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Freedom Through Self-Sufficiency: A Qualitative Examination of the Impact of Domestic Violence on the Working Lives of Women in Shelter

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Using consensual qualitative research (C. Hill, B. Thompson, & E. Williams, 1997), the purpose of this study was to explore the impact of domestic violence on the working lives of women currently in shelter. Several emergent categories suggested that domestic violence has a profound effect on women's working lives, including their ability to maintain work and their ability to concentrate on the job. Contextual factors such as children, external barriers, and community resources also facilitated (or impeded) battered women's ability to obtain or maintain meaningful employment. The relationship between domains suggested a model in which physical and psychological violence act as moderating influences on a woman's vocational self-concept and actual ability to work. Implications for practitioners and researchers are discussed.

In a given year, approximately 1.5 million women experience physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Besides some of the obvious effects of domestic violence that women must overcome, they also suffer effects in their work lives. Though the intersection of domestic violence and vocational concerns is largely unaddressed by the academic community (O'Brien & Brown, 2001), a study by Browne, Salomon, and Bassuk (1999) indicated that women who are in or have recently left a physically aggressive/violent relationship lasting 1 year or more are 33% as likely as women in nonviolent relationships to maintain stable employment in the next 6 months.

Generally, the residual effects of domestic violence for women survivors are thought to include decreased decision-making and problem-solving skills, lowered perceptions of self-efficacy and self-esteem, and negative thoughts of self conveyed by the abuser (Bowen, 1982; Gianakos, 1999). Each of these concerns may in turn impact a woman's ability to seek or maintain meaningful employment—employment that may be one piece of the self-sufficiency puzzle. However, we are only beginning to understand the relationship between domestic violence and women's working lives. Given these concerns, the purpose of this qualitative analysis was to gain a broader understanding of the impact domestic violence has on the working lives of women in shelter.

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An Overview of Vocationally Related Issues Relevant for Survivors of Domestic Violence

Women in shelter from domestic violence face an onslaught of ramifications and decisions related to escaping their abusive relationships, which in turn affect their ability to obtain or maintain meaningful employment. For purposes of this study, five general areas of literature related to domestic violence served as a useful backdrop to our qualitative analysis. These areas, reviewed below, include (a) the relationship between domestic violence and work, (b) the relationship between domestic violence and income, (c) the needs of battered women in domestic violence shelters, (d) women and work, and (e) career counseling issues in working with survivors of domestic violence.

Domestic Violence and Work

Domestic abuse impacts women in their home lives and work lives. Previous studies have suggested that 37%–96% of women in abusive relationships have been affected at work by the abuse (Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence [CAEPV], 2002; U.S. Department of Labor, 1996). Many women in abusive relationships have a difficult time keeping a job or receiving promotions because their work tends to be affected by being late, missing work, being harassed at work, having difficulty concentrating at work, or because their partner will not allow them to work outside the home (U.S. Department of Labor, 1996). Browne et al.'s (1999) findings (cited earlier) regarding the decreased likelihood of women, particularly poor women, to maintain stable employment when experiencing domestic violence provides further evidence for the multidimensional nature of this problem. Additionally, an estimated 13,000 episodes of intimate-partner violence toward women occurred at work, and murder is the number one cause of death among women at work (CAEPV, 2002; U.S. Department of Labor, 1996). It has been suggested that about 20% of workplace murders are committed by the victim's partner (CAEPV, 2002; U.S. Department of Labor, 1996).

Domestic Violence and Income

It is often argued that domestic abuse is not prejudiced to income (Browne et al., 1999; Plichta, 1996; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). However, literature in the area also suggests that, regardless of the income made by the survivor or her intimate partner, women in abusive relationships frequently do not have control of financial resources (Bowen, 1982). Consequently, a common need for women survivors of domestic violence is financial stability and independence. There is also mounting evidence that stands in contradiction to the notion that domestic abuse cuts evenly across socioeconomic status. For instance, in 1998 the U.S. Department of Justice reported that women were approximately four times more likely to experience intimate-partner violence if they lived in poor households (as compared with nonpoor households). A survey of the research related to women and welfare suggests a similar pattern (Browne et al., 1999; Kaplan, 1997; Tolman & Rosen, 2001). Furthermore, Lamonica (2000) noted that jobs typically available to women survivors are low in pay, status, and stability. Additionally, child support may not be forthcoming, and mothers can struggle to survive on subpoverty wages (Hagen & Owens-Manley, 2002). This has led some writers to argue that single parents, and in this case single parents who are survivors of domestic abuse, exchange welfare poverty for "wage poverty" (Rice, 2001). One component of wage poverty is the expense of childcare. Childcare expenses and availability frequently force women to make sacrifices they can ill afford to make, whether they be financial, relational, or quality of (child) care (Rice, 2001).

Domestic Violence and the Needs of Women in the Shelter

According to Panzer, Philip, and Hayward (2000), women who initially enter a shelter are often hypervigilant and experience sleep disturbances. The women's self-care, self-esteem, and interpersonal skills are also compromised as a result of leaving an abusive situation and moving into a protective shelter. Moreover, immediately upon entering the shelter, survivors are faced with the task of adapting to their new environment and relationships (Panzer et al., 2000).

The mental health consequences of domestic violence are quite significant. The rates of major depression, alcohol/substance abuse, and posttraumatic distress are elevated for women who are victims of domestic violence (Panzer et al., 2000). According to Browne et al. (1999), women who have been assaulted by their partners within the last 12 months will often present with significantly higher rates of emotional and medical distress, medical hospitalization, and alcohol or other drug problems. It is important to keep in mind that women who are both survivors of domestic violence and have a history of being abused or neglected during their childhood may present to a shelter with even more complex clinical symptoms (Panzer et al., 2000).

Women who enter the shelter with children deal with not only their own distress but also the distress that their children may be facing. Panzer et al. (2000) asserted that children who have witnessed domestic violence often present with similar reactions and symptoms as individuals who have been direct victims of domestic violence, including health difficulties, sleep problems, anxiety, acting out behavior, anger, feelings of guilt, fear, and/or powerlessness. For some children, their symptoms are even more severe and indicative of depression, dissociation, and/or posttraumatic stress disorder (Panzer et al., 2000).

Women and Work

Because a disproportionate number of women (as compared with men) are victims of domestic violence (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), understanding the basic career issues of women provides a vital background to understanding the issues faced by women survivors of domestic violence. For example, McWhirter, Torres, and Rasheed (1998) argued that women face multiple external and internal barriers that impact their vocational development. Powerful external barriers identified by McWhirter et al. included gender discrimination, racism, homophobia, sexual harassment, a lack of mentors, and a lack of support (especially in light of the multiple roles that many women perform). Internal barriers included low self-efficacy and outcome expectations, skill deficits, and multiple-role stressors (see also Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987).

In addition to the work-related barriers faced by many women, some authors have also suggested that traditional career theories do not adequately capture the role and "location" of work in the lives of people in general, and women in particular (Blustein, 2001; Richardson, 1993). Specifically, Richardson has argued that defining work as a paid career done outside the home "perpetuates a bias in favor of the primacy of work accomplished in the occupational structure" (p. 427). In short, it ignores the many definitions of work, and in the case of women, the work activities related to family, relationships, and community.

In addition to new definitions regarding the role of work in people's lives, the extant literature also suggests that the interaction between work and relationships has a powerful influence on the working lives of women (and men) (Phillips, Christopher-Sisk, & Gravino, 2001; Schultheiss-Palladino, Kress, Manzi, & Glasscock-Jeffrey, 2001). The focus on the interaction between work and relationships is particularly relevant for women who are survivors of domestic violence because their primary relationship may itself be a barrier to work. Chronister and McWhirter (2003) noted that,

> domestic violence, by its very nature, is likely to have pervasive negative effects on battered women's career self-efficacy and outcome expectations, to reduce the availability of supports, and to present a multifaceted set of barriers to battered women's goals and accomplishments. (p. 421)

Domestic Violence and Career Counseling

Though there is a limited amount written in relation to the vocational needs of women in shelter from domestic abuse, three common issues did emerge in the literature. The first was that of lowered self-esteem and self-efficacy among women survivors of domestic violence (Bowen, 1982; Brown, Reedy, Fountain, Johnson, & Dichiser, 2000; Gianakos, 1999; Ibrahim & Herr, 1987). For example, Brown et al. (2000) found that the battered women in their sample scored significantly lower on a measure of general self-esteem and on a measure of career self-efficacy than normative samples. Gianakos (1999) indicated that the focus on self-efficacy in the career counseling process should be primary and should address more than just self-efficacy related to career work

or career. Specifically, she argued that "maintaining a global focus of self-efficacy, rather than a narrow focus on career self-efficacy, may be particularly important for battered women as their isolation provides limited opportunities to interact with others and learn about their world" (p. 11). Recently, Chronister and McWhirter (2003) noted that social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1996) may be a useful means of addressing the specific self-efficacy concerns of battered women.

