POLITICAL AGENDA SETTING
AND THE BATTERED WOMEN’S ISSUE:
THE EFFECTS OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING
ON BATTERED WOMEN’S PROGRAMS

by

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A confluence of social movements occurred in the 1960s which set the stage for public recognition of the battered women problem. Heightened awareness at the community level, combined with the growing interest of informed segments of the professional community, gave the issue its initial hearing and response. Emergency shelters and other alternative institutions run by local women's groups emerged as concrete, grass roots expressions of the demands generated within these two communities.

The success of these early shelters in demonstrating a clear demand for their services, as well as a feasible alternative to existing institutional arrangements, played a role in attracting government recognition and support in the mid-seventies. These early grass roots responses to the problem of family violence drew official attention for several reasons. First, they allowed agencies to expand and diversify existing clientele. Secondly, they promoted "social control," "program," and "professional enterprise" by official, lay, and professional groups seeking to expand their realm of social power and influence. And last, they afforded them the opportunity to structure responses to the problem which effectively ensured that agency practice and goals would go undisrupted by outside demands for specific reforms.

The media played a central role in focusing the attention of public officials on the problem of family violence and in facilitating exchanges between potential agency sponsors and shelter leaders. Because they exist at the boundary which separates the public and private spheres, the media function as both a barometer of, and an impetus to, social change. Their task is to discover, unveil, create, and recreate what is considered "public." As a result, their role in transforming the battered women issue from a source of private shame to one of public concern merits attention.

The elevation of the battered women issue to the government's agenda brought with it significant changes in the nature and scope of earlier grass roots shelter efforts. The purpose of this paper is to examine the substance of these changes, how they occurred, and who the principal actors were.

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I. Introduction

Back in the early 1970s when women first began to seek refuge together from their violent partners, shelters were places where women learned to regain control of their lives. There, women cooked, shopped and lived communally; the shelter was a home. Over the years, however, the situation has changed quite drastically from what it was a decade ago:

For the battered woman who manages to escape her batterer and get into a shelter, she may find herself in a "mini-institution," at the mercy of a bureaucrat and punitive big daddy with big rules and restrictions.¹

Like the home she just left, the shelter may leave her with little control over anything.

According to a former director of one of New York City's battered women's shelters, the primary reason for this shift in the nature of shelter programs can be found in the financial arrangements which exist between individual shelters and funding agencies which leave the former in a highly dependent position.² For example, in New York City, the Human Resources Administration (HRA) acts as the principal municipal agency for administering social service programs. Through its office of Family and Adult Services, it funds the majority of New York City's battered women's shelters.³ Despite the fact that these shelter programs are all private, non-profit, and presumably autonomous organizations, "their hopeless financial dependence on city contracts renders them utterly vulnerable to HRA meddling."⁴
Mary Haviland, coordinator of the Park Slope Safe Homes Project, the only non-HRA funded shelter for battered women, claims that the HRA has gradually asserted greater control over the internal decision-making processes of individual shelters. It has achieved this through several different mechanisms. In the first place, the agency dictates both the type and number of shelter staff positions, salaries, benefits, and job qualifications. Secondly, it demands free access to case records, despite the confidential information which may be contained within them. The HRA also determines each shelter's budget; it stipulates not only the allowable categories of expense but the amounts to be contained in each as well.

Modifying the budget is such a bureaucratic bog that if a shelter runs out of money in one category but has a surplus of funds in another, then it may be forced to return funds to the city at the end of the fiscal year due to HRA's bungled budgeting.

Lastly, the agency sets the salaries for shelter staff, which by most standards are startlingly low. Counselors at Women's Survival Space, for example, receive an annual salary of $11,000 to $12,000.

Thus, reliance on HRA funding has significantly altered the nature and scope of battered women's shelter programs in New York City. Shelters, once created and run on the principal that battered women need an environment of healing and empowerment, now find such goals in frequent conflict with bureaucratic funding requirements. Nor is New York City's experience unique: over the past decade, battered women's programs have undergone
constant transformation, resulting in the continuing redefinition of the battered women problem.

In the early seventies, wife beating generated considerable media and public attention. This spawned the development of a multi-faceted social movement which sought to define the parameters of the problem and to promote specific intervention strategies for its remedy. An early product of these efforts was the establishment of shelters, or safe places within local communities where battered women could seek refuge. Government recognition and funding of battered women's programs in the mid-seventies signalled an important shift in the nature of these shelter programs. Funding sources formally specified the nature of the clientele to be served, the composition of the shelter, the membership of the board of directors, the nature of the record-keeping required, and the nature of the services rendered. Receiving monies from official sources came with significant strings attached and effectively changed existing programs.

