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Abject Economics: The Effects of Battering and Violence on Women's Work and Employability¹

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Research on the effects of battering on women's lives has focused on poverty, homelessness, and welfare receipt, often centering on women who are uneducated or undereducated. The authors analyze how battering impacts the work and employability of women from various employment levels and backgrounds. Data were obtained through qualitative interviews with 19 residents of a domestic violence shelter, some of whom had obtained substantial education and built solid and lucrative careers prior to being abused. The women described instances in which battering had obstructed their ability to find work, maintain employment, and use their wages to establish greater economic independence and safety.

Keywords: *women; work; violence*

Financial resources are critical in battered women's struggles to find safety and gain independence from their abusers. The ability to find and maintain employment during or after an abusive relationship is of paramount importance to women seeking to escape domestic violence. Women who have adequate financial resources will likely find it easier to live independently from their abusive partners, at least economically if not emotionally, socially, and legally. Such women may also avoid having to rely on government subsidies, which is particularly important given the close governmental scrutiny under which welfare recipients now live due to welfare reform (Brush, 2000; Raphael, 1996, 2000). Unfortunately, establishing any level of independence from an abuser, such as by working, runs counter to his goals of establishing power and control through physical and sexual assault, social isolation, emotional degradation, and economic dependence (Ferraro, 2001; Ptacek, 1999). Thus, battered women face multiple barriers to seeking or maintaining employment and to staying safe on the job. Specifically, battered women may lose their jobs due to the short- or long-term effects of abuse, quit due to safety concerns, or be prohibited from working by their abusive partners (Lloyd, 1997; Raphael, 1996; Sable, Libbus, Huneke, & Anger, 1999).

The majority of research (see, as examples, Brandwein, 1999; Brandwein & Filiano, 2000; Brush, 1999, 2000; Levin, 2001; Raphael, 1996, 2000) on domestic violence and work within the social sciences has been directed toward poverty, homelessness, and welfare as many battered women find themselves in such predicaments throughout the course of and after leaving violent relationships. In the organizational management arena, research within the past decade has begun to focus on the effects of violence at work but has largely ignored the effects of partner violence on women's ability to work (see, e.g., Neuman &

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Baron, 1998; O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996), even though women's personal costs and organizational costs due to partner violence are both tremendous. For example, it is estimated that women lose nearly \$18 million in earnings each year as a result of partner violence (Greenfeld et al., 1998). Organizational costs associated with partner violence are high as well, estimated to be up to \$5 billion annually (Johnson & Indvik, 1999; Robertson, 1998).

Our goal in this article is to combine our interdisciplinary interests in a way that contributes to research in the social sciences as well as in the management arena by providing detailed accounts by women about their work-related experiences within the context of a violent relationship. An important contribution of this research is our sample's inclusion of women who had obtained substantial education and built solid and lucrative careers prior to their experiences of violence. We find that both the women with solid and lucrative careers and those who were unemployed or less well established in their jobs encountered difficulty in finding and/or maintaining work because of fear, anxiety, physical injuries, emotional trauma, stalking, and the need for safety. Using Goode's (1971) resource theory and the voices of the participants, we suggest that the violence perpetrated by their abusive partners was purposeful and specifically intended to impede the women's ability to work.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Goode (1971) argued that batterers who lack power (most frequently measured in terms of income, educational achievement, and occupational status) when compared to their partners are more likely to use violence to obtain power in the relationship. Based on this assertion, our thesis is that for some women, employment serves to decrease status and power inequities within their abusive relationships and may subsequently increase their risks of continued battering. This contention has been supported by previous research (Anderson, 1997; Hornung, McCullough, & Sugimoto, 1981; Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986; MacMillan & Gartner, 1999; Stets, 1993, 1995). In the most recent studies, battered women's attempts to work have been correlated with greater and more severe abuse, both for those on welfare (Raphael, 2000) and those living in domestic violence shelters (Riger, Ahrens, & Blickenstaff, 2000).

We suggest that battered women who are able to work have greater chances of establishing some level of independence, which in turn may lessen their abusers' ability to control them and increase the likelihood that they will be able to escape the violence. Batterers are likely to be opposed to, jealous of, and threatened by their partners' efforts to seek or maintain employment, more so than they would be by a partner whose unemployment was already contributing to her financial dependence, social disconnect, and relative powerlessness (see Friedman, Tucker, Neville, & Imperial, 1996; Johnson & Indvik, 1999, for similar arguments). Thus, batterers may abuse employed women, or women seeking employment, to prevent them from obtaining any level of financial means with which they could establish independence, resourcefulness, and social power. This is best understood within a framework that illustrates the ways in which women's resistance to partner abuse, both individually and collectively, threatens the historically and legally established gendered hierarchy within intimate relationships as well as contests notions of structurally supported hegemonic masculinity in the United States.

With this said, however, we also acknowledge that whether or not abuse is specifically targeted at women's employment, such victimization may still readily impede women's abilities to work. Indeed, such victimization is aimed expressly at establishing power and control over a woman. That she may be working or looking for work simply presents another arena in which a batterer's power and control tactics may be asserted.