A second common issue that emerged in the literature was the importance of meeting the short-term employment needs of women in shelter. Brown et al. (2000) reported that women in shelter tended to identify two immediate needs: finding secure employment (or schooling opportunities) and taking care of basic survival needs. Likewise, Bowen (1982) argued that economic survival was the foremost need of many women in shelter, and consequently, the focus of vocational counseling should be on finding immediate employment, with a secondary goal of finding long-term job satisfaction once some semblance of economic stability and independence is obtained.

A third common issue emerging from the literature was the need for career counselors to understand the general psychological and safety concerns faced by women who are in (or who are leaving) a domestically violent relationship (Bowen, 1982; Brown et al., 2000; Gianakos, 1999; Ibrahim & Herr, 1987). These issues include (a) the presence of concomitant psychological disorders (such as posttraumatic stress disorder or depression), (b) the psychological impact of previous traumatic relationships, and (c) the current physical jeopardy of the survivor and her children.

Purpose

In reviewing the literature related to vocational counseling and women survivors of domestic abuse, it is important to note that there is a substantial lack of empirically derived findings that support the assertions made regarding the vocational needs of women in shelter. Consequently, the intent of the present project was to use qualitative research methodology to gain a broader understanding of how abusive intimate relationships impact the work and work opportunities of women currently in shelter from domestic violence. A qualitative methodology was chosen for two reasons: (a) The principal investigator and research team felt that a qualitative analysis would allow for a richer (and broader) understanding of a little-known area; and (b) from a more feminist perspective, qualitative analysis would allow the women who are experiencing the impact of intimate-partner abuse to educate the theorists and practitioners regarding the vocational counseling needs of women in shelter. Given the nature of our goals and the rationale just named, we elected to follow the guidelines and procedures of consensual qualitative research (CQR), as outlined by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997), in analyzing our data. CQR was specifically chosen because it blends a rigorous approach to data gathering and analysis with "a rich description of the phenomenon" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 563).

Method

Participants

Interviews were piloted with six female adults familiar with the issues of domestic violence, including an advocate at an abuse crisis center, two individuals with previous experience as vocational counselors, and three full-time graduate students. After the analysis and revision of the pilot interviews, 10 participants were recruited from the local domestic violence shelter. They ranged in age from 20 to 47 years ($M = 35.4$, $SD = 7.5$). All 10 participants were women. Of the participants, 5 (50%) were Native American, 4 (40%) were European American, and 1 (10%) was Latina. Two (20%) participants were married, 2 (20%) were divorced, 2 (20%) were single, and 4 (40%) were separated from their spouses. Nine of the 10 (90%) participants had children, and the children's ages ranged from under 1 year to over 27 years. Educational levels included 5 (50%) participants who had taken some college or technical courses, 2 (20%) participants with a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma (GED), 1 participant (10%) with a 10th-grade education, 1 participant (10%) with a technical school degree, and 1 participant (10%) who was a doctoral candidate. Four participants were unemployed, 2 worked as secretaries, 1 worked as a waitress, 1 worked as a housekeeper, 1 worked in a local retail store, and 1 worked in a factory. Each participant listed a series of short-term, low-pay positions such as convenience store clerk.

Specific data regarding how long women had been in shelter at the time of the interview were not collected. However, a review of transcripts suggested that most women were interviewed approximately 1–2 weeks after their arrival at the shelter. It was also estimated that half (50%) the participants had previously stayed in a domestic violence shelter.

Though not part of the main analyses, each individual completed a Beck Depression Inventory-Second Revision (BDI-II; Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996) as part of the intake procedures for the study. The BDI-II is an often-used screen for depressive symptoms that has appropriate psychometric properties. According to Beck et al., scores ranging from 0 to 13 are indicative of minimal depression, from 14 to 19 are indicative of mild depression, from 20 to 28 are indicative of moderate depression, and from 29 to 63 are indicative of severe depression. Given these criteria, 2 women had minimal symptoms of depression, 1 woman had mild symptoms of depression, 4 women had moderate symptoms of depression, and 3 women had severe symptoms of depression. Scores on the BDI-II for the participants ranged from 5 to 50, with a mean score of 25.30 and a standard deviation of 14.16.

Instruments

Interview protocol and development. A semistructured pilot interview was developed consensually by the analysis team, primarily on the basis of the overall research question and on the literature reviewed. After piloting the interview questions, we realized that we asked few questions about perceived resources and added such questions to our roster. We also moved many of the demographics questions to the beginning of our protocol in order to build rapport with the participants. The interview was focused on the vocational needs assessment of the women receiving services from a domestic violence shelter and therefore had questions relating to their work, to domestic abuse, to the impact of the domestic abuse on their ability to work, and to resources that they were aware of related to work. Some of the questions developed included "Tell me about your typical work day," "What are some obstacles you see to working?" "Have you lost a job because your partner didn't want you there?" "Has a past or current partner harassed you at work in a negative way, and, if so, how?" "Do you currently have hopes about jobs or careers—can you tell me about them?" and "Tell me about any dreams or hopes that you may have had in the past."

In addition to the questions identified above, team members also spoke to participants about the power and control wheel (i.e., the Duluth model; see Pence & Paymar, 1993, for details of the power and control wheel), as it was a model used extensively by the shelter as a means of educating its residents about domestic violence. Consequently, participants were very familiar with the model, and it became a useful prompt for asking questions about their experiences of domestic violence. The power and control wheel is a visual representation of a wheel with eight spokes. Each "spoke"

contains descriptions of "typical" (according to the Duluth model) behaviors used by batterers. Specifically, the eight spokes describe tactics and examples of power and control, including using intimidation, using emotional abuse, using isolation, minimizing or denying the abuse, using children, using male privilege, using economic abuse, and using coercion. The model is based on the theory that domestic violence is a pervasive pattern of power and control and that physical and sexual abuse reinforces the power and control of the perpetrator (Pence & Paymar, 1993).

The principal investigator monitored first interviews of team members, assuring that they asked both the specified interview questions and appropriate follow-up questions. All team members had training and experience in counseling and career counseling, and the local crisis center provided two 60-min training courses on domestic violence relationships and shelter policy as a prerequisite of our beginning this project. Some of the team members attended additional training through the local crisis center. Because of the high prevalence of violence in the lives of the women interviewed, extra precautions were taken to inform participants of our obligation to report known or suspected child abuse. Specifically, prior to the interview, all the women in the study were made aware of (and consented to) the researchers' obligation to report child abuse and to the stipulation that we would do so in conjunction with shelter staff. When reports were required, they were mutually made by the participant, a research team member, and a shelter staff person.

Demographic information. Demographic information (education level, age, marital status, family status, current and past jobs) was gathered both in a brief written form and again verbally during the beginning of each interview. The demographic questions were asked at the beginning of the interview to build rapport between the interviewer and the participant.

Procedure

Sample development. In agreement with the women's shelter we were working with, the sample comprised willing volunteers who met the following criteria: They were (a) in shelter for a minimum of 2 days, (b) were not psychotic or suicidal, and (c) were psychologically stable enough that participation in the interviews would not cause harm. If a woman met these three criteria, she was approached by shelter staff with a letter of invitation to participate in the study. Interviews were conducted over a 4-month period (February–May), and approximately 50% of the women staying in that particular shelter during that time period participated in the study. Though no formal comparisons were made, the 10 participants seemed typical of women who presented at the shelter. A gift certificate of $20 for a local discount department store was given as a thank-you for participation. Following the interview, audiotapes of the session were transcribed.

Data collection. Participants completed an in-person interview in a private room at the shelter with either one or two team members. An attempt was made to give a copy of the transcript back to the women interviewed so that they might make corrections and comments if they desired. However, at least 2 of the women had left the shelter prior to expectations and consequently did not receive a copy of their transcript. Interviews ranged from 55 to 100 min, with an average interview lasting 74 min ($SD = 14.48$).

Analysis team. Seven members of the research team facilitated interviews and completed data analysis. All team members were women and ranged in age from 23 to 44. Six of the team members were Caucasian, and one was African American. One of the team members was a faculty member, four were doctoral students, and two were master's students. Each member listened to the taped interviews and read the corresponding transcripts to check for accuracy. When interpretation or discernment was questionable, the original interviewers clarified as best as they were able. Inaudible statements were not used.

Identification of domains. Before analysis or coding was conducted on the transcripts, each member of the analysis team came up with possible domain names on their own according to the questions that had been previously compiled by the team. Then the team met and discussed the potential domains in order to come to a consensus on what the original domains should be named. Using these original domains, each transcript was individually read, listened to via audiotape, and coded by each member of the analysis team. Because renaming domains is encouraged according to the CQR method, each team member was also told to monitor for possible domain changes and biases and to journal about the process itself. After each team member analyzed the data, the team came together as a group to discuss the coding and to discuss each transcript individually until a consensus was reached for all of the data from each individual transcript. The original domains were adjusted according to the team's consensual decisions. The final set of domains included the following: impact of domestic abuse on everyday life; impact of domestic abuse on work; and the meaning of work, children, implications of leaving an abusive relationship, future, strengths, barriers (other than domestic abuse), and resources.

