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CHALLENGING GLOBAL GENDER VIOLENCE

The Global Clothesline Project

Susan D. Rose

Challenging Global Gender Violence

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

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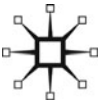
palgrave macmillan

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483



CHALLENGING GLOBAL GENDER VIOLENCE
Copyright © Susan D. Rose, 2014.
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2014 978-1-137-38953-4

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First published in 2014 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN: 978–1–137–38848–3 PDF
ISBN: 978–1–349–48244–3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the Library of Congress.

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

First edition: 2014

www.palgrave.com/pivot

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

To all the women and children who have contributed to the Global Clothesline Project. To all who have suffered violence, to those struggling and surviving, and to all whose lives have been claimed by violence. Let there be peace.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

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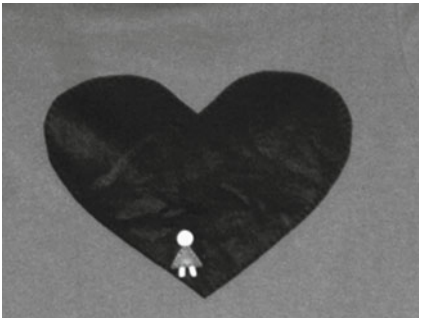
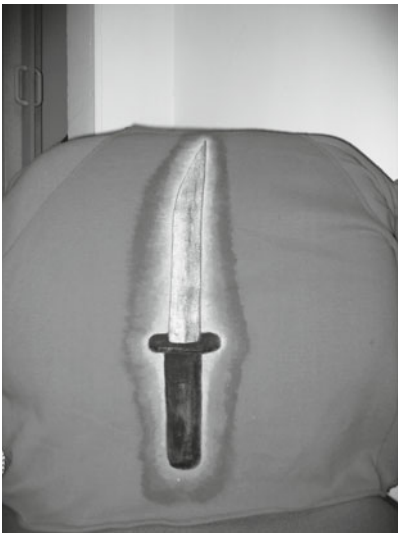


Black Heart: I knew I wanted to have a black heart on it. Maybe it was because I just felt that way about hearts, about love. That is was all very black (Liz).

Shame: I've always felt that my heart was damaged in some way. And that's why I wanted to start with the heart. I picked burlap because I feel that I am very rough (Pat).

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483



Rape: When I made the shirt I kept feeling that it wasn't busy enough. The shirt looked so naked . . . it seems so stark. And then I realized that's how I was feeling (Kim).

These women quoted here all contributed to the *Global Clothesline Project: Bearing Witness to Violence against Women*. Organized in conjunction with the national project based in Massachusetts and part of the international movement against violence directed at women, the Global Clothesline Project (GCP) invited women to create T-shirts that expressed not only the violence they suffered but also the healing and recovery they were experiencing. The effectiveness of the project lies in the work that can be done at an individual or small group therapeutic level (anonymously or confidentially as women may individually or collectively create T-shirts), and at the social movement level with the public display of shirts that expose the violence and healing that has taken place within a particular community—be it a college campus, religious organization, NGO, or local community. The exhibit has the potential to open up a dialogue about violence and to engage victim-survivors, witnesses, and perpetrators to "see" what impact violence has and work toward ending it. A powerful tool to educate the community about the impact of gender violence, it provides both agency and safety to vulnerable victims. It empowers survivors and allies to come together to not only express individual stories

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

but also collectively challenge human rights violations that are often constructed and dismissed as traditional cultural practices.

A small group of women launched the Clothesline Project in 1990 on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, with a display of 31 shirts in Hyannis.[1] They were motivated by figures released by the Men's Rape Prevention Project in Washington DC that showed that while 58,000 soldiers died in the Vietnam War, during that same time period, 51,000 women were killed, mostly by men who supposedly loved them. One of the women, visual artist Rachel Carey-Harper, inspired by the AIDS quilt, envisioned the concept of using T-shirts hanging on a clothesline as a means to break silence about violence against women and raise awareness. A coalition of women's groups on Cape Cod decided to act and created a "program that would educate, break the silence, and bear witness to violence against women" (Clothesline, n.d.). And so the Clothesline Project was born—representing the days when women in close-knit communities would exchange information as they hung clothes to dry in their backyards and share what was going on in their daily lives, talking over the Clothesline.

The Clothesline thus serves to symbolize the breaking of the taboo of speaking about abuse, often interpreted as "airing one's dirty laundry" in public. Not everyone immediately understands the word "Clothesline" or will use T-shirts to break the silence. For example, in Venezuela, we needed to translate the word "Clothesline," and in Cameroon, we used traditional scarves as well as T-shirts; women there also felt more comfortable sewing or doing embroidery, a more familiar medium than drawing with paints and markers. But once explained, the concept resonates across cultures. Remarkably, just after doing a Clothesline workshop in Yaoundé, I had the opportunity to visit the renowned Cameroonian artist Max Lyonga. As we walked into his gallery in Buea, I immediately encountered this painting:

This is one in a series of Max Lyonga's three "clothesline" paintings. A victim-survivor of child abuse himself, he found painting to be his form of expression and healing. We immediately connected and he agreed to have me reproduce an image of his painting here. "The painting represents women's work, and what so often goes on behind closed doors. It's something (family violence) that happens everywhere around the world. I want my paintings to speak to the world, to offer hope" (Max Lyonga, 2011, pers. comm., February).

By the late 1990s, the grass-roots project started had spawned over 350 Clothesline Projects in the U.S., many of them on university campuses.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

My first involvement with the project began in 1993 at Dickinson College when the Women's Center assembled an exhibit as part of the Public Affairs Symposium on "Violence in America." Initially we conducted interviews with 20 women, and then collected additional interviews at the national exhibit in Washington DC, where over 5,000 shirts were displayed in the mall in April 1995. From this work, my colleague and I produced a 53-minute documentary, simply called *Clothesline*, that integrated images from the shirts and interviews with women who spoke to us about the making and meaning of their shirts. The documentary opens with a clothesline of shirts made by women: white shirts (contributed by family or friends) represent women who had been killed; blue or green shirts were made by victims of childhood sexual abuse or incest; yellow or beige shirts by women who had been battered (a common term used at the time); red, pink, or orange shirts by victims of rape and sexual assault; and purple shirts by women who had suffered violence because of being targeted as lesbian. The women drew upon different images and materials to portray the abuse and healing they experienced: black felt and burlap hearts, pieces from childhood dresses, broken candles, ripped out hearts, lace daggers, and photographs of graduation day.

The women spoke about the significance of the images to them and their experience in constructing the artwork. The choice of the burlap fabric, for instance: "I just feel like I have a very rough heart. This is the wound, the incest…And the little hammers are what I've used all my life to beat myself into not allowing me to be me." A striking red shirt, cut up the middle by an artist's rendering of a knife: "When I made the shirt I kept feeling

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

so naked…I better put something else on it. I better put something on the back. The shirt, it seems too stark. And then I realized that's how I felt…I was feeling naked, and I was feeling very vulnerable and very fragile and very exposed in thinking about the whole thing, and making the image, and bringing the image out into the public's eye…I think that's the tight rope that needs to be walked…It's a very empowering situation to go ahead and act, even in the midst of that kind of vulnerability."

In August 1995, I had the opportunity to screen *Clothesline* at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing/Hairou. As I contemplated how to most effectively present the project, I was conscious of being a white, middle-class, professional woman from the U.S. During the Third World Conference on Women in 1985, violence as an issue had barely been mentioned—the major concerns were poverty, potable water, access to health care. So I thought hard about the questions that might be useful in facilitating a meaningful conversation after the screening of that first documentary that featured mostly white women from the U.S.—albeit from various socio-economic groups.

Some of the questions included:

> What are the connections/differences among the kinds of violence described here and those that women in other cultures and societies experience? What are the similarities/differences among the kinds of conditions likely to generate violence against women?
>
> To what extent does incest, as an act of violence against an individual girl or woman, also act as political disempowerment of girls and women in general?
>
> The women in this video are giving voice to the violence committed against them, thus taking back some of the power stolen from them. In what ways do women cross-culturally resist violence? To what extent is "breaking silences" important and possible for women in other cultures? What forms does this take?
>
> "Clothesline" raises issues not only about violence against women, but also about feminist activists and scholars using video-making as the basis for their work. To what extent are women internationally using video as a means for generating knowledge, for reclaiming power of the media?

While I and many others have continued to explore and grapple with these questions, those in the audience that hot day in August were less interested in theoretical, academic questions of this nature and more interested in concrete details. They wanted to know what logistics were involved in organizing a Clothesline Project in their rural village in

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Malaysia or Thailand. Can it be done by the riverside where women wash their clothes, by the well where we draw our water, in a church where we pray, or in a school recently opened for girls? Where and how might a Clothesline be displayed?

My response was simple. The Clothesline concept is adaptable. Wherever women may gather and be safe in talking with one another, the shirts can be created and displayed—whether hung on a Clothesline on a college campus or in a religious institution or neighborhood park or laid on rocks by the river or the well where women wash and dry clothes. While originally there was a color code that helped to signify the type of violence one has experienced,[2] it may not always be possible to use it. For example, artists from the Adolescent Ward at the Hershey Medical Hospital only had access to white shirts—they were displayed on the Central Pennsylvania Clothesline even though the white color of their shirts did not designate death. Likewise, for workshops in domestic violence shelters and schools, we had no way of knowing in advance how many of which colors we may need and many women are survivors of multiple forms of violence. In some cases, women wanted to pick the color that spoke to them. And in the case of the National Disability Clothesline Project in New Zealand (http://disabilityclothesline.weebly.com/), the organizers expressed interest in designating a color for those who have experienced violence against them as people with disabilities. So it is best to adapt and use what works best for one's own particular community and setting.

Since the 1990s, I have had the opportunity to help organize some 20 Clothesline Projects in the U.S. among diverse groups of women and children; in Bosnia among women in a witness protection program who were testifying against Mlađo Radić (who has since been convicted of war crimes and imprisoned); in the urban barrios and rural schools of Venezuela; in Cameroon, Cuba, and the Netherlands. In many cases, the Clothesline Project has now been replicated by people and organizations within those countries. For example, the original Clothesline Project done in Breda, Holland, in June 2010 spread throughout the Netherlands. By International Women's Day, March 8, 2011, women in all 23 domestic violence shelters in the Netherlands had contributed shirts to an open-air exhibit of the National Clothesline Project in the Hague with Dutch parliamentarians and the U.S. ambassador to the Netherlands participating.

While these countries are quite diverse culturally, politically, and socio-economically, they all face the challenge of how to deal with

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

domestic, family, intimate partner, and sexual violence. While the terms used to identify the problems and the resources vary from country to country, what is striking is how similar the experiences and expressions of violence are. The images that women and children draw, the feelings they express, and the very words they use in a panoply of languages reveal the ways in which women from around the world may be different but not so dissimilar from one another.

Hearts broken, daggered, ripped out, sewn back together; big hands and no arms and hands; birds caged and set free; the words NO! Geen! Pas! No Más! Stop! Nikad Više; black eyes, black hearts, black hands illuminate the shirts that women constructed, independent of one another, to express their feelings of despair, fear, anger, freedom, and hope. And no matter the race, ethnicity, or nationality, black was by far the most common color used in both images and words to express feelings of emptiness, despair, and hopelessness. The two other colors most commonly used across cultures were red to represent pain and blood—and in some cases a healthy, loving heart, and green to represent hope and growth.

The women who contribute to the Global Clothesline Project are survivors who are speaking out, some anonymously and others quite publically. To protect confidentiality, I will use pseudonyms for the contributors to the Global Clothesline Project even though some of the women have been active in the media and domestic violence campaigns. To break the silence takes great courage for speaking out is a political as well as therapeutic act, and as such is a claim to power. It involves risk as well as promise whether one is in the U.S. or the Netherlands, in Cameroon or Cuba. While governments and people are becoming much more aware of the prevalence of gender violence and the devastating effects it can have, violence against women continues to be one of the most prevalent, persistent, and pernicious human rights abuses across the developing and developed worlds. It has been recognized as a major public health issue (and for women—*the* major public health issue) and as an obstacle to development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs; UNIFEM, n.d.).[3]

While men also are all too often victims of violence and women abuse other women, men, and children, the vast majority of cases of sexual, intimate partner violence (IPV) involve male-on-female abuse. The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that 95 per cent of the victims of domestic violence are women and the data are consistent across national studies of IPV and sexual violence.

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So while some attention will be paid to the experiences of men, this book features the voices of women and children as they tell their stories of abuse and healing through words and images. It starts at the grass-roots level, with a close reading of the shirts and interviews and then builds toward a more theoretical analysis of the ways in which trauma is experienced and expressed. The chapters move from an analysis of individual testimonies to a macro analysis of structural forces of inequality, examining the ways in which the development of socio-economic inequality leads to greater violence against women and children. One of the primary arguments of this book is that patriarchy and gender violence have not always existed—it is not just a part of human nature but rather of specific kinds of socio-economic and political conditions and cultural values; social constructions of gender roles, norms, and expectations, and systems of socialization. The data clearly indicate that societies that experience greater gender equality experience less gender violence. The final chapters explore effective strategies that are being used to challenge gender violence and the ways in which we may envision healthier societies that encourage respect and compassion rather than competition and control.

Chapter 1 lays out the problem (definitions, prevalence, and consequences) of gender violence drawing data from multi- and cross-national studies.

Chapters 2–4 analyze the themes and images that emerge from an analysis of over 700 Global Clothesline shirts and 200 interviews. They highlight the artwork and voices of women and girls who have suffered domestic, family, intimate partner, and sexual violence. These chapters include: Black Heart (Chapter 2); Shame (Chapter 3); Difficult Decisions: Staying, Leaving (Chapter 4) with a focus on despair and hope.

Chapter 5 is a more theoretical chapter that plays off of an essay titled "The Adventure" by Georg Simmel. It considers the ways in which trauma may be seen as the shadow-side of adventure that draws one in rather than out. The research literature on trauma and gender violence and excerpts from memoirs inform the analysis of childhood sexual abuse narratives from the Global Clothesline Project. This micro analysis synthesizes the research literature, memoirs, and interviews.

A more macro analysis is presented in Chapter 6, "Abuse Is Not Traditional," which argues that patriarchy and violence against women and children have not always been common or condoned. As pastoral and agricultural societies developed out of gathering and hunting societies, the increase in economic surplus led to greater socio-economic inequality

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and an increase in violence against women and children who increasingly became the property of men. The chapter integrates case studies of Maori and Native American peoples, both of whom now have the highest rates of family and sexual violence within their respective societies, even though abuse was not common prior to colonization. Based on the research literature and ethnographic research I've conducted in New Zealand and among Native American communities in the U.S., the chapter highlights the ways in which culture is being applied as a resource in the fight against gender violence rather than being used as an excuse.

Chapter 7, "Facing the Challenges: Creating and Sustaining Healthy Relationships and Societies," examines effective strategies (from international treaties to government legislation, media and educational campaigns, and NGOs) being used in Cameroon, Iceland, New Zealand, and the United States to support victim-survivors of gender violence, raise awareness, and challenge (de-normalize) gender violence. The most common argument used to defend the practice of violence against women and children is a cultural relativist one: that such practice is a part of "the culture." This defense values the preservation of the patriarchal family over the human rights of women and children, and acting on social pathologies that exist in every culture. Drawing upon the research literature on inequality and masculinity studies, the chapter explores how healthier relationships and societies can be built. The argument reinforces the importance of a positive relationship between economic and gender equality in breaking the cycle of gender violence.

Notes

1 Growing out of a grass-roots group in Cape Cod, the National Network for the Clothesline Project is now located at P.O. Box 727, East Dennis, MA 02641.
2 For guidelines in creating a Clothesline Project and the color guidelines, see http://www.clotheslineproject.org/.
3 The MDGS are eight international development goals ranging from eradicating extreme poverty and hunger to achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality rates; improving maternal health; and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. Articulated in the United Nations Millenium Declaration, all 189 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations agreed to achieve these goals by the year 2015.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Acknowledgments

This has been a collaborative project from the very beginning. I want to thank Ethel Jensen, Lonna Malmsheimer, and Jean Weaver, colleagues at Dickinson College, who helped organize and document the Central Pennsylvania Clothesline back in 1993. A very special thanks to all who contributed to that first Clothesline project and to those who were the courageous ones willing to talk about the making and the meaning of their shirts in those early interviews. In many ways, the Global Clothesline Project took on a life of its own, resulting in exhibits, documentaries, articles, and workshops around the country and globally. Many thanks go to former students who worked with me over the last 20 years on this project, including especially the work of Gabriela Uassouaf, Oahn-Nhi Nguyen, Manu Saralegui, Sarah Wright, Hannah Farda, and Shannon Sullivan. International colleagues were central. Thanks to their vision, willingness to trust the process, and their understanding of the importance of raising awareness about family and sexual violence and fighting against it, we were able to do Clothesline workshops and exhibits in the Netherlands, with special thanks to Jan Werd, as well as Carin, Inge, and Marloes; in Cameroon, thanks to Pochi Tamba Nsoh, Georgette Arrey Taku, and RENATA; in Venezuela, thanks to Irlanda Espinoza, Gabriela Uassouf, and the *Circulos Femininos Populares*; with the Tribal Council of California, thanks to Tami Tejada and, Anita Anaya; and in Bosnia, thanks to Shannon Sullivan and Dzana. Thanks to those who have supported me in so many ways along the way: Joyce Bylander, Sue Gilius, Lonna Malmsheimer, Sharon O'Brien, and Kim Rogers—and to my family—*Abrazos Fuertes.*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Part I
Gender Violence across Cultures

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

1
Gender Violence: The Problem

Abstract: *This chapter examines the problem (definitions, prevalence, and consequences) of gender violence. Long a significant cause of female morbidity and mortality, gender violence has increasingly become recognized as a human rights and public-health issue, especially within the last three decades. Still, it continues to be a pervasive danger to women and children in both developing and developed societies as data from multi- and cross-national studies indicate. Female infanticide and femicide, domestic violence, rape, mutilation, sex trafficking, dowry deaths, honor killings, incest, and breast ironing—all of which constitute gender violence—are part of a global pattern of violence against women, a pattern supported by educational, economic, and employment discrimination.*

Keywords: abuse in pregnancy; domestic violence; family violence; femicide; honor killings; intimate partner violence; rape; sexual violence

Rose, Susan D. *Challenging Global Gender Violence: The Global Clothesline Project*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> Violence is every bit as much a public health issue for me and my successors in this century as smallpox, tuberculosis, and syphilis were for my predecessors in the last two centuries.
>
> C. Everett Koop, M.D., Former Surgeon General of the United States (1984)

> Violence against women is the most pervasive human rights violation which continues to challenge every country in the world. While laws, policies and resources are crucial to address this phenomenon effectively, these efforts must be coupled with actions to combat its structural and systemic causes.
>
> Rashida Manjoo, Special Rapporteur for the UN Human Rights Commission on violence against women (2011)

The United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* proclaims that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," yet women's freedom, dignity, equality, and health are persistently compromised by law, custom, and religious tradition in ways that men's are not (Bunch, 1995, p. 14). Female infanticide and femicide, domestic violence, rape, mutilation, sex trafficking, dowry death, honor killings, incest, and breast ironing—all of which constitute gender violence—are part of a global pattern of violence against women, a pattern supported by educational, economic, and employment discrimination. The effects of violence can be devastating to a woman's reproductive health as well as to other aspects of her physical and mental well-being. In addition to causing injury, violence increases women's long-term risk of a number of other health problems, including chronic pain, physical disability, drug and alcohol abuse, skin complaints, gastric ulcers, sleep disturbances, depression, and suicide (Meshkat and Landes, 2011; WHO/UNAIDS, 2010; Krug et al., 2002; Te Awatea, 2010; Robertson and Oulton, 2008). Women with a history of physical or sexual abuse are also at increased risk for unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and adverse pregnancy outcomes (Sakar, 2008; Ending Violence, 2006).

Within the last three decades, gender violence, long a significant cause of female morbidity and mortality, has increasingly become recognized as a human rights and public-health issue. Still, it continues to be pervasive in both developing and developed societies. The World Bank report

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"Violence Against Women: The Hidden Health Burden" (Heise et al., 1994) examined the implications of gender violence for health and socio-economic development, estimating that gender-based victimization is responsible for one out of every five healthy years of life lost to women of reproductive age. The report concludes: "Female-focused violence also represents a hidden obstacle to economic and social development. By sapping women's energy, undermining their confidence, and compromising their health, gender violence deprives society of women's full participation" (p. ix).

Resistance to change is strong, however, especially when it comes to challenging deeply held beliefs and values about gender roles, statuses, and power. Violence against women is a complex phenomenon, deeply rooted in gender-based power relations, sexuality, gender roles, and identity that are embedded in cultural values and institutional practices as well as in individual beliefs and behavior. Efforts to eliminate or ameliorate gender violence must therefore confront underlying cultural beliefs and social structures that reinforce and perpetuate it.

Definition, types, and prevalence of gender violence

According to the first official UN definition of gender violence (1993b), violence against women includes "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life." The UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1993a further clarified that:

> Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms…In all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual, and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class, and culture.

Violence against women and girls includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. It is often referred to as "gender-based" violence because it derives in part from women's subordinate status in society. Many cultures have beliefs, norms, and social institutions that legitimize and therefore perpetuate violence against women. The same

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

acts that would be punished if directed at an employer, a neighbor, or an acquaintance often go unchallenged when men direct them at women within the family or within intimate partner relationships.

Statistics paint a bleak picture of the social and health consequences of gender violence. Violence against women is a major cause of death and disability for women in the age group of 16–44 worldwide (UNIFEM, 2007). Roughly 60 million women who should have been alive today are "missing" because of gender discrimination, predominantly in South and West Asia, China, and North Africa. In India, more than 5,000 women are killed each year because their in-laws consider their dowries inadequate (Bunch, 1997). Surveys from around the world indicate that half of the women who die from homicides are killed by their current or former husbands (Krug et al., 2002; UNIFEM, 2007). Among women aged between 15 and 44, acts of violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents, and war combined (UNIFEM, 2011). According to the U.S. surgeon general, domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women in the United States.

A strong co-occurrence of spousal abuse and child abuse exists (Sousa et al., 2011; Appel and Holden, 1998). Results of a 2003 UNICEF study of child maltreatment deaths in rich countries in the 1990s showed that New Zealand had the third highest child maltreatment death rate (UNICEF, 2003; Social Report, 2010). In a study of 29 OECD countries, only the U.S. (ranked #1) and Mexico (ranked #2) had higher rates of annual child deaths due to negligence, maltreatment, and abuse (Social Report, 2010). While not all of these homicides are the result of familial abuse, many are. It is striking to compare the data from 2001–2008 of the 12,180 children in the U.S. who are reported to have died as a result of abuse and neglect with the combined total of U.S. fatalities for the same time period due to 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, the Iraq War, and the Afghanistan War: 9,664. A study of the exposure of children to physical and sexual violence (PV and SV, respectively) in five African countries "found strong associations between exposure to PV, SV or both and multiple adverse health behaviors during childhood" (Brown et al., 2009).

Data from a variety of sources indicate the degree to which women and girls are in danger across both the developed and developing worlds (Anderson and Sidel, 2011; Parrot and Cummins, 2006; Watts and Zimmerman, 2002; Campbell, 2002). Several studies have shown that there are links between violence against women and HIV/AIDS, especially in countries where women are not allowed to "say no" to their

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

husbands or demand that a condom be used if a husband is HIV positive. A survey among 1,366 South African women indicated that women who were beaten by their husbands were 48 percent more likely to be infected with HIV than those who were not (Women and HIV/AIDS, 2004). In terms of sexual violence, it is estimated that one in five women worldwide becomes a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime (UNFPA, 2005). UNICEF (2013) estimates that human trafficking yields $32 billion in profits yearly. This includes both labor and sex trafficking. While numbers vary, a reasonable estimate is that each year more than two million children are exploited in the global commercial sex trade, many of them trapped in prostitution (Trafficking, 2008). The World Health Organization (2006) reports that 150 million girls experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence in 2002 (CDC, n.d.).

Some groups working with runaways in the U.S. estimate that one in three young people is solicited for sex within 48 hours of running away from home or becoming homeless (UNICEF, 2013). According to U.S. Health and Human Services sex trafficking in the U.S. includes 1.39 million victims each year with the majority being young girls between the ages of 9 and 19. The average age of the victim is 13. In an investigation of human trafficking, U.S. federally funded task forces opened 2,515 suspected incidents between January 2008 and June 2010, classifying 8 in 10 of the cases as sex trafficking (Banks and Kyckelhahn, 2011).

Pornography, a $13.3 billion industry in the U.S. and a $97 billion industry worldwide (Internet Filter Review, n.d.), helps fuel the sex trafficking industry, increases demand for violent sex, and affects intimate partner relationships—both in terms of how time is spent and what may come to be expected. Pornography is significant in shaping people's expectations and desires and is becoming increasingly violent (Dines, 2011). At a 2003 meeting of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, two-thirds of the 350 divorce lawyers who attended said the Internet played a significant role in divorces in the past year, with excessive interest in online porn contributing to more than half such cases (Internet Filter Review, n.d.). Pornography is not a victimless crime: as of 2005, child pornography was a $3 billion annual industry. Gail Dines, sociologist and author of *Pornland: How Porn Is Hijacking Our Sexuality* (2011), argues that pornography—not comprehensive sexuality education or abstinence-only programs—has become the major form of sex education today, affecting people across their life span.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Intimate partner violence

While it is very important to recognize mass-marketed and extreme forms of violence that gain international attention, such as the brutal and ultimately fatal gang rape of a 23-year-old woman on a bus in New Delhi, India, it is also critical to recognize the everyday, "ordinary" enactment of violence against women that occurs in very similar ways across societies. The most endemic form of violence against women is intimate partner violence (IPV; Ending Violence, 2006; Silverman et al., 2001). The Family Violence Prevention Fund (2008) defines intimate partner violence "as physical, sexual or psychological harm by a current or former intimate partner or spouse; it includes a pattern of coercive or manipulative behaviors perpetrated by one intimate partner against the other in order to gain or maintain control in the relationship. These behaviors include psychological, verbal, financial, physical and/or sexual abuse concurrently or alone."

Studies from 35 countries indicate that between one-fourth and one-half of women report having been physically abused by a present or former partner. An even larger percentage has been subjected to on-going emotional and psychological abuse (Heise et al., 1994, p. 4).

A WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence estimated the extent of physical and sexual intimate partner violence against women in 15 sites in ten countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand, and the United Republic of Tanzania. Using standardized population-based household surveys conducted between 2000 and 2003, women aged 15–49 years were interviewed; those who had ever had a male partner were asked in private about their experiences of physically and sexually violent and emotionally abusive acts. In total, 24,097 women completed interviews, with approximately 1,500 interviews per site. The reported lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual partner violence, or both, varied from 15 percent to 71 percent, with two sites having a prevalence of less than 25 percent, seven between 25 and 50 percent, and six between 50 and 75 percent. Men who were more controlling were more likely to be violent against their partners (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006; see also Dahlberg and Krug, 2002).