In this paper, I will attempt to trace the substance and direction of these changes, as well as their effect on the continuing redefinition of the battered women problem. In Chapter 2, I examine the emergence of the wife abuse issue in the 1960s. I will demonstrate how heightened awareness at the community level, combined with the growing interest of informed segments of the professional community, gave the issue its initial hearing and response. Emergency shelters were created in response to the demands generated within these two
communities. In Chapter 3, I take up the issue of official recognition: when and by what avenues it occurred, as well as who the principal actors were. This section is devoted to surveying the range of government responses to the problem of battered women. In Chapter 4, I examine the role of the media in attracting official recognition and in facilitating exchanges between agency officials and movement members. Specifically, I address the incentives to the media in covering the wife abuse issue, the role of the media in defining the problem, and the effects of media involvement in shaping the outcome. Finally, in Chapter 5, having surveyed the range of official responses to the problem, I will attempt to analyze their structure. In this section, I will explore the patterns of interaction and negotiation which developed as a consequence of official recognition, as well as the incentives which influenced the actions of both agency sponsors and shelter leaders.
ENDNOTES


2. Ibid.

3. Personal interview with Robert Trobe, The Deputy Administrator for Family and Adult Services, HRA.


5. Ibid. Additionally, this was confirmed in a telephone interview with Mary Haviland.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.
II. The "Discovery" of Battered Women

A confluence of social movements occurred in the 1960s which gave the battered women's issue its particular expression. Beginning with the civil rights activists, these movements challenged the validity of commonly held notions and beliefs. The anti-war and student movements crystallized debate over the nature and quality of American political life by raising new questions regarding the assumptions and practices of public and private institutions. In particular, the women's movement sought to open up new issues to public debate such as de jure and de facto sex discrimination, sex roles, and the family.

"The personal is political," a slogan indicative of the ideology of a large sector of the women's movement, rejected the notion that certain subjects were isolated, individual problems or taboo topics. Increasingly, the events of women's lives came under public scrutiny as they became important subjects for discussion and analysis. A sense of experimentation, discovery, and commonality took hold among women across the country. Even traditional women's magazines such as "Family Circle" began publishing articles on day care, working women, and women's health issues.

An outgrowth of this activity was the anti-rape movement. Again, women sought to draw upon and politicize their personal experiences. "Speak outs" were devised and employed in several major cities to galvanize public recognition of the problem and to counteract prevailing stereotypes of women as weak, defenseless victims. In many areas, feminist organizations
responded by establishing local rape crisis lines and advocacy services for victims of sexual assault. Not surprisingly, other women took advantage of these services as well, among them many battered women. As abused women began identifying themselves as in need of emergency shelter and assistance, the magnitude of the phenomenon became evident.

Research in the area of child abuse and neglect paralleled this general interest in women's issues. The late 1960s witnessed a spate of research documenting the incidence, prevalence, and severity of child abuse and neglect in the United States. Out of this growing body of work was coined the term "battered child syndrome" to suggest the dramatic, though not necessarily systemic, nature of the problem. By the late 1970s, social scientists and researchers began to establish a connection between child abuse and wife abuse, when findings documented by the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) revealed that approximately 39 percent of all children in the child abuse programs under study came from families in which the mother, too, was abused.

Activities in both these areas --rape and child abuse--lent ballast to feminist groups in their efforts to force discussion of violence and power within the family. The dynamics of familial interaction, particularly the use of force within the family, increasingly came under public scrutiny. With the help of research conducted by Gelles, Steinmetz and Strauss, among others, the issue of wife abuse slowly emerged from behind the matrimonial door into the domain of sociologists
and social scientists.

This research played a crucial role in documenting and validating the battered woman problem as a "real" problem. For the first time, statistics on the incidence and prevalence of wife beating became available and proliferated. It was estimated that between 1.8 and 3.3 million women experienced intra-spousal violence of some form every year; approximately one in four was estimated to be pregnant at the time the violence occurred. Indeed, it appeared that spousal abuse constituted the one truly democratic institution of our time, cutting across racial, religious, age, and socioeconomic lines. In sum, this range of activities served to create a climate in which the issue could be identified and subsequently legitimated as a matter of public concern.

Providing a backdrop for these statistics was the emergence of small, grass roots shelter projects in the United States and abroad. Local women's groups created alternative institutions for battered women "outside the system" in response to the demands generated within their communities. The first shelter to gain widespread publicity and recognition was the Chiswick Women's Aid, established in London, England, in 1971. Its charismatic leader and co-founder, Erin Pizzey, later wrote a book entitled "Scream Quietly or the Neighbors Will Hear," dramatizing the plight of abused wives and drawing attention to the lack of official response to the problem. Based on a series of television programs bearing the same name, and
garnered a great deal of publicity for Chiswick Women's Aid and made her the shelter movement's first media star.