Core ideas. After stability of domains was established across cases, individual transcripts were reorganized by domain (all data were presented by coded domain rather than chronologically). Team members then worked individually to abstract the core ideas present for each domain on each transcript. These individual core ideas were then brought back to the team, and consensus was built among team members regarding the final version of the core ideas for each domain of each transcript.

Cross-analysis. After all transcripts were audited, a cross-analysis was conducted using the domains and core ideas in order to find a set of categories that occurred across transcripts. During the cross-analysis, there were two areas of emphasis. The first emphasis was to examine for common categories across transcripts, and the second emphasis was to find themes and ideas that may have been missed during the earlier steps of the CQR method. During this latter step, some of the data were moved from one domain and/or core idea to be included in the domain and category it fit best. If the data could not be placed in only one category, they were placed in multiple categories. Quotes that provided the basis for each category were then identified in every transcript. Feedback from the auditor regarding the cross-analysis included suggestions around categories that were poorly defined and categories that overlapped. The team reviewed the feedback as a group and made adjustments on the basis of consensus.

Audit. At three separate points in the CQR process, the work of the analysis team was reviewed by an auditor. The first point came after domains had been agreed upon, the second point came after core ideas had been identified, and the third point came after the cross-analysis. In each case, the auditor made suggestions to the team regarding the names and ideas the team was working on. Adjustments were made after the team reached consensus on the feedback given by the auditor. Examples of feedback given by the auditor included suggestions on the wording of domain and category names and a request for an increased amount of specificity in the core ideas put forth by the team members. The auditor was a Caucasian female faculty member in the social psychology discipline whose research is focused in the area of domestic violence.

Results

The results of our analyses lead to a variety of domains and categories that are explored in this section. Domains that emerged in this study include (a) the impact of domestic violence on everyday life, (b) the impact of domestic violence on women's working lives, (c) the meaning of work, (d) children, (e) the implications of leaving the relationship, (f) future, (g) strengths, (h) barriers, and (i) resources. Each of the domains and their corresponding categories are described in this section and are summarized in Table 1. In keeping with the labels suggested by Hill et al. (1997), we described a category as "general" if it was descriptive of all 10 participants, "typical" if it was descriptive of 5–9 participants, and "variant" if it was descriptive of 2–4 partic-

Table 1
Summary of Domains and Categories of the Impact of Domestic Violence on the Working Lives of Women in Shelter

Domain	Category	Frequency
Impact of domestic abuse on everyday life	Physical violence	Typical
	Psychological violence	General
Impact of domestic abuse on work	Mixed messages about work	Typical
	Jealousy about work relationships	Typical
	Harassment at work	Typical
	Difficulty concentrating at work	Typical
	Absenteeism	Typical
	Loss of work opportunities	Typical
	Lowered self-concept	Typical
	Work as escape	Typical
	Economic control and restriction	Typical
	Double duty	Typical
Meaning of work	Achieve immediate self-sufficiency needs	Typical
	An event that accomplishes something	Typical
	An event that is enjoyable	Typical
Children	Childcare as an issue	Typical
	Children and domestic violence	Typical
	Children as the center of life	Typical
Implications of leaving an abusive relationship	Personal losses	Typical
	Personal gains	Typical
	Safety plan at work	Variant
Future	Ability to articulate vocational interests	General
	Positive view of the future	Typical
	Pursuing further education	Typical
	Immediate and long-term needs	Typical
	Securing a home	Typical
	Increasing independence	Typical
	Stability for children	Variant
Strengths	Support	Typical
	Determination	Typical
	Hard working	Variant
	Helping others	Variant
Barriers	Basic living necessities	Typical
	Negative support	Variant
	Education	Typical
Resources	Awareness of community resources	Typical
	Shelter services	Typical
	Childcare	Variant
	Job search assistance	Variant

ipants. We disregarded ideas that were noted by fewer than 2 participants.

Although our questions were focused on the impact of domestic abuse/violence on women's work and work opportunities, the inquiries frequently required a discussion of the impact of domestic violence on the women's everyday life. Consequently, the analysis team felt that this domain should be retained despite the fact that it was not the focus of our study. Our rationale was that, although certainly not a thorough review of the impact of domestic abuse in women's general lives, this domain did provide us with a context to better understand how domestic violence impacts women's work and work opportunities. A review of the domains and emergent categories follows.

Impact of Domestic Abuse on Everyday Life

Participants described domestic abuse as having an impact on their everyday lives. This domain emerged while speaking with the participants about the effect abuse may have had on the survivor's work. Two broad categories surfaced from this part of the interview: physical violence and psychological violence.

Physical violence. Without being directly asked, participants typically (7 of 10) and spontaneously reported that their abusers used physical violence in their relationships. These numbers are not surprising given that the sample comprised women currently in shelter from a domestically violent relationship. Examples included Participant 6, who spoke about her fear both of getting hit and of having unwanted sex with her partner. When Participant 7 asked her husband for a divorce, he threatened to "make your life a living hell till the day you die." Participant 10 described her denial regarding the eruption of physical violence in her life: "[he] started punching, you know, but I didn't put it all together until much later . . . until he stuck my head through the wall."

Psychological violence. Descriptions of psychological violence outside of work generally (10 of 10 participants) emerged while speaking with the participants about their working lives. However, different types of psychological violence were described

by the participants, including manipulation (5 of 10), economic abuse (10 of 10), isolation (7 of 10), minimization of abuse (5 of 10), intimidation (6 of 10), control (7 of 10), and loss of decision making (4 of 10).

Capturing the essence of the different types of psychological abuse is difficult because of the diversity of forms it did take on. For example, in describing the psychological abuse that took place, Participant 9 stated that her abuser "always took my money. I never had any money, except for what he gave me, whatever he gave me," and Participant 2 indicated that her abuser "tries to keep me, like from my family, my friends." However, as indicated above, psychological abuse was not just about the removal of resources (money or relationships), it also included the "provision" of verbal abuse or the threat of physical abuse. Participant 6 spoke of both being constantly belittled and of the "use of intimidations, you know actions, gestures . . . he would grab my fingers and almost try to break them and say, 'don't point.'" Participant 3 summed her life up this way:

> He made all the decisions. Not just all the big ones. He made all the decisions. He told me when I could go somewhere, when I couldn't go somewhere, when I could go to work, and it affected me. Like I said, I'd be upset at work. Because I wouldn't be able to see my mom for weeks on end. And me and my mom are really close. ['So he kept you from your mom?'] Right. He kept me from all my family. The 'master of the castle.' That's just like, you know, and that's so him. 'I'm the man of the house,' you know, 'and what I say goes.'

Impact of Domestic Abuse on Work

The participants in this study were asked several questions regarding the possible impact of domestic violence on their working lives. If participants were initially reticent to discuss their experiences, examples from the literature were given in a nonleading manner. Generally, once women understood the nature of the question, they were quite open to discussion and self-revelation. Several categories emerged from these discussions, including mixed messages about work, jealousy about work relationships, harassment at work, difficulty concentrating at work, absenteeism, losing work opportunities, lowered self-concept, work as an escape, economic control and restriction, and double duty.

Mixed messages about work. A typical (6 of 10) experience for women seeking shelter was the mixed messages about working they received from their partners. These mixed messages generally comprised both being encouraged to work and being derided for working and/or being encouraged to quit. Two women simply noted that sometimes their partner indicated it was okay to work, and sometimes it was not (Participants 1 & 8). Participant 5 indicated that she kept a job because she had to financially support the family, despite the fact that her partner did not want her to work. For Participant 3, this mixed message was a constant source of conflict (and consequently violence) in her relationship with her spouse. She described it this way: "I mean, in the morning he could say 'I don't want you working anymore,' and by afternoon, well, 'we need you to work,' you know, and, it's like, well, yeah, so I just kept working."

Jealousy about work relationships. Seven of the 10 women interviewed (typical category) directly indicated that jealousy was one of the core conflicts they had with their partners regarding their work lives. According to the women, this jealousy was expressed overtly and covertly and led to many harassing and controlling behaviors (described later). For Participant 4, the jealousy was not overt, but it was still present. She indicated that her husband would visit her at work (where the clientele was primarily male) and months later express his jealousy. Participants 2 and 8 each indicated that her abusive partner would come to their respective workplaces and make accusations of infidelity. Similarly, Participant 7 indicated that her partner forced her to quit her job because he was jealous of the men she worked with. One woman (Participant 1) described painting her neighbor's house in exchange for some cash, cigarettes, and dinner. She stated that this made her partner jealous to the point of soliciting the help of others to try to get her home: "He kept sending people over, 'get rid of her,' and it was like they were trying to scare me out of the house [being painted]."