At its most extreme, intimate partner violence leads to death. Studies of femicide in Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa, and the U.S.A. indicate that 40–70 percent of female murder victims were killed by their

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

husbands or boyfriends (Ending Violence, 2006, p. 44). In a U.S. study, murder was the second leading cause of death for girls aged 15–18, and 78 percent of homicide victims in the study were killed by an acquaintance or an intimate partner (Coyne-Beasley et al., 2003). In Colombia, every six days a woman is reportedly killed by her partner or former partner (Ending Violence, 2006, p. 44). Other less severe but common forms of IPV used to control partners include isolating their partners from friends or family, taking their partner's money and giving them an "allowance," and taking away car keys, continually criticizing or demeaning their partner in front of friends, or the threat of or actual physical or sexual assaults.

The 2010 WHO *Multi-cultural study on women's health and domestic violence against women* found that between 6 and 59 percent of women reported experiencing sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, with figures for most sites falling between 10 and 50 percent. Population-based studies from various countries indicate that 10–69 percent of women aged 15–49 years experience physical abuse by a male intimate partner at least once in their lifetime, while 6–47 percent of women report attempted or actual forced sex by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Heise et al., 1999; Heise and Garcia-Moreno, 2002; Jewkes et al., 2002; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006). Sexual violence can have major implications for victims' physical, psychological, social, and spiritual health, including serious physical injuries, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, depression, suicidal behavior, ostracism, isolation, and posttraumatic stress disorder (Robertson and Oulton, 2008; Herman, 1992b; Frazier and Berman, 2008; Jewkes et al., 2002; Martin et al., 2007a, b).

Spousal violence has ramifications for the reproductive health of women. In the U.S., it is estimated that one in five to one in six pregnant women is in an abusive relationship (Sarkar, 2008; Chang et al., 2005; Newberger et al., 1992). Both physical and emotional abuse can have negative impacts on the health of the mother and fetus; these include vaginal/cervical/kidney infections, vaginal bleeding, abdominal trauma, hemorrhage, delayed prenatal care, miscarriage, stillbirth, low birth weight babies or premature delivery, complications during labor, fetal, bruising, fractures, and hematomas, infection or rupture of the mother's membranes, abruption of placenta, chronic illness in the mother or baby, and death (Koenig et al., 2006; Samandari, 2010; Newberger et al., 1992). Some studies based in health facilities indicate a relationship between

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

intimate partner violence and death during pregnancy. For example, a study of 400 villages and seven hospitals in rural western India found that 16 percent of all deaths during pregnancy were the result of partner violence (Ending Violence, 2006, p. 58).

Intimate partner violence in sub-Saharan Africa is increasingly being recognized as an important public-health issue (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006; Bowman, 2003), with about half of African women reporting abuse by their partners (Watts and Mayhew, 2004). Research on the effects of spousal violence on women's health show a link between exposure to domestic violence and adverse birth outcomes (Boy and Salihu, 2004; Silverman et al., 2007), including the risk of fetal loss in this region (Jones and Horan, 1997), where the rate of fetal death is the highest in the world (Alio et al., 2009). Analyzing data from the 2004 Cameroon Demographic Health Survey administered to 2,570 women, Alio, Nana, and Salihu (2009) investigated the effect of physical, sexual, and emotional violence on potentially preventable single and recurrent spontaneous fetal loss. In the violence module of this survey, women were questioned about their experience of physical, emotional, and sexual violence inflicted by their spouses, and about any stillbirths and spontaneous abortions. Of the 2,562 women who responded to the violence module, those exposed to spousal violence (n = 1,307) were 50 percent more likely to experience at least one episode of fetal loss compared to those who were not. Recurrent fetal mortality was associated with all forms of spousal violence, but emotional violence had the strongest association (Alio et al., 2009). Moreover, an association was found between intimate partner violence (physical and sexual) and induced abortion in Cameroon (Alio et al., 2011).

Sexual violence

A study of over 20,000 schoolchildren aged 13–15 years in Namibia, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe found that 23 percent reported having experienced sexual violence (physically forced to have sexual intercourse) at some point in their lives. Such experiences were moderately-to-strongly associated with poor mental health, suicidal ideation, cigarette use, alcohol or drug misuse, multiple sexual partners and a history of a sexually transmitted infection (WHO, 2010a). In a national survey in Swaziland that examined the prevalence and

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

circumstances of sexual violence against girls, some 33 percent of respondents reported experiencing an incident of sexual violence before they reached 18 years of age. Sexual violence was associated with significantly increased probability of reporting ever feeling depressed, thoughts of suicide, attempted suicide, unwanted pregnancy, pregnancy complications or miscarriages, sexually transmitted diseases, difficulty sleeping, and alcohol consumption (WHO, 2010a). Additionally, forced sexual initiation, intimate partner violence, and/or sexual violence appear to increase the risk of pregnancy in early adolescence. In South Africa it was found that pregnant adolescents were over twice as likely to have a history of forced sexual initiation as non-pregnant ones (WHO, 2010a; Jewkes et al., 2002).

Similar findings in the United States have also been reported (Silverman et al., 2004; Noll et al., 2009). According to Boyer and Fine (1993), 62 percent of pregnant and parenting adolescents had experienced contact molestation, attempted rape, or rape prior to their first pregnancy, and between 11 and 20 percent of girls were pregnant as a direct result of rape. Seventy-four percent of women who had intercourse before age 14 report a history of forced sexual intercourse (Guttmacher, 1994). Girls who were victimized prior to their first pregnancy were more likely than girls not abused to: use or have problems with drugs or alcohol or to have sex partners who use drugs or alcohol; have had an abortion; have second and third pregnancies; and to have had a sexually transmitted disease (Boyer and Fine, 1993). Moreover, 70 percent of babies born to teenage mothers are fathered by adult men; only 30 percent are fathered by teenagers (National Center for Health Statistics, 1993; Guttmacher, 1994; Zanga et al., 2008).

Studies from the U.S. indicate that pregnant adolescents (ages 13–17) in particular have an elevated risk of violence from their partners ("Nearly", 1999). In a study of homicide victims in the 1990s, homicide was found to be third leading cause of death among girls aged 10–19, with pregnant or postpartum teens being three times more likely to be victims of homicide compared to their non-pregnant counterparts (Krulewitch et al., 2003; Samandari, 2010). Women are four times more likely to suffer increased abuse as a result of an unintended or unwanted pregnancy, and pregnancy itself can be a result of domestic violence in the form of sexual abuse, marital rape, or denial of access to birth control (Heise, 1993; Boyer and Fine, 1993). In their literature review, Logan et al. (2007) found that sexual abuse is directly associated with teenage pregnancy

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

in retrospective studies in which teens (both men and women) report sexual abuse experiences and teen pregnancy, and also in prospective studies following victims of abuse over time. In addition, sexual abuse is also indirectly associated with teen pregnancy, operating through sexual risk behaviors that may explain some of the association with teen pregnancy. They conclude that research has shown that child abuse in general and the number of types of abuse experiences are positively associated with the risk of teen pregnancy: "The studies examined in our review link teenage pregnancy to many different forms of sexual abuse, including forced sex, nonconsensual sexual contact, sexual experience with an adult, events that the respondent considered to be sexual abuse, any kind of sexual touching, and substantiated incidents of sexual abuse reported to protection services agencies" (p. 4). According to the WHO (2010a), rape or assault is a stronger predictor of health care use than any other variable, with medical care costs of victims being more than twice that of non-victims.

Sexual violence is a major concern in Cameroon as well, where roughly 20 percent of 38,000 women surveyed reported having been sexually violated, with another 14 percent having survived an attempted rape. Repeat victimization is common. Nearly a quarter of all rapes result in pregnancy (RENATA, n.d.a). HIV prevalence was 5.1 percent among all adults aged 15–49 in 2007 and 4.3 percent among young women aged 15–24, compared to only 1.2 percent among young men of that age (UNAIDS, 2008).

Unintended pregnancy is something that Cameroonian women are hoping their daughters can avoid with breast ironing. The UN estimates that 3.8 million West and Central African girls are at risk of a painful form of body mutilation known as "breast ironing." In Cameroon where the practice is most widespread, 50 percent of adolescent girls in cities and a quarter of all girls nationwide have their breasts "ironed" (Papon, 2010). This painful procedure intended to forestall or reverse pubescent development involves binding the breasts with heated towels or other material and then pounding, rolling and massaging them flat with stones, wooden pestles, coconut shells, spoons, leaves, and other instruments. Salt and kerosene have been used as well as hot fufu, hot plantain peelings, bananas, and hot palm nuts (Papon, 2010; Ndifor, 2007; Ndonko and Germaine, 2006; RENATA, n.d.b). The German Agency for Technical Cooperation conducted a survey of 5,661 Cameroonian women between the ages of 10 and 82 years and found that the most common objects used were: wooden spoon/broom (24 percent), pestle

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

(17 percent), breast band (10 percent), and leaves (9 percent). Breast ironing is typically done by the girls' mothers, grandmothers, older sisters, or other female relatives, usually "driven by fear of unwanted male attention, rape and pre-marital pregnancies" (Papon, 2010; RENATA, n.d.b). The risk of having the breasts "ironed" is twice as likely for girls who develop breasts before the age of 9 years compared with those who develop later (RENATA, n.d.b). Rates for girls whose breasts developed before age 9 was 50 percent; before 11, 38 percent; before 12, 24 percent, and before 14, 14 percent (Ndifor, 2007, p. 8; Ndonko and Germaine, 2006). Although it is meant to protect young girls from sexual attention, many with ironed breasts become pregnant anyway and are forced to leave school and get married, undergo unsafe abortion, or give birth outside of marriage (Ndonko and Ngo'o, 2006). According to UNFPA, breast ironing exposes girls to numerous health problems such as abscesses, infections, dissymmetry of the breasts, cysts, and even the complete disappearance of one or both breasts (Papon, 2010; Ndifor, 2007).

Given the high prevalence rates of violence experienced by women, the recommendation is that doctors practicing in all areas of medicine need to recognize and explore the potential relevance of violence issues when considering women's reasons for presenting with ill health (Alhabib et al., 2010).

Breaking silence

Most gender violence not only goes unpunished but is tolerated and suffered in silence by the society at large—social institutions, families, and individuals. "Fear of reprisal, censorship of sexual issues, the shame and blame of those violated, unquestioning acceptance of tradition and the stranglehold of male domination all play their part. In many countries, so does the active or passive complicity of the State and other institutions of moral authority" (Bunch, 1997).

It is more than time to break the silence. So, this chapter ends with the voices of the wise women of the Women's Tribunal as they continue to speak to us from the Fourth World Conference on Women:

> We need to listen to those who do not share the power. To see the violations through the eyes of the powerless, of those who are on the edges—the indigenous, the tribals, the dalits, the disabled, the dispossessed, knowing that from the peripheries of power, the world is seen differently.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Knowing that from the margins comes a new sense of hope, another way of being.
And the Public Hearing seeks to be a voice from the peripheries of this power
For it seeks to speak of this great violence. It comes from an overwhelming silence; a silence that speaks.

It speaks of retrieving memory
from forgetting; It speaks of victims as witness;
of hearing as listening; and listening
as caring; It speaks of caring as healing.

And so the women
speak
Of their anger, their anguish,
their agony
They speak strong in
the knowledge

that as much as they are victims they are survivors
who resist, who rebel
who dare to dream,
differently.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Part II

Telling Lives: Women's Stories from the Global Clothesline Project*

* For a description of the Global Clothesline Project, see the Preface.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

2
Black Heart

Abstract: *Many women and children spoke not only from the heart but of their heart and depicted images of what had happened to theirs as a result of abuse. Hearts—black, bruised, broken, and torn—were one of the most frequent images women and children used to express pain and betrayal. This chapter presents the voices of women and the images they drew.*

Keywords: domestic violence; family violence; intimate partner violence; rape; sexual violence

Rose, Susan D. *Challenging Global Gender Violence: The Global Clothesline Project*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483.

This chapter analyzes the images drawn by women artists who contributed T-Shirts to the Global Clothesline Project. Both their artwork and interviews about the making and the meaning of their shirts express their experiences with violence and healing.

> I knew I wanted to have a black heart on it. Maybe it was because I just felt that way about hearts, and about love. That it was all very black. That's me—the little purple girl. I cut out little felt arms. And then…I left them off. (Liz, 1993, pers. comm., February 20, USA; see Photo 1)

Hearts—black, bruised, broken, daggered, and torn—were one of the most frequent images women and children used to express pain and betrayal. Most often the heart was placed front and center. In life, as well as in death, the heart resonated.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

I picked this material out because I wanted a red and black heart that vibrated—throbbed—and these represent the walls that surround my heart that I built up around my heart to protect myself. (Nancy, 2010, pers. comm., October 20, USA)

The heart is black. I have nothing left. My family was killed. My father. My mother. My brother. They are dead, all dead. There was so much blood. The red around the [black] heart is blood… [But then I made] this little red heart up here, [upside down in the corner]—maybe that can be my heart—maybe there's a little hope. (Somali woman in a domestic violence shelter in the Netherlands, 2011, pers. comm., June 25)

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

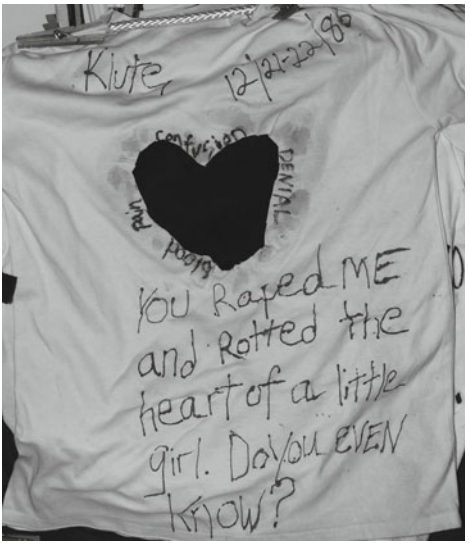
The heart is black because of all the bad things done to her—that's what she's become because of the abuse. The little red spot is her, the girl she was before the abuse. The ribbons emanating from the heart represent her pleas: Help me, help me! (Maria, 2009, pers. comm., June, Venezuelan high school girl)

A woman is like a rose—she is beautiful but if she is abused, the petals of the rose wilt and she turns into a black heart. (Cameroonian woman, 2001, pers. comm., February 5, Cameroon)

Women who drew hearts that were broken, daggered, and ripped out spoke of pain: both physical and psychological. Many spoke of physical violence; all focused on the emotional devastation. Their sentiments were consistent with the Irish study of 127 battered women that found that when women were asked, "What was the worst aspect of the battering experience?" they responded: mental torture (30), living in fear and terror (27), physical violence (27), depression or loss of all confidence (18), and the effect on children (17) (Casey, 1988).

The absence, as well as the omnipresence, of both hearts and hands that characterize so many of the Clothesline shirts reveals a sense of what Avery Gordon (1997) refers to as *haunting*. "Haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence" (p. 8). Huge black hands and no hands; hearts torn out and sewn back together; the

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483



words "NO" and "STOP" and "No Más" illuminate the shirts that women and girls created, independent of one another, to express the abuse they suffered. The consistency of images suggests the kind of textual itinerary that Cathy Caruth (1996) points to in her analysis of literary texts that deal with trauma. The "insistently recurring images" found in the trauma texts, as well as on the shirts, suggest that "reenactment" of traumatic experience occurs not only at the psychological level but the cultural one as well. Caruth argues in *Unclaimed Experience* that the reenactment occurs "precisely because the violent act is unassimilated and not known, and so therefore comes back to haunt the survivor" (p. 4).

The ghost of intimate partner violence and childhood sexual abuse, like the other ghosts Gordon (1997) acknowledges, is reflected in her analysis of the work of Toni Morrison, Patricia Williams, and Luisa Valenzuela.

> [The ghost] is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure; and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost…is one form by which something lost, or barely visible…, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course. The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> structure of feeling a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition. (p. 8)

Liz, the artist of the black heart shirt with the little purple girl, described many of these hauntings and the intermittent understandings that came to her as she listened more closely to herself and drew closer to her past in the context of the present. "After graduating from college, I was just flooded with memories. It was like something was unleashed." As Shoshona Felman and Laub argues, "Identities are constructed both by what we chose to forget, to keep silent and private, as well as by what we chose to remember, to include, to voice, to make public" (1992, p. 3). This process of transformative remembering, as Janice Haaken posits, "privileges the verb over the noun—*remembering* as opposed to memory"; and the recollection of an event serves as a "psychological marker for an early to a later form of self-knowledge" (1998, p. 14).

When asked to describe the making of her shirt, Liz focused first on the materials she chose to use:

> When I was in the store deciding what materials to use for my shirt, I was drawn to the black felt. At first I didn't know why. Then later, as I began stitching the felt, I remember, my uncle—the one who sexually abused me—used to come and pinch my arm and say, "did you feel that, did you feel that?" and then he'd say, "Well I felt it." So I guess that's why I chose it—the sub-conscious—you know, it does things to you.

What returns to haunt the victim is not only the reality of the violence done to her, but also the ways in which the violence is not yet fully known. For example, Liz explains: "The little purple girl…That's me—I cut out little felt arms. And then…I left them off" (see Photo 1). Although Liz couldn't articulate just why she left off the arms, she knew it was significant that she couldn't attach or position them: "They didn't fit, I just couldn't get them to fit right." The absence of arms or hands is commonly found in drawings of traumatized children, and is often interpreted as representing a loss of power and ability to act (Peacock, 1991; Spigelman, Spigelman, and Englesson, 1992; Magwaza et al., 1993; Burgess and Hartman, 1993; Burgess, 1981; Kelley, 1984; Lemley, 1990). As Cathy Caruth (1966, p. 4) explains, both *the knowing* and *the not knowing* is entangled in the language of trauma. The traumatic event that is, by definition, "unbearable" and "incomprehensible" continues to make itself known in various and often circuitous ways. To integrate that experience involves discovering ways to make the suffering bearable, that is, sufferable.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Liz, now a successful magazine editor and layout designer, is clear about both the uniqueness of her story and the ways in which it intersects with so many other stories of women struggling. She has chosen to speak out publically about her abuse, because she knows her "ghost" is a social figure that exists in part because of collective denial, and "hysterical blindness," operating at the cultural, macro-level (see Gordon, 1997; Herman, 1992b). When asked what she wanted to tell the public, she immediately replied:

> It's important for people to realize that those statistics represent people. Behind every one of those numbers (of abuse) is a person . . . (who is) struggling . . . It's not just something you get over. And so there's all those hundreds of thousands of walking wounded women out there. And we're all struggling. I'm trying to find ways to make it less black. I think we all are.

Many of the Clothesline T-shirts and narrators alluded to "black" as a color that represented despair, emptiness, danger, and darkness. No matter the race, nationality, or skin color of the women, black was the color that most often represented feelings of brokenness or emptiness. Even one of the Clothesline artists who was very active in the civil rights movement used the image of "tar baby" on one side of her shirt and a big black circle on the other to represent her oppression and the emptiness she feels as a result of abuse.

> Tar baby lives on my back. [She] is the shame and fear, the confusion and guilt, and just the weight of all this that I have been carrying around with me . . . for almost all of my life-40 years. Sometimes she gets smaller when I'm feeling better and sometimes she gets bigger when I'm feeling worse . . .
>
> In the front, I put the black hole which is sort of the bottomless feeling of not ever being loved. It just feels like a black hole where every piece of support and love and attention . . . just falls into and it never fills up . . . I feel as though it's beginning to fill up now like a well . . . I dated it [because] there's going to be a time when this no longer represents me. (Leslie, 1993, pers. comm., February 20, USA)

"Trying to make it less black" rather than recovery was characteristic of many of the women's testimonies. Recovery suggests a return to a wholeness that may not have existed, especially if one was abused from a very early age, or may not be able to be achieved again. But healing can and does occur and is often represented by flowers, butterflies, the sun, and flourishing wings.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Acknowledging the abuse and violation, trying to make some sense of it, and no longer accepting the blame as one's own was important for the healing process. Pat, creator of the shame shirt to be discussed more fully in the next section, commented that:

> I know there's hope. I know it's out there and I know some day I'm going to get there. It's just, I keep trying to trip myself up on the way. [The abuse] will always be there, and it will be a part of me, but it isn't going to define me anymore.

This too was the case for Susan, a Native American woman, who as a social worker came to eventually forgive her mother. Susan described why she layered the following words.

Love
Doesn't Hurt
above a purple heart that she has cut out.

> The red around the purple on my green shirt represents blood and when I sprayed it on there I actually reflected about what it was like growing up like that and experiencing the punishments I used to get. When I was making the shirt I found it really difficult to spell the words inside of the heart. I noticed that I couldn't quite articulate the "doesn't." I kept spelling it wrong. Soooo finally I said, well, I'm going to do it with glitter, so it's OK. It says, 'Love doesn't hurt.' My mother was Pascua Yaqui and that's Mexican and Spanish. But I grew up thinking I was Italian. I was the eldest child out of three and my mom…I was the one that got the whoopins. I took 'em for my younger brother and sister. Back in the 60's they didn't have laws like they do today for child abuse. So, as I was making this, I remembered

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> feeling empty inside cause I didn't quite always understand why I got beat up. So, I made the heart and then I discovered that the empty heart that I cut this part from, represented what I felt like when I was a kid. You know, although the scars have mostly healed on the outside [she still has a triangle scar below her eye from being thrown down on a concrete step], I still have some that are not healed on the inside. I've done a lot of work around my upbringing. Being a woman who is Native American myself and learning that my mom did the best that she could with what she had. You know, I've been able to forgive her now that she's gone to the spirit world, I'm just the best woman I can be today. (Susan, 2011, pers. comm., May 18, USA)

Susan recounts that her Dad was Dutch German and a gentleman. Her Mom brought her up and she grew up thinking she was Italian. The irony of being beaten with wooden spoons didn't escape her. She too knew many Italian Americans who referred to the tool of choice being wooden spoons when they spoke of having been beaten: the wooden spoon so readily available in the kitchen by the big pot of spaghetti, some of them remembered long after childhood.

> When I got into my first home, the wooden spoons that my mom didn't get me with, that she didn't break over my body, I found them in a box that she gave me for my kitchen. My husband at the time, he was Choctaw and a substance abuse counselor and sensitive to these kind of issues… [so when] I kinda went through an emotional melt down in my kitchen when I pulled them out of the box—he took them and said, we'll throw them away. He said you don't have to have them in your kitchen. And so we did and it was a big release. It was like, almost like I relived some of those beatings when I pulled those spoons out of the box.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Like Susan, Nancy is now in her fifties and has become a domestic violence activist. She has helped raise tens of thousands of dollars for domestic violence services and runs a camp for children who have been exposed to domestic violence. Nancy used both the front and back of her shirt to express her own experiences with abuse. On the front of her shirt, she sewed on a big heart out of a fabric that quietly shimmers in black and red. She then drew black brick walls around all sides of her heart.

> It took me three days to make the shirt . . . I even sewed it cause this is important to me that it stays on, but I like this because it shows that it's vibrating, here's a heart that is part of you, I mean, this is where it starts, that's what makes us breathe and eat and sleep and everything so that's where it starts. That's why I picked that fabric . . . But he took something from me and he left me with a hole, and that black hole right there [in the middle of the heart] is what I feel that I've lost. And the walls that I built around me—they are thick! (See Image 2.2)

Nancy spoke for over two hours about her Mexican American, Catholic upbringing and her family. Her parents were quite protective of their four daughters and Nancy didn't date in high school. She wanted to go away to college but her parents didn't want her to leave home, and so she worked at a grocery store and began taking classes at the local community college. "You respected your parents—that was the bottom line." Then her sister's co-worker introduced her to a Navy man, who was home at the time, at a concert. "It wasn't a date—it was just all of us going to this concert to hear Chicago." And things took off from there:

> He smothered me with all this attention and made me feel like I was his queen, I was everything, I was beautiful, and you know, he was writing to me, he was calling me, you know. All the attention was on me all of a sudden. I thought, wow! This is so cool! This is really nice! All the other times it was my other sisters but it was like me all of a sudden, this could not be! And I'm on the top of the world, and everything was perfect. I had no sexual relationship with anyone up until him. But he introduced me to the whole sexual encounter and made me feel even more so like a queen. Once that took place, it was like, he had control of me. He made me feel like I am everything to him, like I was part of his inner soul!

Within a couple of months, Nancy had completely "fallen for this man." After a false pregnancy alarm, they became even closer. "He wanted to marry me but my parents were totally against it." So they eloped, got married by a Justice of the Peace: "There was no ring. I got married in

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

a flannel shirt and jeans." And then they hopped a train to the Norfolk Naval base in Virginia from Pennsylvania:

> …without even leaving a note for my parents. I was 19 and I had never been away from home before. I remember crying all the way there to Norfolk and I cried for days. Not having communication with my mom, my dad, or my sisters was horrible. I was all alone with this man. It was perfect—for him…
>
> He set the rules down, he told me about the sailor town, where to go, where not to go, who I should I talk, what to wear…I had to be very careful. I always felt like he had eyes on me. I had to have dinner on the table waiting for him when he got home from work, makes sure his whites were starched—I wanted to satisfy him! I wanted to be the best wife, and I wanted to do everything perfect. Well one night he didn't come home until about 10 o'clock—I had been waiting all that time at the table. He was drunk—and with a bit of an attitude, I asked, "Where have you been?" Well, that was the wrong thing to do, because he slapped me, and that just, it just startled me. I ran into the bedroom and he came after me and said to me, "You don't tell me what to do. I don't need to tell you where I am." And that was the beginning of the abuse.

The abuse became physically more violent and continued when Nancy became pregnant. One evening, when they were at a friend's apartment where everyone was drinking and it was getting late, Nancy said they should go home.

> I was about 7 or 8 months pregnant, he threw me to the ground, and he was kicking me and punching me. He dragged me around the apartment complex, I tried to get up a couple times, but it was just so bad I didn't have any strength and I was so afraid that I lost the baby, and then I finally got to my apartment door and he was still kicking me and he was dragging me by my hair (which) was long, past my waist, so that was a tool for him. And he took me into the bedroom…the whole time he was screaming at me and calling me names…Now I know the people in the apartment complex heard it, people at the party heard this too, but no one came out to protect me. No one. And that just proved to me that everyone knew about him and that this was going on all the time. They heard it, but no one protected me. Maybe that's my fault for never talking out about it so he took me into the bedroom, and he made sure that I knew that he meant it. I never thought this would happen to me, like when you see, you know, Popeye on TV, and when someone gives him a good punch and he sees stars…well that's what he did, he took his fist and he just whammed me hard in my face. I fell back in the bed. All I can remember him crying is "baby, my baby; how is the baby?"