This earned her the disdain of many coworkers and followers, who broke away from Chiswick Women's Aid to form the National Women's Aid Federation (NWAF). By 1980, the number of shelters sponsored by NWAF in England grew to 150; these served primarily poor and working class women and their children. Due to the persistence of both the NWAF and Pizzey, the British Parliament established two committees in 1974 to examine the issue of wife abuse, and in 1976 it passed a law granting broader protection to battered wives.

The concept of providing supportive refuge for abused women and their children crossed the Atlantic and took hold in the United States. The earliest shelters, however, evolved from Al-Anon groups, self-help groups designed to assist the families of alcoholics, rather than feminist consciousness-raising efforts. Rainbow Retreat and Haven House, widely cited as the first shelters catering to battered women in the U.S., opened their doors in 1973 and 1974 respectively. Both shelters were established to provide refuge and assistance to the families of alcoholics and refused women access in cases where alcoholism did not constitute an important ingredient of the domestic problem. In their identification of alcoholism as the root cause of battery, as opposed to an excuse for it, these early shelters differed significantly from their feminist successors. The media image of shelters for battered women ties them to the
feminist movement, but such connections did not exist in the earliest U.S. shelters.

Women's House in St. Paul, Minnesota, offers the first example of a shelter established with the specific purpose of providing refuge and assistance to battered women and their children. Its roots lay in the consciousness-raising efforts of a local women's group calling itself Women's Advocates. In 1971, Women's Advocates set up a crisis phone line in the county legal assistance office to provide generic crisis counselling to the women of St. Paul. Before long, they were confronted with the inadequacy and inefficiency of existing legal provisions for ensuring the safety and protection of victims of wife abuse. Women lodging complaints through formal channels often possessed no other alternative but to remain at home while going through the procedures for filing a complaint or petitioning for marriage dissolution. As in many other states, the fact that their lives may have been in danger evoked no official response.

The lack of official response, combined with a growing perception of unmet need, prompted Women's Advocates to incorporate as a nonprofit corporation in 1972. Initially, local volunteers housed the victims and their children in their own homes. Then in 1974, local funding sources enabled Women's House to open its doors. The significance of Women's House as the first feminist shelter rests on the fact that its experience in creating an alternative solution to the problem of wife abuse was not unique. Its success presaged the emergence of similar
grass roots feminist responses to what was increasingly perceived as an unmet need.

Following the lead of local women's groups, feminist organizations began focusing on the issue of wife abuse in the mid-1970s. At the international level, the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women was convened in Brussels in 1976. Attended by over 2,000 women from 33 countries, the Tribunal successfully passed a resolution calling on the governments of nations worldwide to "combat the crime of woman battering" and to "recognize the existence and extent of this problem and accept the need for refuges, financial aid, and effective legal protection for these women." The resolution's international scope of demand constituted an important "claim of power."

Setting the stage on the national scene, the National Organization for Women (NOW) established the National Task Force on Battered Women/Household Violence at its eighth annual conference in October of 1975. Its objectives included: (1) launching an education program to increase public awareness of the prevalence of marital violence; (2) forming coalitions with other women's organizations; and (3) lobbying for remedial legislation. By 1977, one of the NOW Task Force's coordinators, Del Martin, came out with the influential book "Battered Wives." Later that same year the National Women's Year Conference in Houston, Texas, passed a resolution urging action on the issue at the federal, state, and local levels. Because NOW views itself essentially as a political change
organization, it directed its efforts towards the macro-societal, rather than the micro-individual, level. This meant that it was concerned less with the direct provision of services and more with the transformation of deep-seated attitudes and expectations regarding women's position in society.

Paralleling efforts at the national level, were statewide activities. In 1975, a New York conference on battered women took place. Maria Roy, a social worker and organizer of the conference, later went on to found Abused Women's Aid in Crisis (AWAIC), a social service organization established to provide immediate crisis services to the victims of domestic violence. These included telephone counselling and crisis intervention, general information and referrals to shelters, and community outreach. Since its inception, AWAIC has proven successful in gaining media attention, creating and operating a shelter for battered women, and aiding the passage of state legislation affecting the provision of services to battered women.

This coalescing of events at the international, national, and state levels gained momentum from local initiatives as well. Beginning in 1976, New York City NOW chapters began forming their own domestic violence task forces, as did other local chapters. Moreover, the number of community organizations established to provide crisis shelter and services to the victims of wife abuse continued to grow. Most began as community-based groups of concerned individuals whose members were almost exclusively women and frequently familiar with the problem through their professions.
Estimates of the number of organizations providing services to battered women vary, but by all accounts the figure has risen dramatically over the years. In 1975, perhaps a dozen shelters or other programs provided assistance to these victims. By the end of 1977, a survey conducted by the Colorado Association for Aid to Battered Women located 79 shelters and 116 other programs serving women victims. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights identified 300 shelters, hotlines, and advocacy groups for battered women nationwide in 1978. And in 1979, U.S. News and World Report reported that over 170 shelters opened in the U.S. between 1975 and 1978.