ABUSE, WORK, AND EMPLOYABILITY

The effects of abuse on women's work and employability are numerous. For instance, many women are not able to look for work due to physical and psychological abuse, which contributes to their social isolation, emotional degradation, and feelings of worthlessness (Kurz, 1995). Given the well-documented inverse relationship between battering and self-esteem (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Cascardi & O'Leary, 1992; Ovara, McLeod, & Sharpe, 1996), abused women may struggle with many psychological and emotional impairments to employment. The high levels of withdrawal, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder they experience may also lead to drug and alcohol dependence and other health problems that negatively affect employment (Lloyd, 1997; Lloyd & Taluc, 1999; Tolman & Rosen, 2001).

Additionally, several forms of work-related harassment have been identified through empirical research (Chenier, 1998; Shepard & Pence, 1988), conceptual/position papers (Robertson, 1998; Zachary, 2000), and advocacy-based documents (Magee & Hampton, 1993; Wilson, 1997). Specifically, women have reported that their batterers stalked and/or assaulted them immediately prior to or during a work shift, threatened their child or children, hid or stole their car keys or transportation money, repeatedly called or sent e-mail messages to them throughout the work day, spread lies about them disguised as concern (e.g., telling the boss that she had a drug problem, had been stealing from the company, or was suffering from a mental illness), and destroyed their work documents. In Shepard and Pence's (1988) study, over half the women reported having been harassed at work by phone or in person by their abusers.

In terms of assault, Warchol's (1998) analysis of Department of Justice data found that between 1992 and 1996, partners assaulted an average of 18,000 people at work each year. Women were 5 times more likely to be victimized by a partner at work than were men, accounting for 15,000 of these incidents each year. Beyond the immediate physical injuries due to partner violence, women may suffer from long-term ailments such as chronic pain, vision or hearing loss, ulcers, indigestion, and eating disorders, all of which may complicate employment (Coker, Smith, Bethea, King, & McKeown, 2000; Wilson, 1997).

In the most severe cases, women are murdered at work by their abusers. Homicide is the leading cause of death in the workplace for women and the second leading cause of death in the workplace for men (U.S. Department of Labor, 1994; Vanden Bos & Bulatao, 1996; Younger, 1994). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries in 2001, approximately 31% of workplace fatalities of women and 14% of workplace fatalities of men were caused by interpersonal assaults (U.S. Department of Labor, 2001). Although the majority of women victims are murdered during the course of a robbery, a substantial number are murdered by someone they know, often a current or former partner (Greenfeld et al., 1998).

Although some women leave their jobs due to their partners' demands or threats or as part of leaving a community to escape the violence, others may try to retain their current, perhaps stable and lucrative, employment (Chenier, 1998; Mack, Shannon, Quick, & Quick, 1998). The desire to maintain employment creates a situation in which a batterer knows with some level of certainty when and where his victim may be found, even after a relationship has ended. Thus, a batterer may seek out his (ex)partner while she is at work and perhaps even target her coworkers or employers if he believes that she is receiving assistance and support from them (see Neuman & Baron, 1998, and Solomon, 2001, for similar discussions).

EMPLOYER COSTS OF AND RESPONSES TO PARTNER VIOLENCE

In recent years, employers have shown greater interest in protecting themselves and their employees from the effects of partner violence, but few have taken an active stance against partner violence or developed formal policies for dealing with it (Hermelin, 1995; Johnson & Indvik, 1999; Kinney, 1995; Solomon, 1995). However, employers would have much to gain by taking steps to ensure the safety and well-being of their employees. For example, employers' liability with regard to workplace assault may be greater than for random acts of violence if little is done to prevent an incident after being made aware of the existence of partner violence (e.g., Johnson & Indvik, 1999; Paetzold, 1998; Robertson, 1998). Aside from financial liability, other organizational costs associated with partner battering are staggering, estimated to be as high as \$5 billion per year in terms of absenteeism, tardiness, lowered productivity, turnover, increased security costs, and medical expenses (for such discussions, see Johnson & Indvik, 1999; Robertson, 1998; Zachary, 2000). Battered women incur an estimated \$24 million a year in medical expenses, much of which is paid by employee-sponsored health care plans (Greenfeld et al., 1998). Wisner, Gilmer, Saltzman, and Zink (1999) found that nearly \$2,000 more was spent per year on abused women than on a random sample of general health plan enrollees. Though hard to quantify with respect to organizational costs, abused women may also use work time and employers' resources to secure social, legal, or economic support or for arranging shelter if they are unable to attend to such needs from home (Wilson, 1997). Finally, Brownell (1996) has argued that assaults that occur in the workplace may victimize other employees as well, causing them extended physical and/or psychological harm, lowered productivity, absenteeism, and turnover. The costs to secondary victims may also translate into organizational costs.