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> I was young, I was very naïve, I was so naïve about everything. Now I'm 55 years old, I look back on that and think, "I wish I would have just gone to the bus station. I wish I would have had someone to talk to, to help me get there. Wish I would have just picked up the phone and talked to my mom and dad to say that I'm sorry, help me, help me!" But even when we went back on weekends to Pennsylvania to visit his parents, I couldn't visit my parents—I was also so embarrassed by what I had done—and I had hurt them so much. And I couldn't admit what was happening to me—I was supposed to me an independent woman, a married lady!

On the back of her shirt, Nancy wrote the following phrases that she remembers hearing over and over again: "Forgive me," "I am so sorry," "You're pathetic," "You made me do this," "No one else will ever want you," "You will never leave me."

Nancy did find the strength to leave the marriage after seven long years—with her daughter, Randi, who was born a healthy little girl. "She was beautiful. My strength was my daughter. She gave me purpose, she helped me focus to be a good mom and also to live a healthy life no matter how bad it was."

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

While many of the hearts depicted emptiness and despair, others represented positive feelings of strength and hope. For example, Cheryl painted an image of a heart created by two hands that joined together "to fan the flame of hope":

> I asked my 19 year-old daughter to design it and then I came here today to create it. This is my hand as her Mom's, and the smaller hand is hers. In between is our heart and within the heart is the flame of hope that we always had with us, even during the darkest of times. She said, "Mom, I'll do the design if you do the slogan." So my slogan is fan your flame of hope…No matter how desperate and how dark the times got, I still had that little flame of hope within myself and kept it going.

At the time of her abuse, Cheryl lived with her second husband. She recounts the beatings she endured, from fists and kicks to fire pokers. The beatings often took place when her daughter was staying with her father, Cheryl's first husband and high school sweetheart.

> Many times the abuse would happen on weekends that she would go to visit her dad. And, so she would come back and I would have bruises or scuff marks. And she would ask me what happened and I would say to her that I fell down the steps or I walked into a door. And she never really commented that much—she was between like 5 & 7 years of age then. And it wasn't until later you know, maybe five years later, that she really started talking about things and opening up and letting me know how much she had seen. And she said, she said to me, "You always did these things when I wasn't home and I couldn't figure out why you never walked into doors or why you never fell down steps when I was home." And [it was] not so much that she did not believe me, but that she just couldn't quite, you know, couldn't quite figure it out and maybe knew inside that I was saying that to protect her.

Like many mothers, Cheryl tried to protect her daughter from knowing about the abuse but as is most often the case, her daughter, like most children, knew what was going on at some level. The research literature is clear about the many ways in which children who are witness to family violence are affected even if they are not the direct victims of the violence (Behind Closed Doors, 2006; http://www.childwitnesstoviolence.org/; Carpenter and Stacks, 2009).

> One time when she was home, he had been verbally abusive in the lower part of the house and I was trying to get away from him. I was running up the steps to get to my bedroom and I tripped on my bath robe and fell…He

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> came up after me and started strangling me. She was in her room down the hall and had crept down the hall and I didn't know it, and she peeped around the corner and she saw him with his hands around my throat. And so she had run back the hallway and here she had made a little safe place in her closet and gone to the back of the closet with her blanket and was back there and stayed there until she felt that it was safe to come out. Not only did I not know that she had seen what he was doing to me until years later, I never knew that she had that little safe place in her closet. And that really, that was painful for me to realize that everything that I had done, the extent that I had gone to protect her from hearing or from seeing anything, that she had actually taken measures to protect herself. And, obviously, it's hard to this day to think about because I did basically everything I could think of to hide it from her, to shield her from that.

By the time Cheryl's daughter was around ten they would sit in the outdoor hot tub and talk about what they would do if they could escape, and where they would live.

> During the thick of things I would ask her to please be patient and in a way it was not fair to her, because I would ask her to keep it our secret. You know, I was afraid of people finding out what was happening to me. I was afraid of losing her as a result of that. I was afraid of what he would do if our secret got out. But we would sit out in [our] outdoor hot tub and we would make plans of what we were going to do and talk about having a little house all to ourselves. She said to me at one point, "Mommy promise me that when we are in our own little house, that someday, you and I will do something so that other moms and daughters don't have to go through what you and I are going through." And that has a lot to do with why I am here today. It's taken me ten years . . . to come to terms and to feel composed enough and at peace with who I am to be able to talk about it. But I do feel that it is very important . . . that people know that this doesn't happen to just a certain kind of person, that it happens to professional women, that it happens to middle class America. It can happen to anyone.
>
> You know, we had a beautiful home, outdoor pool, outdoor hot tub, we travelled a lot. I had a career. People certainly perceived us as the perfect couple. He was abusive a little bit prior to us getting married, but not to the extent that he was afterwards. And, you know, prior to getting married, he'd have a limo pick me up at work and take me shopping and I'd get flowers every day for a week. It was all very you know, much part of keeping me controlled and I think not wanting to lose me. And then and I made the excuses too. Well . . . it was just probably because he was going through a divorce and you know, he said you know, it's because of the stress of the divorce. And it

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> was hard to acknowledge what was going on behind closed doors for fear of what people would think or that they wouldn't believe me 'cause it was very much drilled into my head that there was something wrong with me.

Cheryl explained that it has taken her ten years "after getting out" to find the courage to speak out against domestic violence. Her motivation to participate in the Clothesline Project, as well as to speak at a domestic violence rally, was an altruistic one. She wanted to help other women who find themselves in an abusive relationship.

For, the heart on her shirt symbolized hope and courage. Other women and children as well drew hearts to signify death and despair as well as hope. In a domestic violence shelter in the Netherlands, I sat with a Somali woman whose eyes had very little life left in them. While she was almost catatonic and had said little to anyone in the shelter in the months she had been there, she engaged in the Clothesline Project. She sat alone, away from others, and cut out a big, black felt heart, glued it on her shirt, and stared at it. After a while she cut out a smaller red felt heart and glued it onto the upper right-hand side of her shirt. When I asked her about the shirt, she spoke very quietly in short, simple sentences. "My family was killed. My father. My mother. My brother. They are dead, all dead. There was so much blood." This Somali woman, whose name I do not know, had seen and experienced too much violence to find much hope in life. She was still surviving the death of much of her family in Somalia and the beatings her husband gave her after they had found refuge in the Netherlands. She was all but comatose—BUT—she did cut out that little red heart. "Maybe," she said, "someday I will feel like I am alive again." And she wanted her photo taken with her shirt. About this she was very clear. She was proud of her shirt and wanted to share it—and the thought, no matter how slight—that there still may be some hope for her (see Image on p. 17).

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

3
Shame

Abstract: *From sadness to shame, women's shirts depicted the heart as central. But shame, unlike sadness, involves blame and invokes judgment. Sadness involves a sense of loss, shame a sense of having been found out. This chapter, drawing from interviews with women who contributed to the Global Clothesline Project, explores the ways in which shame can keep women from acknowledging they are being abused or raped and/or from speaking out about the abuse. It also explores the ways in which perpetrators in particular and the society in general may use shaming as a tactic to silence victims, often enabling the violence to continue.*

Keywords: domestic violence; family violence; intimate partner violence; sexual violence; shame; rape

Rose, Susan D. *Challenging Global Gender Violence: The Global Clothesline Project*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> Statistics are people with their tears wiped away.
>
> Bertell

> I had a little dress on and my dress got torn . . . My heart was broken because now it was out in the open. My perpetrator made me believe that somehow it was my fault. If anybody knew about it they would know that I had something to do with this and it was my shame.
>
> Cindy, 2011, pers. comm., May 18

From sadness to shame, women's shirts depicted the heart as central. But shame, unlike sadness, involves blame and invokes judgment. Sadness involves a sense of loss, shame a sense of having been found out. With shame there is a sense that others can see what you have done—or what has been done to you—that you have done something wrong or dirty and that it is your fault. And so one wants to hide. It is often because of shame—and the stigma associated with abuse—that children and women remain silent. Such silencing often occurs at the individual level; shame is internalized while it is reinforced by the community and culture that all too often do not want to acknowledge, listen to, or deal with stories of abuse.

> I've always felt that my heart was damaged in some way. And that's why I wanted to start with the heart. I picked burlap because I feel that I'm very rough. I don't feel that I can be caring or compassionate to other people. And I just feel like I have a very rough heart. This is the wound, the incest. It doesn't take like a big part, because I don't feel that it destroyed my whole heart, it's just something that radiated. And the little hammers are what I've used to beat myself into not allowing me to be me, all my life. And these are the things—nature and love and passion and music and things like that—that I consider to be me. And that's what bleeds. The part that's me that isn't allowed to be. The shame which I feel; I carry my father's shame. I am shame. In the middle, the little heart, is God. Because I feel that God is the only one that's brought me through. (Pat, 1993, pers. comm., February 17; see second image on p. vii)

Pat visually names SHAME in bleeding capital letters. Through years of individual and group therapy she has come to unearth the shame she had internalized as her own and give it back to those who deserve it.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> I decided to name the people that I can remember abusing me . . . And that's powerful to me because I feel like I need to start giving responsibility to those people. I still carry it as my fault.

As part of her healing process Pat decided to bury her ideal family. "I went out and performed a little ceremony and gave them a little tombstone. It was a powerful experience."

> I wouldn't say we have a family, we just come together now and then as individuals. We now come together as individuals. When in therapy we did a family sculpture, mine was everybody in some far corner. We didn't interact.

Pat's older sister and brother have talked about abuse by their father as well. Pat's middle sister, the only one to never have had a room to herself growing up, was not abused but believes her siblings and wants to get at the truth of the family history. They suspect that their father was abused as a child as well and had great shame about abusing his children:

> I think he suffered all his life for what he did. My father had a hell of a life. He hated himself. And he was incredibly guilty, destroyed himself . . . I think he chose to die.

Pat believes that her father not only suppressed memories of his own childhood but "he totally suppressed the memory of my childhood too. I had been in the hospital (as the result of an attempted suicide) and when he came for a family session, he said he could not remember me being a child, at all. But he broke down and cried for how he had destroyed his children's lives. He died soon after."

Pat was very angry with her mother for a long time, but also acknowledged that her mother was very honest about her denial. "She does not want to know. When I told her, she said she wasn't surprised at all, and that 'if he were alive, I'd kill him.' But she isn't willing to talk about it. She told me, 'I want to remember him in the good times. I don't want to think anything bad about him.' " It is very common for children who have been abused by a father or step-father to be particularly angry at their mothers for not having protected them; it is often easier and safer to feel anger toward the non-abusive, less-threatening parent who did not intervene.

Even though Pat understood the ways in which she had internalized blame and redirected and expressed her anger, she was still struggling to free herself of feeling shame. In fact, all of the women and girls I interviewed who had experienced childhood sexual abuse and/or intimate

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

partner violence spoke of shame. And as they spoke of shame, their voices tended to get quieter, their eyes lowered. Shame and stigma can be quite persistent even if one has worked through a therapeutic process—and even if one intellectually knows that one is not to blame—that the abuse was not one's own fault.

Tears of shame on our children's hearts

Cindy, a Native American social worker, draws the picture of a little girl in a torn dress with tears flowing down her face. She also writes the word, "tears," referring both to her tears of shame and the tears in her dress. From an early age, Cindy was repeatedly raped by an older male cousin. At first she tried to avoid him when she was left alone with him:

> I remember once, when I knew that I was going to be left with him and I couldn't talk my mother into taking me with her to the store, and I knew what was coming, I ran into the bathroom and I locked the door and I stayed in the bathroom with the door locked the whole entire time they were gone to protect myself. So I just sat in there, and I remember I was just in tears and crying and sitting on the floor just waiting for the time to go

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> by. And him banging on the door and telling me to open the door, and, you know, threatening me…I never felt brave enough to tell. I think he really had me brain washed. If I told I was gonna be in big trouble.

Children often do not tell anyone about their abuse (Smith et al., 2000). They may fear being punished, stigmatized, and ostracized. They may fear what the perpetrator will do to them. They may fear that they will not be believed, or worse, blamed for their own abuse (Child Sexual Abuse, 2013). There can be so many fears, overlapping and intersecting—enough to silence anyone, especially a child, who has less power and all too often less credibility than adults.

The psychological and emotional damage inflicted by the abuse is often much more damaging than the physical damage. Finkelhor and Browne (1985) identify "four traumagenic dynamics—traumatic sexualization, betrayal, stigmatization, and powerlessness—as the core of the psychological injury inflicted by abuse Stigmatization…refers to the negative connotations (e.g., badness, shame, and guilt) that are communicated to the child around the experiences and that become incorporated into the child's self-image." Such negative ideas are often conveyed by perpetrators who may blame victims for their involvement and/or threaten them. Pressure for secrecy from the offender can also send powerful messages of shame and guilt. In any of these cases, power is involved. In their discussion of "stigma as the co-occurrence of its components—labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination," Link and Phelan (2001) argue that "for stigmatization to occur, power must be exercised."

In Cindy's case, fear of her overpowering perpetrator, what he would do to her and what would happen if anyone found out, paralyzed her. But finally one day when she was *only seven* years old, Cindy did fight back and she screamed loudly. Her older sister and female cousin heard her.

> My elder sister and cousin (female) heard my screams of trying to get away from my perpetrator and they came and rescued me…They were pulling me and I was being pulled in both directions and I had a little dress on and my dress got torn. It was ripped. Then we hurried on down the street to go back to my home from my relative's home. As we were going down the street I was traumatized by the fact that my dress was ripped. I, later as an adult, thought back about that and realized that having that tear in my dress was the wound that I was feeling emotionally. It was opened, the shame was opened and I was attempting to hide it. My heart was broken because now it was out in the open. My perpetrator made me believe that somehow it was

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> my fault. If anybody knew about it they would know that I had something to do with this and it was my shame.
>
> So, there I was hysterically crying, walking down the street, holding my dress and, so that was the moment that was profound for me as an adult in healing. Remembering that moment. So, it was important for me to put that on the back of my shirt. I've forgiven and put that behind me—but I've not forgotten. So, I have written here "the tear on her dress is the tear on our children's heart". Because that's how I really feel. I wanted to make that statement. And on the front I put "Stop Sexual Violence Against Our Children".

Fifty years later, what Cindy remembers most vividly was her dress being ripped and having to walk back home, down the street where everyone could see the tear in her dress and know what happened to her. That was what felt most shameful and painful to her.

As Finkelhor and Browne (1985) argue, "Stigmatization is reinforced by attitudes that the victim infers or hears from other persons in the family or community. It may grow out of the child's prior knowledge or sense that the activity is considered deviant and taboo, and it is certainly reinforced if, after disclosure, people react with shock or hysteria, or blame the child for what has transpired." Children may be additionally stigmatized by others seeing them now as "used or spoiled goods," or as sexualized and having loose morals who could contaminate others as a result of the molestation. The anticipated and/or actual reaction of others to what has happened "spoils normal identity," as Erving Goffman described in his classic work on *Stigma* (1963); in essence, one has become tainted.

Already as a very little girl, Cindy knew what her cousin was doing was wrong, that it hurt, and that she could be in trouble if anyone found out. But Cindy's parents believed her.

> They did sit down once and talked about it and told me that it wasn't my fault. I miss that initial feeling…I was so relieved. But, I still had so much bottled up in me. That was just one time that we talked about it and we were done. It was never brought up again. It was never discussed. I never really got a chance to go through any kind of healing ceremony.
>
> It's not totally resolved, you know. I always still felt like, who's looking at me? Who's judging me? My mother even said she recalled that now I was kinda the taboo little girl because now I knew about sex. I might taint some of the other little cousins of mine. So the aunties kept them away from me in fear that I might, you know, tell them about what happened to me.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Lenore Terr in *Too Scared to Cry* (1990) follows the life trajectories of children who have been traumatized. She discovered that how well children fared had less to do with the type and severity of the traumatic experience and more to do with whether a child could talk about it and be heard. In Cindy's case, her parents believed her and did not blame her. In fact, they told her that it was not her fault but after the one and only conversation her parents had with her, the sexual abuse was never mentioned again. Now 50 years later, she still carries the hurt and pain and shame.

While Cindy believes there were consequences for her cousin, she was not sure what they were except for the fact that she was now the marked little girl who never went to her aunt's again.

> I'm guessing that he was spoken to by the elders. What exactly they did to him, I don't know. Only that I never went over there again. We were separated after that. My aunt would come over to our home, but without her children and she always felt, I could tell, she always felt she needed to make it up to me in some way. Like it was her fault. There was a lot of misunderstanding, you know, that could've been discussed and could've been talked out had we had the knowledge that we do today and had the counseling.
>
> It's still a curse. I don't think it's ever gonna go away. I still have nightmares and I don't recall them for the most part, but I'm always fighting my perpetrator off me. My husband will wake me up whenever I have those dreams. He'll go, "you're having one of those dreams again. Struggling, trying to get away from somebody…"

Both trauma and stigma can persist long after a traumatizing event is experienced and acknowledged (Child Sexual Abuse, 2013; Link and Phelan, 2001; Smith et al., 2000; Coffey et al., 1996). Cindy recalls that "back then" they didn't practice their culture and traditional ways of healing, and she reflects on how meaningful a "washing-away-grief ceremony" could have been. "I wish that as a child I had had those things, running water—a river or a waterfall, somewhere that feels good that you can go and sing some healing songs and take the water and wash your face and wash that grief away." Now, as she works with abused children as a social worker, she can offer them that: "I can help other children, you know, go through a ceremony, take them into the sweat lodge and let it out there, have a face-washing to wash that grief away." Even though healing has come through therapy and she knows as an adult who works with other victim-survivors that it was not her fault, she still can feel the shame that she felt as a young child. And she knows that there are more effective ways of dealing with sexual abuse. Had she been able to

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

take part in a traditional healing ceremony that was common in her "traditional" culture, that shame and pain may have been washed away at a much earlier age.

Fiola's tears of sorrow and shame

Tears appear not only on a dress but also in one's sense of self, in family and intimate relationships, and in the social fabric. Fiola, a Cameroonian woman and an Auntie who volunteers with RENATA (a NGO working with teenage mothers in Cameroon), knows this only too well. She draws her tears of sorrow and shame onto a traditional Cameroonian scarf—long enough for her to draw herself four times, representing the little girl who was raped first at age 3, and then again at ages 12 and 17. The fourth woman represents her now, the woman who is "ready to stand up and fight against rape."

> They often say that girls are being raped because of their dressing, their seductive way of walking… When I was raped at 3 years old, was it because I was dressing sexy or the way I was walking? (Fiola, 2011, pers. comm., February 5)

RENATA has conducted various nationwide surveys with the help of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation. They found that 12 percent of rape victims were less than 10 years of age (RENATA Director, 2011, pers. comm., February 5). And as studies in the U.S. as well as Cameroon show, repeat victimization is common (Sarkar and Sarkar, 2005).

Fiola describes her shawl that features four women shrouded in black veils with black tears running down their faces:

> I decided to draw the woman who is shedding tears. She is covered, she covered herself with a black cloth… This is all because (pause)… I will say this represents me, yeah. From what I have experienced… I've been raped three times… when I was 3, when I was 12, and then when I was 17, so I've been raped three times… When I see them I cry. I have to think about what happened to me when I was 3 years, 12, and 17…
>
> So this [the Clothesline Project] is really an opportunity… At times I say to myself that no, the world is not supposed to see me. I isolated myself. The black cloth is signifying that I am covering myself away from the world… I am like an outcast. So, at times I sit down, I think I shed tears because I, I, I see myself like half a human being.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Under the women on the shawl, she wrote: "stand up strong and fight against rape."

> So that's why I want, I want those of us who have been found guilty [of being violated] to stand up strong and firm. I have written it here: "that we should stand up strong and firm to fight against this rape.
>
> What pushes [someone] towards that child, for you to rape that child?" We need to tell these men not to rape. It should be a shame for people to hear that you did an act like that…your own conscience [should] judge what you have done. It is really, really a shame. That's all I can say, 'cause I mean, the rapists that rape children of 3 years, may your conscience always judge you…The child does not know anything…(but) the blame goes to the victim and the rapist is, is free…

Fiola attributes her conviction now to stand firm and fight against rape to her involvement with the Aunties Association, RENATA, and the training she received there, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7.

> We had this seminar for one week…At first I was shy…but I was the first person to stand up and give my testimony because they made me to understand that denouncing it [rape] was part of the cure, curing your heart, and curing your state of mind…Actually that day was a very bad day for me…it gave me a dark mind, a black mind. That day, I did not want to talk to anybody, but as I finished [giving my testimony], one of the coordinators took me outside. They talked to me, talked to me, gave me encouragement,

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> all those kind of things. So from that day I saw, I saw the world to be normal because at times I used to think the world is for some people and not for me. So I became, I became normal. And from that day, I had the courage and the strength . . . to fight against rape. I am really, really ready. (Fiola, 2011, pers. comm., February 5)

Speaking out takes courage; it involves risk as well as promise. But as the narrators of the Clothesline Project also remind us, we need to consider what it means not to risk. While there are dangers involved in speaking out, there are also dangers in remaining mute. Although silence may serve as a refuge, it is also a place of bondage. Silence stifles the soul, affects the quality of relationship with others and one's physical and mental health. It also reinforces an unjust and abusive system of power that renders the victim powerless, and enables abusers without holding them accountable.

Along with other Aunties, Fiola has

> been moving from school to school, primary schools, secondary schools, talking and preaching against rape and giving them our numbers to call us whenever they need. I am really strong and ready and I need people to accompany me to fight against rape . . . I don't want [rape] to repeat itself to my junior ones, to my daughter, or to any other person. It would pain me so much.

Fiola is also clear where the shame belongs:

> The shame goes to the person that raped the child . . . And no matter what the woman is wearing, it does not give room to a man to abuse that woman sexually. A sexual relationship is something [where the] two should sit down and come to a conclusion where the woman will agree, the man agrees, and it happens. Not that you force the woman . . . I do not belong to you. You have no right, even if I belong to you, you have no right to force me . . . If I refuse and you do it forcefully, then you have raped me. Even if I'm your wife, you have raped me. (Fiola, 2011, pers. comm., February 5)

The color of silent tears

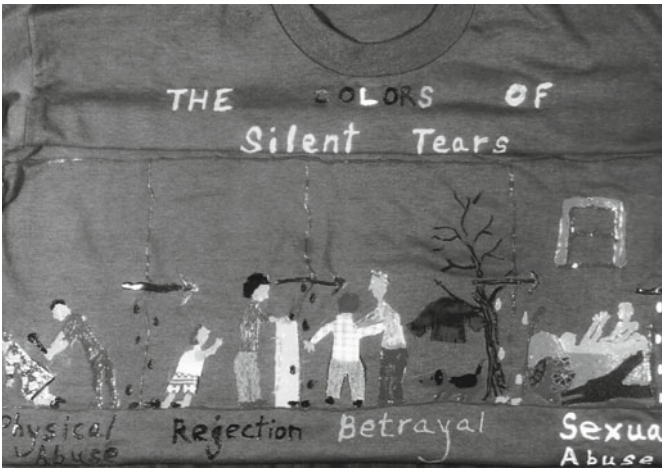
Julie, a white woman from State College, Pennsylvania, had come to Dickinson College with her incest survivors' group to see her shirt displayed as part of a symposium on Violence in American Society.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

We sat in a quiet and secluded corner of the Social Hall in the midst of the exhibition of some 90 shirts. When the interview with Julie began, members of her incest survivors' group, including her therapist, were with us in the room. While she said she really wanted to talk about the making and the meaning of her shirt, she also needed to explain why she was so nervous. "It's just that I feel like everyone is looking at me because that's what my grandfather did. He'd make me undress and then ask me to dance for him, and he'd come in when I was talking a bath. So it's just that I feel like everyone's looking at me." Julie was visibly upset and we asked her if she wanted to stop the interview or if she would rather that everyone else leave the room. She was adamant: '"No!'—they are my support. I want them here and I want to tell my story" (Julie, 1993, pers. comm., February 17)

Julie constructed her shirt out of scraps of material from clothes she wore as a child. Her shirt depicts a series of scenes: "the progression of abuse."

The first scene, she explains, is of her father who beat her brother and her with a thick stick:



> Those tears are red because they represent physical abuse—they represent blood. Because of the abuse, I turned to my mother but she was never there for us. She was so busy cleaning the house, making everything perfect. So I put those tears in black—because she was never there—there was like a big black hole. So I turned to my grandfather who would take me into the woods with him and he had two dogs—and I loved the dogs and I loved

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> being with him. He gave me attention but not always the kind I wanted—so I represent those tears in beige—because he was my own flesh and blood and he took advantage of me. And that sexual abuse led to other people abusing me—I guess I had victim written all over my face—and so I made those tears white—I guess I will say that—that they are white because they represent sperm. (Julie, 1993, pers. comm., February 17)

Julie was only four when her grandfather began to sexually abuse her. "I didn't really know what was going on—I just knew it was wrong, that I had to keep it a secret and that my father would kill me if he found out."

Many of the young women I interviewed told of how their family either denied what happened to them or blamed and rejected them. Girls and women today—in the United States, in Cameroon, and around the world—are still blamed for being raped. Georgina is a young Cameroonian woman who became involved with RENATA when she got pregnant as a result of rape at age 15. She says clearly and forcefully:

> My family, they never believed my story. At first when I was raped (at age 15), my mother was that kind who was always busy. She never cared to check me up…She couldn't believe me. It was only when I was 5 months pregnant…then she beat me up, addressed me as a prostitute. She never even listened to what happened to me. I was branded as a bad girl…(Georgina, 2011, pers. comm., February 5)

On her shirt, Georgina drew a red house with words makes sure that conveyed: "Never trust a man in the house."

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> I trusted him—he was so kind. But that day…he raped me inside his house…So I decided to use the color red because it symbolizes rape…That day he took everything from me. He took my virginity. As a teenager I lost so many things…that day I became pregnant, and I became a teenage mother.

After training with the RENATA Aunties in Yaounde, Cameroon, Georgina has gone back to school and is studying psychology so she can help other young women—*and* their mothers so they can better understand what is happening and be more supportive of their daughters. Work with mothers of abused children has also become Pochi Tamba Nsoh's mission as well. Pochi delivers the nightly national English radio news program and was the first to produce a program on sexual violence for Cameroonian TV. She believes that "it is really important to help mothers understand what their daughters are going through, to not reject them on the basis of traditional cultural values but to embrace them" (Pochi, 2011, pers. comm., January 29).