Funding sources for shelter and direct service provision comprise a patchwork of public and private institutions as well as federal, state, and local agencies. They range from churches and traditional women's organizations such as the YWCA to the federal government, especially the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) and the Department of Labor, through the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA). Mapping the terrain between these two points are such diverse funding sources as state and city government, private foundations, local voluntary organizations, fund-raising campaigns like the United Way, and individual fund-raising campaigns. Staff salaries and housing expenses make the operation of shelters a costly venture; as a result, there is a constant focus on fund-raising efforts.

Independent operations established to serve the needs of battered women and their children have gradually supplanted
earlier multi-institutional approaches to the problem. Whereas in the past a wide array of related services including rape crisis centers, mental health hotlines, and support groups for the families of alcoholics were employed to treat victims of domestic violence, today independently operated battered women's organizations are the norm. The reasons for this, I believe, can be found in the increased recognition of wife beating as a social problem and the involvement of professionals in the provision of services.

What I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter is that the issue of wife beating was taken up in the lay and professional communities before reaching the attention of government. Heightened awareness at the level of the mass public, combined with the growing interest of informed segments of the public which were able to promote a particular expert view of the problem, gave the issue its initial hearing. Moreover, the creation of emergency shelters and other alternative institutions by local women's groups emerged as concrete expressions of the demands being generated within these two communities. Thus, initial consideration of the problem, as well as the remedies generated for its solution, gained popular legitimacy before reaching the governmental agenda. In the following chapter, I take up the issue of official recognition: when and by what avenues it occurred, as well as who the principal actors were.
ENDNOTES


2. For a discussion of why the women's movement focussed on the issue of the family, see Barbara Easton, "Feminism and the Contemporary Family," Socialist Review (June, 1978) pp. 11-36. For an account of the impact of the women's movement on national policy formation, see Jo Freeman, The Politics of Women's Liberation (New York: McKay Publisher, 1975).


7. These statistics were taken from the National Violence Survey, conducted in 1976. See U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Science and Technology Hearings, op. cit., pp. 72-77.

8. Ibid.
9. I use the term "spouse abuse" because it is widely accepted and used in the literature. However, its use should not imply that battering has become an equally "male" problem. The evidence suggests that battering remains overwhelmingly a woman's problem. On this subject, see R. Gelles, "The Myth of Battered Husbands, Ms. (October, 1979) pp. 65-72.

10. At one level, emphasizing the "classlessness" of wife beating reflects the movement's growing awareness of how heterogeneous the problem really is. At another level, increasing acknowledgement of violence in middle-class homes is, at least in part, due to movement work. And at still another level, arguing that social class is not a major factor in wife beating is part of a larger effort to create a new image of the battered woman as the "typical" woman, and thus deserving of support.


16. Rainbow Retreat was opened in Phoenix, Arizona and Haven House in Pasadena, California.

17. This distinction between "alcohol as an excuse for violence and "alcohol as the sole reason for abuse" was made by the research community in the early 1970's. See, for example, R.J. Gelles, The Violent Home: A Study of Physical Aggression between Husbands and Wives, op. cit.


24. Martin, op. cit.

25. Ibid.


31. In her discussion of theoretical approaches to agenda setting, Barbara Nelson preserves Roger Cobb and Charles Elder's distinction between systemic and formal agendas, the former consisting of "all issues that are commonly perceived by members of the political community as meriting public attention and as involving matters within the legitimate jurisdiction of existing governmental authority," and the latter focussing on "that set of items explicitly up for the active and serious consideration of authoritative decision makers" [R. Cobb and C. Elder, Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of American Agenda-Building (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1972) pp. 85-86]. However, she substitutes two expressions for the somewhat undifferentiated concept of "systemic agenda," which I found useful for purposes of this analysis. They are "popular agenda" and "professional agenda," denoting awareness on the part of the mass public
and awareness among those members of the public informed about a given issue who may promote a particular expert view of the problem, respectively (Nelson, op. cit., Chapter 2).

32. Cobb and Elder, op. cit., Chapter 6. The authors argue persuasively that there is never a single, undifferentiated public; rather, a public is always specific to a given issue or situation. Thus, the public is defined by the subject matter at hand and is subject to change in its composition.
III. **Official Responses to Domestic Violence**

The success of early shelters in demonstrating a clear demand as well as feasible alternative to existing procedures has played a role in attracting official recognition and support for battered women's programs. Since 1975 both state and federal governments have become involved in the issue. In addition to funding emergency shelters and crisis services, they have sought to address the problem through three major categories of activities. Broadly, these include: research and public information, government policies and programs, and legislative change.