Unfortunately, one response employers use to cope with the effects of partner violence on their employees is termination of the victim's employment. Shepard and Pence (1988) found that many of the women in their study had lost their jobs because of excessive absenteeism, tardiness, poor job performance, or the threatening and disruptive behavior exhibited by their partners in the workplace. Though they did not specify that termination was the reason for job loss, Browne, Salomon, and Bassuk (1999) found that only one third of the battered women in their study were able to keep their full-time jobs for 6 months or longer the year following a report of domestic violence. Clearly, abuse and battering affect women's ability to obtain and maintain employment, regardless of the specific reason stated for the job loss.

VIOLENCE, POVERTY, WELFARE, AND WORK

Many women who are forced out of the labor market by partner violence subsequently fall into poverty. For example, a disproportionate number of homeless women have experienced domestic violence, having become homeless after fleeing their abusers (Kurz, 1995; Zorza, 1994). In Tolman and Rosen's (2001) survey research with 753 women, recent victimizations by a partner were associated with economic hardship. Lloyd (1997) found that although battered women are just as likely as nonbattered women to be employed, they have lower individual incomes than nonbattered women, experience more medical problems that affect their jobs, and are more likely to have had periods of unemployment than nonbattered women. In other words, battered women are employable but have a harder time maintaining work in the same job over a period of time. Furthermore, the instability of employment affects women's and their children's ability to obtain and maintain health care. Many jobs, particularly those in the lower end service industry, where many women work, delay offering health care and other fringe benefits to employees until a probationary period is completed. Thus, multiple episodes of short-term and intermittent employment are likely to keep abuse victims from obtaining health care and other fringe benefits (e.g., paid vacation) associated with tenure at work.

A link between domestic violence and welfare is also well established (Brandwein, 1999; Brandwein & Filiano, 2000; Brush, 1999, 2000; Busch & Wolfer, 2002; Levin, 2001; Raphael, 1996, 2000). Zorza (2000) attested that welfare recipients experience nearly 3 times the amount of violence as compared to

other women in their neighborhoods who are not on public assistance. The findings by Kurz (1995) and Honeycutt, Marshall, and Weston (2001) support this contention. Specifically, in Kurz's research on 129 divorced women with children, those who suffered the worst levels of poverty also experienced the worst levels of violence, with women on welfare encountering the most serious abuse. Although findings vary, an estimated 30% to 65% of welfare recipients have experienced domestic violence sometime in their lives, and between 10% and 25% have suffered such abuse within the past 12 months (Sable et al., 1999; Tolman & Rosen, 2001; U.S. General Accounting Office, 1998). Such figures are much higher than those reported by women in the general population for whom the most recent Violence Against Women Survey has found a lifetime partner victimization rate of 25%, with 1.5% experiencing abuse within the past year (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

As we have discussed, partner violence impedes women's ability to work, making it difficult for them to obtain or maintain employment. Such violence is costly for women and for organizations that employ or would seek to employ them. In the following sections, we investigate the possibility, suggested by Goode's (1971) resource theory and existing empirical research, that some partner violence is perpetrated with the intent to prevent women from obtaining or maintaining employment. Although our investigation is not such that a causal relationship may be established, the women's stories are compelling and appear supportive of our thesis.

METHOD

The data on which our analysis is based were collected as part of a larger project on women's experiences with violence and help seeking. Although several options were available for obtaining data for this project, qualitative semistructured interviews seemed the most appropriate given the nature of the inquiry. Conducting interviews in a semistructured format provided for a wealth of information to be gathered on various aspects of the women's lives. Moreover, by not having to conform to a rigid interview schedule, the women were able to stay within their personal boundaries of comfort and safety and decide for themselves how much detail to provide about their victimization and work experiences. Such flexibility was essential because many of the women were in very dangerous and vulnerable positions at the time of the interviews.

Although this methodology may be criticized because of its lack of reliability and generalizability, it may also be credited for producing a richly detailed and descriptive set of narratives that would not have been possible through alternative means of data collection (Kvale, 1996; Lofland & Lofland, 1995). It follows a tradition within feminist epistemology of privileging women's diverse standpoints while also providing them with greater voice as to how they contribute to academic inquiry (DeVault, 1999; Harding, 1987; Hartsock, 1983; Naples, 1999; Reinharz, 1992; Smith, 1989). Indeed, in emphasizing the epistemic privilege, or the specific vantage point, of the participants, we hope that this research provided members of a marginalized and often silenced group greater opportunity to offer meaningful accounts of the ways in which the world is organized according to the oppressions they experience (Collins, 1989; Elliot, 1994; Narayan, 1988; Smith, 1987).

The interview schedule included questions regarding the women's experiences with abuse, violent victimization, and help seeking. The questions were informed by existing literature on women's victimization and were intended as a starting point in what typically became free-flowing discussions about the participants' lives. The first author completed the interviews with 19 residents of a domestic violence shelter in the Phoenix metropolitan area of Arizona between the months of July and November 2000. The women were asked to participate in the interviews during weekly "house meetings" via formal letters and verbal invitation. Because the first author worked as a fill-in staff member at the shelter, the recruitment process was particularly successful. Many women divulged that they felt greater ease in

speaking with someone they knew and trusted. The interviews were conducted at the discretion of the women within private rooms at the shelter and lasted an average of 55 minutes. Each recorded interview was transcribed and coded for emerging and recurring themes. All interviewees were given a remuneration of \$10 cash and access to their transcript as well as any subsequent reports.