In Cameroon, girls who become pregnant as a result of rape or incest are often blamed and disgraced; typically they are abandoned and sent away from home. In some countries, girls may be stoned or imprisoned or forced to marry their rapists. In others, the consequences may not be as severe, but girls are still often blamed for seducing the man. They may not be believed or they may be discouraged from moving forward with any charges because it could hurt the future education, occupation, or reputation of the man.[1] Even in developed countries where there have been significant changes in thinking about and dealing with sexual assault over the last few decades, little girls as well as grown women may still be blamed for dressing or moving in a provocative way or being out late at night. A case may go to court, but the one raped is still often the one put on trial. As recently as 2012, the U.S. Republican Party Platform approved a ban on abortions even in cases of incest or rape, with major Republican politicians such as Todd Aiken, like Rick Santorum before him, arguing that a woman who is raped can't or is extremely unlikely to become pregnant. Their argument is that if it's "legitimate rape," a woman's body shuts down; in order to become pregnant, a woman must want to have sex (Mackey, 2012). Or some may argue, like Indiana Republican Senate candidate Richard Mourdock, that pregnancy resulting from rape or incest is "a gift from God." Neither Aiken nor Mourdock, however, was reelected. While there are significant cultural, political, and judicial differences in the handling of family violence

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

and sexual assault across countries, in the end, the experience, consequences, and treatment of victim-survivors and violators may not be as dissimilar as one might initially think.

In all cases, power and control are involved. Physical, psychological, political, and cultural power shape who is able to exercise their will, and who is seen as credible and who is seen as less credible. The strongest reason for not speaking out is fear coupled with shame and embarrassment. Women, children, and men who are victims often have to fear for their own physical, psychological, and social safety, fear what other people might think about them or their family, and fear repercussions against them and their loved ones for speaking out. Women and children often remain silent, hoping often beyond hope that the violence will stop. In doing so, they often protect the abuser and in the end, continue to live in fear and danger. But as Audre Lorde says in response to her daughter asking if she had been afraid to speak out, "Would I have been any less afraid had I not spoken?"

Class and shame

Linda and Cheryl (first introduced in Chapter 2) have much in common as professional women who identify as upper-middle-class citizens of U.S. society. Both described the embarrassment they felt at having to admit first to themselves, and then to others, that they were being abused. For Cheryl, artist of the "fanning the flame of hope" shirt, the greatest difficulty was first recognizing that she was in an abusive relationship and then being willing to tell someone:

> It was hard to acknowledge what was going on behind closed doors for fear of what people would think or that they wouldn't believe me. 'Cause it was very much drilled into my head that there was something wrong with me. And I felt that people wouldn't believe me if I said that I was being abused. And even to look at it as abuse. You know, you don't, when you're in this situation, you don't think of being abused. To a certain extent, I felt like I deserved it for whatever reason. (Cheryl, 2010, pers. comm., December 4)

Like Cheryl, Linda used the words "domestic terrorism" to describe the situation she found herself in. A businesswoman, with a multi-million dollar furniture business, and tennis coach, Linda had had a very loving first marriage. Her first husband died young of a heart attack at age 34, leaving her with two children. Twelve years later, she re-married, this

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

time to a man "who seemed a little controlling before we married but I just thought he was concerned about me and the kids."

> Well, I was just blindsided. It was just crazy. And I was already married to him, so it was like, how do I get out of this, what do you do. Actually it was terror…It just snowballed into just anything bad that you could ever want for a marriage. And then it got violent. So there was no other choice but to finally get my opportunity to get a PFA. And move on. The emotional embarrassment…DUH…with this whole thing. I'm a high school coach. And I wouldn't tell anyone. And there are so many things that I can't believe, that my natural personality, which is really an outgoing individual—it just totally put me into a depression. Trying to claw my way out because I was embarrassed. I lived in this nice neighborhood and nobody knew. (Linda, 2010, pers. comm., November 21)

When Linda talked with her lawyer, he suggested she go to Domestic Violence and Legal Services for advice because he didn't handle Protection from Abuse orders (PFAs).

> I mean I really did [live in] fear. After I had the PFA and the judge signed a note and the sheriff came and moved him [my husband] out of the home, he came looking for me down at the park where I was teaching this man's little son. The father happened to be an attorney, and he was a senator at one time, so he was a strong character. Well, actually, my husband wanted to attack me. He made a beeline for me and I saw him coming and I was afraid it might happen. He grabbed my tennis racquet from me and was gonna flash me over the head with it but the father intervened and called the police.
>
> Once I got out of the marriage, I found out that he had two other PFAs against him from two other women. I can tell you, if I ever hear of him getting married again, I am going to call and warn that woman. (Linda, 2010, pers. comm., November 21)

Linda was able to get out of the marriage within three years but it was at a cost—to her health and her business. Boundaries with her clients had been crossed and she lost millions of dollars in the process of marrying and then divorcing.

In the case of dating, intimate partner, and sexual violence, the risk of embarrassment may override the need to seek help even when help may be available. For example, interviews with college counselors indicate that a college co-ed may be more embarrassed and thus afraid to run out into the dorm hallway half-naked and screaming in order to save herself from being raped than to endure the rape and its consequences.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Yet, increasingly, women and children across the world are speaking out. From elderly Comfort women to young girls refusing to be forced into early marriage to women establishing their own villages in Kenya to those reporting abuse to authorities, women and children of all ages, socio-economic statues, nationalities, religions, races, and ethnicities are speaking out. How well are they being heard and supported?

Dealing with interpersonal violence is not just an individual problem but a societal one, as C. Wright Mills would argue. Gender violence affects all of us—as well as the economy, health care, the welfare system, the work place, religious institutions and challenges our humanity and cultural values. The question becomes, who is valued? Who is to be protected and who is to be sacrificed? Institutions, including the family, schools, religious institutions, the health care system, law enforcement, the judiciary and courts, affect how family and sexual violence are seen, understood, and responded to—and to what extent the cycle of violence may be reproduced or interrupted. The Catholic Church, the military, and educational institutions, as well as families, have been implicated in ignoring, denying, and covering up abuse. By March of 2013, the Catholic Church has paid out more than $2.5 billion in the U.S. alone to victims of child abuse by religious leaders (Clergy, 2013); high incidences of sexual violence in all branches of the military have been exposed and investigations are under way as generals testify before Congress about the cover-up of sex abuse cases and the retribution against victims who have come forward rather than the punishment of offenders (Invisible War 2013); Penn State officials have been forced to resign and are under criminal investigation for their cover-up of the Sandusky child abuse cases (Giroux and Giroux, 2012; Lefkowitz, 1998). The question remains: shame on who?

The cycle of violence

Who or what is to blame? As they say, there is enough blame to go around. Men also suffer from narrow social constructions of masculinity and double-binds, albeit in different ways, under a patriarchal gender system. They are taught they must be tough and in control (*Tough Guise*, 2013; 1999). Contemporary, dominant notions of "traditional" gender role norms encourage men to express anger rather than empathy and sensitivity. Ironically, then, shame is also one of the foremost reasons for men committing acts of violence as well as women enduring acts

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

of abuse. James Gilligan, author of *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic* (1996), is a physician who works with maximum security inmates. The major explanation he gives for why men commit violent acts is shame. Using numerous case studies taken from his own practice, he convincingly makes the case for shame as a precursor to many acts of violence by men who often feel as though they are the living dead. The blinding of eyes symbolically reveals the desire to not be seen; the emasculation of men and the mutilation of women to render the other impotent or powerless and non-threatening. Gilligan argues that while acts of violence may not make any rational sense to others and may seem senseless, they often contain an emotional rationale or logic for those who commit them. He urges readers, policy makers, and psychotherapists to understand the phenomena—not to excuse but to understand it—in an effort to more effectively deal with violence.

In the next chapter, we will examine case studies of women killed by their intimate partners. In Sherri's case, her husband had been abused by his father who beat him regularly as a child. As a punishment, he would make J. and his brother sit naked in a cornfield on top of a scarecrow stump in full view of anyone who happened by. In Sarah's case her mother was killed by her abusive boyfriend the morning after an embarrassing incident at a Little League game. This is not to say that these particular events or punishments caused these men to kill their partners but they do help explain what may have precipitated the violent behavior.

It is also important to recognize, however, that the sense of shame that may motivate perpetrators to commit violence may be a very different kind of shame than victims feel. Perpetrators may be moved to act in order to redress what they perceive to be a "wrong" done to them, while for victims, shame may lead to paralysis and silence, trying to keep others from knowing what has happened and the ways in which they have been wronged. In both cases, social forces condition what is considered to be shameful but the very sources and consequences of shame may be experienced quite differently by perpetrators and victims. We need a broader, more nuanced vocabulary to talk about a spectrum of shame that is shaped by patriarchal understandings of who is entitled to respect and obedience and who is supposed to be respectful and obedient. For many perpetrators, shame comes from a sense of their entitlement being challenged, of being "dissed." The result is *out-rage* when they are not given the kind of respect they feel they deserve. Often, there is no remorse, though perhaps regret for being caught or found out. For victims, shame

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

tends to come from feeling that they are at fault, that somehow they did something wrong or weren't able to stop what was happening; the result is often internalized, self-blame. While often identities of victim and perpetrator overlap, this may help explain some of the choices that both men and women may make in dealing with abuse.

In the next chapter, we will explore some of the difficult decisions involved in why women may stay, and when and why they may leave.

Note

1 This is often the case with boys who speak out about sexual abuse as well. One need only consider the case of victim-survivors who testified in the Sandusky case at Penn State or the cover-up and collusion of the Catholic Church in multiple cases of sexual abuse of boys as well as girls.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

4

Difficult Decisions: Staying, Leaving

Abstract: *So many people ask, "Why doesn't she just leave?" Those who have been in abusive relationships or work with those entangled in such relationships know that leaving is not as easy or straightforward as it sounds. Both staying and leaving can be very complicated, both emotionally and strategically, and dangerous. Children, along with financial and safety considerations, are often central to deciding whether to stay or leave—and how to leave once and for all. Presenting a number of women's stories as they reflect upon the difficult* process *of leaving as well as staying, this chapter also includes interviews from family members whose loved ones were murdered in the process of staying in and attempting to leave abusive relationships. With greater understanding of the dynamics involved, a critical question focuses not so much on women's decision-making but on men's choices; this reframes the question of "why does she stay?" to "why does he abuse"?*

Keywords: child abuse; domestic violence; family violence; intimate partner homicide

Rose, Susan D. *Challenging Global Gender Violence: The Global Clothesline Project*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Don't ask me why

So many people ask, "Why doesn't she just leave?" Those who have been in abusive relationships or work with those entangled in such relationships know that leaving is not as easy or straightforward as it sounds.

In addition to fear, embarrassment, and trying to protect the reputation of their families, for which women are held disproportionately responsible, women stay on for a myriad of reasons. Among them is an economic reality. Women in the U.S. still earn 77 cents to the male dollar and many, although certainly not all, are financially dependent on the man (husband or partner) with whom they live. They may lack the economic resources to find another place to live or to find employment or day care if they have children. They may not have a car and may be living in a place that has no public transportation. They may or may not have been in the workforce if they were primarily responsible for child care. Here—in both deliberate and unintended ways—structural forces collide with personal decision-making; economic concerns, health insurance, child care, employment are all major factors to consider. Many women across the socio-economic spectrum in developed societies report having become psychologically dependent on their partners, even if they had economic resources and had once been strong, independent individuals, as Linda had been—living on her own and managing to work and bring up her two children for 12 years after her

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

first husband died. Others, like Cheryl, came to believe she was the one at fault even though she had ample financial, educational, and employment resources to draw upon.

For women less fortunate economically and for many in developing countries, there are even fewer economic and institutional resources to draw upon to enable them to leave abusive situations. The main differential factor for women in developing countries may be community and family support and the degree to which male dominance and entitlement are encouraged or tempered. Will there be a place for women to go to and be accepted if they were to leave their husband's home. Can they survive independently or go back to their family of origin?

The power of male control in the context of the developed world should also not be underestimated. By isolating someone from their friends or family, taking away the car keys, watching their every move, making someone believe they are not worthy or are stupid or a *fucking bitch*…(see Image on p. 26) a woman may come to believe that no one else would want her, or believe her, or that she couldn't possibly manage alone. Some women speak of a sacred commitment they made—until death do us part.[1] Many stay out of a concern for the children, believing they should have a father—and/or not wanting to dislocate the children or move them to another school. Others believe their partners will not let them leave—that they will come after them, stalk them, kill them—that it may be more dangerous to leave than to stay, and that the threats their partners make are not idle ones but are to be taken seriously—as the data on intimate partner homicides suggest. On average, more than three women a day are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in the United States (Futures, n.d.).

Research indicates that the most dangerous time for a woman is when she attempts to leave or ends an abusive relationship. In the United States, women who leave their batterers are at a 75 percent greater risk of being killed by their batterers than those who stay (National Network to End Domestic Violence [NNEDV], n.d.). For many women and children, the disclosure of their identity and location may be life-threatening. Many victims are stalked relentlessly for years after having escaped from their partners: 59 percent of female stalking victims are stalked by current or former intimate partners (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000); 76 percent of women killed by their abusers had been stalked prior to their murder; and 85 percent of attempted femicide victims had experienced stalking within 12 months of their attempted murder (McFarlane et al., 1999,

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

p. 311). According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence (n.d.), "Batterers who stalk their former partners are the most dangerous and pose the highest lethality risk. The severity of this 'separation violence' often compels women to stay in abusive relationships rather than risk greater injury to themselves or their children." Many of those who do succeed in leaving their abuser may live in constant fear of being found. It is therefore very important for a battered woman to make her own decision to leave a relationship because she is in the best position to assess the potential danger (Minnesota Advocates, 2003).

For many women, the emotional feelings are often complex—love mixed with fear, good times with bad, hope with despair. Females within many cultures have been socialized through a reservoir of cultural narratives to stand by their man. Children's fairy tales, with few exceptions, continue to emphasize women's power—indeed role and responsibility—to turn the beast into a man, the animal into a prince. Even in more recent Disney films that present strong female characters such as Ariel and Belle, these quasi-feminists still sacrifice for their men—giving up family and voice. Belle, the smart, literate woman in *Beauty and the Beast* who is more interested in books and science than in the arrogant stud Gaston, ultimately domesticates the beast through her kiss of love. Given the collusion of patriarchal cultural values and tales, and economic and political systems that grant more power and resources to men, it is little wonder than many women stay or keep returning—especially when it can prove very dangerous to leave.

Katrin is a Dutch woman who lived in Amsterdam and had to flee the city to escape from her abusive husband and in-laws. She had married a Turkish man. While the first months were happy ones, they didn't last. When they went on what was supposed to be a holiday to Turkey to visit his family, Katrin discovered that he was already married with six children. She decided to return early on her own to Holland and soon found out that she was pregnant. Her husband and his Turkish family then followed.

> It's then that the violence really started. I didn't want to be a second wife. I wanted a divorce but in his culture, a woman doesn't ask for a divorce. (Katrin, 2011, pers. comm., June 25)

Since her husband had only had a religious marriage in Turkey, legally he was able to marry Katrin and then bring his children and family to Holland. When Katrin asked for a divorce, it was an affront to her

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

husband's honor and the honor of his family. That's when the violence began. When she didn't do what he demanded, the beatings intensified as did harassment from her in-laws. Katrin desperately wanted the baby but a beating to the stomach led to the miscarriage of the baby.

> I can forgive him many things, but I cannot forgive him for making me lose my baby.

On her shirt, Katrin asks: "What of my honor?" recognizing the painful irony of a double standard for men and women that puts the burden of responsibility on women to maintain the family honor by being subservient. Crimes committed in the name of "honor," usually by a brother, father, husband, or other male family member, are a means of controlling women's choices, not only in the area of sexuality but also in other aspects of behavior, such as freedom of movement. Such crimes frequently have a collective dimension, with the family as a whole believing itself to be injured by a woman's actual or perceived behavior (Ending Violence, 2006; Welchman and Hossain, 2005). UNFPA estimated that 5,000 women are murdered by family members each year in "honor killings" around the world (Ending Violence, 2006, p. 47).

Katrin was very personally aware of the intensifying concern over the rise of honor crimes in the Netherlands as immigrants from other cultures brought and acted on their expectations for women's behavior that deviated from those of the Dutch (Esman, 2005; Van Eck, 2003). Among Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands, both wives and daughters were expected to be obedient to their fathers and husbands and to maintain the honor of the family through modesty and virtue. In the end, Katrin—in her own words and with tears in her eyes—recounted that "I was the one who had to flee my own hometown, go across the country and hide in order to escape being killed."

Katrin describes her struggles with drug and alcohol addictions and finally entering a domestic violence shelter at wit's end, not wanting to live. "I told the police when they came to the door, if you can't find a place for me to stay that's safe, then just let me die here." Fortunately for Katrin, there was a shelter that she could go to and stay for up to two years. Valkenhorst offers substance abuse and psychological counseling besides vocational training, and helps women look for housing and employment opportunities as well as providing food and shelter.

Reminiscent of Maya Angelou's book *Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and Marilyn Frye's essay on "Oppression" that uses the birdcage as a

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

metaphor for the oppression of women,[2] Katrin drew a caged bird on one side of her shirt. But on the other side, she drew a proud peacock. "My shirt, it has a caged bird who cannot fly, who is trapped. I was a frail bird when I entered the shelter. But after two years at Valkenhorst, I emerged, proud as a peacock."

Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose

While much of the focus in the Netherlands was on the kinds of family violence taking place among immigrant groups, there is increasing recognition that domestic violence is taking place among all sectors of the society. This is something that Jan Werd, director of the Valkenhorst shelter, is very much aware of and promoting nationwide. Together we organized the first Clothesline Project in the Netherlands at Valkenhorst where 30 women created T-shirts that were then displayed for a symposium on domestic violence, which included law enforcement, social workers, and politicians from 18 regional cities. Among the speakers at the symposium were two survivors who had created T-shirts: Katrin and Ingrid.[3]

Ingrid, a petite, blond Dutch woman, told her story quietly but with passion and conviction. She has become a domestic violence advocate at the national level, helping organize an advocacy for survivors: Stichting Zijweg (https://www.stichtingzijweg.nl/). At the symposium, in front of some 85 participants, she told her difficult story of needing to go into hiding with her two little daughters in order to get away from her abusive husband. "Domestic violence can happen to anyone. It happened to me." Beside her was her shirt she had made that morning.

Like a number of women, Ingrid used the front and back of her shirt to depict the good and bad things that had happened to her. The back typically features what happened to them before—and the front part, the hope that they are feeling.

> At first I didn't know what I should do with the t-shirt, because it's almost like two different things, the violence and my life, so I decided to use both sides of the shirt. This is for the good side, I call it "the after"… it feels great and [the before], I felt broken, then I felt lonely, then I felt black and blue, then I felt like I was falling apart, I felt fragile, I felt like my life was upside down, and I felt like small caterpillars, not grown, and I felt chained. But then "the after," I like the colors much more… there are three flowers and I

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> now feel beautiful. The big flower is me. The little flowers are my two girls and also now I'm a butterfly, and my little girls are butterflies, because now we're free to fly and it's now just the three of us, so I made three hearts and we now have dreams and we feel strong, so that's the meaning of my shirt. (Ingrid, 2011, pers. comm., June 25).

Ingrid knows all too well that there is no easy way out. For her, it was difficult and dangerous to stay and difficult and dangerous to leave.

> It's just very hard, because where do you go to? And what will happen when you leave? He always, he made really sure that I knew that if I was leaving, that he would come looking for me, so what's the use of going through all the hassle of leaving, knowing that he will try everything again to find me, so it wasn't a good option. I didn't see it as an option for a long time, I didn't see that I could leave.
>
> [But] I got so afraid of him, and he was so clear that he was going to end my life if I was going to leave with the kids, if I would try any way to start my own life, he would kill me, and he always told me, I will go to jail for it for years, but you will never see your children back. And at one moment he called me to tell me how he would end my life that night and he was so clear in it, I knew he was going to do it so it wasn't that much of a courage [to leave]. There was more fear of staying in my home than leaving, so that was the moment that I finally left… That night the police came and a good friend came, I went to my Dad's house but he knew where my Dad was living, so I knew I couldn't stay there for long, so two days later I went to a shelter. And then [he found me] and I had to move to another shelter.

Now, even years after she has been able to get free from her husband and move on with her life, she remembers how hard it was.

> If I had known before I ended the relationship how hard the struggle would be after ending it, I think I wouldn't have had the strength to end it. Because I really thought like most people you just end the relationship, and it's over. And it wasn't, it was the start of much more violence, so it took much longer than I thought to get my life back. I think most people don't, they just think, oh you leave and it's all over and you just go on with your life and it will be happily ever after. That's not the case. It's now 5 years ago almost that I did end the relationship and still it affects my life and my children's lives.

As Ingrid's testimony powerfully recounts, it can be dangerous to stay and dangerous to leave. It took desperation and courage for her to leave; ultimately she felt she had no choice: "I knew he would kill me." It took her a number of years, but Ingrid just finished her degree in social work and is a domestic violence advocate who works with other victim-survivors.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

If it can happen to me, it can happen to anyone

Cheryl, an upper-middle-class white American woman, and the artist who created the fanning the flame of hope shirt described in Chapter 2, could identify with Ingrid's situation. She too spoke of daily living in fear, of domestic terrorism:

> You know, it was intimidation in its purist form. There were times he held a gun to my head, he would just go pow, you know, I didn't know whether it was loaded or you know, if there were any bullets in it or not. He would tell me that if I ever tried to leave or he ever came home and found me moving out that they would find me floating face down in the river and that there wouldn't be any marks on my body but I'd be dead just the same. He'd had been in the military and he presented himself as a Vietnam Vet and different times when he had been physically abusive, he would say that he was having flash backs from having been in Vietnam…and would tell me all these stories…he said he was in Special Forces and you know, give all these accounts of things that he had done in Vietnam. And he would get emotional. He would break down and weep. (Cheryl, 2010, pers. comm., December 4)

The violence, however, had become so severe that in order to protect her own and her daughter's life, she needed to get out of the marriage. After the divorce, Cheryl discovered her husband had never served in Vietnam, something his sister had told her but she hadn't believed given how emotional he would get. But she looked up his service records and found that indeed he had never served in the Armed Forces and actually found the letter he wrote to the draft board asking to not be drafted because his twin brother was already serving in Vietnam.

Denial and realization

Coming to realize that one is in an abusive relationship is for many women a process that may take years. This is poignantly described in Roddy Doyle's novel titled *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* (1996). A 37-year-old, working-class woman, Paula Spencer, unfolds the story of her abusive marriage to Charlo Spencer, her husband of 17 years—and the man who first swept her off her feet and saved her from "being a slut."

Beginning with the very first chapter, Doyle introduces flashbacks and intrusive memories that disrupt a linear narrative and represent the

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

fragmentary and circular nature of the trauma narrative. When police come to her house, ringing the doorbell to tell her that Charlo has been shot dead, Paula flashes back to other times when the doorbell has rung: when police came looking for Charlo—"what had he stolen now?"—and when her daughter incessantly rang the doorbell rather than walking to the back door and Paula slapped her on the face. Almost simultaneously as Paula hears the news of Charlo's death, she thinks back to their first meeting. "I swooned the first time I met him. I actually did… Charlo Spencer. There he was, over there, leaning against the wall" (p. 3).

> His hand in his pockets with the thumbs hooked over the denim and a fag handing from his mouth. It got me then and it gets me now: cigarettes are sexy… He took the fag from his mouth—I could feel the lip coming part of the way before letting go—and blew a gorgeous jet of smoke up into the light (p. 3)… He was elegant… His timing was perfect… [As the song 'my eyes adored you, though I never laid a hand on you' played] I put my head on his shoulder. He had me. (pp. 3–4)

The next thing Paula knows (chapter 3, p. 5), she is lying flat out on the floor, trying to figure out what happened to her.

> I knew nothing for a while, where I was, how come I was on the floor. Then I saw Charlo's feet, then his legs, making a triangle with the floor. He seemed way up over me. Miles up, I had to bend back to see him. Then he came down to meet me, his face, his eyes went all over my face, looking, searching. Looking for marks, looking for blood. He was worried, he turned my head and looked, His face was full of worry and love. He skipped my eyes.
>
> —You fell, he said.

Doyle uses the technique of stream of consciousness to capture and portray the fragmentary and complex nature of abuse and recovery narratives. As flashbacks intrude upon her consciousness, Paula not only revisits her past but also the telling of her story. The narration itself is fragmented, circular, filled with omissions, silences, and questions—*why?*

Survivors both seek and fear knowledge. The structure of the narrative reflects this dialectic and the approach-avoidance of knowing and feeling that comes with the experience of trauma. Trauma narratives are not static; they develop over time and experience. Paula's iterative telling of her story circles back *and* around, first not knowing what had happened, finding herself flat on the floor with Charlo standing above her looking down with a worried look on his face, until the end, when she finally says, "If he loved me, then why did he hit me?" (p. 192).

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Throughout the novel, Paula keeps coming back to this incident. Her first telling constitutes chapter 3, which is only one paragraph long; by chapter 25, when she reflects on it again, her telling is much longer and more detailed.

> He lost his temper. And he hit me. He lost his temper. It was as simple as that. He sent me flying across the kitchen, I hit the sink and fell. I felt nothing, only shock. And a spinning in my head. I knew nothing for a while, where I was, who was with me, how come I was on the floor. Then I saw his feet, then his legs, making a triangle with the floor. He seemed way up over me. Miles up. I had to bend back to see him. Then he came down to meet me.
>
> —Y'alright?
>
> His face, his eyes went all over my face, looking, searching. Looking for marks, looking for blood. He was worried, he turned my head and looked, His face was full of worry and love. He was scared. He skipped over my eyes. He turned my head and looked at the sides.
>
> —You fell, he said.—I didn't—
>
> I fell. He felled me. I'm looking at it now. Twenty years later, I wouldn't do what he wanted, he was in his moods. I was being smart, he hated me for being pregnant, I wasn't his little Paula anymore—and he drew his fist back and he hit me. He hit me, Before he knew it? He drew his own fist back, not me. He aimed at me. He let go. He hit me. He wanted to hurt me. And he did…
>
> I'm looking at it now but that isn't what I saw then. I couldn't have coped with it then, the fact that he's hit me, plain and simple, he'd drawn back his fist and smashed me. Something had gone wrong.
>
> I fell.
>
> I'd been too near to him; he hadn't realized.
>
> He'd only been warning me.
>
> He didn't know his own strength.
>
> He had other things on his mind…
>
> It would happen again…It had been a mistake. We'd laugh about it later. Remember the time.
>
> We did laugh about it later. That night, And the time after that…until I couldn't laugh anymore…Nothing came out when I opened my mouth. Only pain.
>
> What happened?
>
> I said, Make your own fuckin' tea…I provoked him, I always provoked him. I was always to blame. I should have kept my mouth shut, But that didn't work either. I could provoke him that way as well. Not talking.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> Talking. Looking at him. Not looking at him. Looking at him *that* way. (pp. 162–63)

The chapter continues. "One day I was Mrs. Paula Spencer, a young wife and soon to be a mother . . . making my husband's dinner, timing it so it would be just ready for when he came in from work . . ." (p. 168). In parentheses she thinks, "(I keep blaming myself. After all the years and the broken bones and teeth and torture I still keep on blaming myself. I can't help it. What if? What if?" (p. 170). At the end of the chapter, Paula's story is more detailed yet still filled with self-blame and concern about Charlo:

> He hit me. He sent me flying across the kitchen and I hit the sink and fell. I felt nothing for awhile, only shock . . . Then I saw his legs, making a triangle over me . . . He skipped over my eyes, He couldn't look straight at me. He felt guilty, dreadful. He loved me again. What happened? I provoked him, I was to blame. I should have made his dinner. It was my own fault . . . (p. 175)

Caught in the double bind that Elizabeth Waites brilliantly analyzes in *Trauma and Survival* (1993), Paula circles back and forth, questioning Charlo, questioning herself, and only later questioning others. "Why didn't they ask me [the doctors]—I swear I would have told. *Ask me. Ask me. Ask me*."