**Research and Public Information**

Government funded research and public information relating to issues of wife beating began in the early 1970s. At that time, the federal government disbursed monies to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) for the initiation of several family violence research projects. The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) began funding the Center for Women's Policy Studies, in Washington, D.C., in 1976, which allowed the Center to begin publishing *Response*, a monthly newsletter on domestic violence programs and policy. That same year, the Washington-based Feminist Alliance Against Rape began publishing *Aegis*, a magazine dealing with issues of violence against women.

In 1978, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held a national conference to examine the policy issues surrounding wife beating. Out of this effort came the establishment of a
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence that same year. The purpose of the Coalition was to collect and disseminate information relating to wife abuse. Finally, the Office of Domestic Violence, established in 1979 and abolished two years later, funded a number of projects specifically for battered women. Of special importance, it published a monograph series on how to set up programs and lobby for battered women. Similar initiatives at the state and local level complemented these national activities.

**Government Policies and Programs**

U.S. government agencies responded to the problem of wife abuse in one of two ways: either they expanded the range of services available under existing programs, or they established entirely new ones consistent with agency mandate and orientation. An example of both is contained in the LEAA policy initiative for domestic violence. In the late 1970's, the LEAA began channelling several million dollars through the Victim Witness Assistance Program, and dispute resolution projects such as the Neighborhood Justice Programs, to combat family violence. The major objective of these early programs, however, was to "assist in the development, implementation and replication of projects designed to improve the treatment of victims and witnesses and to increase citizen confidence in and cooperation with the Criminal Justice System." No specific mention was made of battered women.
By 1979, however, the LEAA had tripled its allocation to $1 million.\textsuperscript{9} Agency officials publicly decried the mounting incidence of wife abuse in the country and announced that funds would be targeted specifically for domestic violence projects.\textsuperscript{10} Formalized as the LEAA Family Violence Program, the expanded demonstration funded fourteen family violence projects in 1978 and seventeen in 1979. The majority of them dealt specifically with the problem of battered women.\textsuperscript{11}

Other federal agencies became actively involved in or generally associated with, the issue at about the same time. However, their efforts rarely involved the initiation of new services targeted specifically for the victims of domestic violence, as did the LEAA policy initiative. In 1978, the Department of Labor instructed its Regional Administrators to direct local governments to begin funding programs for battered women under Titles I, II, and VI of the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA).\textsuperscript{12} By providing jobs to over half the U.S. shelters, CETA played a central role in the shelter expansion of the late 1970s.\textsuperscript{13} ACTION also began providing staff support through its VISTA program to emergency shelters in 1977.\textsuperscript{14} In addition to making some monies available through a mini-grants program, it funded technical assistance centers in each of the Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) ten regions, which disseminated information on how to assist battered women.\textsuperscript{15}

Federal Title XX funds, established in Public Law 93-647, provide states with funds for a wide range of discretionary
social services. Among them, "protective services" are most often used to prevent the abuse and neglect of children and women. Although shelters and services for battered women frequently receive Title XX funds because social service administrators at the local level view them as prime candidates for protective services, wide inter- and intra-state variation exists in their use. Other federal agencies and programs funding services for battered women included the Office on Domestic Violence and Community Services administration, both abolished in 1981.

Legislative Change

Policy officials and movement advocates sought legislative change at both the state and federal levels. However, because these policy debates differed from one another, both in terms of substance and scope, they produced significantly different policy outcomes. Whereas efforts at the state level aimed mainly to broaden the scope of protection afforded battered women under existing civil and criminal remedies, federal initiatives sought to establish new services and programs. As a result, different definitions of the problem engendered very different policy responses.

The primary form of action at the state level was legislative reform. As of 1978, 33 states had passed or had pending some form of domestic violence legislation. With the exception of one statute passed in 1973, a total of 32 bills dealing with the issue were introduced and passed by state
legislatures in the two-year period extending from 1977 through 1978. By 1980, the total number of states enacting special legal provisions for battered women rose to 45. Thus, legislative action on the issue occurred very quickly.

The array of amendments introduced most often focused on the development of mechanisms for improving the documentation and recording practices of local agencies, especially local law enforcement agencies, and on creating or enhancing avenues of civil law recourse. Thus, while courts, police, and prosecutors may continue to display reluctance in intervening in domestic violence situations, these laws made it more difficult for them to ignore the issue entirely. By clarifying victim rights under existing statutes, and imposing penalties on assailants when successfully charged, these legislative modifications constituted important governmental initiatives.

Although several states have allocated monies for the direct provision of services, the amount remains negligible. Few, if any, of the bills just mentioned contained mechanisms for appropriating funds, whether it be to battered women's shelters and organizations or to city and county governments. Rather, states have attempted to modify policy, and to some extent local procedure, while making little or no provision for the financial resources needed to implement state directives.

