees,

> . . . male violence against women in the family is an expression of male domination. . . . I believe that violence is inextricably linked to all acts of violence in this society that occur between the powerful and the powerless, the dominant and the dominated. While male supremacy encourages the use of abusive force to maintain male domination of women, it is the Western philosophical notion of hierarchical rule and coercive authority that is the root cause of violence against women, of adult violence against children, of all violence between those who dominate and those who are dominated. It is this belief system that is the foundation on which sexist ideology and

> other ideologies of group oppression are based; they can be eliminated only when this foundation is eliminated. (p. 118)

In other words, although it may seem politically expedient to keep a narrow focus on men as perpetrators of the vast majority of domestic violence, the decision could undermine more fundamental social change. hooks describes the limits of an approach that focuses too narrowly on the sexist nature of violence by pointing out that it,

> . . . lends credibility to sexist stereotypes that suggest men are violent, women are not . . . [and ignores] the extent to which women (with men) in this society accept and perpetuate the idea that it is acceptable for a dominant party or group to maintain power over the dominated by using coercive force. It allows us to overlook or ignore the extent to which women exert coercive authority over others or act violently. (p. 118)

Sexism and Domestic Violence

As hooks points out, overlooking the extents to which men are victimized by and women the perpetrators of violence also allows us to ignore the severity of the problem of violence in the culture as a whole. Specific to domestic violence, overlooking the extent to which both women and men learn the use of coercive authority also allows us to overlook battering in lesbian and gay relationships. Reasoning that in a heterosexist world gay and lesbian relationships are bound to reflect some of the same abusive dynamics as "straight" relationships, an analysis of homosexual domestic violence is consistent with an analysis of heterosexual domestic violence as rooted in sexism and patriarchy. On the other hand, due to homophobia and heterosexism, gay and lesbian battering is much more complex.

Gay and lesbian batterers may have added tools with which to isolate their partners; the fear of being "outed" and compounded problems with being believed add to the isolation of gay and lesbian victims of domestic violence. Also, although lesbian women have a long history as activists in the battered women's movement, battered lesbian women still have often fewer options than battered straight women. Shelters, mostly full of straight women, may not be realistic options for many lesbian survivors. Battered gay men have even fewer resources specific to their needs.

But even were gaps in services for and attitudes about battered gay men and lesbian women more fully addressed, the existence of battering in homosexual relationships would still present theoretical contradictions. Gay and lesbian relationships in many ways provide direct challenges to the sexism that most social or feminist analyses of domestic violence identify as at the root of the problem. Rejecting one of the strongholds of male power, the traditional heterosexual, nuclear family, gay men and lesbian women often defy traditional gender role expectations as well; gay men, for example, may have to learn the emotional and nurturing skills typically associated with femininity; lesbian women may learn the kind of self-reliance typically associated with masculinity. The fact that so many gay and lesbian relationships can defy traditional gender role assumptions and still be abusive highlights the intimate relationship between domestic violence and all other forms of violence or abuse. Particularly when compounded with homophobic

violence, attention to gay and lesbian domestic violence suggests a broader analysis of domestic violence than one narrowly rooted in sexism.

The Political Impact of Social Analyses

The issues of batterer treatment and gay and lesbian domestic violence described in the previous sections point to a difference between social and political analyses of domestic violence. Obviously, explanations rooted in analyses of social factors are more politically useful than those rooted in individual explanations. It is difficult to galvanize people around a problem that is explained as the result of individual pathology or psychology. Still, a social analysis of sexism should not be equated with a political analysis of domestic violence.