> Broken nose. Loose teeth. Cracked ribs. Broken fingers. Black eyes . . . For seventeen years. There wasn't one moment when I wasn't afraid. (Doyle, 1996, p. 176)

Reflecting back upon the many hospital visits when doctors stitched her up, she realizes that "it was my little secret and they all helped me keep it" (p. 188).

Using a phenomenological approach, Doyle explicitly deals with the dynamics of intimate partner violence (IPV) and how it affects people's self-esteem, defense mechanisms, coping strategies, behavior, *and* narration. He shows *how* Paula tells and retells, interprets and reinterprets her story *in the process* of coming to understand and reinterpret her abuse. It is only in the very process of telling her story that Paula comes to understand and integrate it.

> He loved me and he beat me. I loved him and I took it. It's as simple as that, and as stupid and complicated. (p. 192)

Often the simple truths are the hardest to understand and explain.

Paula knew why she didn't leave—there was no money, no place to go, no support (p. 209). But when Charlo tries to hit on their teenage

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

daughter, Paula lets loose. She hits him with a pan on the side of the head, and then begins kicking him; finally she throws him out of the house. The novel ends here, with Paula's last line: "It was a great feeling. I'd done something good" (p. 226).

In real life as well as in fiction, coming to realize and admit that one is being abused can be a long process. It took Cheryl a number of years to recognize and acknowledge the abuse she was being subjected to. For her as well as the fictional Paula, the emotional abuse was as difficult as, if not more difficult than, the physical abuse. Even though Cheryl had the economic resources to leave and a good job that could support her and her daughter, she did not have the family support and psychological independence to leave. By way of analysis, she explains why she wrote "fucking bitch" on the back of her shirt:

> I was no longer Cheryl—I was fucking bitch. That was my name. And I was a professional woman—but somehow I lost all sense of myself as Cheryl—until one day, I looked in the mirror—and saw myself in the eyes staring back at me, beneath the bruises, I saw Cheryl—and I started taking pictures of myself looking into the mirror…

Cheryl would look at the photos over and over again, only slowly coming to realize and accept that the person who was supposed to love her was her abuser. In the end, she did leave—and, those pictures became her "saving grace in court." During the court hearing, her husband claimed that Cheryl had been the one beating him, recounting in detail how she pulled out the fire poker and began hitting him and kicking him. Cheryl's lawyer then asked her to pull out the photos—that was the end of the hearing.

Many of the women whose stories have been recounted here were able to finally extricate themselves from abusive relationships but it was not easy. Others were not so lucky. Sarah's mother was murdered as she attempted to leave her abusive boyfriend; and Nancy's daughter, Randi, was murdered by her husband without even knowing that her life was in danger.

Remember Nancy, the 19-year-old who eloped and moved to Norfolk, Virginia, with her new husband? At 55, she reflects back on her leaving her abusive relationship after seven years.

> Something happened to me when I turned 25. I said, "That's it, I'm going to leave." And that's exactly what I did. I thought about Randi and I thought about how I couldn't expose her to this. It was not right and it was not the life I wanted her to live. So we left. But the fear that I had living with him

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> heightened once I made the decision to divorce him. I was afraid of his actions—the threat of his killing me or taking Randi from me. I left and moved in with my sister and my parents were there to help me. But it wasn't until I was in my late 30s that I was actually able to talk about it and say that my husband abused me. I still never say his name…To this day, he frightens me. I remember when Randi was killed, my first thought was that he killed her. (Nancy, 2010, pers. comm., October 20)

Randi, Nancy's pride and joy, grew up, graduated from college, and married a man they both thought was wonderful. In Randi's case, there were never any visible signs of abuse, either physical or psychological. But on the evening of January 10, 2003:

> …in a quiet neighborhood in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, Randi Lee Trimble's life was stolen away. Her husband, Brian Trimble, along with his friend and coworker, Blaine Norris, now locked away in prison for life, confessed to conspiring and then carrying out their plan to murder 28-year-old Randi Trimble. Their motive: cash in on a life insurance plan that would pay out $100,000, of which $20,000 would go to Blaine Norris to cover credit card debt he accumulated by filming an independent horror flick (modeled after the Blair Witch film). Randi was found lying in a pool of blood in the garage of their home, strangled with Christmas tree lights and stabbed 29 times. (Murphy, 2006)

In memory of Randi, the young woman full of life and love, Nancy has dedicated herself to working against domestic violence, establishing an annual "Randi's Race Against Domestic Violence," which has raised tens of thousands of dollars for Domestic Violence Services, and Randi's Camp for young children exposed to domestic violence.

Children

Interviews with women reveal that the number one reason women give for staying in and leaving abusive relationships is "for the sake of the children." If spousal or intimate partner abuse is going on in the home, then there is a high likelihood that child abuse may also be happening (Sousa et al., 2011; Appel and Holden, 1998). Moreover, research definitively shows that children who witness domestic violence also suffer, very often experiencing secondary trauma (Behind Closed Doors, 2006; http://www.childwitnesstoviolence.org/).

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Many women who are being abused are mothers who often go to great and courageous lengths to protect their children from abusive partners (Futures, n.d.). A 2006 study found that 15.5 million U.S. children live in families in which partner violence occurred at least once in the previous year, with 7 million children living in families where severe partner violence occurred (McDonald, Jouriles, and Ramisetty-Mikler, 2006). And a 2003 study reported that almost half of all incidents of IPV occurred in homes with a child under the age of 12 (Futures, n.d.). The UN secretary-general's Study on Violence Against Children conservatively estimates that 275 million children worldwide are exposed to violence in the home (Behind Closed Doors, 2006). As Carpenter and Stacks's review of the literature reveals, being witness to family violence as well as being a target can have devastating effects on children's development and can be a threat to infants' and young children's sense of security and well-being (2009, p. 832).

Children who witness family violence by seeing or hearing it may suffer a range of behavioral and emotional problems. Research suggests that violence in the family affects children in at least three main ways: their health, their educational performance, and their use of violence in their own lives. While most children who witness violence at home will not become violent, those who do exhibit violent behavior are more likely to continue that behavior and transmit it to future generations. Children who have been abused have been found to show more anxiety, depression, and trauma symptoms than children who have not been abused; they may exhibit more fearful and antisocial behavior and

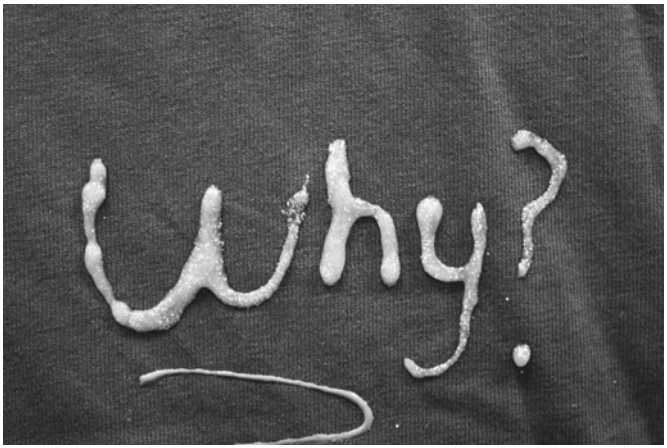
DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

exhibit more aggressive behavior toward their peers (Ending Violence, 2006, p. 61).

Ann, a bright and attractive mother of three young children, had been abused for a number of years both verbally and physically by her husband. On her shirt she drew a picture of a big sheep with the words "A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing" to describe the abusive and controlling husband she experienced at home in contrast to his public persona. People generally perceived him to be a fine, upstanding member of the community. For years she tolerated his abuse for the sake of their children but when he began physically abusing their youngest son, she decided she had to leave in order to protect the children. She obtained a Protection from Abuse (PFA) order but her husband still has children's visitation rights. She continues to be afraid of him, what he is doing to their children, especially the youngest son, and what he may be capable of doing. Her children participated in Randi's Camp for children exposed to domestic violence. They also made T-shirts. One of her sons wrote in large letters, "Stop Daddy" with a sad face filling in the bottom of the explanation points!

Many of the children who participated in the Clothesline Projects at both Randi's camp and the Venezuelan school wrote words as well as drew images. The words most commonly used in English and Spanish were "Why?" and "Stop!" Hearts, tears, and stick figures showing what was happening to them, other girls, or their mothers were also common. Many featured broken hearts and broken families—and a longing for the abuse to stop.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

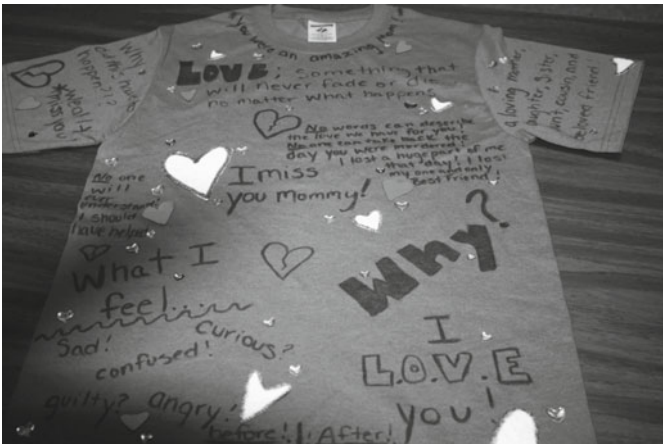


A few shirts were also made by children whose mothers had been murdered by intimate partners. Sarah, who was 12 when her mother was murdered by her boyfriend, drew many hearts on her shirt (Image 4.9) with the words: "Why?" "Mommy, We Miss You!" and "I love you!"

Never coming home again

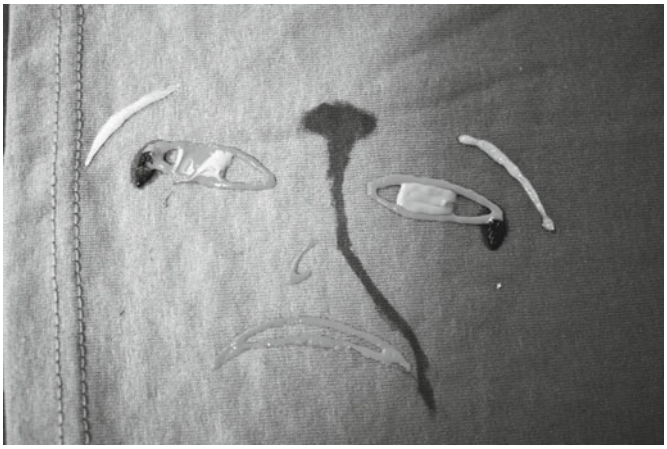
Approximately 10 percent of the 200-plus shirts that have been contributed to the Global Clothesline are white shirts created in memory of

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483



women who have been murdered by their intimate partners. One shirt displays a photo of a woman who was murdered by her ex-husband in a drive-by shooting when she and their three little children were selling lemonade by the street corner. Many of the shirts show photos of

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483



woman who were married, with their birth and death dates; most were young—in their twenties and thirties—when they were murdered. A number of shirts, like Carolina's, memorialized a murdered loved one with the words: "From ashes of destruction to wings of freedom."

In Carolina's case, she knew her daughter was being abused and was living in fear for at least the last nine years of her life.

> She told me, "Mom, I want to leave but I can't…" About two months before (she was killed), she came out to me one night. She says, "Mom, I got to go get some lunch meat for J.," she says, "because he has to go to work the

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> next morning". And she says, "Do you want to ride along with me?" So we were talkin'…and she went to get the car keys—they live next door. Well, apparently she and J. got to talkin' and he decided he didn't want any lunch meat. But she comes back and says, "Mom," she says, "I told him I want to take a ride." I thought she was getting the car but she came with the horse. "Mom," she says, "I want you to ride with me." So we doubled up together on her horse. And it was moonlit, beautiful out. And we went up through the orchards. We were gone about an hour, when she says, "Mom, if you don't hear anything out of me every day, or I don't call you, or you don't see me, you hunt up Pam (her daughter and Carolina's granddaughter) and me because J. says he's going to kill us." (Carolina, 1993, pers. comm., February)

This had not been the first time he had threatened Sherri or her family. Carolina continues:

> They had been high school sweet hearts but then she left town, married, and had a daughter. J. hunted her down and threatened that if she didn't come back to him, he would blow our house off the map. His parents had dynamite—so he could have. I didn't find this out until years later.

Believing she could never get away from him, Sherri went back to J. On September 11, 1990, J. shot her with a .44 magnum gun at home in front of her six-year-old daughter and grandparents. J. is now serving a life sentence in prison but may be up for parole and Carolina is taking care of her granddaughter, Pam. The story, however, gets even more complicated as Carolina's younger daughter is married to J's brother. Carolina lost a daughter, is now the guardian for her granddaughter, and continues to live in fear in a complicated web of relationships.

Sarah and her younger sister lost a mother and now live with their grandmother.

> "A golden heart stopped beating…hard working hands laid to rest…God took you from us to prove that he only takes the best." This quote was read at my Mother's funeral in May 2005. (Sarah, 2010, pers. comm., August 4)

On her shirt, Sarah draws a golden heart:

> This heart represents my mother and how much we loved her. I was 12 and my sister was 6 when she was murdered. [My mother's boyfriend] came to my sister's elementary school and shot her 9 times in the back. She was in the parking lot picking up my little sister, trying to get away from him.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Her mother's boyfriend had been living with them for about six months and was often abusive:

> He was often yelling or hitting—I didn't like him at all and was beginning to stand up to him. It was clear he didn't want us kids in the way… The afternoon before my Mom was murdered, we were at my little sister's Little League game. He had gone to get a hot dog and some fries and he comes flying over the back of the chair, like some cowboy showing off, and he slipped on the wet grass and missed the chair and fell on his butt. I laughed—it was so funny. And he was so mad. I decided to go home with my grandmother and stay at her house that night because he was so mad. So I don't know what happened that night and I've always regretted that I wasn't there—because I don't know what my little sister saw or heard that night—and she won't talk about it. The next morning, my Mom had decided to finally leave him. She went to the local police station to try and get a PFA but they told her she had to go to the county courthouse that was 20 miles away. So she went to pick up my 6 year old sister first at her elementary school and that's when he shot her—in the parking lot of the school—9 times in the back as she was trying to get away from him. And then he shot and killed himself.

Sarah and her little sister went to live with their grandmother. They have received good support from Domestic Violence Services and their grandmother has encouraged them to talk about what happened and to be strong and live their lives as their mother would have wanted:

> My grandmother always told me not to use this as an excuse. I have to live my life in ways that would make my Mom proud. And I tell that to my sister too.

Sarah and her sister also have participated in a number of Domestic Violence vigils and Sarah has often spoken out publically against domestic violence. She also carries a lipstick that has the domestic violence hotline number tucked inside:

> Just in case I see someone who may need help. Like the other day, I was at Burger King and this guy was just screaming at this woman—he was such a jerk. Sometimes you can't say anything or it would make the situation worse but in the bathroom you can hand her the lipstick.

Sarah had to grow up well before her time. She has just finished high school and is going to college. She has already become a domestic violence advocate and plans to continue to work for women's rights.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Regrets

Susan, a victim advocate, created a white quilted shirt with a broken heart that she made in memory of her friend who was murdered by her husband. On it, she wrote the following poem:

> We were young together.
>
> I remember you from the playground, dances the city used to have in the summer.
>
> I remember the music and the warm summer nights.
>
> And I remember what a striking couple you were.
>
> Everyone knew you and he were in love.
>
> Everyone knew you and he would marry.
>
> When we were young, it was a fairy tale story, to believe in love and marriage.
>
> But I remember he was very jealous.
>
> And I remember you were very spirited.
>
> When you argued, you would walk away from him, tossing your long blond hair.
>
> We both married.
>
> We both had baby boys.
>
> Five years later, when my daughter was born, I saw him working in the hospital.
>
> He was out of prison by that time.
>
> I am middle-aged now, as you would be.
>
> I have seen him again and again, over the years—with different women, with different families.
>
> And then, a few weeks ago I saw him in court.
>
> Another woman tried to walk away from him, threats, fear, intimidation, and control.
>
> I watch my two young grand-daughters racing through my yard,
>
> their long hair flying out behind them.
>
> I think of you, of all the countless moments you were never able to experience.
>
> And how I wish that one last time you could have tossed you long hair, defiantly,
>
> and walked away from death.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Notes

1 Excellent resources for women who believe that their religion prohibits divorce or sees it as sinful are Marie Fortune, *Keeping the Faith*; and James Poling, *Abuse and Power* (1991).

2 Using the bird cage metaphor, Marilyn Frye argues that multiple factors (cultural values, gender expectations, economics, employment, politics) discriminate against and oppress women. Unless one is able to stand back and see the whole picture (birdcage), one is not likely to see the systematic way in which all the wires are connected to prevent escape. No one wire holds the bird (woman) captive; it is the network of interconnected wires (forces) that imprisons and oppresses.

3 After the initial Clothesline Project and symposium at Valkenhorst in June 2010, Jan Werd was able to involve all 23 domestic violence shelters in the Netherlands in creating an open air Clothesline exhibit in the Hague to raise awareness about domestic violence at the national level. Women from all of the shelters, as well as professional artists, contributed T-shirts and on International Women's Day, March 8, 2011, Dutch parliamentarians and the U.S. ambassador to the Netherlands participated in the event, speaking of the importance of recognizing the devastating effects family violence has on women, children, and families in the Netherlands.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

5

Trauma Narratives: Breaking the Silence of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Abstract: *This is a theoretical chapter that plays off of an essay by Georg Simmel, "The Adventure." It considers the ways in which trauma may be seen as the shadow-side of adventure that draws one in rather than out. The research literature on trauma and gender violence and excerpts from memoirs inform this micro analysis of childhood sexual abuse narratives from the Global Clothesline Project. Breaking silence and bearing witness are central to the healing process, not only for the individual but also for the restoration of social order.*

Keywords: child abuse; child sexual abuse; incest; trauma and healing; trauma narratives

Rose, Susan D. *Challenging Global Gender Violence: The Global Clothesline Project*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> Each segment of our conduct and experience bears a twofold meaning: it revolves about its own center, contains as much breadth and depth, joy and suffering, as the immediate experience [allows], and at the same time is a segment of a course of life…
>
> Simmel, 1971, p. 187

With this passage, Georg Simmel launches into his exploration of "The Adventurer," an essay that profoundly and playfully explores the ways in which "adventure" is an integral part of a life, yet marked by its discontinuity with it.[1]

> The most general form of adventure is its dropping out of the continuity of life… What we call an adventure stands in contrast to that interlocking of life-links, to that feeling that those countercurrents, turnings, and knots still, after all, spin forth a continuous thread. (pp. 187–88)

Strikingly, Simmel's analysis of adventure applies well, if paradoxically, to the experience of trauma. Traumas, like adventures, are often marked in parenthetical time (pp. 187–88). But while Simmel may "ascribe to an adventure a beginning and an end much sharper than those to be discovered in other forms of our experiences" (p. 188), the traumatic event often resides in more ephemeral time, remaining unintegrated or "frozen" in time. As psychiatrist Dori Laub (1992), who writes about the experiences, memories, and narratives of Holocaust survivors, argues:

> The traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of "normal" reality… This absence of categories that define it lends it a quality of "otherness," a salience, a timelessness, and a ubiquity that puts it outside the range of associatively linked experiences… Trauma survivors live not with memories of the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion…and therefore…continues into the present… (p. 69).

In what ways may trauma be considered the shadow-side of adventure—similar in form though oppositional in meaning—that draws one in rather than out? Trauma, like adventure,

> is certainly part of our existence, directly contiguous with other parts which precede and follow it; at the same time, however, in its deeper meaning it occurs outside the usual continuity of this life. Nevertheless, it is distinct from all that is accidental and alien, merely touching one's outer

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> shell. While it falls outside the context of life, it falls, with this same movement, as it were, back into that context again…; it is a foreign body in our existence which is yet somehow connected with the center; the outside, if only by a long and unfamiliar detour, is formally an aspect of the inside. (Simmel, 1971, p. 188)

This connection between inner lives and outer manifestations is illustrated well by shirts contributed to the Global Clothesline Project. On Pat's shirt, a burlap heart configuring the experience of pain and healing illustrates the embodiment of that which is both integral and foreign, and presents an outer representation of that which lies within. Pat describes the making and meaning of her shirt:

> I've always felt that my heart was damaged in some way. And that's why I wanted to start with the heart. I picked burlap because I feel that I'm very rough. I don't feel that I can be caring or compassionate to other people. And I just feel like I have a very rough heart. This is the wound, the incest. It doesn't take like a big part, because I don't feel that it destroyed my whole heart, it's just something that radiated. And the little hammers are what I've used to beat myself into not allowing me to be me, all my life. And these are the things—nature and love and passion and music and things like that—that I consider to be me. And that's what bleed; the part that's me that isn't allowed to be. The shame which I feel; I carry my father's shame. I am shame. In the middle, the little heart, is God. Because I feel that God is the only one that's brought me through. (Pat, 1993, pers. comm., February 17)

Pat simply and exquisitely speaks of the embodied pain and numbness of both *being* and *not being*, which is part of the experience of violation, and reveals the layers of meaning that interact with one another, defining and redefining the connections between inner and outer realities. She also speaks of the relationship between violation (the incest) and her father's shame that has bled into her: "I carry my father's shame. I am shame"—and visually represents it in bleeding capital letters. In the healing process, Pat has begun to unearth the shame she had internalized and to give it back to those who abused her: "I decided to name the people that I can remember abusing me—my father, my brother, and a babysitter…And that's powerful to me because I feel like I need to start giving responsibility to those people. I still carry it as my fault."

And she continues:

> I know there's hope. I know it's out there and I know some day I'm going to get there. It's just, I keep trying to trip myself up on the way. I really have

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> the confidence that I can recover. It [the abuse] will always be there, and it will be a part of me, but it isn't going to define me anymore.

Pat is very articulate about the ways she has embodied and blocked pain. She speaks of wanting to embrace the part of her she left behind as a child, and of reclaiming feeling and compassion for herself and others. In the process, she is both coming to understand and redefine the meaning that sexual abuse has had for her: "It will always be there . . . but it isn't going to define me anymore." This is not a matter of a "moving beyond" experience; rather it is a matter of understanding experience in a new way, one that recognizes both its pervasiveness and its limits. In describing the process, Pat recognizes both the connections and discontinuities between inner and outer selves. For Pat and for other survivors of childhood sexual abuse, recovery involves renegotiation of one's identity.

Renegotiation requires dialogue amongst one's various selves and between those selves and others who can listen. As Laub argues, in order to undo the entrapment of the traumatic reality and its reenactment, one must engage "in a process of constructing a narrative, reconstructing a history and essentially, of *re-externalizing* the event" (Laub, 1992, p. 69, emphasis added). The act of telling one's story, through both visual and narrative representation, is an important part of the process. Often the narratives of people who have been traumatized reflect what Harvard psychiatrist Judith Herman considers to be the central dialectic of psychological trauma: "The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud . . . People who have survived atrocities often tell their stories in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner which undermines their credibility and thereby serves the twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy" (1992b, p. 1). Survivors both seek and fear knowledge. The structure of the narrative reflects this dialectic and the approach-avoidance of knowing and feeling that comes with the experience of trauma. Moreover, the narrative is not static; it continues to develop over time and experience. Within the context of psychotherapy, the telling of a story is often a "slow, laborious process, a fragmented set of wordless, static images [that are] gradually transformed into a narrative with motion, feeling, and meaning" (Herman, 1992a, cited in Strozier and Flynn, 1996). As Laub describes the narrative of a survivor of Auschwitz: "She was testifying not simply to empirical historical facts, but to the very secret of survival and of resistance to extermination . . . her silence was part of her testimony.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

It is not merely her speech, but the very boundaries of silence which surround it which attest, today as well as in the past, to this assertion of resistance" (1992, p. 62).

By breaking through the silence, survivors are constructing oppositional narratives that defy the taboo against *talking about* incest and torture, and in the process are re-creating themselves. In resisting traditional narrative forms, survivors often encounter great skepticism and resistance to the telling of their stories. Speaking out is a political as well as a therapeutic act, and as such is a claim to power. It involves risk as well as promise. And as these women who are ready to speak out remind us, we need to consider what it means not to risk. While there are dangers involved in speaking out, there are also dangers in remaining mute. Silence stifles the soul, affects the quality of relationship with others, and accepts an unjust and abusive system of power that renders the victim powerless. It also enables abusers without holding them accountable. In the process of breaking silence, survivors are not only finding their own voices, they are also collectively creating new narratives that challenge the individual and collective denial of abuse and the reproduction of violence. In dialogue with others who can bear witness, survivors are redefining the experiences that once rendered them powerless.

Liz, who portrays herself as a little girl without arms, situated in the corner of a black heart, spoke to this sense of powerlessness:

> I knew I wanted to have a black heart on it. Maybe it was because I just felt that way about hearts, and about love. That is was all very black. That's me—the little purple girl. I cut out little felt arms. And then…I left them off. (Photo 1)

Liz could not articulate just why she left off the arms—but she knew it was significant that she could not attach or position them: "They didn't fit, I just couldn't get them to fit right." The absence of arms or hands is commonly found in drawings of traumatized children, and is often interpreted as representing a loss of power and ability to act (Peacock, 1991, pp. 100–109; Spigelman, Spigelman, and Englesson, 1992).

Now a successful magazine editor and layout designer, Liz has chosen to speak out publicly about her abuse. When asked what she wanted to tell the public, she immediately replied:

> It's important for people to realize that those statistics represent people. Behind every one of those numbers [of abuse] is a person…[who is]

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> struggling…It's not just something you get over. And so there's all those hundreds of thousands of walking-wounded women out there. And we're all struggling. I'm trying to find ways to make it less black…

Liz reports that she always remembered the physical abuse inflicted upon her by her father who "became quite violent after a brain tumor." And she recalls being sent to her aunt and uncle's for the summers after her mother died. While she talked about "the vivid memories" she had about the summers there, she also says, "I just don't remember anything about (the sexual abuse) within that time frame. Although it went on for 6 summers (from the age of 6 to 12), it's like I remember it as one summer." Then the week after graduating from college, Liz experienced a flooding of memories. She describes moving in and out of awareness both at the time the abuse was going on, and later, as she recalls the details and remembers more fully the emotional impact it had.