Harassment at work. As evident from the descriptions of jealousy provided above, another typical category prevalent among the women (7 out of 10) is harassment at work by the abusive partner. In addition to Participant 1′s description of her partner sending people over to try to remove her from her house-painting job, 6 other participants indicated harassing behaviors at work. These behaviors included harassing or intruding phone calls to the participant, phone calls to the participant's boss as an attempt to deride the participant, forcing the participant to be late for work, forcing the participant to leave work, and intruding behaviors (abusive partner coming to work to monitor her working environment or to harass the participant). Participant 10 stated:

> It really bothered him that I'd work. He'd call me there all the time, you know . . . there's a phone call and this is like every half hour . . . so I think if my bosses didn't like me they'd probably have fired me because he called so much during the day.

Participant 7 stated that when she did work, her partner would call her at least 10 times a day, and then, when confronted with the behavior at home, deny it and tell her that she was losing her mind. Participant 1 indicated that her partner would show up unannounced from time to time: "I think one time he came there and he was drunk and I was so embarrassed, and he looked like the pits. I was like, oh, and I'm trying to keep this image up you know."

Difficulty concentrating at work. Separate from the harassment at work, 7 of the 10 women in this typical category reported difficulty concentrating at work as a direct result of being involved in an abusive relationship. The trouble concentrating usually took one of the following two interrelated forms. First, all 7 of the women reported that the aftermath of a physically or emotionally violent experience with their partner left them physically and emotionally drained, making it difficult to complete or focus on the tasks involved in their work: "Like maybe a fight might be, you know, oh well, you know, just kind of drag you out" (Participant 1). For some women, this meant not being able to attend to work: "I would have to go to the bathroom and finish my crying and come back and try to get focused on what I was doing" (Participant 8). Participant 3 commented:

> Because sometimes I'd go to work and I'd be so upset from arguing with him or something I'd just, I'd feel like I'd just want to cry, you know. Or we had a fight the night before and he hit me. He never left bruises anywhere that anybody could see. I was always hidden. So I

> was in pain, too, and it made it hard. I had to call in sometimes because I was in too much pain to even walk or, you know to go in, you know, or I was too upset.

Second, 6 of the 7 women (endorsing the overall category) reported that they would frequently find themselves worrying about their immediate future interactions with their partner, whether they would be yelled at or beaten when they got home and whether there were any behaviors they could engage in that would decrease the likelihood of such a conflict. In discussing this second form of concentration difficulty, the CQR team termed this particular phenomenon as *anticipatory fear*. One woman (Participant 8) had a partner who came to her workplace and threatened her while she was working. Participant 7 worried that her partner would take her children from her while at work, and Participant 10 would anxiously await the next harassing phone call (from her partner) while at work. Participant 5 described her experiences of anticipatory fear in response to the question "How did work go for you?":

> Pretty solemn. I'm usually a pretty easygoing person, you know. I like to talk to people, whatever. [However, at work] I would try to figure out what I should do next, what I should say, what I shouldn't say. All this stuff going in my mind. And so sometimes I would forget to do some things like with the customer's order or stuff like that and just the fact that it's always like that.

Absenteeism. The women interviewed for the study typically (5 of 10) indicated that a violent or controlling partner directly or indirectly caused them to miss work. Sometimes this would take the form of staying home with sick kids, despite the fact that the partner was not working (Participant 4), or being forced to leave work to either travel with a partner (Participant 6) or talk during work hours (Participant 9). Participant 3 indicated that frequently the physical violence left her in too much physical pain to attend work. Participant 10 stated that while working, her partner would call her up and (falsely) claim that one of her children was ill and that she needed to come home. She then described the following: "I'd get there and he'd be sitting outside [their home] waiting for me to time me and see how long it took me to get there."

Losing work opportunities. Six of the 10 participants in this typical category indicated that at one time or another, their abusive partners' behaviors either kept them from getting work or forced them out of a job (either because they had to quit or because they were fired). Participant 2 described a previous relationship in which she lost work because of being beaten by her partner:

> Now it's, it hasn't gotten this bad [this time], but I lived with a man who used to beat me up so bad that I would lose a job. You won't go to work all beat up. You know, your face all, black eyes and your hair pulled out and stuff.

Participant 1 pointed to a pattern across her relationships, noting that each of them had held her back from something meaningful in school or work. For her, this sometimes took the form of isolation in very rural communities, isolation made worse when her partner refused to allow her access to her own (or his) vehicle.

> I mean, I tried to get a job, but it was like so remote and far out where we lived, it was like, and I had everything so I could start work but the relationship just wasn't going anywhere because it was, oh, he took the car and a bunch of stuff.

Jealousy was sometimes linked to the reason the women lost work opportunities. Participant 7 reported this account of her partner's statement to her:

> There's guys there at work and 'you can't look at guys,' you know. And it was, finally he just said 'I don't want you working there. You have to quit.' Well, he went to my boss and said 'I don't want her working here, she's not doing her stuff at home, she's got to quit.'

Likewise, Participant 8 reported that she would be accused of "being places I wasn't when I wasn't home. So the only way that I would stop getting that ass kicking and have to defend myself all the time was just to prove where I was and stay at home."

Lowered self-concept. Having their work-related self-concept changed in a negative way was a typical (8 of 10) theme described by the women interviewed for the study. Some women described a general feeling of lowered self-esteem or self-confidence, whereas a few described specific work-related skills impacted by their abusive relationships. In regard to the latter, Participant 5 described that though she viewed herself as a good "people-person," she would no longer know how to talk to people. In regard to the former, 2 participants indicated that their lowered self-concept was related to having to completely change their identity in order to escape their abusers. Still another participant (Participant 6) gave this description of how domestic violence led to a lowering of her more general work-related self-esteem:

> Oh yes, oh yes because it would just, like um, a tape recorder for example. You know it just played over and over. . . . The job I had would really kept [sic] me busy, but every once in a while it would like if I took a, from a smoke, if I took a smoke break, I would go out and start thinking about it and go back upstairs and then have to get rid of that crap to go back to working. So I mean that it was, I had to work myself into a better mood I guess . . . because then my self-esteem was starting to go down the toilet.

Work as escape. The women interviewed for this study typically (6 of 10) described work as a way of escaping an emotionally or physically abusive home environment. In discussing this point, the women generally felt that the work environment was safer and less conflicted than the home environment. Participant 4 stated, "There was times when it was, they would call me to see if I could come into work and I would, just so I wouldn't have to deal with him." Participant 6 echoed those thoughts, saying, "[if] I didn't have my job, I think I would have gone crazy. It gave me, when we were together, it gave me a very needed outlet away from him." Participant 10 indicated that although work was boring, "at least I wasn't physically by him, you know . . . I'd be, you know, out of his reach."

Economic control and restriction. Nine of the 10 women (typical category) interviewed indicated having no control over the money they earned, and the 10th woman indicated that her husband unsuccessfully attempted to take over her finances. Participant 10 summed her experience in this area by saying, "he'd take my checks and take my bankcard. I couldn't even hide money." Participants 1, 2, 3, and 5 each indicated that their partners took their money and made them ask for an "allowance." Participant 2 stated, "All I'd want [was] my own account, but he won't let me." For Participant 5, the financial control was more passive: "Well, I know that we have joint checking, and I put it [her paycheck] in there and it was spent . . . you know, and we have obligations."

Participant 9 simply stated, "he never gave me . . . allowance, and I never asked him for money. He'd take my money." In addition to having her money taken by her partner, Participant 3 also discussed being unaware of her and her partner's financial status, which added to her overall anxiety. She described to her interviewers a scenario in which she learns from her landlord her husband is late paying rent:

> . . . having to go to work, you know, thinking, I'm losing my apartment. You know, if I lose my apartment I won't be able to work anymore because I'll be living out of my car, and how can I go to work?

Double duty. Though never stated directly, 7 of the 10 participants in this typical category gave indications that they were completely responsible for both their job at work and more than their share of household duties (including children). Embedded in this category may be a connotation of traditional gender roles, though more information is warranted. As an example of this category, Participant 1 succinctly stated, "Well, I had a partner, I mean, my partner, but he didn't work and he didn't watch the kids and he was just really the pits, and I did everything." Participant 10 described a tension between her job and housework:

> I'd have to make sure that I had dinner on the table when he got home from work so . . . if I didn't get off work early enough, I'd get in trouble because I didn't get there soon enough to start dinner. You know, so if I didn't start it the night before, so that way all I had to do was warm it up, but I couldn't put anything in the microwave, it had to be cooked on the stove.

Meaning of Work

Participants were asked to define what work meant to them. The responses given by the participants contained three main themes, including an activity that achieves immediate needs related to self-sufficiency, an event that accomplishes something, and an event that is enjoyable.