Beyond analyzing sexist social forces, a broader analysis of oppression in general is necessary in part to reconcile some of the contradictions associated with racial diversity analyzed in this research. What are the social change priorities of activists of color working in multi-racial, battered women's movement organizations? Although at Abri House women of color were disproportionately represented in direct service positions, they were also attributed by white feminists with bringing a growing social change emphasis to the organization. Further, while Abri House expands its work with its local community within the context of becoming racially diverse, the informal family and community ties emphasized by activists of color were not accurately reflected in the organization's most recent community work. The issue of batterer arrest and prosecution again presents itself

as an example. Would a battered women's movement controlled by women of color prioritize batterer arrest and prosecution? Given women of color's general awareness of the racist nature of so many law enforcement and legal practices, probably not.

Likewise, returning to my own personal experience with batterer treatment and to the issue of gay and lesbian battering, the problem of a political analysis that focuses too narrowly on sexism also presents practical problems. The committee with which I participated had real trouble reconciling their commitments to offer sensitive treatment options for gay and lesbian batterers and to write a statement of philosophy that was firmly rooted in an analysis of sexism. Problems with language were most obvious. Should the statement assume gender neutrality (i.e., by referring to "people who batter"), or should it reflect what most agreed was at the root of the problem and talk about "men who batter"?

But analyses of domestic violence that do not give certain emphasis to sexism seem problematic. After all, there are valid reasons for prioritizing arrest and prosecution; namely, the sexist nature of traditional, "old boy" responses to victims and perpetrators. And, even accounting for the very real problem of lesbian battering, the vast majority of batterers are men. To what extent do we actually support lesbian abusers and survivors by simple measures such as using gender-neutral language? While sweeping the sexist nature of so much heterosexual and lesbian violence under the rug, the use of terms like "people who batter" does not really constitute significant outreach to gay and lesbian victims and batterers.

Analyses that down-play sexism seem therefore inherently apolitical. One activist, for example, described a change in her understanding of batterer treatment when she described a change "from treating perpetrators, to looking at anger management as something that everyone can benefit from." Her ideal was that, "men and women, people who are holding their anger in and people who are explosive with their anger, can all take the same treatment and benefit from it." Without including some understanding of the unequal power underlying male and female relationships, her ideal seems to ignore the reality behind much domestic violence.

Another activist suggested an analysis that emphasized but was not limited to sexism and did not individualize the problem:

> I think it is sort of the dynamics of oppression in general. One of the things that's had an impact on me, just to touch on it, is having some cross-cultural exposure. I'm not sure that I can articulate it exactly, all the ways, but having spent some time in other cultures, and having looked at some of the issues around family dynamics, around gender, around violence, has really made an impression on me. That is why I don't think that domestic violence is a result of these individual pathologies, as much as it is how society organizes itself. There are cultures in which other variables are relatively stable, and things are not particularly stressful, and domestic violence is an extreme problem. There are other situations where there is a great deal of instability, and a great deal of personal stress, stress on families, stress on relationships, and domestic violence is not as great an issue. So it has to be something else, you know, be it wife burning in India or shooting your family in Lakeville, there is something other than just an individual losing it there.

In contrast to an anger management model where anyone, "people who are holding their anger in and people who are explosive with their anger, can all take the same treatment and benefit from it," the above description seems to take into account the

reality of power imbalances between (mostly male) abusive partners and their (mostly female) victims into account. Still, those gendered power imbalances are not reified as they are in analyses of domestic violence that focus too narrowly on sexism. Emphasizing the roles of different values and institutions in shaping sexism and domestic violence, the analysis recognizes the need for race, class and culturally specific analyses of domestic violence, and for services and social change programs that are sensitive to the diverse needs and concerns of survivors from different backgrounds.

Directions for Future Research on the Battered Women's Movement

An analysis of the way in which domestic violence is tied to sexism has provided the basis for a battered women's movement. An understanding of the sexist nature of intimate assaults has been a defining feature of the movement as distinct from traditional social services. As my research suggests, despite adopting more traditional structures and creating more services and resources for individual women, shelter organizations can maintain commitments to feminist social change. As the preceding discussion highlights, however, sexism is not the only social relationship of unequal power relevant to understanding domestic violence. A general direction for future research, then, is to look at the ways the battered women's movement can incorporate issues of race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality in an analysis of domestic violence, in services for victims and survivors, and in practices to change a culture that supports violence.