All the women who volunteered to participate provided their expressed consent prior to the interview; however, the human subjects institutional review board that approved this research specifically prohibited their signing informed consent letters due to concerns regarding confidentiality and safety. All women consented to having their interviews audiotaped and were given the opportunity to provide their own pseudonyms for identification purposes. The names of any other people discussed during the interviews were changed by the authors. Additionally, the actual names of the women's employers were replaced with descriptions of the organization or industry within the text of their narratives. Aside from these changes, quotes from the participants are verbatim.

FINDINGS

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

The women were diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, age, educational attainment, socioeconomic class, and occupation. Nine (47%) identified themselves as White, 4 (21%) as African American, 2 (11%) as American Indian, and 2 (11%) as Latina. Two other women identified themselves as biracial, being American Indian/White and African American/White, respectively. Five (26%) women were between the ages of 18 and 25, 10 (53%) were between 26 and 35, and 4 (21%) were between 36 and 45. Eight (42%) women had obtained less than a high school education, 5 (26%) had either graduated from high school or obtained a general equivalency diploma (GED), and 6 (32%) had completed at least some college.

In terms of social class and occupation, 5 (26%) of the women reported being consistently poor and/or homeless prior to their stay at the shelter. These women relied on welfare, other public subsidies, or their abusers for the majority of their living expenses. They described living very transient lives involving constant movement between the streets, their own homes, the homes of relatives or friends, and shelters. These women rarely maintained employment for any length of time. Ten (53%) women reported being lower or working class. Some of these women had not worked very often but rather had relied on the income of their abusers. Others had worked, but their abusers' tactics frequently interrupted their employment and prohibited long-term economic stability. Those who had retained consistent employment described jobs that paid low wages, offered few if any fringe benefits, and were predominantly located in the service or manufacturing industries. Many of these women had also relied on welfare subsidies at some point in their lives. Finally, 4 (21%) women described themselves as middle class. They had obtained jobs that paid well and offered fringe benefits and promotional opportunities. However, these women also found themselves in financial difficulty as they had either expended their savings, lost or quit their jobs, or had their money stolen from them by their abusers, causing them to seek residence at the shelter.

The one overall commonality among the women was motherhood, as 16 (84%) had children, with an average of 2.4 children each. All but one of the children were minors and the majority were living at the shelter with their mothers. Four of the women who had children with them were also pregnant at the time of the interviews.

Although the interviews were conducted in such a way as to allow women flexibility in divulging details about their victimization, most did so willingly and openly. They gave horrific accounts of severe and multiple forms of battery. Eighteen (95%) women reported that they had been physically assaulted, which included anything from being pushed and slapped to being stabbed and shot. Seven (37%) women reported having been sexually assaulted, most frequently in the form of rape, but incidents of forced prostitution, exposure or involvement in pornography, and unwanted fondling were also described. Emotional abuse in the form of verbal threats, insults, degradation, and psychological terrorism was identified by 16 (84%) women.

Finally, 13 (68%) women described financial and/or property abuse, although all of them could have been considered victims of financial abuse because they were living in a domestic violence shelter, and hence were considered homeless, because of the abuse. Those who described instances of financial and/or property abuse reported multiple work-related consequences. These women had been unable to work due to injuries, left their jobs because of the emotional toll the abuse was taking on them, had been forced to quit because of their abusers' control tactics, or suffered in some other way that affected their economic stability. Throughout the women's narratives, challenges to their ability to find work and maintain employment were clear. Batterers used physical abuse and psychological control tactics to obstruct their partners' work, seemingly with the goal of either causing the women to quit or lose their jobs and thus become more economically dependent or to disrupt and complicate their lives after separation.

PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES OF ABUSE ON EMPLOYABILITY

The most obvious way in which abusers obstructed women's employment was through physical abuse. Throughout her abusive relationship, Lydia had worked in various full-time jobs. However, none of them had lasted long due to her injuries:

[Question (Q): Before you had your son were you working consistently or was it real here and there?] It was sporadic because he had no problem beating me up. I couldn't move so I would have to call in and say I couldn't make it. I couldn't sit there working in a bakery, talking to people with bruises and everything all over the place. [Q: Of course not. So lots of times you just couldn't work because of the injuries?] Yeah. He used to pick me off the ground by my hair. He broke the wall with my face.

Nina also suffered physical assaults that affected her ability to work. In fact, her boyfriend went so far as to attack her at her place of employment when she tried to work a longer shift:

I was working at a large discount retailer and we didn't have a phone and I told him I'd be off at a certain time, and I didn't get off then 'cause they asked me to work late . . . and I didn't have a way to call him...so he came in and dragged me off by my hair. [Q: Did they do anything?] No, they didn't stop it, no. They came to my house later to check on me, which made it worse.

