



Church soup kitchen — New York (GEORGE COHEN / IMPACT VISUALS)

PATHFINDER

on

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

IN THE

UNITED STATES

*The Center on Crime,
Communities & Culture*

DISCUSSION OF MAJOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TERMS



North Carolina prison inmate incarcerated for killing her husband after years of physical abuse (SARAH HOSKINS /IMPACT VISUALS)

Solid research begins with a firm understanding of key concepts, but identifying concise, universal definitions in the field of domestic violence is difficult. Professional groups and various disciplines have all put forth different opinions on the usage or application of certain terms. This lack of standard terminology makes information-sharing across disciplines difficult.

Confusion arises with respect to defining terms because, in some cases, different disciplines use different words to mean the same thing. *Domestic violence* and *family violence*, for example, are used interchangeably in the social sciences, whereas the legal system distinguishes between the two terms. The lack of nationally recognized, uniform definitions of what constitutes violence or battering has prevented legal, health care, and social service professionals from responding in the most effective manner to the needs of their clients.

Information on the subject of battering in same-sex relationships and incidences involving women battering men is

extremely limited. This may be a result of underreporting and a general unwillingness to seriously address the problem.¹ For simplification and continuity, we will address men as batterers and women as victims.² We do, however, suggest that readers interested in other types of relationships involving abuse access the available literature and resources listed in the pathfinder. Please also see the special note at the end of this section which focuses on domestic violence in same-sex relationships.

Domestic violence and battering may also take on different forms and have different meanings in other cultures. We have focused our research on Western-based resources and information, but have attempted to include as much material as possible that addresses implications of domestic violence in other cultures. Please utilize the resources we have provided and let us know of additional sources that should be included in the updated, electronic version of this document.

The Center on Crime, Communities & Culture seeks to provide the user of this pathfinder with the most reliable and up-to-date information possible. With that in mind, we have developed the following definitions based on a review of the most current and widely-used literature available from the health care, legal, and social service fields.

We welcome comments and suggestions. Please contact the Center on Crime, Communities & Culture at our website: <http://www.soros.org/crime/>.

BATTERING

Dr. Anne H. Flitcraft originally coined the term *woman battering* in the 1970s, describing it as an “identifiable pattern of ongoing, systematic, and escalating abuse that often extends over a lifetime” (Flitcraft, 1977, p. 3). *Battering* refers to intentionally injuring someone. A wide range of physical

and psychological pain is inflicted upon victims by their batterers. Battering is also about control. In addition to overt forms of physical and psychological abuse, the batterer may control the victim’s access to the outside world by denying her use of the telephone, money for public transportation, or the simple freedom to leave her home unescorted.

Physical Abuse

The dynamics of an abusive relationship where battering occurs are more complicated than many people realize. Physical abuse in a battering relationship is not just about a husband injuring his wife. Kaplan points out, in her book *Family Violence: A Clinical and Legal Guide*, that “both men and women are targets of assault during domestic violence” (Kaplan, 1996, p. 142). The abuse may involve one person (the batterer) injuring the victim. But, very often the victim also physically injures the batterer. The victim may retaliate for past abuse, she may defend herself from further violence, or she may simply lose control and strike out at the batterer without provocation.

The victim’s abuse generally follows a pattern that begins with occasional slapping or pinching and escalates to more serious abuse, such as burning, punching, or assault with an object or weapon. Battering may also involve sadistic sexual acts ranging from rape to genital mutilation. Repeated violent episodes often lead to the victim’s hospitalization and sometimes death.

It is important to note here that, generally speaking, a man’s greater average size and strength may mean that a violent act he commits would inflict considerably more pain and injury on a female victim than if the same act were committed by a woman on her male partner.

Psychological Abuse

Psychological abuse, also referred to as emotional abuse or nonphysical abuse, is another debilitating form of battering

ABSTRACTS, INDEXES, AND DATABASES

► INTRODUCTION

The outline below contains brief descriptions of the major sources available in three broad fields of research: law, medicine, and the social sciences. Within each category, entries appear in alphabetical order by source name. Contact information for the primary producer of each source is included at the end of the entry. Internet addresses have been provided where available. A hyperlink to the producer's website has been created in the electronic version of this pathfinder whenever possible.

For those readers who may be unfamiliar with library terminology: An *abstract* is a brief synopsis or summary of the key points discussed in a journal article or textbook. An *index* is an organized set of terms used to create either a database or a thesaurus. An index often contains information such as author name and affiliation, journal citation, and subject headings (keywords to use when researching a topic). It is a reference tool that enables the researcher to find a narrow range of information from within a much larger body of material. A *database* is a means of organizing information into sets that ease the search and retrieval of information. This term usually describes a tool that is available in machine-readable format, either on disk, on-line through a vendor, or on the Internet.

► LEGAL

The following commercial databases may be accessed by subscription, which can be quite expensive for the consumer. Alternatively, you may be able to access these services through your local public or academic library or major law firm.

LEXIS

Widely-used service for on-line legal research, with comprehensive, full-text reference and research service; updated continuously.

Contact:

LEXIS/NEXIS
475 Park Avenue South, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10016
Phone: (800) 346-9759 Customer Service
URL: <http://www.lexis-nexis.com>

Westlaw

Competitor of LEXIS for on-line legal research; has both CD-ROM and on-line products; updated continuously.

Contact:

West Information Publishing Group
P.O. Box 64833
St. Paul, MN 55164-0833
Phone: (800) 328-4880
E-mail: westmedia@westpub.com
URL: <http://www.westpub.com>

► MEDICAL

The National Library of Medicine databases are modestly priced and can be accessed by subscription, either through the Internet or by directly contacting the Library at the address provided below. EMBASE and PsychAbstracts are somewhat more expensive, but may be accessed on a pay-as-you-go basis using an on-line service like CompuServe.