Some more specific directions for research can be defined in terms of my substantive or analytic chapters. Chapter IV, concerning activists' experiences of the organizational structure, highlights the need for more research on the limits to full participation for women of color in historically white feminist organizations; how and to what extent are women of color actively shaping the work cultures and priorities of multi-racial feminist organizations? Specifically, research conducted in a variety of organizational settings would be helpful. Chapter V, concerning issues relevant to activists' work with individuals, suggests further research into the ways in which social understandings of systems of oppression can and can not be incorporated with "treatment models," or "counseling techniques." Where is the common ground, for example, in the new territory of batterer treatment? And Chapter VI, concerning the political visions informing expectations and directions for the work of ending domestic violence, suggests the need for research exploring the changing role of shelters and communities in nourishing and limiting a feminist social change vision to end domestic violence. How will the local and informal community networks suggested by feminists of color in academe, and by women of color in this study be reflected in the expanding community change work of the movement?

Directions for future research are also suggested by the limits of this study. Specifically, research that more systematically includes and analyzes the viewpoints of women with different race, ethnic, class and sexual identities, including attention to diversity within those broad groups, is necessary. More comparative research

concerning priorities and understandings within different organizational settings would also be helpful in understanding the battered women's movement and its commitments to both social change and social service.

Finally, research that focuses on how victims or survivors--particularly those who have used shelter services--understand the roles of social service and social change in the battered women's movement would be helpful. One woman interviewed for this study commented that many shelter residents probably saw Abri House as a social service agency and did not associate it with a feminist movement. How survivors understand the roles of social change and social service is immediately important to activists as they negotiate their commitments.

An Addendum to the Research Process: Sociology and Movement Participation

In the quote that introduced this chapter, Claire described Abri House as keeping its eye on a vision, "a picture of where we're going and why we're going that way." In defining that vision, all well-researched, sociological analyses of the battered women's movement and its organizations are important to stimulating further work against domestic violence. Further, since the strength of the movement depends on the political self-consciousness of movement activists, more research conducted by activists in the battered women's movement is essential to ending domestic violence. Engaging in a critical sociological analysis of their own work can help battered women's activists to clarify their goals, and to achieve those goals effectively.

Having suggested the need for more sociological research on the battered women's movement that is done by battered women's activists, it is important to note how my dual roles as activist and sociologist shaped this research. I did not begin working in the movement with the intention of researching it. In fact, although I started graduate study in sociology a year before I started working as a volunteer for Abri House, it was only after several years of doing both things that I began any kind of formal sociological research or analysis of the movement. My primary identification of Abri House as a place where I worked as part of a movement to end violence against women--and only secondarily as a place for sociological research--shaped the nature of my research in distinct ways and is related to my more general beliefs about the inherently political nature of sociology.

The most obvious way in which my identification as activist/sociologist (and not sociologist/activist) shaped my research was in defining to whom my language and analysis spoke. Although my research questions were informed largely by what I saw as erroneous assertions from sociological literature, the bulk of my analysis spoke more directly to the battered women's movement than to sociological theory. While I did provide counter-evidence to sociological assertions about how feminist organizations are co-opted, my main emphasis was to identify current tensions in the movement's dual commitments to change and service with the hope that my research could have some practical use for the movement. My language reflected that emphasis; it was directed not toward those who routinely use terms like paradigm, ideology, and hegemony but toward those who routinely use terms

like standards, ideas and power. My parsimonious use of sociological theory in my substantive or analytic chapters (Chapters IV, V, and VI) also reflected my primary identification as a movement activist.