Abusers endangered women's jobs through less obvious forms of physical abuse as well. Throughout the interview with Nina, it was clear that her employment had been disrupted a number of times. She had eventually gone to college, obtained some nursing training, and begun working as a licensed practical nurse in a local hospital. However, she temporarily lost her nursing license when it expired while she was living in another state with her four adolescent sons after leaving her boyfriend. She renewed her license and resumed working upon her return to Arizona but lost her job after coming to the shelter. Nina also had fairly serious mental problems that were stabilized with medication. Without medication she often tried to commit suicide by cutting herself. One of the tactics a different abusive boyfriend had used was

withholding her medication until she would have one of these suicidal episodes. This would then impede her work, as she was usually hospitalized and would subsequently lose her job.

In some cases, physical abuse was used to try to prevent women from even looking for work. Michelle described an incident after she had moved out of a shared residence with an abusive boyfriend and had started applying for jobs:

I had just left a job interview and I had on a nice suit and heels and everything and he shoved me up against the wall and I was down on the floor and he took a chair and he picked it up and the chair was like over me and I just knew he was going to hit me with it.

Illustrating Mahoney's (1991) concept of separation assault, Michelle's ex-boyfriend seemed intent on maintaining control after their relationship had ended by assaulting her because she had gone to a job interview. Although Michelle did eventually find a job, she expressed anxiety and fear about working due to this retaliatory assault by her ex-boyfriend.

As further illustration of the link between physical abuse and work, Cynthia described a cyclical pattern in which her employment revolved around her boyfriend's periodic incarceration. In describing the 9-year relationship, she reported that when her boyfriend was incarcerated (approximately six times during the 9 years), she was able to hold down a job and care for her four children. However, when he was out of prison, Cynthia usually ended up losing or quitting her job, neglecting her children, and sometimes used methamphetamines to appease her boyfriend and numb her own feelings, pain, and injuries. She described the cycle:

I'd work and I could take care of myself when he wasn't around. The only time I did drugs was when he was around. Everything was always when he was around. When he was gone, I worked and I took care of the kids.

In these narratives we find that abuse may or may not be directly targeted at impeding women's employment. In some scenarios, abusers seemed intent on disrupting and/or preventing their partners' employment, whereas in other cases the abuse in itself was sufficient to complicate women's employability.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF ABUSE

Many of the women's struggles with looking for work and maintaining employment were couched within their abusers' successful attempts to erode their psychological well-being. Of her abuser's tactic of sleep deprivation, Patsy explained, "He kept me up all night and he did not let me sleep. The guy's a psycho. He had the TV on loud, the radio on loud, all night. He was just telling me, 'You're not going to sleep.'" As a result of this form of abuse, Patsy's ability to find and be productive at work was greatly reduced because of her exhaustion and lack of concentration. In addition to disrupting her sleep patterns, Patsy's boyfriend used other means of psychological abuse to successfully erode her self-esteem to the point that she did not feel like working, or even getting ready in the morning:

I have had really good jobs. I've been a leasing agent, worked at two apartment complexes . . . I've had some really good jobs. [Q: Did getting abused affect getting a job?] Yes it did. He slapped me in the face and called me a loser. He just really made me feel ugly. Before I met him my self-esteem was like way up there. I was outgoing. I was talkin' to people. I didn't have pimples on my face. I was just a happy person. I remember I was a happy person. Once I started dating him, everything was fine, but after a while I just got worn out. My self-esteem was just like that [motions downward]. I just didn't feel good about myself. In

the morning, I would go to get dressed, I'd feel . . . I'd feel like my hair didn't come out, or I'm breaking out. It just really messed me up.

As Patsy's experience indicates, even for women who had worked fairly regularly prior to and during their abusive relationships, the emotional toll of violence was devastating. Similar to Kurz's (1995) findings, some of the women in our study felt that they were neither capable of working nor worthy of employment. As a further illustration of this, Amy discussed how her self-esteem affected the way she thought about employment and the role of her partner in terms of financial stability:

He's always worked and I really haven't had any work experience. I guess he got at my self-esteem real bad where it's like I need a man in my life. . . . If he's not in my life, I feel incomplete. . . . I haven't worked in a long time.

These narratives illustrate that the psychological and emotional aspects of domestic abuse foster poor self-esteem, depression, and feelings of low self-worth, all of which negatively affect women's employability. In some cases, the effects of abuse on the women's well-being were compounded by obvious efforts by their abusers to exploit their financial vulnerability.

ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION

As a form of financial abuse, some of the women's batterers effectively destroyed any financial independence they may have had upon entering the relationship. After establishing dependence, these abusers then exploited the women's economic vulnerability in ways that inhibited their employment. Terri described the process with which her husband accomplished this task by stripping her of her means of financial independence early on in their relationship:

I met him one day and started working for him the next. . . . Then, within a month he quit payin' me. He called my 3-year-old's father, who was never a part of my life but always paid child support. . . . He got on the phone and he said, "You don't need to send child support anymore. You'll never see Amy again. I'm her daddy now and I will take care of her." So there went \$350 out the window. I was a single mom and had been working two jobs. He was supposed to be paying me enough to make up for both jobs but he never paid me. I ended up moving in with him within a month.

After stopping her child support payments, refusing to pay her, and coercing her to move in with him, Terri's husband went on to ensure she had no means of obtaining employment or even leaving the house:

When I met him I was a 33-year-old single mom working two jobs and taking care of my three girls. I was independent. I went from being very independent to this intense personality of a prisoner. He actually, literally took my license for two years. I did not drive. He kept me out at least 45 minutes from town. There was never a way to leave.

These tactics seemed very clearly motivated by the batterer's interest in establishing and maintaining complete power and control over Terri, her life, and any means of financial security she may have derived through work. Indeed, although the mechanisms used by batterers for impeding their victims' employment and employability vary in context, they are all tremendously effective in consequence.

CONTEXT-SPECIFIC EFFECTS OF ABUSE

Abuse affected two other women in very specific ways, both of which bear mentioning here because of the consequences their situations had on their employment opportunities. Effects on the first woman involved immigration status. Anna Marie, an undocumented Mexican national, had traveled to the Phoenix area with her abusive husband and their two young daughters. After subjecting her to several incidents of verbal abuse, Anna Marie's husband beat her up and she moved to the shelter. Although her inability to work was largely due to her immigration status, she had come to the United States because of her husband. As has been documented elsewhere (Dasgupta, 2000), Anna Marie felt trapped in the United States because she feared reprisal if she returned home without her husband. At the time of the interview she was pursuing a divorce through American courts and was unsure about how she would support herself and her children after leaving the shelter. For Anna Marie as an illegal immigrant, abuse compounded the already difficult task of finding legitimate work. Having limited English skills, she spoke of her employment situation through a translator:

[Q: What do you need to leave here, to be productive, to be safe, to be happy?] I need to work and have a place for my kids. [Q: Have you had any luck finding a job?] No. I have been looking for a job, but since I am undocumented they really won't hire anyone like that. So now I'm working on getting fake papers. So far, I haven't been able to get a job. I go to a Spanish-speaking support group on Tuesdays so from there some of the ladies are helping Me get a job.

The second woman, Renee, experienced difficulty with finding work because of her batterer's nonviolent, yet coercive, tactics after the termination of their relationship. Renee's ex-boyfriend prevented her from being able to obtain work by keeping her identification and birth certificate (items she had left when she fled their home). As Renee described, her ex-boyfriend had started to harass her sister at work in his efforts to find her, as he held the identification (ID) as a form of ransom:

He doesn't know where I'm at. He still calls my sister and my sister can't stand him, so she's not letting him know where I'm at. Only she and my brother know where I'm at. She said he's getting to the point now where he's calling her job. I was telling her that I needed my ID and my birth certificate and all that stuff, and she said she tried to go over there and get it and he told her if I want anything, I'd have to come and get it myself. So I'm just going to let everything stay there.

Because he refused to give Renee's sister her identification and birth certificate, Renee's job prospects remained severely limited until she could obtain duplicate copies of these documents. For her, the danger of disclosing her whereabouts to her ex-boyfriend was not worth the risk. Her choice of safety over work was common.

THE CHOICE OF SAFETY OVER WORK

Although the women's specific experiences with abuse as an impediment to employment were diverse, they all shared the common experience of fearing for their safety, and their efforts to avoid future victimization affected their abilities to work. All of the women entered the shelter out of necessity, either fearing for their lives or being financially unable to move away on their own. Thus, some women tried to find shelter space as far away from their abusers as possible whereas others accepted the first beds to become available, as the shelters in the area were regularly filled to capacity. Accepting the first available beds often meant moving to another part of town, which could result in up to an hour and a half commute back to their communities and workplaces. In either event, the women often ended up far from home, which impeded their ability to maintain employment at their previous jobs.

Rachel had been employed as a systems analyst for a large, international phone company before entering the shelter. In fact, she had initially decided against coming to the shelter because she felt she had enough

money saved up to support herself as she hid from her boyfriend. However, she eventually decided to come out of concern for her safety. She also felt it necessary to resign from her position. In the following excerpt, she discusses her decision to seek shelter and how her employer was ill-equipped (or unwilling) to help her keep her job:

I had a real good job and he followed me to my job and he followed Me home and he showed up on my back porch. I was working at an international phone company as a systems analyst. I had to resign from my job. I wouldn't be safe. My shift ended at 10:00 at night. There's no way I was going to walk through the parking lot at 10:00 at night. No way. I don't care how many security guards walked with me. [Q: Were they willing to walk with you?] Not really. [Q: Was the company trying to help you?] Yes and no. They had a copy of my protection order.