A brief synopsis of the major provisions of California's bills serves to illuminate those policy areas most amenable to state legislative revision during the two-year period under question:
- Chapter 720 eased requirements on obtaining a temporary restraining order by eliminating the necessity that a woman have marriage dissolution papers on file before obtaining an order, and by expanding the right to protection to cohabitants.

- Chapter 908 provided for the separate reporting of spousal and child abuse.

- Chapter 912 made spousal assault a felony subject to imprisonment for a period of time not to exceed one year. Cohabitants were again included under this definition of eligibility.22

Subsequent legislative sessions have witnessed the introduction of additional "fine tuning" revisions to existing statutes. These bills concern themselves primarily with specifying civil remedies, expanding the range of available restraining orders to include: temporary restraining orders to prevent domestic violence, civil harassment restraining orders, and restraining orders to accompany a divorce.23

Efforts to pass legislation at the federal level have not met with equal success. In the 1978 congressional session, the first major piece of domestic violence legislation was introduced, but failed to obtain the support of both houses of Congress. Subsequently, two bills reached the floor of the House and Senate during the 1980 congressional session which were very significant, both in terms of allocation and services provided. H.R. 2977, the Domestic Violence Prevention and Services Act, and S. 1843, the Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Act, would have provided for a three-year appropriation of seed money for domestic violence services. Specifically, activities eligible for funding under these bills
ranged from training programs for personnel and demonstration projects to battered women's shelters and services. The two pieces differed only with regard to the formula for allocation.\(^24\)

Subsequent to passage in both houses of Congress, the two bills were sent to conference to reconcile their differences. Passed by the House, the conference report made it to the Senate shortly before the November 1980 elections. The report did not come up in the Senate until after the elections, at which time conservative Republicans threatened to filibuster the bill if it reached the floor for a vote. That the bill did not come up until after the election severely hurt its chance of passage. Liberal defeats in the Senate combined with a seeming shift in national mood\(^25\) made it difficult to marshall the forces necessary to secure the bill's passage. So on November 17, one of the bill's sponsors, Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA), withdrew the proposed legislation.\(^26\)

Earlier Senate hearings on the legislation foreshadowed its demise. At that time, a vocal "pro-family" position emerged whose views found expression in the remarks of Senator Humphrey (R-NH), ranking minority member of the Senate Subcommittee on Child and Human Development. During the Senate hearings on S. 1843, Senator Humphrey stated:
Mr. President, I oppose S. 1843, the Domestic Violence Prevention and Services Act, for a variety of reasons. It addresses a broad and disquieting problem, but that is not sufficient to recommend it. The bill's approach is both improper and disingenuous. We are not speaking here of legitimate police activities, or the responsibility of government to protect citizens from bodily harm. We are considering federal entailment with psychosocial techniques, and the promotion of ideas on conjugality and the family. These are the proper concerns of families, churches, universities, and private groups. The federal government has no business intruding here...

... I fear that the would-be grantees under S. 1843 are opposed to traditional families. Sixty-four percent of the funding under this proposal would go to sustain so-called "homes for battered women." What kind of values and ideas would these "homes" advance? The federal government should not fund missionaries who would war on the traditional family or on local values.27

The sentiments expressed in this statement are quite telling. While acknowledging that violence within the family exists, they nonetheless reinforce the privatization of the phenomenon. If one were to extend the logic implicit in the view that government support and services constitute threats to the family's existence, then the preservation of the family unit would supersede the welfare and safety of its individual members as a major goal of government.

Having being defeated in three prior congressional sessions, it appears unlikely that federal domestic violence legislation will be forthcoming.28 Indeed, given the demise of the 1980 legislation and the remarks which presaged it, one might argue that wife abuse has been stricken from the public agenda entirely. However, as I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter, official recognition of the problem assumed diverse and changing forms. Domestic violence legislation
faltered at the federal level, yet made considerable headway in state legislatures across the country. Moreover, government agencies, principally at the federal level, expanded the scope of their involvement and influence in the provision of services to battered women and their children. Lastly, and no less importantly, government funded research served not only to document the extent of the problem, but to justify future expansion in government policy and programs for battered women.

Having surveyed the range of government responses to the problem of domestic violence, I would now like to examine the role the media played in constructing these responses. More precisely, I propose to analyze the ways in which the media were responsible for attracting official recognition of the problem, and how they facilitated exchanges between potential agency sponsors and shelter leaders.