Achieve immediate self-sufficiency needs. Participants typically (6 of 10) defined *work* as a tool used to obtain immediate needs (food, shelter, clothing, and transportation). One participant wanted "anything that will get me on my feet so I can, well, get me on my feet" (Participant 2). Participants also expressed long-term career goals that fulfill needs of self-sufficiency, enjoyment, intrinsic rewards of work, and opportunities to interact positively with other adults. Each participant indicated self-sufficiency as a primary goal, though they were still hopeful that their jobs would also provide some personal satisfaction. For example, one participant indicated, "I don't care if school is [awful], I'm going to do it. It'll be better for the future, easier on the kids. So I have to make it work" (Participant 7). *Self-sufficiency* was defined as being able to pay one's bills and, if applicable, provide for the care of children.

An event that accomplishes something. Participants (4 of 10) variantly defined work as an event that accomplishes something, whether paid or not. This includes taking care of children or family members as well as paid work. One participant said, "If I just did nothing during the day I would feel, feel like the pits. Even if I got up to do the dishes and felt I conquered something. That was work for me. No matter what it was" (Participant 1), and another stated, "taking care of your kids. And the house . . . I think work is so I can get out to meet different people" (Participant 4). Participant 5 noted, "I would look for work that is satisfying . . . the money aspects, helping people. I love to be around people." Productivity appeared to be a primary construct in the participants' definition of work.

As an example of accomplishing something, completing an education was important for Participants 1, 3, 4, and 5. One noted, "I think . . . as far as just being at school doing something and feeling good about it and working toward something, a goal" (Participant 1). Participant 4 indicated she would like to return to school to train to be a pharmacy technician, a career that typically requires a college degree.

An event that is enjoyable. Participants typically (8 of 10) indicated enjoyment of work as an important component in their meaning of work. Most were able to recall a job that they found enjoyable. One participant wanted "something that you enjoy and that you're constantly learning from and that you are challenged by it" (Participant 6). Another indicated, "I don't like sitting around. I like work" (Participant 7). Three participants indicated that part of enjoyment was a setting that allowed participants to work with others. For example, "I love to be around people" (Participant 5). Another indicated that working around people in the past, "it was fun because you looked forward to seeing them" (Participant 9).

Children

Nine of the 10 women interviewed for this study indicated that they had children, some of whom were grown adults, some still dependent on the participant, and some in temporary or permanent foster care or living with relatives. In analyzing the interviews conducted with the women in this study, three recurring themes emerged in the data—themes that all became typical categories for the women who had children.

Childcare as an issue. Participants (5 of 10) typically stated that childcare was an issue in their abusive relationships, though the nature of what this meant for the individual women varied. Some women were concerned over their own ability to take care of their children while employed or in school, a problem made more difficult by a typical perception that their partner was unable or unwilling to care for their children.

Two participants quit school because of the difficulty in juggling obligations at school and with children. One of the participants (Participant 4) gave this account of that process:

> I was going to Tech and I was, I only needed like, I think, three classes and I had two little ones and I was pregnant with the third one and I was just, I couldn't, I couldn't do it, you know. It was just too hard.

The cost of childcare was another factor that influenced participants' pursuit of certain jobs. Participant 4 stated, "I have to find a job that I can work during the day because I can't afford a babysitter for five kids in the evenings." For Participant 5, childcare was more about trust than money. She wanted someone within her (trusted) support system to watch her children, and they were all either working, attending school, or both. Similarly, Participants 4 and 8 felt that childcare was a big issue and a determinant in whether they were able to work. Participant 4 stated,

> I know that I can work as long as I want now, as long as I have, you know, days, or if I could find somebody to watch the kids the hours

> that I need. You know? I don't have really an obstacle besides childcare, you know.

Discussion regarding their partner's inability or unwillingness to provide childcare often followed a discussion of the difficulties of generally finding childcare. Participant 1 gave the following scenario as an example of this pattern:

> He [her partner] was there watching him [their son], but not as good as I wanted him to. And when I came in, I was just totally disgusted, it's like the dishes were still dirty. I got done with school and you know [the son] was hungry and he [the partner] was laying on the couch like a potato and I just . . . and then the first thing that he flew at me was, 'what are you doing with the cab driver (laughing)?'

Some women reported that their partners had been legally charged with child abuse, neglect, or both, leaving the participant to shoulder all of the responsibilities of childcare. These and other concerns led 3 of the women with younger children to report that they worried excessively about their children while at work. Participant 7 described the following scenario:

> Well, when I was at work, he'd call and say, 'if you don't get home, I'm taking the kids and I'm gone.' That was his biggest threat. He was going to take the kids—and he did once. He took off with them for three months. And I didn't see them.

Children and domestic violence. The women interviewed (5 of 10) typically reported instances of their children either witnessing domestic violence or being the victims of abuse. Participant 1 spoke about her embarrassment when her partner would come home, and the children would watch them fight. Participant 9 indicated that the last time her daughter saw her, "I was covered in blood," and Participant 8 described her understanding of her children's desire to be away from a home embroiled in conflict. Participant 5 began to think of leaving her relationship when she came to realize her young child understood the nature of her parents' fighting, and following her husband's incarceration, Participant 4 described the following conversation with her 7-year-old:

> And that kind of woke me up too. It was like, you know, my seven-year-old did, [said] . . . 'Well, if we don't have dad around, we don't have to put up with his hitting. You know?' So I was like . . . he gets it.

Because of the violent and sometimes neglectful actions taking place within their homes, 2 of the women currently had children in temporary foster care, 2 had had children permanently placed in foster care or adopted, and 2 had children living with relatives. Participant 4′s children were temporarily in foster care, and the following dialogue took place between her and our research team: "And do you have any contact with your children right now?" "I see them once a week." "Are they supportive?" "Yeah. They want me to hurry up and get them back."

Children as the center of life. The women interviewed typically described their children as a source of encouragement and joy (5 of 10). Participant 7 stated that ". . . my kids always come first for anything" and that nothing would interfere with the relationship she has with her children. Participants 6 and 8 referred to their children as "my hero" and "My children are my life," respectively. Indirectly, Participant 4 expressed this same sentiment when she described her determination to get her children back from foster care: "But I'm doing pretty good. I am working on everything that I need to do and so—because I don't want to lose them, I can't."

Implications of Leaving the Abusive Relationship

Participants stated that leaving their abusive relationships also had implications on their everyday lives. This theme emerged while speaking with the participants about what the effect of leaving the relationship had on them. This resulted in three main categories.

Personal losses. Participants typically (7 of 10) identified a number of different losses sustained in the process of leaving their relationships. The most prevalent loss participants identified was the loss of their homes and, consequently, having no other place to reside but the shelter. One woman stated, "Yeah, I'm homeless now, and it's really hard, you know. It's really hard. I've never been homeless. So, I've always had my own place, since the time I was 18 until now" (Participant 3). Other variant losses identified were loss of self (i.e., "It swept my whole identity away," Participant 6); loss of money (i.e., "I have no money. No money, if I had money, I'd have a house, I'd have transportation to get to work," Participant 2); loss of transportation (i.e., "I mean, he even got to the point where he stole my title to my car," Participant 1); loss of support (i.e., when asked about support from friends of family, 1 woman stated, "No, my counselor . . . , but that's it," Participant 4); loss of job (i.e., "I did not want to quit, but I had to because my husband was harassing me there, and I was also getting threats from him and his family," Participant 3); loss of trust (i.e., "I never put all of my trust in one person, never. . . . Even my own children I don't trust," Participant 2); loss of possessions (i.e., "I had the clothes on my back when I came in here, that was it," Participant 3); and fear of men (i.e., "I was really afraid of the men at work," Participant 3).

Personal gains. Participants also typically identified some general and specific gains that occurred as a result of leaving their batterers. These gains included pursuing a life free from the abusive relationship (e.g., "I think I want to be on my own. I think I've had enough of terrible relationships to learn my lesson," Participant 1) and regaining a sense of self; for example,

> And as I left, I realized that I was a C average student, and it was really hard, you know? Then after I left and went on my own, I was an A student, was on the Dean's list, and every quarter after that. I think I had more time to myself. (Participant 1)

Participants also experienced financial independence. For example,

> The first check I got, I cried and I cried and my boss is like, 'what are you crying for?' And I'm like, you know what, I got paid . . . you don't understand, he took all my money, you know? And she's like, 'this is your first paycheck by yourself you mean?' And I'm like yes, and I just started bawling all over again. It's like, it's overwhelming. (Participant 3)

Safety plan at work. Only 2 participants indicated having a safety plan in place while on the job in this variant category. One woman stated, "Yeah, I mean, because I informed my boss now. He knows. I have to keep an emergency phone on me at all times, and I also have my restraining order on me" (Participant 3).

Another woman stated, "my boss let me stay up front because she knew that, well, I have a restraining order against him, and he's not allowed in the store" (Participant 6).

Future

In the context of asking the women about themselves, and about their life goals and work goals, participants (not surprisingly) often spoke about their future. As with most discussions of the future, there was typically a connotation of hopefulness in what participants said. Seven categories emerged in the future domain, including an able articulation of vocational interests, a positively viewed expression of the future, and desires to pursue future education, to achieve immediate and long-term needs, to secure a home, to increase independence, and to find stability for their children.