So where sociologists typically describe their roles as "outsiders" in the context of the movements or institutions they study, I felt very much the "insider" in the context of the battered women's movement I studied, and something of the "outsider" in the context of sociology. Still, although my language and analysis spoke most directly to the battered women's movement and not to the discipline of sociology, I believe my research contributes greatly to sociological theory and practice. While I did not engage in much explicit sociological theorizing, my research is inherently theoretical. My decision to analyze the structure of the organization, the actual practices engaged in by activists, and then the political visions or consciousness of activists, for example, was rooted in my understanding of Marxism and a historical materialist method. My decision to tie my political practice with the battered women's movement to my study of sociology is a result of the same theoretical and epistemological concerns. Likewise, my resistance throughout my research to look at Abri House as an organization that started out as a grassroots collective and through being co-opted became a mainstream institution represents a definite, if not always explicit, dialogue with other recent research on feminist organizations that emphasizes the non-dichotomous nature of movement ideology, and the formation of diverse political identities among movement activists.

The fact that I could earn a Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology with a dissertation that speaks as much to practice as to theory represents one of the greatest potential strengths of the discipline: that "expert" analyses of the "real" world can come from and speak to that world. Sociology need not proceed directly from and to the ivory towers of academe, it can proceed from and to the lived experiences of those who are being researched. With historical roots in understanding and impacting the changes of the nineteenth century Industrial Revolution, in Marxism and, later, in the reform oriented "Chicago School" of the 1940s, sociology has a firm tradition of tying activism to research. Still, much sociological research and dialogue is inaccessible to all but a small group of highly educated intellectuals. Too much social research originates in questions posed by academics with little lived experience of the institutions or movements they study, and too much of it is made inaccessible by virtue of being written in arcane language and published in specialized academic journals. In addition to contributing something to the battered women's movement, therefore, I hope also that this research encourages more sociology that values lived experience as a basis for understanding, and recognizes the inherent ties between knowledge-making and politics.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. When did you begin working at the shelter? For how long did you work there?

2. What did/do you do in your work? Could you describe a typical day or week?

3. Why did you want to work at the shelter organization? How did you feel about working with battered women when you first started the work? What were your most important goals you had for the job?

4. Did the work meet your expectations?

5. What did/do you like most about the work? What did/do you like least about the work?

   --what aspects of the oraganization would you like to see change?

   --which aspects should definitely be kept?

6. Now I want you to imagine what you would do in this scenario: You are on a nation-wide task force that has just been awarded a very large grant to help end domestic violence, or battering.

   --what are your priorities? Why?

   --if the money had to be divided between a media campaign, housing for survivors, counseling services and training counselors on domestic violence issues what would your priorities be?

7. One central question for my dissertation comes out of my experience as a public speaker for the shelter. On the one hand, I say that we can help battered women by understanding what happens emotionally or psychologically when confronted with an abusive husband, boyfriend, or partener; on the other, I emphasize the need to go beyond individual psychology to look at how social conditions create and maintain violence against women.

   --where would you place the principle causes of battering on a continuum from individual to social (interviewees were shown a five point scale from individual to social)?

   --where would you place the solutions?

--why do you place yourself there? Do you agree with the proposition that any woman could end up a battered woman?

--does that reflect the kind of work you were/are doing with the shelter, or is it just how you think about it. (If action and thinking are different)--how did/do you feel about that?

--where do you think you fall relative to the people you were/are working with?

--where would you place the shelter on that continuum? Has that changed over time?

--how has your thinking changed over time?

8. Now I want to ask you some questions about your personal background to help with my analysis of your responses.

--how old are you?

--how do you define your race or ethnic background?

--your educational background?

--your occupation?

--your household income?

--are you married or living with a partner?

(If yes, what is partner's education and occupation)

--are you a parent?

--what were your parents' occupations when you were growing up?

--how would you identify your past and current class background?

--do you identify as a survivor of domestic violence?

9. Finally, is there anything else that you would like to tell me? Anything that you think I might want to ask in the future?

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