Markeelie also quit her three jobs in order to flee her boyfriend. It was a difficult decision to make as she had worked to support herself from the time she had her first child during her senior year of high school. She had managed to continue attending school while holding down a full-time job and raising her infant son until her boyfriend forced her to drop out of school. She then began working three different jobs and was justifiably proud of herself for being able to juggle work and motherhood at such a young age. After being raped by her boyfriend and observing the fear he induced in her son, Markeelie decided to flee across the country. She did so by bus, 8 months pregnant and with her son in tow. She fully intended to resume employment, but because she was so far along in her pregnancy, she had to rely on Temporary Assistance to Needy Families [TANF] until she gave birth:

I worked most of the time. I held three jobs. I had two factory jobs, and then I was working at a large retail store. I worked at a large computer manufacturer from about 8:00 to 2:00, then the store from about 4:00 to 8:00 and then I had to go to my other job which was inventory and there was never a specific time when I'd get off of work. [Q: You were working 14 or 15 hours per day?] Yeah, well my inventory job was paying me \$8.00, and I was making \$7.00 at the store, and \$8.00 at the other place. [Q: Do you plan on going back to work after you have your baby?] Oh yeah. I've worked all the way up until I came here. . . . Trevor had gotten to a point where he was just terrified. He got to a point where he wouldn't eat when his father was around, he wouldn't sleep while his father was around and he wouldn't even play or watch TV. He would just sit there like a mummy and wouldn't do anything. That's how terrified he was of his father. That's a lot for a 2-year-old. Then Jerry had gotten to a point where he would start raping me and hitting me in the stomach and I had to make a choice to get us out of the situation.

Melissa left her job before coming to the shelter, as well. Before making the decision, however, she struggled with how she would manage her household alone. Even with a good job as a food service manager at a prison, the financial obligations of providing for seven young children were overwhelming. She felt that without her husband's contributions, however minor they were, she would be unable to afford the expenses of child rearing, particularly daycare, which had been provided at a reduced rate by her boyfriend's mother. In the end, she did leave, entered the shelter, and quit her well-paying job because it was too far of a commute from the shelter. She described her predicament and resentment over leaving her job:

I was paying for everything. All of his money went to his car, his clothes . . . him. I was paying for everything . . . groceries . . . you name it, I paid for it. I always took care of all of the kids' needs anyway, but he wasn't helping any more. So I still had this in my head, "I can't make it." I could have . . . I would've been alright. I'd still have my good paying job. I would have had to struggle a little bit for awhile. . . . So now I've got to start all over. I got paid good. I was making \$13.00 per hour plus I got paid overtime [OT] which is very rare for management to get paid OT so I was bringing, with the overtime I put in, about \$700 or \$800 a week alone. . . . I couldn't have stayed because I don't have the transportation back and forth and being in management I have to be accessible and I wouldn't be accessible here.

In another case, Samantha was no longer able to work because she had fled the home she had shared with her boyfriend without her computer. She had relied on her computer to work from home so that she did not have to put her 14-month-old son in daycare. When her boyfriend refused to return the computer, Samantha was unable to work. As she described,

He's got everything I own, including my computer which is my job and he won't give it back to me. [Q: What were you doing with work?] Typing in rebate forms into the computer. I can do it at home and not put him in daycare. It pays pretty good. [Q: And how long have you been working on the rebates?] About 9 months.

Fortunately, Samantha reported that her employers were holding a position for her if and when she was able to get her computer back. However, her experience with an understanding employer was rare. Because few of their employers made systematic or conscientious efforts to protect the women, or had formal policies for assisting domestic violence victims, when faced with a choice between safety and economic stability, the women chose safety. Indeed, because all of the women in this study were in a shelter at a confidential location, they were concerned about going anywhere that was less secure (i.e., any public place). They were particularly fearful of going back to their jobs after entering the shelter, knowing well that their workplace would be the one location at which they could be found. As Patsy commented, "He's been looking for me. . . . He's went to my job that I did work at looking for me."

In addition to fear of returning to their old jobs, some women were afraid of looking for new jobs as well. For instance, Traci wanted to work in order to save enough money to move out of the area, but did not feel safe:

I want my life back and that's all I want. I have a real good job with a large retail chain store but it scares me to death to go to work every day. It's like I feel like I'm a hunted animal and he's the hunter. My mother is like, "Why don't you save up some money and move? Just leave the entire state. I know you don't want to because of how close you are to the reservation up here and everything, but think about it. Why don't you move to Utah, move to Idaho . . . I know you love the desert and that's what you crave. Just change locations." It's hard for me to do because I love this place. . . . I have no doubt in my mind that I'll bounce back in a month and be safe for another year maybe, or until they catch him.