As many contemporary feminists and psychotherapists would describe it, recovery does involve re-membering the body/mind/spirit connections. It involves picking up the threads of discontinuity and making sense of them; it calls people to re-weave the fabric of their being (Davis and Bass, 1994). In the process of recovery, the abuse gets redefined as it becomes more fully understood. For Liz, it became integrated in new ways as the adult-she and the little girl-she become more aware of one another. The little purple girl with no arms can now be embraced by the adult woman who is re-claiming parts of herself, a process that Liz describes as a journey.

This re-claiming does not necessarily or even often result in the construction of a new, coherent, or unified self; it is more likely to represent an acceptance of ambiguity and a sense of a diversified self who continues to discover herself in relation to the past, the present, and the future.

The adventure that leads one into new encounters stimulates the senses by challenging them with new sounds, smells, and sensations (Waites, 1993, chapter 1).[2] When one leaves behind familiar territory and enters new terrain, adrenalin rushes to prepare one to meet the unknown, the unfamiliar, the stranger who is potentially an enemy but also potentially a friend. The "alter-adventure" of engaging past trauma may likewise lead one into unexpected, though strangely familiar territory. As one embarks on the interior journey, it may feel like one is revisiting a minefield. The challenge for the survivor is not only to explore the old terrain but to carve a new landscape out of it. With both the adventure and alter-adventure, the journey invokes risk

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

but also opportunity. By expanding and exploring new boundaries, the adventure/alter-adventure can revitalize. It can also terrify. It can lure us further or paralyze us.

While culture shapes how we interpret experience, what meaning we attach to it, biology contributes certain constraints on this. In the case of inescapable trauma, the psychobiological response is more likely to numb than to mobilize one for flight or fight (Waites, 1993; van der Kolk, 1987; van der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth, 1996).[3] As psychologist Elizabeth Waites describes it:

> Traumatic experience typically produces an overwhelming need to escape what is, in reality, inescapable. Dissociation is a psychobiological mechanism that allows the mind, in effect, to flee what the body is experiencing… The shock of trauma produces states that are so different from ordinary waking life that they are not easily integrated with more normal experience. As a result of this discontinuity, the traumatic state may be lost to memory or remembered as a dream is sometimes remembered, as something vague and unreal. (1993, p. 14)

Because of its place in our psychic life, remembered trauma like adventure tends "to take on the quality of dream. It often moves so far away from the center of the ego and course of life which the ego guides and organizes that we may think of it as something experienced by another person [or as something] alien" (Simmel, 1971, p. 188). In the case of sexual abuse, this dream-like quality of experience results from the sense of one's self being so assaulted, so bombarded, that one psychologically "escapes" in order to avoid destruction.

This phenomenon is well described in the narratives of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Dissociation, which gives rise to a form of temporary transcendence, is one of the major defense mechanisms resorted to by traumatized children. The mind or spirit leaves the body and the child may come to feel no pain, may leave the scene entirely, neither experiencing the abuse at the time nor remembering it afterward. The escape from self—from what is being done to the self—creates a safer space, a retreat. It may be temporary or more long-lasting, depending on the severity and frequency of abuse. The responses of others help shape the meaning of the experience, and the possibilities either for integrating the experience or rejecting it, dealing with it in the present or putting it aside to deal with later. Over time, one becomes accustomed, even entrained, to follow certain patterns of response, whether dissociating from or acknowledging pain (Herman, 1992b; van der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth, 1996).

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

In the case of adventure, one seeks revitalization through excitement. In the traumatic escape, rather than seeking more stimulation, one seeks less; rather than excitement, one seeks safety.[4] As Liz recalled her escape into the wallpaper:

> I remember being on their bed and he was laying on top of me. And I had my hands stretched out. And I was touching the wallpaper. And it was that flocked wallpaper, you know, the kind with the white stuff with gold specks, and just feeling it…I was trying to focus on it…rather than on…yeah, I (was) dissociating.

Many survivors of childhood sexual abuse have described the experience of becoming observers of their own abuse, of symbolically leaving their body and watching the enactment of abuse from another place, for example, from the ceiling or through a window. This figurative flight may protect them from abuse that might otherwise be impossible to experience and recover from, given the psychological meanings for the self. As Ferenczi, Freud's student, analysand, friend, and colleague wrote in a 1933 paper shunned by his psychoanalytical peers:

> It is difficult to fathom the behavior and the feelings of children following such acts of (specifically sexual) violence. Their first impulse would be: rejection, hatred, disgust, forceful resistance. "No, no, I don't want this, it is too strong for me, that hurts me. Leave me be." This…would be the immediate reaction, were it not paralyzed by tremendous fear. The children feel physically and morally helpless…The overwhelming power and authority of the adults renders them silent. (Greven, 1990, p. 158; Terr, 1990)

So the mind or spirit may leave the body and the child may escape to an altered state of un-consciousness. While the body may remember the abuse, the mind may not. The escape from self—from what is being done to the self—creates a safer space, a retreat. Such responses are common for those who have experienced severe trauma: war veterans who suffered shell shock, those who have been tortured, and even those who have been in serious car accidents. Over time, if the abuse continues, one may become accustomed, even entrained, to follow certain patterns of response, such as dissociating. And while dissociation may serve as a very effective coping mechanism at the time of abuse or shock, in the long term it can become counter-productive.

The effects of trauma on personality formation and integration vary according to the type and severity of the trauma, and whether or not one is able to speak of and process the trauma (Terr, 1990). According

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

to Bruner, "What does not get structured narratively, suffers loss in memory" (1990, p. 56). Both experience and expression are critical here. As Waites argues,

> The integration of identity is closely allied to the development and experience of autobiographical memory, a sense of personal continuity and consistency over historical time that forms the background for the individual's interactions with others and serves as a reference point for self-reflective activities. (1993, p. 14)

For some, experiences of severe abuse have led to dissociative identity disorders (DID), formerly referred to as multiple personality disorder (MPD). Cathy, who self-identifies as having MPD, symbolically portrays the divides within by splitting her shirt in half:

> Well, this is the side that is the part of me that was in bondage. And then over here, this side, is freedom from it… And then I put this name, Audrey here because I have another persona and her name is Audrey Katherine Lovett. And she gets me out of a lot of jams and she's my best friend, but it's really me. I give her a lot of credit when it should be me that takes the credit—because she does all the good. And, so, it's really me. She's gotten me into a couple of jams though, too, along the way. And then this represents my arms because I was very, very destructive. I've got scars all over my arms. (Cathy, 1993, pers. comm., February 17)

Cathy points out quite literally the outer manifestations of her inner pain, and the ways in which her abuse led to internal divisions and multiple personas. She also divides the shirt with the words "despair" and "hope":

> So I put here… "despair." And then I come over here and I put "hope"… In some ways I did this the way I thought people would want to see it, and to portray it in a better way than sometimes I feel… sometimes I feel that to survive is punishment… But I didn't feel it was offering survivors anything. And so I decided to put "hope" there instead. And for the most part I feel more hopeful than I ever have in my life.

This sense of hopefulness grew out of supportive dialogue with professionals, other survivors, and her selves: "There's no reason why I should be breathing, but for some reason I am a survivor. And I need to learn to accept that, and go with it, instead of resisting it. And I know it will take the rest of my life." After years of severe familial abuse, foster care, and recurrent hospitalizations, Cathy is for the first time living on her own and employed. She is grateful to a supportive community of people

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who can listen to the stories of abuse she has to tell, help her sort out the meaning of those experiences, and move on.

> It's great to know that there's people that are there for you, who believe you… I might have a long journey ahead of me but I'm willing to do it. And I've got the support to do it this time. And there ain't no stopping me.

For another contributor, the split is displayed through the images she drew on the front and back sides of her shirt. As Marty describes it:

> It's got sort of a healthy family on one side and a very dysfunctional family on the other… Actually this is the front. What I always did in the past was, I sort of used the good things in my life to sort of cover up the bad things and that contaminated the good things, because it made them unclean. So, what I did was, I put this on the front so I could just… be out with this. And just say, this was wrong, it was wrong, and it was reality. And then the good things won't be contaminated. (Marty, 1993, pers. comm., February 17)

Marty then discusses her motivation for working through her childhood experiences of abuse:

> I live apart from myself. You know, I kind of float around. And I want, I'm 26 years old, and I want to experience the rest of my life. And there's something that follows me around. And it's just terrible. And I need to admit that it exists because otherwise, you know, I get real crazy inside. And I feel separate from my life. I'm just sort of watching it from a distance. And it's not feeling real to me. And I have a real sense that I don't want to lose the next 25 years of my life and wake up and be, you know, have lost all those years.

Some theorists and therapists argue that until the selves are integrated, re-united, and one is able to tell the story of the abuse as experienced and witnessed, the self cannot alter the meaning, and therefore the impact of the abuse. Other therapists and survivors argue that integration does not necessarily have to take place, that for some survivors, there may be a conscious choice or subliminal warning not to force integration but to allow the co-existence of parts of the self (Stardancer, *Survivorship Newsletter*). In either case, awareness of one's experiences and recognition of the *complexity* of one's self/selves is fundamental to embracing rather than "losing oneself."

To lose oneself is to become so involved in something that one is no longer self-conscious about what one is doing. One is, in a sense, taken away. Whether in the context of work, or making love, or dealing with trauma, being so engaged can be powerful and productive as long as one

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can return to an awareness of self again. It is not losing one's self per se that is to be avoided, for we may find ourselves anew in the process of being lost and found. The danger is to lose touch for so long that one becomes unaware of some of the most potent sources of action and motivation (Miller, 1990; 1981). To be "lost in the moment" is one thing. To be lost for months or years of a lifetime is quite another; it means to become alienated from one's self, and less responsible *to* and *for* one's self.

Linda Cutting discusses this explicitly in her beautifully—even musically—written memoir on family violence, incest, and suicide. The daughter of a minister, Cutting recalls being safe when playing the piano: "The piano was sacred. No one would touch me there" (1997, p. 57). Her memoir, *Memory Slips* (1998), tells of a life lived in music and a life lived between the notes, as she struggles to reclaim herself after years of sexual abuse and the suicides of two of her brothers. As a professional concert pianist, Cutting reflects that "in music one measure can expand to contain a lifetime. And a lifetime can disappear in just one beat" (p. 5).

> "There are three kinds of memory slips, [she] tells [her] students." One, when memory slips but you find your way back without losing a beat. Two, when you don't find your way back until the downbeat. Three, when you don't find your way back in time and must stop and restart the music. I don't tell them about the fourth possibility, when one memory slips, another intrudes, and you don't find your way back for a very long time. (p. 6)

The day Cutting reported her minister-father to the National Association of Congressional Churches was the day she canceled her first concert as a professional pianist. "Maybe," she writes, "it was an unconscious exchange—words for music. A breaking of the ancient bargain I'd made with my father. Instead of playing the piano, I told" (p. 136). When she entered therapy and began telling her story and the truth about her bothers, she "became the family traitor" (p. 104), and it was three and a half years before she was able to play again professionally. Her first concert was a relief effort for the survivors of an earthquake in Kobe, Japan, and a chance to perform music that she loved, this time "finally free to make music for its own sake . . . when I finally feel I can take my time" (p. 240).

In daring to remember and speak about what they remember, survivors encounter both loss and gain. Sylvia Fraser, in *My Father's House: A Memoir of Incest and Healing* (1987), reveals this as she describes her process of recovering and integrating memories of childhood abuse:

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> In retrospect, I feel about my life the way some people feel about war. If you survive, then it becomes a good war. Danger makes you active, it makes you alert, it forces you to experience and thus to learn. I know now the cost of my life, the real price that has been paid. Contact with inner pain has immunized me against most petty hurts. Hopes I still have in abundance, but very few needs. My pride of intellect has been shattered. If I didn't know about half my own life, what other knowledge can I trust? Yet even here I see a gift, for in place of my narrow, pragmatic world of cause and effect…I have burst into an infinite world full of wonder. (p. 253)

In order to step back into the fullness of being and embrace the wholeness, in both its good and bad aspects, survivors speak of the need to pick up the strands of their being; to re-member the connections between the body, mind, and spirit; and to re- integrate knowing and feeling. This is not a matter of finding the one authentic or monolithic self but rather of recognizing the multiplicity and complexity of one's experiences and the continual evolving of identity (Bruner, 1990; Lifton, 1993; Strozier and Flynn, 1996).

The task of re-connecting to oneself and others, however, is not an easy one. There are lots of reasons why people forget or deny (Freyd, 1996), why parts of our being go into hiding to protect or at times expose or wage war with other parts. The challenge is to develop not only an awareness of all these parts but also a sense of empathy with that self-as-other that may have been created as a means of enduring trauma. If the trauma is survived and a sense of safety is secured, then a reunion of the split selves may be possible. A recognition of the other-as-self may create a sense of identification, of empathic understanding. Rather than an-other co-existing as a stranger or foreign body within, it may come to be seen as a friend, even an integral part of one's being.

Even though one may experience oneself-as-other as a way of surviving great violation, the selves are materially embodied together, and help to define one another. To not identify and embrace the other-as-self is to deny the diverse, both connective and discontinuous, experiences that have helped shape who one is. The consequences of this denial may take many forms: alienation, projection, psychosomatic symptoms, disembodiment. One may come to feel disconnected from the self or others; unaware of what one is doing or feeling; unaccepting of responsibility for what one does. The defense mechanisms of denial and dissociation, moreover, are used by abusers and witnesses of abuse as well as by survivors. This helps explain how ordinarily decent people can also come to

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torture and abuse others, and how people can witness atrocities and still deny that such abuse exists (Kristof, 1997, pp. A1, 8).[5]

Judith Herman argues in her study of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among war veterans and sexual abuse survivors that:

> The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the work *unspeakable*... Atrocities, however, refuse to be buried. Equally as powerful as the desire to deny atrocities is the conviction that denial does not work... Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims. (1992b, p. 1)

In order to gain a greater understanding of the impact and reproduction of violence, we need to examine the interactions between psychological and biological processes, and cultural and social factors. We need to ask under what conditions and through what means victims are likely to be silenced or enabled to speak; to forget, recall, or retrieve memories; to panic, become numb, or resist; to dissociate or integrate experience; to identify with or challenge the perpetrator? How do various kinds of social support affect the experiences of survivors and their responses to violence and resistance? The execution of violence in its various forms and intensities challenges not only theoretical models but emotional responses as well. It is therefore critical that "we," as individuals and the body politic, examine our willingness to explore the sources and consequences of familial, institutional, and cultural violence—and our resistance to doing so. Where do the sources of support and challenge lie? Where does denial cover-up violence—and where are violence and denial confronted? Which stories are told, which are buried? What do "we" believe and what do "we" refuse to believe? What do we know of violence? What do we not know? And why?

"Knowing," let alone recalling, involves complex processes that are mediated by cultural, social, political, and psychological factors. Being human means having the capacity to reflect upon the past and alter the present in its light, as well as to reinterpret the past in light of the present. As Kenneth Gergen argues, the "immense repository" of our past encounters may come to be salient in different ways as we review them reflexively or come to reconceptualize them (1982, p. 18).

Jerome Bruner further argues in *Acts of Meaning* that "experience in and memory of the social world are powerfully structured not only by

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

deeply internalized and narrativized conceptions of folk psychology but also by the historically rooted institutions that a culture elaborates to support and enforce them" (1990, p. 57). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the processes of knowing, forgetting, and remembering are as complex as human beings, who have to continually negotiate their social worlds, and their understanding of what is true in the present as well as in the past. These are philosophical, political, and sociological issues as well as psychological ones. It is clear that one's position of power in society (marked by "race," class, gender, age, sexual orientation, etc.) influences whether one is seen as credible and authoritative (van der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth, 1996; Herman, 1992a; 1992b; Terr, 1994). It is no coincidence that formal resistance to memory recovery comes not with survivors of car accidents, stroke victims, or even war veterans but with survivors of childhood sexual abuse.[6]

As Milan Kundera writes in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, "Man's struggle against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting." The resistance to acknowledging and then acting upon the reality and pervasiveness of child sexual abuse in the United States is well documented. It is difficult to deal with the number of children who are taken to emergency rooms and who die each year as a result of abuse. But denying that that reality exists does not alleviate the suffering of those children or prevent the reproduction of violence. Neither does denying the experience of adult survivors of child abuse. In order to understand the degree of violence in the United States today, we need to examine the process and function of denial—at individual, institutional, and cultural levels. As Herman reminds us, while atrocities may be repressed, they are not forgotten (1992b, p. 7).

The contrast in consequences for those who are enabled to tell their stories and for those who are silenced is revealing, as psychologist Lenore Terr shows in her work on childhood trauma. In a systematic, longitudinal research study of children who had experienced a range of traumatic incidents (from kidnapping to car accidents to sexual abuse), Terr found that the psychological and social adjustment of traumatized children depended less on the severity or duration of the trauma and more on whether or not the child was able to speak of the trauma, and if so, how people responded (1990; 1994). Were they able to listen and to act as witnesses in support of the child without blaming or silencing the child?

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

For those whose speaking meets with denial or derision, the original betrayal is reinforced and the secondary trauma becomes retraumatizing. Pat, for example, says that for a long time she was more angry at her mother for not protecting her than at her father who sexually abused her.[7] At the same time, she recognizes that her mother's continual denial and inability to deal with the incest is rooted in her own abuse history:

> That's how she survived her abuse… My mother is very honest about her denial. She does not want to know. When I told her, she said it didn't surprise her at all… But she also said, "I don't want to know anything bad about him." And then she gave me the, "Oh, you're doing so wonderfully"… She can't handle anything that's negative.

Pat clearly articulates the patterns of denial that enable the perpetuation of abuse:

> What I would say to the public is that I strongly believe you are the problem. The perpetrators are given permission. It's the people like my mother who had to turn their back—and I say that to myself too, because that's how I survived, turning my back on people… Like being at work where people would make abusive comments or make fun of people sexually, I just couldn't deal with it. And it's only going to change if we've got the guts to turn and look at ourselves and ask "Why? Why are we so afraid to face it?"

There are many reasons why denial is an easier, if less effective, mechanism than acknowledging and dealing with an abusive relationship, especially when it occurs within the context of the family. It is hard to listen to stories of abuse for they threaten our identity as human beings; they challenge our notions of family and our sense of ourselves as belonging to a civilized society. And the strongest resistance, as Alice Miller argues, stems from self-defensiveness, for listening to such stories may unearth the listener's own repressed experiences of pain (1981; 1990).

Being hard to believe, we conveniently find ways out, ways to bury and conceal that which is not supposed to be. While earlier studies and writings reveal the periodic awareness of the existence and consequences of domestic violence and political torture, and of the coping strategies of victims and witnesses, the opening through which recognition can turn to action is quickly sealed off from collective investigation (Herman, 1992b; Greven, Brown, and Bohn, 1989; Gordon, 1997 ; Pleck, 1987; Miller, 1981; Rose, 1993). Silence protects both perpetrators and the notion (no matter how illusory) of a harmonious community and family; it also retraumatizes and isolates victims.

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Ultimately, recovering from trauma is not just an individual act but a collective process: it demands dialogue. While bearing witness to trauma is a process that involves the listener, many people are unable or unwilling to listen, and trauma-survivor narratives often meet with great resistance from the larger society. A backlash against speaking out occurs because it exposes the atrocities in our midst and challenges both those who abuse power and those who stand by as mute witnesses. It is "easier" to side with abusers than to serve as effective witnesses to the abused, as Herman clearly articulates:

> It is very tempting to take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement, and remembering. In order to escape accountability for his crimes, the perpetrator does everything in his power to promote forgetting. Secrecy and silence are the perpetrator's first line of defense. If secrecy fails, the perpetrator attacks the credibility of his victim. If he cannot silence her absolutely, he tries to make sure that no one listens. To this end he marshals an impressive array of arguments, from the most blatant denial to the most sophisticated and elegant rationalization. After every atrocity one can expect to hear the same predictable apologies; it never happened; the victim lies; the victim exaggerates; the victim brought it upon herself; and in any case, it is time to forget the past and move on. The more powerful the perpetrator, the greater is his prerogative to name and define reality, and the more completely his arguments prevail. (1992b, pp. 7–8)

The organized resistance to survivors speaking out is both predictable and revealing. The False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF), organized by the parents of Jennifer Freyd, a psychology professor at the University of Oregon, is a prime example. Freyd's parents organized FMSF a couple of months after Jennifer entered therapy. Although she had not spoken to the public or her parents about her childhood abuse, they went on the offensive by organizing the FMSF, whose major aim is to repudiate claims of recovered memories. After Jennifer declined their invitation to serve on the board of directors, her parents pressed the attack by sending unsolicited materials that questioned their daughter's integrity and character to her colleagues while she was undergoing her tenure review. The invasion of privacy and violation of boundaries in these contemporary and public actions

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

reveal, in and of themselves, the problematic nature of her parents' relationship with her.

Interestingly, Prof. J. Freyd's research focuses on the epistemology of knowing. Her book, *Betrayal Trauma: The Logic of Forgetting Childhood Abuse* (1996), draws upon current psychological and neurophysiological research to posit a theory of betrayal trauma, which explicates why it makes sense for children who have been abused by family members to forget that abuse. As Bickerton points out in his review of *Betrayal Trauma*, "Freyd marshals the psychological, neurological, and cognitive-science literature with impressive skill" (1997) to suggest that when pain comes from betrayal by someone very close to a child, and the abuser (and everyone else) acts as though nothing is amiss, the child—who is dependent upon those adults—will find ways to minimize, deny, or forget the abuse in order to survive. This is especially true in a culture that tends to believe and support adults, while questioning the credibility and experience of children (Ceci and Bruck, 1995).

Given the social forces that act to preserve patriarchal and parental power, and protect adult perpetrators, it is no surprise that many survivors of sexual abuse have found it nearly impossible to speak of their abuse. Social, institutional, and cultural forces have often colluded to silence such stories, which threaten the ideal of family harmony and community order. To reveal the range and depth of perversion and abuse is to threaten that very order. The irony, of course, is that to not reveal it is to ensure the reproduction of violence and distortion, and thus ultimately the collapse of the very systems people are trying to protect.

In attempting to speak out, survivors must not only tell their story of abuse but counter the abuser's version, which is typically normalized by dominant cultural narratives about victimhood, the family, and relationships between parents and children. The survivor of childhood sexual abuse has to break through the traditional story line that places blame and responsibility on the victim and calls (in the Fourth Commandment) for children to obey their parents without a reciprocal emphasis on the responsibility of parents to children (see Rose, 1993; Greven, Brown, and Bohn, 1989; Poling, 1991; Jay, 1992).

The challenge for survivors of childhood sexual abuse is to create a new language by means of which they can speak of abuse and of parents who violate their responsibility to children. In challenging the old story, survivors are seeking a new positionality vis-a-vis the dominant discourse. They are creating alternative narratives that enable them to speak

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

of childhood sexual abuse and to resituate blame and responsibility, to give the shame back to those who abused them rather than accepting it as their own fate. In radically challenging the "official story" that upholds the status quo, these new stories do not come without struggle (Rose, 1993) But as African–American poet and activist Audre Lorde asks, "Would I have been any less afraid had I not spoken?"

In the act of violence, the perpetrator controls the story he enacts. This is seen in such expressions as, "she asked for it"; "that'll teach her a lesson"; "she made me do it, it was her fault"; "spare the rod, spoil the child." Within the context of this traditional and patriarchal narrative, the targeted person becomes a victim because she is deserving. "Our sense of the normative is nourished in narrative, but so," argues Bruner, "is our sense of breach and exception. Stories make 'reality' a mitigated reality" (1990, p. 97). Trauma narratives (whether they recount experiences with sexual abuse, lynching, or political torture) reveal the unjustified violence done to people, and hold abusers rather than victims accountable. They expose the illegitimate use of force, power, and authority and in so doing, de-authorize the credibility and legitimacy of abusers.

By naming and claiming the experience of abuse and survival as their own story, survivors reconstruct the story of abuse rather than accepting it as the shameful bequest of parental violation. The survivor narrative names the violation as an act of cruelty, control, or hubris, not as justified punishment visited upon a recalcitrant inferior or "sidekick." This act of naming and narrating seizes the story from the violator and gives witness to the struggle of the survivor and to her multidimensional self. The survivor is no longer objectified, her identity no longer relegated to a unidimensional victimized or stigmatized status; rather she may emerge from the fire as a strong, resourceful, and diversified self.

Although silence may serve as a refuge, it is also a place of bondage. In speaking out, the victim-survivor finds her own voice through which she can tell her story. Instead of living with the split, polarized identities of the good-bad selves projected onto her by the abuser, she can come to appreciate and experiment with both the resistance and the accommodation that was part of her survival strategy. Taking the story away from the abuser and redefining the experience and oneself in relation to it are acts of self-determination. As a consequence, resourcefulness and responsibility rather than reaction can come to characterize relationships and life choices. Volition, rather than violation, then becomes the driving force and opens up the possibilities for healing.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Notes

1 However, for those whose abuse begins early and is chronic, trauma may be the consistent and continuing reality.

2 The response to new challenges can be arousing and energizing, and at optimal levels can facilitate learning, problem solving, and a sense of competence. But trauma, in contrast to interesting challenges, can overtax the mechanisms for responding to new or dangerous situations. Systems regulating arousal may become hypersensitive, too easily switched on, or too difficult to moderate or turn off. See E. Waites (1993, chapter 1).

3 Inescapable shock tends to produce lasting and deleterious psychobiological changes (van der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth, 1996, p. 311).

4 The adventure can draw us into an exciting exchange with worlds beyond our ordinary experience. But these times of adventure need to be complemented by periods of reflection. If the adventure is not to become just a frenetic run from self as ordinarily perceived and experienced, then periods of quiet reflection and integration need to follow. If we do not move inward, and contemplate that which we have experienced, then we are forever on the run. Or if the process of reflection is too interrupted, we—and our experiences with adventure (or trauma)—become fragmented, splintered, dis-membered.

5 For example, N. Kristof (1997, pp. A1, 8) focuses on the stories of Second World War Japanese veterans who, more than 50 years later, are still haunted by the memories of crimes they committed against other men, women, and children during the war.

6 For current brain and memory research exploring the ways in which experience is recorded and how the processing and storage of traumatic memories may be quite different to the processing of more ordinary experiences, see the work of Bessel van der Kolk, particularly van der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth (1996). As we gain better data about the interactions between bio-chemical, neurological processes, and trauma, we will be able to better assess the processing, storage, and retrieval of a range of events along the spectrum from ordinary to traumatic. See Herman (1992b and 1996) for a review of studies that indicate that traumatic memories from childhood have been retrieved after a period of dense amnesia and later confirmed beyond a reasonable doubt. See also Terr (1994).