Ability to articulate vocational interests. The women's ability to articulate their work interests emerged as a general category for all 10 participants. The women had a definite idea about what they wanted and what they did not want as far as work is concerned. Several of the women expressed an interest in pursuing future jobs that involved the helping professions that are traditionally female career fields. The various jobs included work as a teacher, writer, nurse, hospital administrator, pharmacy technologist, speech pathologist, counselor, radio announcer, lawyer, and waitress.

Positive view of the future. Participants typically (5 of 10) verbalized hope for the future. Participant 2 expressed confidence in her ability to find a job and is determined to do so. Participant 8 indicated her goals are "not unachievable, you know. This is a realistic thing, and I can do this." Two women (Participants 3 and 4) identified determination as their strength that will help them succeed, although most were not able to identify personal strengths that would help them to obtain their goals.

Pursuing further education. As these women shared their work interests, a typical category of having the desire to pursue further education or go back to school emerged (8 of 10 women). Goals ranged from completion of general equivalency diploma (GED) requirements to certificate completion to college degrees. Participant 2 remarked, "I want to try to get my CNA license." After moving and changing her name, Participant 3 hopes to "start all over again, with everything. I'm hoping to get into school. . . ." She further stated enthusiastically, "I would have to get my GED . . . and then I'd have to call home and tell everybody, 'I'm going to school!' And I'd be so proud. So, in the next three months, that's what I would do" (Participant 3). Participant 5 also expressed this sentiment: "People say you stay away for a year or two, you'll never want to go back. I've always wanted to go back. I'm more of an academic person really. Yeah, I love to learn. I love the classes."

Immediate and long-term needs. A category of immediate needs and long-term needs was a typical future-oriented theme for the women interviewed (8 of 10). For example, Participant 4 has a long-term goal of becoming a pharmacy technician, but for now, "I might be at the same place . . . who knows . . . I'll have to do something, you know, until I figure out what I'm going to do or do what I need to do." Participant 3 shared a powerful statement that further highlighted this discrepancy in needs. When she first arrived at the shelter, she noted, "I wouldn't take off my jacket for like the first two weeks I was there. And my shoes. Because if he were to come through that door, I was ready to bolt." When interviewed a few weeks after her arrival, this same participant hoped to get her GED and go back to school. In 6 months, Participant 3 hoped to be "able to work in public, instead of hidden away in my current job."

Securing a home. Securing a home was another typical category that emerged where a noticeable difference between the women's immediate and long-term needs became apparent. Securing a house was a primary need for 6 (of 10) participants. Participant 4 indicated she would like to have a house with her children. Participant 2 noted that in 6 months, "I'd have my own place. I'd have a good job. I can be around my family and friends." Participant 6 stated that she would like to have "just your basics, having a roof over my head, having a job and food to eat." Participant 1 spoke at great length about how she hopes to have a nice apartment in 3 months. She further explained the link between maintaining a job and establishing a home:

> You know, keeping a job and a good job that I want where I could accumulate enough money where I could at least get the things that I want in my home where I could be happy at home and at work.

Increasing independence. Increasing immediate self-sufficiency or independence was a typical category that surfaced for the participants (9 of 10). For Participant 3, being "able to manage my own money on my own . . . I'd be very happy." Having and making choices is important to participants as well. Participant 8 indicated that "I want to be able to stand up and just have good days and bad days, but do it right from my own root." One woman saw a new identity, social security number, and credit as a way to start independence (Participant 10). Security and independence is something that Participant 1 hopes to achieve:

> As long as I had transportation, I'd be happy to go to work and get up in the morning. Just be on my own . . . my own security. Knowing that I didn't have to depend on anybody, but myself and my kids would be all right. . . . I want to be totally dependent on myself and nobody else whatsoever.

Stability for children. A variant category for the participants (4 of 10) was the desire to establish a more stable environment for their children. For example, for 2 women, their primary goal was to regain custody of children (Participants 4 and 9). Participant 5 would like to better herself for her and her daughter.

Strengths

Participants were asked about their general strengths and their strengths specifically pertaining to their work lives. Strengths tended to be positive characteristics possessed by the participants or characteristics that were helpful when things became difficult for them. Most of the participants struggled with identifying personal strengths whether or not the strengths were related to their work or work goals.

Support. Participants typically indicated that one of their key strengths was the support they received from others. This relational support was described as coming from various sources, but those mentioned most frequently included friends, shelter professionals, other domestic violence survivors, family, and children. Support was identified by 9 of the 10 participants as a strength they possessed.

Some participants were able to identify numerous supports in their life. One participant (Participant 7) reported her daughter and the shelter were supportive of her. Regarding her daughter:

> She in an inspiration, you know? She's got dreams of being a computer tech, out at MIT, and she keeps telling me, 'you can do it, mom, you can do it.' And she's like the best thing that could ever happen.

Other participants were only able to identify one support: "the only one who has supported me has been my son" (Participant 6). Some participants found support from their places of employment. Participant 3, who had to switch jobs because of her husband's continued harassment, spoke highly of her new boss, saying ". . . and he said, 'if there's anything we can do for you, you know, if something's going on or there's something you need, just let us know.' So he's really understanding about it."

Determination. Typically the participants (7 of 10) identified determination as one of their strengths. For instance, in response to a direct questioning of their strengths, 2 participants responded with, "Oh gosh. Determination. That's the only thing I can think of is that is determination to do it" (Participant 4), and "Determination. I have determination" (Participant 5). Whereas some participants discussed their determination as something that served them well both at home and at work, others made references to how it helped them more specifically in their work life: "I don't know, if you want a job bad enough, you can push for it" (Participant 2).

Hard working. Related to their determination, another strength that participants variantly (3 of 10) appeared to take pride in was their ability to be a hard worker. One participant expressed how she was able to keep her job when she was not receiving any assistance from her abusive significant other, and another simply stated, "I'm a hard worker" (Participant 2).

Helping others. An additional variant category within the strengths domain was that of helping others (3 of 10). Participant 8 typified the individuals who fit in this category, indicating that "I like to make people feel better, you know?" Interestingly, even though only 3 participants identified their ability and enjoyment of helping others as a strength, many of them expressed a desire to work in professions related to helping others (see the *Future* section).

Barriers

Participants were asked to identify barriers (i.e., other than their abusive relationship) to reaching their goals, especially their work goals. It was difficult for both the participants and the analysis team to separate barriers related to abuse from other barriers. Consequently, some of the obstacles listed below may arguably be related to being in or ending a domestically violent relationship, but they nonetheless were identified as barriers not directly related to violence within the participants' intimate relationships.

Basic living necessities. Participants typically identified the lack of basic living necessities (e.g., money, housing, and transportation) as the biggest barriers to pursuing their life and work goals. Their responses to questions were often simple and straightforward. For example, Participant 2 succinctly reported, "Well, I need clothing, I need money, I need a home." Several participants also expressed a clear understanding of how the absence of basic necessities became a circular problem. For example,

> Maybe a car, housing, um, you know, like you have to have a car before you can go to work. Because you have to drive to work and you have to have housing. . . . If I had those, I think I would be pretty happy. I'd be on cloud nine. (Participant 1)

Negative support. A variant category that emerged as a barrier for 3 of the 10 participants was negative support from others (e.g., family and friends). One participant reported her family of origin was the source of her negative support: "Yeah. Because my mom told me you've got to make it work; you can't get divorced. It's against the rules" (Participant 7).

Education. Education was a typical barrier identified by 5 of the 10 women. For most of the women, education was a barrier because they had too little education for achieving their work goals. However, one woman (a doctoral candidate) did indicate that she was too educated for the kind of jobs that could potentially help her start over.

Resources

Participants were asked several questions about resources in their community. Resource-related questions included open-ended inquiries regarding what community resources they were aware of and, more generally, what resources they thought would be beneficial to them as they worked toward their vocational and life goals. Three categories emerged from the analysis of transcripts. These categories include an (a limited) awareness of community resources, an awareness (and appreciation) of shelter resources, and more specific discussions of the need for childcare and job service assistance.

Community services. Participants typically (5 of 10) indicated different job-related resources that they were aware of in the community, including Job Service, the Salvation Army, Temporary Aid for Needy Families, the newspaper, housing, job fairs, and job service Internet listings. One participant reported that it was through a job fair that she found work (Participant 3). Another participant shared how grateful she was for the services in the area and how helpful the classes offered at Job Service have been. She stated, "they build your self-esteem and help you find what kinds of things that are interesting and take all these aptitude tests" (Participant 2). In contrast, 1 participant shared her perspective of the level of awareness of job-related resources in the community, noting that "all I can tell you is that there is not much awareness. You know, if it was like posted . . . all the things they could do, and be at . . . it would be better" (Participant 3). When participants were asked what resources they thought would be helpful in obtaining work, a number of specific services within the agency (i.e., the domestic violence shelter) and community were mentioned by the participants.