4. It has been effectively argued that such "public relations" conferences serve to dissipate movement enthusiasm and energy by making it appear as though policy elites are responding to the problem when, in fact, they're not (Spector et al., op. cit.). Murray Edelman has further suggested that tangible resources and benefits are frequently not dispensed to unorganized political interests [M. Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1964)]. Similarly, in his analysis of the relationship between protest leadership and target groups, Michael Lipsky argues that symbolic dispensations are granted, not only to reassure unorganized political group interests, but to reduce the anxiety of wider "reference" publics as well (M. Lipsky, "Protest as a Political Resource," American Political Science Review (December 1968) p. 1155). Studer discusses these issues and others in the context of the shelter movement and its relationship to policy elites (Studer, op. cit., p. 419). On the role of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Conference, she concludes: "Despite the 'niceness' of the gesture, ... these conferences lacked the official authority needed to implement the demands they generated."


10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.


13. A fascinating discussion of the role of CETA in contributing to the moral and program enterprise of the shelter movement can be found in Johnson, op. cit., pp. 833-835.


15. Ibid.

16. Ibid. Barbara Nelson’s discussion of how protective custody provisions and services transformed the child abuse legislation, changing it from a public health focus to a child welfare focus, suggests why several states have prohibited utilization of Title XX funds for this purpose. Strong intervention laws, combined with a strengthened response system, could result in increased demands on the system as well as reconstruction of the problem (Nelson, op. cit., pp. 132-135). In the 1980 congressional session, two bills were introduced to restrict state discretion in the use of Title XX funds. These companion bills--S. 1153 and H.R. 3434--would have amended Title XX guidelines to deny states the right to prohibit funds for shelter activities. Both were defeated.

17. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Battered Women: Issues of Public Policy, op. cit., Appendix B.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. As with the issue of child abuse, state legislators rapidly adopted wife abuse reporting laws. Two factors, in particular, account for this phenomenon: (1) reporting laws allowed state legislators to display no-cost public rectitude, and (2) a narrow definition of the problem required a simple solution, one that could easily be adopted by state legislatures (Nelson, op. cit., pp. 132-133).

22. Ibid.

23. Enacted as California Code of Civil Procedure Sections 540-549, 527.6 and 4359.

24. A good overview of the major provisions of these companion bills, as well as an account of the events leading to their eventual demise, is provided in Sandra Wexler, "Battered Women and Public Policy," in Women, Power and Policy, Ellen Boneparth, ed. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982).

25. In his analysis of how issues are elevated to the governmental agenda, John Kingdon discusses the role of a "national mood" in promoting higher agenda status for some items and pushing other items into relative obscurity [Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984) pp. 153-157].


28. Kingdon argues convincingly that policy windows open infrequently and do not stay open long. Moreover, although certain objective features define a policy window, such as a change of administration, a renewal, or the imminent collapse of a major sector of the economy, it exists in the perceptions of the participants as well. They perceive its presence, they estimate the likelihood of its future occurrence, and they sometimes misestimate or misperceive. When the latter occurs, the opportunity may not emerge again for a very long time (Kingdon, op. cit., Chapter 8). This, I believe, is the case with domestic violence legislation: its policy window has closed and its chance for passage has faded, at least in the near future.
IV. The Role of the Media

One would expect the media to play an important agenda-setting function because they exist at the boundary which separates the public and private spheres. They function as both a barometer of and an impetus to social change; their task is to discover, unveil, create, and recreate what is "public". As a result, their role in transforming the battered women's issue from a source of private shame to one of public concern merits attention. In this chapter, I propose to address three broad sets of questions. First, what were the incentives to the media in covering the wife abuse issue, and how did coverage reflect those incentives? Secondly, what role did the media play in issue creation, and subsequently, in issue maintenance? And lastly, how did media involvement affect the outcome; in what way did it contribute to the problem's current definition and treatment?

Incentives to the Media

In his analysis of the nature and limitations of protest activity, Michael Lipsky argues that the organizational behavior of newspapers can partly be understood and interpreted in terms of their maintenance and enhancement needs. These direct them toward projects of civic betterment and impressions of accomplishment:

Reporters... are frequently motivated by the desire to contribute to civic affairs by their "objective" reporting of significant events; by the premium they place on accuracy; and by the credit they receive for sensationalism and "scoops."
By all accounts, wife beating was a good subject for the media. It was controversial; it mixed elements of violence and social relevance. Most important, it provided a focal point for serious discussion of such issues as feminism, family relations, and sexual inequality, without sacrificing the entertainment value on which media typically depend.  

The media, in turn, was an important resource to the battered women's movement. By granting movement activities wider visibility and legitimacy, media coverage served two primary functions. First, it heightened public awareness and concern for the problem of wife abuse. Secondly, it evoked an array of official responses as established organizations began to perceive new needs and potential constituencies. Movement activity, combined with media attention, created a climate in which organizations already inclined to offer programs and services could do so and anticipate benefits in return.