Although Traci's prospects for the future were optimistic, it was clear that she only thought about the short-term—being safe tomorrow, next month, or next year, as her ex-boyfriend was on the run from authorities at the time of the interview. Until his apprehension, she was not going to feel safe regardless of where she was living and where she was working. Even after a relationship had ended, batterers continued to harass, assault, and in other ways complicate their ex-partners' lives (Mahoney, 1991).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

To date, much of the research on domestic violence and work has centered around the effects of abuse on women in poverty or on welfare. Through an economically, occupationally, and educationally diverse sample of battered women, our research expands and contributes to existing literature through an examination of specific, yet varied, ways in which abuse affects women's employability and attempts to work.

In addition, our research considered the work-related effects of abuse for women who were employed fairly consistently, some of whom had obtained substantial education and built solid and lucrative careers but lost or left their jobs due to the partner violence. In accordance with Goode's (1971) resource theory and existing empirical research, we have found that at least some partner violence was perpetrated with the intent to prevent women from obtaining or maintaining employment, and for other women, the effects

of abuse served the same function regardless of whether their abuse was expressly targeted at such consequences.

Indeed, our research identified patterns of abuse that prevented or disrupted women's employment. Although research in the organizational management arena has continuously denied the relevance of partner violence to work, effects of partner violence that are directly related to work and organizations clearly include absence, turnover, replacement, and in some cases, violence perpetrated at work. When women choose safety over work and resign, are dragged away from the workplace by the hair, or are absent due to facial bruises, the inaccuracy of claims that partner violence is not an organizational issue becomes increasingly clear.

The women in our sample suffered the financial consequences of not being able to go to work or hold down decent-paying jobs, which contributed to their financial instability, poverty, and, for many, subjugation to the government's ever-watchful eye under welfare. Their futures, as well as the futures of their children, were uncertain. Many did not know how they would support themselves and their families, obtain the necessary education and training needed for the most desirable and lucrative positions, and remain safe after leaving the shelter.

Further research and activism on women's work within the context of partner violence is certainly merited. In addition to the obvious individual and social economic incentives for ensuring women's safe and productive employment, research has suggested that paid work, increased financial independence, and educational and vocational training and success, if occurring in a safe and supportive context, are emotionally and psychologically rehabilitative for battered women (Murphy, 1997). Moreover, investment in vocational training and employment resources may go a long way toward reducing the revictimization of battered women by helping them feel empowered and supported while leaving their batterers and establishing safe and productive lives.

As an illustration of this, Websdale and Johnson (1997) evaluated a service called Job Readiness Programs that at the time of their research existed within domestic violence shelters throughout Kentucky. The program was used as a complement to the basic services the shelters offered to each of their residents. Premised on the assumption that battered women are active help seekers and problem solvers, the program was aimed at challenging the structural disadvantages many face upon leaving violent situations by offering vocational training, education, employment, housing, child care, legal advice, assistance with welfare, and skills training for independent living. Such a comprehensive approach garnered extremely positive results within Websdale and Johnson's research, with participants reporting less revictimization, better development of and satisfaction with social support systems, and greater economic stability. Recent research (Cole, 2001; Lein, Jacquet, Lewis, Cole, & Williams, 2001) has substantiated the need for this type of comprehensive-based approach to helping battered women not only in shelters but also within other community agencies where women go for help, including welfare offices.

Assuming that a woman can find a job, housing, and child care, ensuring her safety while at work is also of paramount importance. Early research has suggested that employee assistance programs (EAPs) aimed at alleviating workplace violence and offering support to workers are helpful for addressing problems before they reach crisis levels (Saltzberg & Bryant, 1988). In addition to such programs, we recommend

that employers emphasize efforts to assist battered women in maintaining employment, perhaps by providing transfers (if requested) or paid leave where possible. Formal and informal efforts to assist abused employees may result in positive outcomes for the employers as well as for the employees. For at least 2 of the participants in our study, such programs would have been extremely helpful. Rachel, a college educated systems analyst, left her lucrative job after being followed home from work. Had her employer, a large international phone company with offices throughout the United States, provided her with a transfer, Rachel would have been able to maintain employment and the employer would have been able to retain an employee and generate goodwill among other employees. For Samantha, whose ex-partner kept her computer, had the employer who was holding her job also provided her with another computer, Samantha would have been able to continue working. Her continuous employment would also have provided the employer with continuity and a knowledgeable and loyal employee.

Formal EAPs and other efforts to assist battered women may also aid our understanding of how much domestic violence reaches the workplace and what types of services workers need to feel safe and productive while at work. Support and enforcement of a victim's restraining order or an agency-based restraining order, along with heightened security, protection from penalty or termination for an employee's disclosure of domestic violence, and other preventive and protective measures, may also be helpful (Chenier, 1998; Zachary, 2000).

Despite considerable funding and research being devoted to the criminal justice response to domestic violence, little has changed in the rates of battering or in the official mechanisms for handling abusers. Certainly, efforts to combat battering would benefit from recognition of the problem in various social settings and institutions. We believe that concerted corporate efforts to reduce domestic violence and assist battered workers are an untapped but important means of addressing partner violence. These efforts, coupled with larger structural challenges to gendered, raced, and classed power relations within intimate relationships and in society are required to confront domestic violence on a broader scale.

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