7 This is a common response of incest survivors who feel betrayed by and often more angry at their mothers who failed to protect them than at their abusers. This holds true, conversely, for fathers who stood by while their wives abused their children. One explanation is that the ineffective witness who did not protect the victim is a less-threatening object of anger.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Part III

Gender In/Equality: Reaching toward Ending Gender Violence

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

6

Abuse Is Not Traditional: Culture and Colonization

Abstract: *This chapter provides a comparative (historical and cross-cultural) analysis of societies that experience very little gender violence and those that are violence-prone. It focuses on case studies of Maori and Native American peoples, both of whom now have the highest rates of family and sexual violence within their respective societies even though abuse was not common prior to colonization. The ways in which socio-economic inequality leads to increased violence against women and children and how the dynamics of family violence parallel those of colonization (power, control, and patronage) are discussed. This chapter examines Native American shirts and interviews that speak to the impact of intergenerational trauma. The chapter ends with a discussion of decolonizing methods and the ways in which Maori and Native Americans are re-claiming culture as a resource rather than an excuse in challenging gender violence within their communities.*

Keywords: abuse is not traditional; inequality and gender violence; intergenerational trauma; Maori; Native Americans; violence and colonization; violence and indigenous societies

Rose, Susan D. *Challenging Global Gender Violence: The Global Clothesline Project*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> If it happens to you for racial reasons, it's a human rights violation.
> If it happens to you for political reasons, it's a human rights violation.
> If it happens to a woman, it's cultural.
>
> U.S. Senator Pat Schroeder

The most common form of violence against women is intimate partner violence (IPV), enacted at the interpersonal level but supported by macro, patriarchal systems of male power, entitlement, and authority. Sexual violence too is (usually) the act of an individual man against an individual woman, but it is important to place such acts in the context of prevailing societal values, beliefs, and norms. A sense of male entitlement to expect and exact respect from women, regardless of their behavior, typically characterizes such human rights abuses against women and children (O'Toole, Schiffman, and Edward, 2007; Kimmell, 2008; 2000; Connell, 2005).

Both within and across societies, *culture* has often been used as a rationale for not challenging the abuse of women and children. When violence is used against other groups of people based on ethnic, racial, or religious grounds, it is called racism; in the case of systematic killings, genocide. When it comes to systemic violence against women and children, it is often considered cultural or "traditional." But as Michael Singer (2001) argues, it is critical to ask who gets to define "culture" on behalf of the group. Who holds the power and authority to dictate the contours and confines of culture and for whom? In the context of patriarchal societies, one-half of the population (men) holds the power to define the parameters of the social order and what constitutes culture and religious tradition. It is worth examining, historically and contemporaneously, how and why analyses may differ when the violence is enacted on a subordinated group of people based on race, ethnicity, nationality, or gender.

It is also important to recognize that neither patriarchy nor violence against women and children is "traditional" if one considers the societies in which the vast majority of human history has been lived (Harris, 1991). In the vast majority of gathering and hunting societies that have been studied, neither patriarchy nor private property had yet emerged. Women's and men's roles were relatively equally valued, and abuse of

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

women and children was uncommon. As Kathleen Gough (1971) has argued:

> Hunting and gathering societies have less control over women and their sexuality—to deny it or force it upon them or rob them of their children; to confine them physically or prevent their movement (through the veil, foot-binding, corsets); to use them as sexual property; or to isolate them from sources of travel and activity. Especially lacking is male possessiveness, savage punishment for female adultery, the jealous guarding of female chastity and virginity, and the denial of divorce to women.

As modes of production shifted from gathering and hunting to pastoral and horticultural to agricultural and industrial societies, so did social organization and gender roles, statuses, and relations. As women's status relative to men's declined, violence against women increased (Gough, 1971; Friedl, 1978; Collins, 1971).

Neither "culture" nor "religion" is inherently patriarchal. Tendencies toward both gender egalitarianism and inequality can be found within and across religious traditions and cultures. David Levinson's study (1989) of violence in 90 societies around the world reveals that wife beating occurs more often in societies in which men have economic and decision-making power in the household, where women do not have easy access to divorce, and where adults routinely resort to violence to resolve their conflicts. In areas of the world where family violence was low or nearly absent, cultural norms included monogamous marriage practices, equal access between men and women to economic resources, the ability for both men and women to initiate a divorce, and the availability of non-parental child caregivers (Levinson, 1989). Drawing upon a vast review of the literature, Robertson and Oulton (2008) argue that such factors are "manifested by distinct and hierarchical gender roles, notions of male sexual entitlement, the low social value and power of women, and ideas of manhood linked to the control or 'disciplining' of women. These in turn are linked to factors such as low levels of education among women; few public roles for women; the lack of family, social and legal support for women; and the lack of economic power for women" (see also Jewkes, Sen, and Garcia-Moreno, 2002).

Patriarchal norms engender and reflect gender inequality and inequities at a societal level, and legitimize intimate partner violence and sexual violence perpetrated by men at the micro or interpersonal level (Russo and Pirlott, 2006). Such gender inequality decreases the resources

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

available to women, including resistance to unwanted sex and violence, and increases the acceptance of the use of violence against women. Furthermore, it contributes to gender-based inequities in health and access to health care; in opportunities for employment and promotion; in levels of income; in political participation and representation; and in education. Thus, "macro-level interventions that increase structural supports and resources that decrease gender inequality—as well as interventions to reduce gender inequality at the community and individual levels—may serve to decrease intimate partner violence and sexual violence" (Smith Fawzia et al., 2005, p. 680).

While patriarchal culture did not always exist, it came to be seen as normal and natural (Lerner, 1987) and legitimized discrimination and violence against women "for their own good" (Ehrenreich and English, 2005). Increasingly, however, scholars and activists are beginning to mobilize the concept of culture as a resource in the struggle against gender violence (Adelman, Haldane, and Wies, 2012; UNSRVAW, 2009). Among Maori iwi and Native American tribes, where women's economic contributions and work were valued commensurate with men's, violence against women was not common (Smith, 2008; 2005; Cram et al., 2002). An increase in violence against women came with colonization (Smith, 2008; 2005; Robertson and Oulton, 2008; Rothenberg, 1980). Targeting the relatively high status of many indigenous women as problematic, colonizers imposed notions of gender roles based on patriarchy and individualism, which led to the devaluation of the position women held in Maori iwi (Balzer et al., 1997) and in Native American tribes (Rothenberg, 1980; Smith, 2005).

Today, both Native Americans and Maori have the highest rates of sexual and domestic violence in their respective countries. Native American and Alaska Native women are more than 2.5 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than other women in the U.S. (Amnesty, 2009; Special Rapporteur, 2011; see also Smith, 2005; Bhungalia, 2001; Deer, 2010). Sexual violence and sexual trafficking of Native American women has a long history, dating back to settlers and soldiers raping women not just as a "random or individual act but as a tool of conquest and colonization" (Amnesty, 2009; Smith, 2005; Deer, 2010). Viewed by colonizers as "dirty…sexually violable and rapable" (Smith, 2005, pp. 10–12), indigenous women's bodies became objects to be conquered, just like the land (see also Mikaere, 1995; Salmond, 1992). As the 2009 Amnesty International report notes, 'The underlying attitudes towards

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Indigenous peoples that supported these human rights violations committed against them continue to be present" in the contemporary United States, and "they contribute to the present high rates of sexual violence perpetrated against Indigenous women and help to shield their attackers from justice" (p. 1). According to statistics of the Department of Justice, one in three Native American women will be raped at some point in their life and three in five will be physically assaulted (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000). The 2011 UN Special Rappoteur's report on violence against women in the U.S. indicated that nationwide between 60 and 80 percent of violent victimizations of Native American women are perpetrated by non-Natives. The report concludes that:

> The causes and consequences of this violence are reflected in the socio-economic realities faced by Native American communities, coupled with the historical discrimination they have experienced. This has led to adverse consequences such as increasing levels of substance abuse, violence, chronic health issues and, in some communities, rising suicide rates.

Maori also are substantially over-represented as both victims and perpetrators of violence in families/whanau (the extended family). Maori women have a lifetime prevalence of IPV (49 percent) twice that for New Zealand European (24 percent) or Pacific women (23 percent); 28 percent of Maori women compared to 10 percent of non-Maori women with current partners reported experiencing at least one act of physical violence or sexual abuse in the previous 12 months of the 1996 Women's Safety Survey (Lievore and Mayhew, 2007, p. 55). Seven times more Maori women and four times more Maori children are hospitalized from an assault compared to Pakeha women and children (Pakeha refers to New Zealanders of European descent; Reporting n.d.). Maori women and children are also disproportionately represented as clients in women's refuges (Cram et al., 2002, p. 1). There is also great concern about the level of violence against children: half of all children killed by caregivers are Maori (Reporting, n.d.). A constellation of conditions contribute to these and other measures of health and quality of life: Maori are the most likely to die early; be unemployed, imprisoned, and/or homeless; suffer mental illness; and collect a welfare benefit (except for the old-age pension, which no one lives long enough to collect) (Fiona Cram and Suzanne Pitama, cited in Te Puni Kokiri, 2010, p. 10).

These statistics are not a reflection on indigenous cultures per se but on the conditions of poverty, cultural disruption and disintegration, lack of access to land, employment, a living wage, quality education, and

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

affordable housing. As Ferraro argues, "The disproportionate representation of African American and American Indian women among victims of intimate partner violence must be understood within the context of the histories of slavery, colonization, genocide and racism, contemporary structural disadvantages and the complicated entanglements of each woman's life" (2008, p. 207). An extensive literature supports the assertion that colonization has played a major role in the perpetration of sexual violence in indigenous communities by undermining traditional values and practices protective against sexual violence, by the colonizers' construction of indigenous women as dirty and impure, and by the sexual harassment and rape by White men of Indigenous women who in many cases provided them and their families with domestic services (Robertson and Oulton, 2008; Smith, 2005; Dabby and Poore, 2007; Hill Collins, 2000; Goldsmith et al., 2005). While one cannot assess how these cultures would have adapted had there been no colonization, it is clear that with colonization came the introduction of new diseases, alcoholism, and violence in its many forms—increased warfare, killings, suicide, and family and sexual violence that had not been common previously.

Engaging in a process of de-colonization, many colonized peoples are examining what has been stripped away and what may be useful to reclaim as the best of their culture's traditions. Maori organizations and scholars are emphasizing the traditional obligation and power of the *whanau* to protect all its members—women, children, and men—from harm (Te Puni Kokiri, 2010).

Re-claiming and re-visioning traditional culture to fight against gender violence

New Zealand and the United States are both highly developed countries with relatively high levels of sexual and intimate partner violence. Both have significant indigenous populations that were characterized by low levels of gender violence prior to colonization while today they suffer the greatest degree of gender violence in their respective countries. The following case studies examine the ways in which both Maori and Native American domestic violence activists and agencies are reclaiming traditional cultural beliefs and values in the struggle against gender violence.

All too often, critiques of gender violence from developed countries focus on what is happening in less developed, "traditional" societies *over*

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

there rather than examining similar social pathologies close to home. Patriarchal practices are often conflated with "traditional" cultures. The cultural relativist defense of practices that disadvantage or harm women often relies on an argument that they are "traditional" to a particular culture, which one should not criticize or attempt to change. Today, however, many colonized peoples, activists, scholars, and service providers are taking a longer historical view with regards to what was traditional and reclaiming cultural values and beliefs that are more gender egalitarian—and less violent. The recognition and re-claiming of these alternative cultural views are important not only for Maori and Native Americans but for everyone wanting to develop more humane relationships and healthy families and communities.

Culturally sensitive approaches: Maori of New Zealand

Today both scholars (Milroy, 1996; Te Puni Kokiri, 2010) and service providers are emphasizing the importance of reclaiming more traditional and collective responses to acts of sexual and domestic violence within Maori communities and against Maori women and children. The Amokura Report suggests the ways in which traditional concepts and practices can inform the contemporary struggle against family and gender violence:

> Drawing on the wisdom of our tupuna and traditions is not to return us to a mythic past or golden age—our people have always adapted to new circumstances and experimented with new technology. Rather it is to understand and be guided by the symbols, values and principles that can enhance our capacity to live together peacefully as whanau and communities. Our capacity for resilience as an indigenous people is fed and nourished by our language, traditional practices and oral traditions. (Cited in Te Puni Kokiri, 2010, p. 21)

This is further asserted and used by those working in the field of family violence.

> Dr Bruce Perry argues that "traditional ways are permeated with empirically derived wisdom" and advocates adherence to the practices of indigenous peoples for the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and raising of children. He advocates for community and collective approaches to community building to ensure that family, child rearing and relationships do not become the exclusive domains of experts and specialist programmes. (Cited in Te Puni Kokiri, 2010, p. 21)

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

In the past couple of decades, scholars, service providers, activists, and government agencies in both New Zealand and the United States, as well as in other countries, have paid more attention to exploring culturally specific approaches to counseling and legal remedies. Increasingly agencies are realizing, as Milroy notes, that "legal responses to domestic violence which may be valid and beneficial for *Pakeha* (white) women may be inappropriate, ineffective or worse for Maori women" (1996, p. 59). Many have questioned the relevance of the NZ Domestic Violence Act (1995), "based on Western concepts of family, to the more complex *whanau* and *hapu* structures, and traditional constructions of, and responses to, violence practiced by Maori and Pacific peoples" (Te Puni Kokiri, 2010, p. 39). Kruger et al. (2004) warn that "if whanau violence interventions continue to be delivered from a *Pakeha* conceptual and practice framework that isolates, criminalizes and pathologizes Maori individuals, nothing will change" (Tü Tama Wahine staff member interview, cited by Kruger et al., 2004, p. 4).

The need to strengthen *whanau*, as an alternative to "individual or couple-based approach to intervening in family violence" (Grennell and Cram, 2008, p. 1), underpins the Amokura Family Violence Prevention Strategy in Tai Tokerau, Northland. Designed to achieve positive outcomes by focusing on *whanauoranga* (family well-being), rather than family violence *per se* (p. 5), Amokura is a collective response to family violence overseen by a consortium of seven iwi (tribe) authorities. The strategy received international recognition in 2009 for its innovative approach to addressing domestic violence and was awarded the Annual Human Rights Prize from the Leitner Centre, New York.

Such an approach reflects an historical understanding that can be effectively employed today. Research undertaken by Balzer et al. (1997) for Te Puni Kokiri reinforces the notion that the response to family violence for Maori was a collective one. Mason Durie in his book *Mauri Ora* (2001), argues a similar point:

> there is no historical support for claims that traditional Maori society tolerated violence and abuse towards children and women, or that some members of the group were of lesser value than others. An unsafe household demands a whanau response and, as an immediate priority, an assurance that safety can be provided—elsewhere if not at home. Then, safety guaranteed, the way is clear to embark on a journey which will relieve hurt, restore healthy relationships, and, in the process, strengthen personal and group identities.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Tü Tama Wahine, a program facilitator involved with another Maori-oriented program, commented:

> In all those early written reports the women and children were fearless; I've read them. The only way you get fearless women and children is by raising them in a culture where women and children are loved and respected. That's the only way. You do not get fearless women and children through raising them in a violent manner and that's the evidence. That has to be put across in any programme. Otherwise how can they face the truth about what's happened, they'll never face it. That there are historical things that need to be undone, need to be corrected. (Quoted in Cram et al., 2002, p. 20)

As a counseling agency, Tü Tama Wahine sees the need to provide services from a Maori perspective that focuses not only on inequality between men and women, which is the core of the mainstream family violence programs, but also on the continuing history of inequality between Maori and Pakeha and the need for de-colonization (Cram et al., 2002, p. 40).

The focus on de-colonization gives a framework for understanding the conditions that led to the reproduction of intergenerational violence but it is not and should not be used as an excuse (Ruahine Albert, 2011, pers. comm., 6 June). This is echoed by another service provider who described a men's program that uses Maori culture and history as a guideline:

> Men are greeted with *powhiri* (a Maori welcome ceremony). The groups discuss the Treaty of Waitangi and on the board is written "male by birth, man by choice." 486 Men are told to think about this challenge and work to understand a family relationship. Sessions include equality, parenting, and child care. 487 Often, men don't acknowledge committing violence in the present, but blame it on the past-they externalize the blame, and often blame colonization. In such instances, they are told, "white men came and colonized, but they didn't pick up your hand and make you smash your missus." (Cited in Contesse and Fenrich, 2008, p. 97)

According to Ruahine Albert, director of Te Whakaruruhau Maori Women's Refuge in Waikato, it's also about creating a culturally safe space so that women may be more likely to leave a situation of domestic violence (2011, pers. comm., 6 June). For Maori, this may involve respecting "cultural practices such as separating items pertaining to food and those pertaining to the body, removing shoes before entering a house, and

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

use of *karakia* (prayers)" (service provider cited in Contesse and Fenich, 2008, p. 93).

Native Americans, U.S.A.

A number of Native American associations have organized efforts to more effectively respond to Native American women's concerns and needs related to intimate partner and sexual violence. One of the earliest and best developed is "Mending the Sacred Hoop" (MHS), which grew out of a Native women's advocacy and support group for survivors of domestic violence in Duluth, Minnesota, in the 1980s. They explicitly argue that "progressing in the work to end violence against Indian women must begin with the development of relevant responses that work at reclaiming pre-contact values, values that restore harmony and balance to Native communities shaken by a history of oppression" (Mending, n.d.). An important part of their advocacy work is to reclaim traditional values of respect and cooperation: "We must work to restore the balance and harmony to our tribal communities . . . This is accomplished through remembering who we are, where we come from, and working to create social change" (Oden, 2003, p. 72; Mending, n.d.; Wolk, 1982).

In a similar vein, the Sacred Circle National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women's Informational Handbook reframes domestic violence issues and dynamics within the context of Native people's experience of colonization and a history of oppression. It argues that gender violence increased when Native people moved away from the cultural traditions in which women and men were valued and respected equally (Violence, n.d.).

Both of these organizations and an abundance of scholarship emphasize that Native people held women as sacred. In many Native societies, women were honored and respected for their life-giving powers; their ability to create life likened them to Mother Earth. "While the legends of creation differ from tribe to tribe, most equate the power of woman with that of the Earth Mother. Their communities respected and honored them. Acts of violence, such as rape were uncommon, and when they did occur, they evoked fear and horror because Native respect for women arose from the belief that women had power over life and death. By many accounts, domestic violence was rare in indigenous societies prior to European contact and only became common after the onset of

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

colonization" (Wolk, 1982; Mending, n.d.; Allen, 1992; 1985). In various tribes this honor and respect was evident in the way in which Native women were active and influential in political, religious, and economic spheres (Wolk, 1982).

The work in Native men's groups also emphasizes the importance of respecting and honoring women and men in ways that "restore natural ways of living" (Violence, n.d.). The authors of the "Mending the Sacred Hoop Tribal Men's Program" intend the guide to be a "resource tool for Native communities wishing to design a program built upon tribal values, perspective, and life ways that helps men understand and address their use of violence against an intimate partner . . . In order to create social change in and for our communities, we have to reclaim our own indigenous teachings on culture and values" (Returning Men, n.d., p. 4).

> It is evident that the Western belief system does not work. Not for the white man and not for the Indian man. It is not natural to beat up your wife, to abuse your children, to destroy your family. As an Indian man, these actions are even more unnatural, and this brings more shame and guilt. If we really live by our ways as Indian men, our role is to protect, provide and serve our women and children. And if you really believe that in your head and your body and your soul, then there is no way, shape or form that you could ever hurt a woman—verbally, psychologically, or sexually. (Oden, 2003, p. 84)

Chase, a Pomo man and domestic violence advocate who participated in the Clothesline workshop with the Inter-Tribal Council of California, made a shirt for his wife (Cherokee and Sioux), who was abused as a child. He now works with men who batter to restore their sense of dignity and the "traditional" sense of manliness that honors and respects women:

> What it comes down to again is the traditional teachings, traditional values that were found originally in our communities—this is how you conduct yourself. There's the understanding that was taught early on, that you have respect for every living being . . . We see a woman as sacred . . . We come from a woman, we all come from the mother earth that gives life. That is the focus. That is the teaching . . . that women are sacred because they are givers of life. We're trying to reinstill that in our young men. Because that has been lost. I think that through time, a lot of men lost their identity and lost their sense of knowing what their roles are . . . in that whole assimilation process. I know for our organization we're doing that. We're implementing those traditional teachings. Going back to basics. As far as, you know, we

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> need to honor our women, but we need to honor ourselves, too. Men, need to, even as perpetrators, because they are a victim too. They need to realize that they are capable of unlearning, you know, what is negative about being controlling, about having to feel like they need to dominate the women that they have relationships with.
>
> So, there is changing that mind set and then re-learning the old ways. We're all vulnerable human beings. And, I encourage men, I say that it's ok to be vulnerable. Traditionally, that was a strength. It was OK. We were taught that way, traditionally. Being vulnerable is a strength in our native beliefs. Because then we can realize how much we need one another and how much we need to practice the one thing that is so important—to ask for help and ask grandfather creator how do I communicate, how do I walk in a good way…It's the fear that I don't know what to do or I think I can't do it. I'm afraid of failing. Not many men can say that. So, we're doing a lot of work around that area; they need again to honor themselves. (Chase, 2011, pers. comm., May 18)

The parallels between the de-colonizing work being done by Maori in New Zealand and Native Americans in the U.S. are striking. Both are clear about the damage done to their people and the need to reclaim many of their traditional values and practices in order to restore health to their communities.

> As Native people, we "walk in two worlds" carrying our customs, traditions, and culture on the Native side as well as the values, beliefs, and structures introduced through colonization. Our Native teachings guide us to live harmoniously with each other and the Earth; those ways of life were disrupted with the creation of reservations, forced assimilation, and numerous attempts to eradicate Indigenous people to exploit Earth's natural resources. Indeed, our communities look and function quite differently compared to 500 years ago. Prior to European contact, elders were revered, children were cherished, men were expected to earn their status, and women were honored. Violence against Native women, which began as a tactic of colonization, continues today as its by-product: women are exploited just as the Earth is exploited; the roles of men and women have been altered. The work of confronting, addressing, and ending violence against Indian women means that we must confront, address, and change our beliefs about what it means to be a Native man and what it means to be a Native woman. (Returning Men, n.d., p. 5)

The Tribal Men's Program/Batterer Intervention Workbook clearly articulates the links between colonization and IPV and analyzes the processes used by both colonizers and batterers to dominate those they want

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

to control. "Colonization was a methodical, reoccurring, and systematic process to establish dominance (power and control) over the land and people. Battering is a methodical, reoccurring, and systematic process to establish dominance (power and control) over an intimate partner" (Returning Men, n.d., p. 5). The workbook attributes the high rates of violence perpetrated on Native women to the history of colonization that disrupted tribal structures, family structure, language, beliefs, values, and traditions, replacing them with the colonizers' patriarchal culture and practices. "Violence against women is supported by a belief system that denies the humanity of women; the tactics used by men who batter are in many ways the tactics of colonization and the effects of colonization are being borne by the bodies and spirits of our women" (Retuning Men, n.d., p. 5).

These sentiments were echoed throughout the domestic violence workshop organized by the Inter-Tribal Council of California and subsequent interviews conducted with domestic violence social workers who participated. One woman explained:

> We are experiencing intergenerational trauma. We are responsible for 7 generations ahead of us; and what happened to the 7 generations behind us still affects us today. I had to send my son away just like my parents had to send me away. I was adopted because my biological parents were alcoholics and abusive. And I became an alcoholic and drug addict—I wasn't a nice person when I drank and I chose bad partners—they were violent and I was used to being a victim. I tried AA and NA but something was missing. When I became involved with White Bison, which is a 12-step program for Native Americans, I learned about the sacred hoop—I knew my sacred hoop was broken. So that's my shirt: mending the broken hoop. I'm still working on it. But that's when I began healing. Now I am able to help other women—I had to go back to our traditions. (Rena, 2011, pers. comm., May 18)

> Many of us have been unable to love our children in the ways we wanted to because our parents could not love us. They were torn away from their families and sent to boarding schools, stripped of their culture, and love, and affection. Many were abused—and they came home broken. (Margo, 2011, pers. comm., May 18)

Both the White Bison Wellbreity program, "a grass-roots movement that provides culturally-based healing to the next seven generations" and the Mending the Sacred Hoop program believe many of the problems affecting both rural and urban tribal communities today are

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

a direct result of several generations of Indian children being taken away from their families and suffering abuse in boarding schools that began in 1879 and continued well into the 1950s. "Many children who were taken from their homes learned lessons of self- hatred, and domestic and sexual violence, and brought these ways back into their communities. The boarding school era of Native experience created one of the most tragic chapters of loss in Native identity, and left in its wake a legacy of domestic and sexual violence, alcoholism, displacement, and suicide that continues to affect tribal communities today" (Oden, 2003, p. 37; see also Fear-Segal, 2007; Smith 2005; Rose and Saralegui, 2012).

Once Native women held relatively higher status in their communities than white women did in theirs. Wagner argues that Iroquois women influenced the early suffragette movement by providing a model of women who lived liberated lives, with rights, freedoms, and a voice in government:

> Surely these white women living under conditions of virtual slavery did not get their vision in a vacuum. Somehow they were able to see from point A where they stood corseted, ornamental, legally non-persons, to point C ... They caught a glimpse of the possibility of freedom because they knew women who lived liberated lives, women who had always possessed rights beyond their wildest imaginations, Iroquois women. (Wagner, 1996)

Today, we all—Native and non-Native—have much to learn from indigenous cultural traditions that valued and practiced gender egalitarianism in the past. For some of us, this means recognizing and re-claiming our

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

cultural traditions; for others, it means embracing new models that value women's and children's rights as human rights equal to those of men. For all of us, it means being willing to expose social pathologies within our own cultures as well as others (Gunning, 1992). To ignore or condone violence in order to protect the sanctity of the family, race, or community only reproduces more violence and ultimately destroys the very institution it was meant to preserve. Just because a practice has become characteristic of some cultures or sub-cultures (be it living up to ideals of unattainable beauty through toxic breast implants cosmetic surgery, female genital mutilation, breast ironing, or everyday enactments of power and control over another person), it does not mean it is legitimate or is immune from criticism. We need to examine both the motivations and consequences of such practices—who do they benefit and whom they hurt; who do they serve and whom do they make subservient?

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

7

Facing the Challenges: Creating and Sustaining Healthy Relationships and Societies

Abstract: *This chapter examines effective strategies (from international treaties, government legislation, media and educational campaigns to NGOs) being used in Cameroon, Iceland, New Zealand, and the United States to support victim-survivors of gender violence, raise awareness, and challenge (de-normalize) gender violence. The most common argument used to defend the practice of violence against women and children is a cultural relativist one—that such practice is a part of "the culture." This defense values the preservation of the patriarchal family over the human rights of women and children. Drawing upon the research literature on inequality and masculinity studies, the chapter explores how healthier relationships and societies can be built. The argument reinforces the importance of a positive relationship between economic and gender equality in breaking the cycle of gender violence.*

Keywords: activism against gender violence; human rights; women's rights

Rose, Susan D. *Challenging Global Gender Violence: The Global Clothesline Project*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483.