Shelter services. Participants typically (7 of 10) reported that shelter services were an important resource in obtaining work. Some participants shared how the shelter is helpful in familiarizing them with the services it provides when they are ready to leave and also as an important source of support. One participant, for example, explained how the shelter offers a monetary incentive of $100 for groceries if they clean their living space before leaving the shelter. These incentives help "to at least keep you on track" and "you don't have to worry about starving when you move out into your apartment" (Participant 1). In contrast, 1 participant was unsure whether the shelter had any job-related services. Another

participant emphasized the importance of a shelter advocate who "says we're on your side, you're doing good. Reassurance is always a good thing, whether it comes from a lawyer's advocate or a shelter's advocate; more advocates would be awesome" (Participant 8).

Participants also shared their perspective of the appropriate time to encourage new shelter residents to begin the job-search process. Two of the participants suggested a 1–2 week timeline. One participant suggested giving new residents at least 1 week after entering the shelter to

> Let everything, you know, settle down and let them know that they, they're safe, and they're not going to feel like they're safe . . . but you don't want to push a job on them too fast, because it will be just too much for them. (Participant 3)

Childcare. Participants variantly (4 of 10) reported that the lack of childcare made it difficult to obtain and maintain employment. One participant suggested giving a list of day cares to women in the shelter who have children. She also suggested providing this list in a timely fashion, "maybe ASAP, within a week of the time that they get here so that they could start work" (Participant 1).

Job-search assistance. Participants variantly (3 of 10) reported that job-search assistance would be a helpful resource in obtaining work. This type of assistance for 1 participant would involve something other than "just 'here's today's newspaper'" (Participant 6). Another participant shared how confusing it can feel when first moving into the shelter and how beneficial it would be to help people find a job once they have settled in (the shelter) and feel comfortable with everything:

> You know, and people, people are going to be confused when they first come in here. . . . Just take the time to talk to them and reassure them that they can do it. And they can be independent. They can make their own money, and they can do this. Give them, but give them enough time. (Participant 3)

Discussion

The original goal of this research project was to address the question of how women in shelter from domestic violence experience the impact of that violence on their work and work opportunities. Not surprisingly, our findings suggest that intimate-partner violence and abuse has a multidimensional, and at times reciprocal, impact on women's ability to obtain or maintain stable employment. This ability (or inability), in turn, has consequences for the women's ability to obtain financial self-sufficiency, job satisfaction (instead of simply stable employment), and overall life satisfaction. The reciprocal nature of the relationship comes into play when a woman who cannot find self-sustaining employment is unable to leave her abuser.

Work was generally viewed as a positive and safe component in the lives of the women interviewed, while at the same time being a source of conflict (and consequently violence) in their relationship with their abusive intimate partner. The latter was to a large degree attributed to the jealousy and lack of control that the abusive partner had while the women were at work.

Overall, the impact of domestic violence on women's working lives took on many aspects—from an inability to concentrate on the job to missing work because of physical pain or dysfunction (consequent to being battered). It also took on the aspect of economic restriction, harassment at work, absenteeism, lost work opportunities, and, perhaps most interestingly, lowered self-concept. The only "positive" effect that domestic violence had on women's work lives was the women's tendency to spend more hours at work in order to escape a violent home.

The results also suggested that the vocational needs of the participants could not be addressed without also meeting the needs of the women's children. Children played an integral part in the women's decision to stay in or leave a relationship, to take on particular work, or to continue educational opportunities. Childcare was one of the most important recurring concerns for the women who had minor-aged children, and the tension between obtaining employment and caring for their children was evident throughout their interviews. This finding is also consistent with the literature on single women in general (Morrison, Page, Sehl, & Smith, 1986).

Other external factors also played a role in the women's pursuit of their immediate and long-term vocational goals. These factors include perceived barriers (e.g., money, transportation, housing, childcare, and education) and resources (e.g., job assistance programs and shelter services) that served to impede or facilitate meaningful employment.

In looking at the results as a whole, we believe that a natural relationship emerges among the domains and categories discussed in the Results section. Figure 1 demonstrates our conceptualization of these relationships by showing that domestic violence directly impacts both a woman's vocational (and general) self-concept and her actual ability to work. Domestic violence can also indirectly impact these same two key constructs (self-concept and actual ability) through the effect it has on a woman's children. Generally speaking, the moderating influence of domestic violence on a woman's vocational self-concept and actual ability to work is negative and proportionate to the degree and intensity of psychological and physical violence experienced.

As noted earlier, other factors play a role as well. For example, children have an effect on women's working lives, the valence of which can be positive or negative. Specifically, children can serve as inspiration and meaning, but in the face of failed support from partners and from society, the responsibility of sole parenting can also present barriers to obtaining and maintaining meaningful employment.

As indicated in Figure 1, two other external factors play a role. The first is that of barriers (other than domestic violence), which can include a lack of transportation, housing, education, or support. The second is resources, which can include access to community assistance, shelter programs, childcare, and social support. These two factors impede and facilitate, respectively, the opportunities for women to obtain or maintain meaningful employment. It is important to note that these two factors also act recursively on the model presented in Figure 1, as the presence or absence of resources and barriers also impacts a woman's vocational self-concept and her actual ability to work.

Recently, Chronister and McWhirter (2003) have advocated for the use of SCCT (Lent et al., 1996) with battered women. The results of our study seem to support their assertions. Specifically, we have argued that domestic violence impacts a woman's (vocational) self-concept as well as her actual ability to work. In the

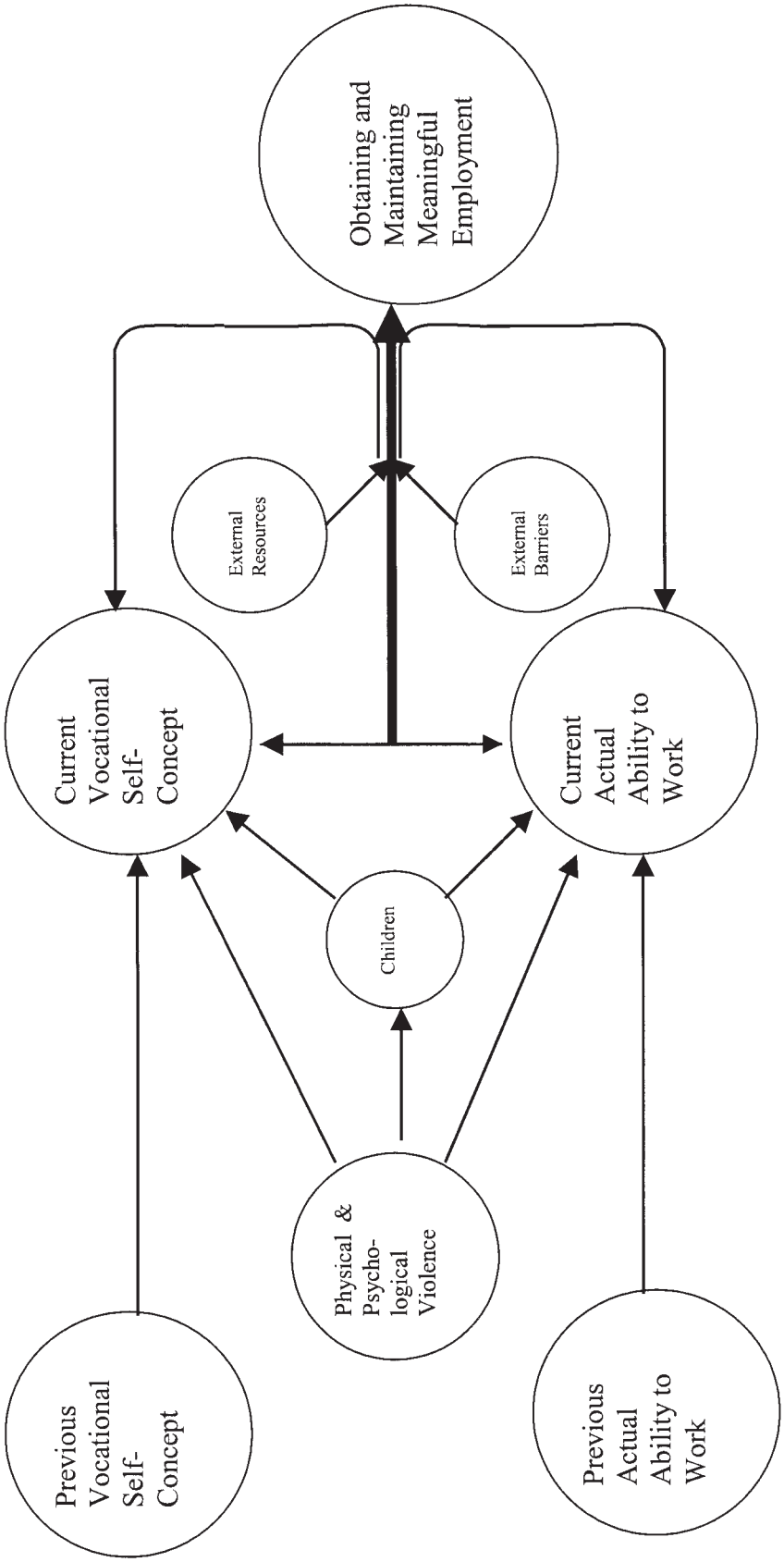

Figure 1. Factors contributing to meaningful employment among women in shelter from domestic violence.