BIOETHICSLINE (BIOETHICS onLINE)

Bibliographic citations on ethics and public policy in the health care field. Includes citations from 1973-present; updated bimonthly.

Contact:

National Library of Medicine
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, MD 20894
Phone: (800) 638-8480
E-mail: mms@nlm.nih.gov

EMBASE (Excerpta Medica)

Bibliographic database of biomedical literature. Contains more international coverage than MEDLINE; heavier emphasis on molecular level. Covers literature from 1974-present; updated weekly.

Contact:

Elsevier Science
Secondary Publishing Division
245 West 17th Street
New York, NY 10011
Phone: (800) 457-3633
Fax: (212) 633-3975
E-mail: usembase-f@elsevier.com
URL: <http://www.elsevier.nl/>

HealthSTAR

Bibliographic database of clinical and non-clinical health care delivery services; includes material on wide range of topics, including outcomes measures, insurance, manpower, health care policy, etc. It contains literature from 1975-present, primarily journal articles in English, French, and German. Access on-line or via the Internet; updated monthly.

Contact:

National Library of Medicine
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, MD 20894
Phone: (800) 638-8480
E-mail: mms@nlm.nih.gov

Index Medicus and MEDLINE

Premier medical database, providing abstracts, some full-text available via Internet, several reference tools. More than 3,700 biomedical journals from around the world indexed (including non-English language); includes citations from 1966-present. Available in print (*Index Medicus*), on-line, on CD-ROM, or the Internet (*MEDLINE*): clinical. On-line database updated weekly; printed indexes updated monthly; hardcover *Cumulated Index Medicus* published annually.

Contact:

National Library of Medicine
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, MD 20894
Phone: (800) 638-8480
E-mail: mms@nlm.nih.gov
URL: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov>

RESOURCE DIRECTORIES *

Directory of victim assistance programs and resources. (1993).
Des Moines, IA: Kendall-Hunt.

Chapman, J. R. (Undated). *Directory of information resources on victimization of women.* Chevy Chase, MD: Response. (Available in IBM or print formats.)

Chapman, J. R. (Undated). *Directory of international networking resources on violence against women.* Chevy Chase, MD: Response. (Available in IBM or print formats.)

Contact:

Response
4136 Leland St.
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
Phone: (301) 951-0039

Reed, R., & Danek, K. (1993). *How and where to find facts and get help.* San Jose, CA: R & E.

Contact:

R & E Publishers
468 Auzerais Avenue, Suite A
San Jose, CA 95126
Phone: (408) 977-0681
Fax: (408) 977-0693

* For more complete details, please refer to: *Directories in Print* (13th ed.). (1996). (Vol. 1). New York: Gale Research.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

► PRINTED

Cooper, M. (1992). *Current and future effects on children witnessing parental violence: An overview and annotated bibliography.* (Vol. 1). Vancouver, BC: British Columbia Institute on Family Violence.

The first in the Institute's series on interpersonal violence, this is an annotated bibliography of the effects on children who witness parental violence.

Cooper, M. (1994). *Child custody and access in the context of family violence: An overview and annotated bibliography.* (Vol. 2). Vancouver, BC: British Columbia Institute on Family Violence.

The second in the Institute's series on interpersonal violence, this is a brief overview and annotated bibliography that lists 81 relevant books and articles, with abstracts arranged topically. Also indexed by both author and subject.

Nordquist, J. (1992). *Violence against women: A bibliography.* Santa Cruz, CA: Reference and Research Services.

Nordquist, J. (1995). *Domestic violence, spouse abuse/marital rape.* Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

► PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTIONS

Ferrato, D. (1991). *Living with the enemy*. [photojournalism]. New York: Aperture.

A highly lauded work that features photographs of battered women, their children, batterers, police, and other scenes. Graphic, but compelling.

NOTE: *The Minnesota Higher Education Center against Violence and Abuse has compiled an extensive bibliography of films and videos on domestic violence. Please contact them at the address below for further information.*

Minnesota Higher Education Center against
Violence and Abuse
386 McNeal Hall
1985 Buford Avenue
University of Minnesota
Saint Paul, MN 55108
e-mail: mincava@umn.edu
URL: <http://www.umn.edu/mincava/>

INTERNET RESOURCES

Searching the Internet for information on domestic violence can be challenging.

First, the user has to choose a search engine if using the World Wide Web, or find a relevant gopher server. Once the search term has been entered, the search engine may indicate a huge number of websites or gopher sites that the user must browse in order to find any meaningful information. The following are just a few addresses that will point you toward interesting sites that are considered authoritative sources of domestic violence information. We have chosen the sites below for the unique audience each targets, or because we have found them to be particularly comprehensive.

The electronic version of this section will enable you to circumvent some of the frustrations of seeking Internet-accessible material by allowing you to hyperlink directly to these sites. The Internet addresses provided here (URL's) were all functioning at press time. There should be no additional cost for printing material from these websites beyond customary monthly Internet access charges.

California Coalition for Battered Women in Prison

This organization's homepage is more of a fact sheet than a website. The Coalition represents a unique group of people directly impacted by domestic violence.

URL:

<http://www.igc.org/justice/prisons/women/ccbwp-brochure.html>

Colorado Domestic Violence Resource and Prevention Page

Colorado's site is one of the most comprehensive domestic violence prevention sites on the Web. One particularly