Working toward gender equality is one of the most important strategies to reduce violence against women. Providing good health care and educating girls are two of the first steps needed. In "The Tragic Reality of Violence: Facing the Facts of Violence Against Women and the Millennium Development Goals" UNIFEM cites violence against women as a major obstacle in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Articulated by the United Nations Millenium Declaration, the MDGs are eight international development goals ranging from eradicating extreme poverty and hunger to achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality rates; improving maternal health; and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. All 189 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations have agreed to achieve these goals by the year 2015. The report explicitly discusses how eight of the MDGs directly relate to violence against women across the life span, and concludes that "states should take concrete steps to secure women's human rights and promote gender equality. In order for the Millennium Development Goals to be achieved, violence against women must be addressed" (UNIFEM, n.d.). An investment in girls is not only good for women, it is also good for men. This is a win-win for everyone where respect and compassion rather than control and wealth are the measures of success in interpersonal relationships, societal health, and sustainable development (see Farmer, 2004; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009; Wilkinson, 2009). It is also economically sound (UN, 2006).

At the international level, the World Health Organization (WHO) is involved in "ongoing efforts to prevent interpersonal violence in all its forms, including child maltreatment, youth violence, intimate partner violence, sexual violence and elder abuse." Since the launch of WHO's World report on violence and health in 2002, its recommendations on violence prevention have been endorsed by the World Health Assembly, the Human Rights Commission, the African Union and the World Medical Association. These recommendations call upon governments and stakeholders at all levels of decision-making to define priorities for, and support research on, the causes, consequences, costs, and prevention of violence against women. According to Dr. Alexander Butchart, former WHO coordinator for violence prevention,

> The good news from this report on the economic dimensions of violence is that, according to the few cost-benefit studies that have been conducted, violence prevention is cost-effective . . . While it would still need to be established if the same results will be obtained in developing countries, these

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

> findings suggest that violence prevention is not only good for health and safety, but also sound economics. (WHO, 2004)

The UN report *Ending Violence Against Women* (2006) does an excellent job of laying out the issues and providing empirical data, acknowledging that while much more needs to be done, many "good" or "promising" models can be extracted from a variety of experiences around the world. Common principles include: clear policies and laws; strong enforcement mechanisms; motivated and well-trained personnel; the involvement of multiple sectors; and close collaboration with local women's groups, civil society organizations, academics and professionals (p. 101).

Greater awareness, coordination, funding, and political will are needed. It is also clear that international organizations often work at cross-purposes. While WHO and UNICEF are working to prevent and address violence, the IMF and the World Bank are squeezing developing countries with restrictive policies that create desperate conditions for many people while economically and politically benefitting the elite. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), has been adopted by the majority of countries (but still not the United States).[1] There is global cooperation in attempting to track and punish sex traffickers while U.N. peace-keeping forces have been convicted of sexual violence against the very refugees they were supposed to be protecting. Recognizing that there are significant contradictions within and across organizations, institutions, and states working to combat violence against women and children, this chapter focuses on some of the effective strategies that are working to reduce gender violence around the world. Some are international in scope, such as Vital Voices (http://www.vitalvoices.org/) and Equality Now (http://www.equalitynow.org/) are building coalitions around the world. Other initiatives are focused within nation-states, ranging from legislation to media campaigns, from NGOs and activism to academic scholarship.

The Nordic model: legislating change

The Nordic model has two main goals: curb the demand for commercial sex that fuels sex trafficking, and promote equality between men and women. And it is spreading. Three of the four countries with the highest degree of gender equality have adopted it as a way to combat sex trafficking and sexual exploitation (Equality Now, n.d.; Hausmann,

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Tyson, and Zahidi, 2012). In 1999 as part of a Violence Against Women bill, Sweden became the first country to *criminalize* the buying of sex while *decriminalizing* being in prostitution (Equality Now, n.d.). By 2012, this law had been adopted in full by Norway and Iceland, and partly in Korea, Finland, Israel, and the United Kingdom; there are also strong movements to introduce the Nordic model in Ireland, France, Denmark, and Latvia. "Sweden recognized prostitution as an institution of inequality. Most people in prostitution enter as children after being sexually abused. Lacking education and resources to survive, often destitute and homeless, they are easy prey to pimps and johns. Sexism and racism lock them in, as in the United States, where African-American women and girls are overrepresented in prostitution, as are native Canadian women in Canada" (Waltman, 2012) and women of color and ethnic minorities in Europe and Asia. But sex trafficking does not just exist because its victims are vulnerable; it exists because there is a demand for commercial sex that traffickers can exploit and profit from (Equality Now, n.d.). Attempts to eliminate prostitution, sex trafficking, and pornography, therefore, can receive serious pushback from those who profit, including organized criminal gangs. Strong and concerted leadership is needed in order to succeed but it can be done as the case of Iceland demonstrates.

Initially, Iceland followed the Dutch model and decriminalized prostitution without criminalizing the buyers. Research indicated, however, that countries that legalized the commercial sex industry such as the Netherlands witnessed increased prostitution and greater numbers of trafficked women and girls to fulfill an influx of international sex tourists as well as increased demand locally (Sex Trafficking, n.d.; Levenkron, 2007; Kristof and WuDunn, 2010, pp. 31–32). So after legalizing prostitution in 2007, Iceland passed a law in 2009 criminalizing the purchase of sex in order to better promote gender equality and fight exploitation. Iceland was the first Nordic state to ban strip clubs and lapdancing for feminist, rather than religious, reasons. Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir, the politician who first proposed the ban, told the national press: "It is not acceptable that women or people in general are a product to be sold" (Bindell, 2010). Push back by those with an interest in protecting, promoting, and profiting from pornography was intense but although he received hate mail, threats on his life, and an attack on his house which then required 24-hour surveillance (Icelandic 2012), former minister of the interior of Iceland, Ogmundur

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Jónasson, remains firm: "There was lots of resistance, of course, but I was not going to be bullied by corporate pornographers who want to make a profit from selling bodies" (2013, pers. comm., June 20). In a June 20th speech given at Wheelock College, Jónasson appears a calm but determined man who is clear about his commitment to promoting greater gender equality, protecting the human rights of women, and curbing access to pornography on the Internet: "If we can send a man to the moon, we can stop prostitution and pornography being easily accessible on the internet for children to see." The proposed legislation underway would extend Iceland's longstanding ban on printed porn to the web as well. The intent, Jónasson says, is to protect children from being exposed to sexually violent content: "What is under discussion is the welfare of our children and their rights to grow and develop in a non-violent environment; this is not being anti-sex, this is being anti-violence."

In addition to the bans, the Nordic model provides treatment and exit centers for those who want to get out of prostitution. Prostitution generally inflicts such trauma that escape is extremely difficult without social support. A study of 854 prostituted persons in nine countries found that 89 percent wanted to escape prostitution but felt they could not; two-thirds met clinical criteria for posttraumatic stress equal to that of Vietnam veterans seeking treatment and victims of torture or rape (Farley et al., 2004). In an earlier study presented at the American Psychological Association, researchers found that of the almost 500 prostitutes they interviewed from around the world, two-thirds suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In contrast, 20–30 percent of Vietnam combat veterans were diagnosed with PTSD and less than 5 percent of the general population (Zuger, 1998). A Korean study (Choi et al., 2009) found prostitution strongly related to posttraumatic stress, even controlling for prior childhood abuse.

As the UN report on *Ending Violence against Women* argues:

> Violence against women will not be eradicated without political will and commitment at the highest levels to make it a priority locally, nationally, regionally and internationally. Political will is expressed in a variety of ways, including legislation, national plans of action, adequate resource allocation, location of mechanisms to address violence against women at the highest levels, efforts to overcome impunity, visible condemnation of this violence, and sustained support by leaders and opinion makers of efforts to eradicate it. (2006, p. 21)

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Many Nordic countries are taking the lead in protecting women's and children's rights as human rights. They are taking seriously the obligation of states to "respect, protect, promote and fulfill all human rights, including the right of women to be free from discrimination" (UN 2006).

New Zealand: It's Not OK national media campaign

Culture is formed by the values, practices, and power relations that are interwoven into the daily lives of individuals and their communities. While patriarchy, a system that establishes a hierarchical ordering of gender relations and statuses that advantage men and disadvantage women, is prevalent around the world, its particular manifestations need to be examined within the context of specific historical periods and cultural contexts. Culture is not static, rather it is constantly being shaped and reshaped by processes of material and ideological change at local, national, and global levels (UN, 2006, p. 31). As seen in the case study of New Zealand's media campaign to end violence against women, both patriarchy and the historic mis-representation and discrimination of Maori are being challenged.

> If child abuse were a "Maori" problem, we would expect to see it only within Maori families. However, it occurs in communities the world over. Family violence, sexual abuse of women and children, high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, poverty and high levels of crime occur in other highly stressed communities. Aboriginal communities, Native American communities in Canada and the US, and African-American communities in the US are all grappling with these problems. At present Australia is going through the same soul-searching as New Zealand in respect of its Aboriginal people. (Di Grennell cited in Te Puni Kokiri, 2010, pp. 12–13)

While New Zealand has sound legislation on domestic violence, it remains a serious social problem (Contesse and Fenrich, 2008). According to various surveys and studies, one in three New Zealand women have been a victim of domestic violence. The governor general observed that New Zealand has "some of the best legislation in the world (the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 and the Domestic Violence Act 1995) and among the worst of performances" (Hassall and Fanslow, 2006 cited in Contesse and Fenrich, 2008, p. 37). Nearly half of all homicides and of all violent crimes in New Zealand are committed by a family member (Family, 2009). And the New Zealand Institute gave New

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Zealand a "D" rating on a report card because of its high rates of violent deaths and child abuse (Social Report, 2010; OECD, 2010).[2]

In order to reduce family and sexual violence, the New Zealand government is attempting to change attitudes and behaviors within the culture at large. Its very effective national media campaign, *It's Not OK*, started airing TV ads in 2007. The first ad (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poRjb4m8RXk) features a wide range of men and women from various ethnic and racial backgrounds, ages, and positions in society, who simply *and* adamantly say that violence against women and children "is not OK." While Maori may have the highest rates of family and sexual violence in New Zealand, they are clearly not the only ones experiencing and perpetrating it. Yet, for the past century, the dominant media and violence discourse rendered Maoris both hyper-visible and invisible.

> If we pause for a moment we can bring to mind the names and faces of women and children victims of intimate partner violence and child abuse. Are most of the faces and names you recall Maori? While it is true that Maori are disproportionately represented as both victims and perpetrators of this violence, media representation would suggest that Maori are the only victims and perpetrators. High profile tragedies are seized on by mis-informed commentators who denounce Maori leaders and make reference to the "brown" under classes. (Te Puni Kokiri, 2010)

The goal of the anti-family violence *It's Not OK* media campaign is to educate both the media and the public. The representation of people from multiple backgrounds speaking in the first person is very effective in communicating how violence happens in all sectors of society. Older and younger men, women and children speak: "It's not ok to say she was asking for it; it's not ok to be cruel to your boy just because it never did me any harm;…to control your family with threats, to bully them, or intimidate them, or *ever* think you can demand their love and respect; to make them feel worthless just because you're having a bad day…it's not OK to blame the drink, or blame your culture; it's not ok to punch a hole in the wall to teach your wife who's boss; it's not ok to make them feel scared in their own home;…it's not ok to look the other way and say it's not our problem, because it is *our* problem. And it's not ok, ever. But it is OK to ask for help."

In its evaluation of the effectiveness of the national campaign, the Ministry of Social Development found that the campaign met the media objectives of making people more aware of the problem and more likely to intervene (McLaren, 2010, p. 12). Within a few years, the question "Are you ok" has become a code phrase to ask if someone was suffering

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

from family violence. The media campaign has helped not only to raise awareness but also to create a more open space within which people can approach the subject with one another.

SHINE (Safer Homes in New Zealand Everyday) is a national family violence organization based in Auckland. In addition to running a crisis hotline, a women's shelter, and men's programs, SHINE works with child crisis teams. If a mother gets a Protection from Abuse order (PFA) for 10 days and the husband is out of the home, child advocates will go to the home to work individually with each child while a victim advocate will work with the mother. The first four consultations are free. The aim is to listen to each individual talk about what they are experiencing and witnessing. Then everyone is brought together (ideally by the third meeting) so that they can share their perspectives; the goal is also to have the children and mother talk together. "Often the children know what is going on but the mother is trying to protect them and she doesn't realize how much the violence is affecting them or it may be that the children are also targets in ways she doesn't know" (Donna, child advocate, 2011, pers. comm., January 13). "There is often so much silence and so much violence in the family, even between siblings, that we want to create a dialogue. We also want everyone to be involved in safety planning and to know what to do in case there's a violent incident" (Jill Proudfoot, services director of SHINE, 2011, pers. comm., January 13). SHINE also has coordinated with local law enforcement, fire departments, and contractors to provide free security assessments and locks for those who need them (http://www.2shine.org.nz/).

Cameroon: NGO—The Aunties' Association RENATA

The German HIV Peer Collective (GHPC) considers Cameroon's Aunties Association (RENATA) "one of sub-Saharan Africa's most promising models for empowering girls and young women to protect their sexual and reproductive health and fight gender-based violence" (Aunties, 2010). In 2001, the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), now the German International Cooperation (GIZ), launched the Aunties' Project, borrowing the name from the tradition of girls in Cameroon calling their aunts or an older women they trust by the diminutive term "Auntie" (or *Tantine* in French). "Auntie" is a sign of affection for a girl's most trusted confidante. A Cameroonian girl turns to her "Auntie" for advice: how to relate to boys and men, how to remain chaste until marriage, and for comfort.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

Before the program was launched in 2001, systematic data on sexual behaviors and pregnancy had been collected through Demographic and Health surveys by the Cameroon government (1991, 1998) and through a 2000 study by the German-Cameroon Health and AIDS Programme (GCPSS). These studies found that "girls in Cameroon had followed worldwide trends towards sex before marriage and multiple sexual partners, putting them at high risk of getting pregnant, being removed from school, forced into early marriage, harmed by unsafe abortion and acquiring sexually transmitted infections, including HIV" (Aunties, 2010). Roughly 20 percent of 38,000 surveyed women in Cameroon reported having been sexually violated, with another 14 percent reporting having survived an attempted rape. Nearly a quarter of all rapes result in pregnancy; 18 percent of rape victims contracted a STI, including HIV. Fifty-three percent of women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15 and, of those, 45 percent have experienced physical violence within the past 12 months (Aunties, 2010; RENATA, n.d.a).

In terms of gender inequality, Cameroon ranks 103rd out of 155 countries in the Gender-related Development Index, putting Cameroonian women at a distinct disadvantage compared with women in many other countries. While Cameroonian women have slightly longer life expectancy than men, they are significantly less likely to read or write or get a decent education and their estimated earned income is not much more than half that of men (UNDP, 2009). The last Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in 2004 surveyed 10,462 households throughout Cameroon. The data indicate that by 20 years of age, 29 percent of women are pregnant or have already given birth to at least one child. Half of all women are married by age 17.6 years, while half of all men wait until they are at least 25.2 years old. About 30 percent of married women say they are in polygamous unions. Fifty-nine percent of rural women and 71 percent of women from the poorest households give birth at home without the assistance of a trained professional. Ninety percent of women know about contraception but only 13 percent use modern methods.

Yet, Cameroonian women are strong and they are beginning to mobilize other women across the country to speak out against sexual violence. *Sisters-in-Law* (2005) is a powerful documentary that features the work of women prosecutors and judges who prosecute cases of adultery, rape, and sexual abuse in Kumba. And in 2005, Cameroon's local Aunties' associations formed the National Network of Aunties' Associations;

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

it became known as RENATA (n.d.). RENATA continued to conduct systematic research and have used the data to expose the practice of mutilating or "ironing" the breasts of girls (2006), the dangers of early pregnancy (2008), and the high incidence of rape and incest (2009). The Cameroonian staff not only provides counseling and services to teenage mothers, many of whom are abandoned by their families, but also educational outreach. They train the girls and women to give talks about reproductive health and sexual violence in elementary and secondary schools in both urban and rural areas; many take this information back to their villages (site visit and interview with author at RENATA in Yaoundé, 2011). According to the GTZ website, almost 90 percent of all the unwed young mothers identified and interviewed during the recruitment process follow up by taking the basic training and joining local Aunties' associations; by mid-2010, approximately 3,000 Aunties were providing sex education in schools and 4,300 were providing counseling to young people. By February 2011, RENATA had worked with some 15,000 Aunties in 250 organizations around the country (interview with author, 2011).

GIZ has recognized the achievements of RENATA, citing its monitoring and evaluation methods that produce sufficient evidence to show that it is an effective and cost-efficient way of reaching towards its objectives that call for "participatory, empowering, gender-aware, sustainable, and transferable" action. The GIZ publication concludes that "the Aunties' approach is transferable to other countries, providing a promising model for empowering young women, fighting gender-based violence and contributing to four of the eight Millennium Development Goals" (Aunties: GPHC Successful Programmes 2010 www.german-practice-collection.org/en/successful-programmes). The report notes RENATA's specific achievements as being cost efficient: "It costs from €76 to €81 to train each Auntie and the costs beyond training are low and easily sustainable since the project depends largely on volunteerism and donations in-kind." A 2006 survey of 802 trained Aunties found that 75 percent were very satisfied and 23 percent were moderately satisfied with their training. Before training, 26 percent always used condoms; after training and then attending Aunties' association meetings regularly, 47 percent always used condoms. Since training, 19 percent had returned to school and 63 percent had taken other action to improve their economic prospects, such as serving an apprenticeship, entering a business, or taking up a part-time job. In 2007—after the government promised free

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

antiretroviral therapy and after a survey found that only 56 percent of Aunties were tested for HIV before last giving birth and that many did not return for the result—the project began making a routine offer of testing to trainees during basic training workshops. In 2009, 88 percent of all trainees took up the offer and 99 percent of those returned to learn the result (Aunties, 2010).

Other organizations, such as U.S.-based *AEquitas*, are working with legal and medical professionals in Cameroon and a number of other countries to better understand sexual violence. They are working with Sexual Abuse Nurses (SANE) to recognize and document sexual abuse and rape so that such evidence may be used in court. Together with the NGO Vital Voices, they are also working on an anti-trafficking campaign in Cameroon.

The U.S.A.: the academy and activism

The majority of research on sexual and domestic violence and effective strategies for treatment have come from the United States (Robertson and Oulton, 2008), with the Duluth model of family violence dynamics (the power and control wheel) being one of the best-known and widely used models (see http://www.theduluthmodel.org). The United States however, has not ratified CEDAW, and as of 2012, still ranks #1 in the number of child homicides under the age of five; it also continues to have high rates of homicide, suicide and rape. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, a number of organizations are doing excellent work and making a difference in responding to and de-normalizing gender violence. While there is no national ad campaign, there are numerous NGOs and government organizations working to educate the public and reduce violence against women and children. In a thoughtful and thorough analysis of various data sources, David Finkelhor, director of the Crimes against Children Research Center, co-director of the Family Research Laboratory, and professor of Sociology at the University of New Hampshire, and his co-author provide a convincing argument that the incidence of child sexual abuse in the U.S. has likely declined since the 1990s; the jury is still out on the question of the decline of physical child abuse (Finkelhor and Jones, 2012). A fact sheet reporting the successes of the federal Violence Against Women Act claim that the incidence of intimate partner violence has decreased from its

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

implementation in 1994 to 2010; while it does not provide specific data, making it difficult to assess, it does outline the steps that were implemented (Factsheet VAWA, n.d.) and it concurs with the analysis made by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Men's and masculinity studies

Violence is fundamentally about power and control, and control over the actions and movement of others. Recognizing that the gendered socialization of men (be in control) and women (be pleasing) reinforces patriarchal relations and contributes to violence against women, many academics and activists have critiqued patriarchal beliefs, values, and practices that do damage to men as well as women (Connell, Gibson, Jhally, Katz, Kimmel, Messerschmidt). Research and classes in men's and masculinity studies are becoming increasingly common on college campuses. And while long ignored, gender is increasingly being recognized as a significant variable when examining patterns of violence in the research literature, and the mainstream as well as alternative media. *Voice Male: Changing Men in Changing Times* is a quarterly magazine "whose roots are deep in the male-positive, profeminist, anti-violence men's movement." Recent issues examined school shootings, mass killings and serial murders in the U.S. executed predominantly by young, white men (Voice Male, 2013). It is clear that the struggle to transform gender relations and to eliminate violence against women cannot be successful without the involvement of men.

A number of promising examples of organizations and coalitions exist in which men address the need to end violence against women. For example, Men Can Stop Rape is an organization that mentors young men and conducts training sessions on healthy masculinity for academic and community organizations. Their aim is: "To mobilize men to use their strength for creating cultures free from violence, especially men's violence against women" (http://www.mencanstoprape.org/). The founders recognized that the majority of violent acts committed against women was by men and that the majority of prevention efforts were aimed at risk-reduction strategies for women. They founded the organization in 1997 in an effort "to shift the responsibility of deterring harm away from women by promoting healthy, nonviolent masculinity" (Men Can Stop Rape, n.d.). In 2000, the organization developed the MOST mentoring club

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

for young men, which has received numerous accolades. The National Crime Prevention Council recognized it as one of the most promising "50 Strategies to Prevent Violent Domestic Crime"; Vital Voices, co-founded by former U.S. secretary of state Hillary Rodham Clinton, described it as "one of the most innovative prevention programs in the United States"; and The Ms. Foundation for Women, the DC *Catalogue for Philanthropy*, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation have all recognized its effectiveness.

Another example is the White Ribbon Campaign, which encourages men and boys to wear white ribbons on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, "as a personal pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women" (http://www.whiteribbon.ca/). The campaign has developed educational materials and action kits aimed at transforming men's attitudes; these have been distributed to schools, universities, corporations, and labor unions. Since its inception in Canada in 1991, the White Ribbon Campaign has spread to 47 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific (Ending Violence, 2006, p. 125). Other groups are raising awareness of the issue in military, trade unions, sports teams, and the police—as well as campaigns that utilize positive male role models to oppose violence against women.

A number of excellent films that address male violence against women, such as *The Invisible War, Not My Life, Tough Guise, Dream Worlds, The Price of Pleasure, Power and Control, Killing Us Softly,* and *Miss Representation, Bowling for Columbine* are screened regularly in college classes and by community groups. And books such as *Half the Sky*: *Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (Kristof and WuDunn, 2010) offer excellent models and resources for people and groups working to end violence against women—and they are inspiring young people.

Conclusion

> Violence against women is, perhaps, the most shameful human rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture, or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress toward equality, development, and peace.
>
> Kofi Annan, United Nations secretary general ("A World Free of Violence against Women," United Nations Inter-Agency Global Video Conference, March 8, 1999)

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483

The struggle continues for women's rights to be fully recognized as human rights. Violence against women is a violation of human rights, rooted in historically unequal power relations between men and women and the systemic discrimination against women that pervades both the public and private spheres. The most common rationale given for the denial of human rights to women is the preservation of family and culture. Increasingly, however, it is being recognized that greater gender equality leads to a healthier quality of life for everyone and the more democratic development of societies (Wilkinson, 1996; 2009; Farmer 2004). Data from various cross-cultural studies indicate that the greater the equality between men and women, the less the violence against women. From the macro to the micro level, international treaties, NGOs, scholars, activists, and everyday people are beginning to challenge older, static notions of tradition as well as to mobilize aspects of "traditional culture" as a resource in the struggle against gender discrimination and violence. Indigenous peoples in the U.S. and New Zealand are re-emphasizing traditional values and approaches, recognizing that abuse was not traditional within their societies. In the process of making this explicit, they are both building up men as they attempt to re-instill a sense of pride and respect for women and children. Young women and men on college campuses today are examining the slippage between the rhetoric of college mission statements and the reality of unhealthy interpersonal relationships and the implementation of policies that too often fail to protect women from sexual misconduct and violence (Adelman, Haldane, and Wies, 2012).

The 2010 WHO report on "Preventing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Against Women" concludes that gender inequality and inequity are important societal-level factors that remain significantly underresearched in terms of their associations with intimate partner violence and sexual violence. But it identifies two specific risk factors that are strongly associated with intimate partner and sexual violence—"the unequal position of women in a particular relationship and in society (which is underwritten by ideologies of male superiority); and the normative use of violence to resolve conflicts" (p. 38). Necessarily, much of the research on violence against women and children and interventions today takes an ecological approach, recognizing that work must be done simultaneously at the macro, meso, and micro levels and across the life span. There needs to be a re-examination and re-visioning of cultural

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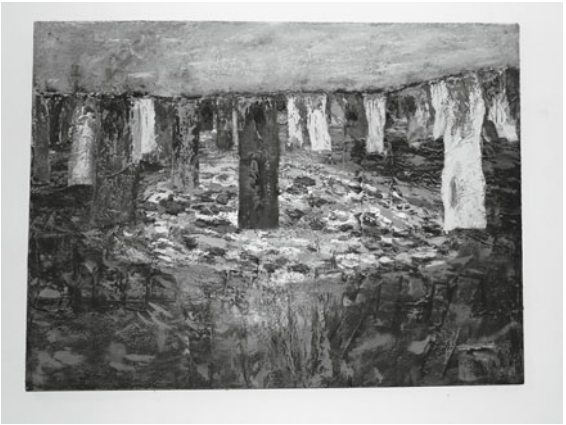
attitudes, beliefs, and values toward gender equality; of economic and political practices and policies; of institutional practices including medical, legal, educational, familial, religious, and health care systems; and interactions at the interpersonal level. Even greater coordination among international, national, regional, and local organizations needs to take place. While this is not easy, it is possible and, more importantly, critical if we are to break the cycles of violence and support human rights for children and women.

to violence.

YES to hope, healing, and joy

DOI: 10.1057/9781137388483



Respect and Peace (Painting by Max Lyonga, Buea, Cameroon)

Notes

1 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is the most comprehensive international bill of human rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The convention defines discrimination against women as "…any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." States parties also agree to take appropriate measures against all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women, and according to the UN, CEDAW "is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations" (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm). The vast majority of U.N. member nations (187 out of a total of 194 countries) has ratified CEDAW; only 7 have not. The U.S. stands out along with Pacific island nations of Tonga and Palua; Iran, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan, claiming the dubious distinction of being the only country in the western hemisphere and the only industrial democracy to not ratify it. Although supported by three U.S. presidents,

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CEDAW remains stalled in the U.S. Senate with opposition coming from conservative religious groups, such as Concerned Women of America, that believe it threatens traditional American and family values (see also Rose, 2005; 2011).

2 On May 16, 2007, the New Zealand parliament passed—by an overwhelming majority—new legislation effectively prohibiting corporal punishment of children by parents. Before the new law was introduced, the New Zealand Crimes Act (section 59) recognized the right of parents to use "reasonable force" in disciplining children. The new Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Act—in force from June 2007—removed this defense so that the criminal laws on assault apply equally to adults and to children. http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/progress/prohib_states.html#newzealand. For nation-states with full prohibition, see http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/progress/prohib_states.html (the U.S. is not one of them).

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