SCCT model, the core construct of self-efficacy is a malleable component of one's self-concept. As such, self-efficacy may be a starting place from which counselors and clients can begin to counteract the negative self-beliefs associated with being a survivor of domestic violence. SCCT also posits that external supports and barriers are crucial factors in the pursuit of vocational goals, a proposition that certainly is consistent with our proposed model.

Limitations

This study took place in a city of approximately 60,000 located in the northern plains. Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of individuals in the community are of northern European background, most shelter residents (and consequently study participants) are not. In fact, over half the participants in the present study identified an ethnic minority group as their cultural heritage, and exactly half identified themselves as Native American. Certainly overrepresentation of cultural minority groups in shelter has vast sociopolitical implications, implications that go well beyond the scope of the present study.

However, the overrepresentation of cultural minority groups also has direct ramifications for our results. Specifically, the majority of individuals on our analysis team were Caucasian American, raising concerns that within the interviews, participants who represented minority culture groups may have been reticent to speak up regarding issues of race and culture. In fact, previous researchers (Brown et al., 2000) indicated that women in shelter identified discrimination as a significant barrier to employment. Still other writers have also suggested that Native American individuals may value career and work in terms that are different from the majority culture in North America (i.e., as a contribution to the community rather than to the individual; Juntunen et al., 2001). These issues did not emerge in the present study.

Indeed, as is true with all research, we may have unintentionally introduced our own bias to the research findings. For example, the general "helping stance" that many team members viewed as part of their professional identity led to a tendency to view the women survivors sympathetically while viewing the perpetrators they described more harshly. The analysis team guarded against that tendency in order to more accurately hear the voices and stories of the participants. Our caution also allowed us to capture more of the sense of personal agency that our participants exhibited.

Implications for Practice and Research

Practice. An inherent limitation to our qualitative study is that the results represent only the present sample and are based on the self-report of the women interviewed. With this caveat in mind, our results do support the notion that women in shelter from domestic violence and abuse have unique needs (Bowen, 1982; Brown et al., 2000; Gianakos, 1999; Ibrahim & Herr, 1987). Developing an understanding of these needs may be beneficial to practicing professionals who come into contact with victims of domestic violence. The following are tentative suggestions consequent to the findings of this article and a review of related literature:

Work safety. Results of this study suggest that the "on-the-job" performance of most participants was impacted by domestic violence. Consequently, the practitioner would do well to assess the emotional and physical safety of their work environment. Is the client able to work without intrusion from her (ex)intimate partner or related persons? Is she able to concentrate on her work? Is she able to trust individuals in her environment? If she is still in contact with her partner, does she have support at work and a safety plan at work? Once an assessment of these issues is completed, the client and counselor can work together to help the client take the steps she deems appropriate to improve the quality of her work life.

Home safety. Similar to work safety issues, the physical and emotional safety of the client's home environment will impact her ability to be a productive and satisfied worker. Consequently, the counselor should assess the safety of her home environment, make resources and knowledge available to the client, and once again help the client take the steps she deems appropriate to improve the quality of her home life.

Short-term needs and goals. As clients and counselors work together to determine safety issues, they also should work together to understand the immediate needs of the client. For instance, what does the individual need in order to have financial independence? Does she have housing? Transportation? Are there resources in her community that can assist her with these needs? If so, how does she utilize them? Like Bowen's (1982) recommendation, the emphasis here is on dealing with the basic survival needs of the client.

Long-term needs and goals. Many of the women interviewed had difficulty looking into the future, though once asked showed delight in the possibility of talking about their hopes and dreams. Consequently, the counselor needs to find a balance between the immediate survival needs of the client and the hope of better things (beyond survival) in the future. Presenting things in the context of short-term and long-term plans seems to be an appropriate way of striking this balance. Additionally, it is presently estimated that 50% of women who leave an abusive intimate partner will return to that partner and that it takes roughly seven attempts before a woman leaves a relationship permanently (Browne et al., 1999). Consequently, the long-term nature of the process of disengaging and/or escaping from a violent intimate partner should also play out in the manner in which counselors assist their clients in having hope for the future.

Assist with positive self-concept messages. Although participants in this study were able to identify "hard work," "determination," and "helping others" as strengths they had, more specific job-related skills were very difficult for them to identify. Consequently, a focus of counseling women in shelter must be on increasing awareness of (and even building) the general skills and strengths possessed by the woman survivor. SCCT (Lent et al., 1996) interventions may be appropriate for such an endeavor. Additionally, previous literature (Krieshok, Ulven, Hecox, & Wettersten, 2000) has suggested that writing resumes and getting vocational assessment feedback may be related to an increase in career self-efficacy for vocational counseling clients.

Empowerment. As noted at the beginning of this article, Bowen (1982) argued for a stance of empowerment on the part of the career counselor, even in the face of desired "dependency" on the part of the client. This is also a subtle theme running through the results of this study. Specifically, women in shelter have been disempowered in many aspects of their lives. Letting the women experience decision making and teaching the decision-making

skills are therefore important life skills that can be practiced as part of the counseling process.

Children. Children were identified as an integral issue in the working lives of our participants. From providing family friendly counseling services to helping women understand childcare resources to making decisions about investing in careers while raising a family, counselors can be sensitive to the role of children in a client's decision-making process. Additionally, the safety of children was also a reoccurring concern of women in the study, and counselors may also benefit from understanding the tension between making sure children are safe and finding stable employment.

Research. The findings of this analysis represent a starting point that, taken with other empirical work in the area (i.e., Brown et al., 2000; Chronister & McWhirter, 2004), begin to clarify the vocational issues and concerns of women in shelter from domestic violence. We believe the next step is to engage in further qualitative research efforts, including such methodology as grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) or narrative analysis to continue to develop our understanding of the complicated factors at play for survivors of domestic violence. Quantitative methods that test the generalizability of these (and future) findings are also warranted. More specifically, we believe that a hypothesis-driven test of domestic violence as a moderating variable on a woman's vocational self-concept and her actual ability to work would provide further verification of our present findings.

A second area of research that follows from this study is the development of an instrument (or instruments) useful to understanding the prevalence of work-related concerns of women in shelter. Such an instrument would also be useful to the individual practitioner in assessing the work-related needs of clients who present with issues related to domestic violence. In addition to instrument development, the norming and renorming of already-used instruments may also be beneficial, especially in light of the unique needs of the population and in light of the possible overrepresentation of cultural minority groups within shelter environments (see Chronister & McWhirter, 2004).

A third needed area of research is program evaluation, including the impact of a career counseling program on a domestic violence survivor's vocational and life goals. Simply put, the research question would ask whether the provision of vocational services assists women in improving their vocational self-efficacy, financial stability, job satisfaction, feelings of safety and security, and overall job satisfaction. Also of interest would be a more direct inquiry into whether financial independence (or self-sufficiency) does indeed increase a woman's ability to leave an abusive intimate partner.

Finally, as with any group of people, the survivors of domestic violence are heterogeneous and, consequently, may have many different needs on the basis of characteristics other than the violence they experience in their lives. Research on how domestic violence impacts the working lives of people of different cultures, gender, sexual orientation, and geographic location (rural vs. urban) would also provide useful information to the practicing therapist.

Challenges to such a research line are plentiful. The difficulty in obtaining a meaningful control group, dealing with attrition, and respecting the extreme need for privacy and safety for this particular population makes the search for knowledge trying. Nonetheless, creative attempts have proven fruitful, and creative attempts combined with strong researcher/agency partnerships will assist in making such relevant research happen (Edleson & Bible, 2001).

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that domestic violence has a profound effect on the working lives of women survivors. This may occur because of a diminished vocational (and general) self-concept and a decrease in actual ability to work, impacting a woman's opportunities to gain or maintain meaningful employment. The results of this study also highlight the importance of considering contextual factors such as children, available resources, and external barriers (other than domestic violence). However, more research regarding the applicability of these findings is needed if we are to create the necessary tools to assist survivors of domestic violence to live vocationally and relationally satisfying lives.

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New Editor Appointed for *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*

The American Psychological Association announces the appointment of Lois E. Tetrick, PhD, as editor of *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* for a 5-year term (2006–2010).

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Manuscript submission patterns make the precise date of completion of the 2005 volume uncertain. The current editor, Julian Barling, PhD, will receive and consider manuscripts through December 31, 2004. Should the 2005 volume be completed before that date, manuscripts will be redirected to the new editor for consideration in the 2006 volume.