Role of the Media

In his formulation of the "issue-attention cycle," Anthony Downs predicts that problems will begin to fade from public or media attention when their solutions imply the necessity of economic redistribution, or when their coverage begins to bore an easily-bored public. Thus, domestic crises or social problems reflect a cycle of waxing and waning public interest in a given issue, rather than change in the objective conditions of society. He proceeded to identify three attributes or issues likely to pass through an issue-attention cycle. These include:
(1) The problem must be one that affects only a minority of individuals in society;

(2) The social arrangements responsible for inflicting harm on this minority must also confer substantial benefits on powerful interests in that society; and

(3) The public might ignore the issue entirely were it not for the media's dramatic treatment of it.  

The battered women's issue clearly met these three requirements. Moreover, a review of *New York Times* coverage of the issue revealed that media attention to the issue conformed to Downs' formulation, at least until 1978. What happened before and after this point in time will be taken up in this chapter.

Although Downs' five-stage natural history cycle successfully sketches the overall pattern of how and when coverage of an issue is sustained, it fails to specify its processes. This last task drew the attention of Barbara Nelson who, in her study of political agenda-setting and the case of child abuse, sought to amend Down's formulation in order to explain why media attention to a host of issues could be more long-lived than previously assumed. She advanced four factors contributing to this phenomenon: topic differentiation, issue aggregation, the link between professional and mass media, and the growing appeal of human interest stories. The first three, in particular, provide constructive analytic categories for exploring why media coverage of wife abuse may continue to gradually rise rather than decline.

Topic differentiation and issue aggregation served to reduce and widen the scope of the problem simultaneously. In the
first case, media coverage of wife abuse increased as the specific types of abuse covered themselves increased. As the general problem of wife abuse was broken down into more narrowly defined "sub-problems," such as marital rape and the battered women's syndrome, coverage increased. At the same time issue aggregation occurred, which effectively narrowed the scope of the problem. Like child abuse, the issue of wife abuse was linked to issues of overarching concern, such as familial, racial, and international violence. Thus, both processes acted to sustain media interest in battered women.

The link between professional and mass media further facilitated this process, and, in part, accounted for the development of topic differentiation and issue aggregation. To a large extent, the mass media consistently and carefully monitored professional journals for new and interesting stories. Similarly, the professional media pumped new information to the mass media, so as to create a research cycle with a life of its own.

For the battered women's issue, this cycle began in the early-seventies. At that time, research on the subject largely conformed to the "psychopathological" model for explaining domestic violence, endorsed by major sectors of the social service establishment. According to this view, both batterers and their victims suffer from personality disorders; social and structural reasons for abuse remain unexamined. It wasn't until the mid-seventies that social scientists and researchers began tracing and articulating the cultural and legal history of
patriarchy. For the first time it was argued that violence by husbands against wives should not be interpreted as a breakdown in the social order, but rather as a contribution to maintaining that order. Looked at in this way, domestic violence appeared functional, rather than dysfunctional, to the continuing existence of American society. Representative of this new research focus was work undertaken by M.D.A. Freeman, who argued that law and litigation effectively divert public attention away from society's deep-seated problems to focus instead on "individual rights:"

The power of law is such that by framing the issue in terms of individual rights the real problem is obscured. With domestic violence, as we shall see, the tendency has been to individualize the problem, so that social and psychological analysis has been very much in time with legal thinking. Both have concentrated on a small sample of known batterers, on "official deviants." None of these disciplines has done much to improve the overall position of women.

Social and cultural variables in the perpetuation of wife abuse drew further attention when Stark and Evoy reported that one out of every five Americans approves of slapping one's spouse on "appropriate occasions," and that the figure rises with income and education.

Newspaper coverage reflected a similar cycle of mounting and changing interest in the issue of wife abuse. A review of the New York Times Index revealed that this form of media displayed relatively little interest in wife abuse prior to the mid-seventies. I checked the following subject headings for references between 1970 and 1978: assaults, battered wives, divorce, domestic relations, families and family life, marriage,
violence, and women. Between 1970 and 1972, not a single reference to wife beating as a social or community problem appeared. News reports of assaults and murders in which the victim was incidentally identified as married to or cohabiting with her assailant offered the only testimony to the existence of domestic violence for that period. In 1973, the *New York Times* reported a new statistic linking police intervention in domestic "disputes" with increased police fatalities; then in 1974, an article appeared which noted that New York City police discouraged battered women from pressing charges. A record number of five articles appeared in 1975: three dealt with lack of cooperation by members of the criminal justice establishment in processing wife abuse cases; one reported a conference on battered women; and another described a NOW march in protest of violence against women.

More intensive coverage began in 1976, when seven articles appeared. For the first time, media coverage extended to battered women's shelters and other innovative approaches to addressing the problem. Moreover, extensive coverage of the class-action suit, filed by the Litigation Coalition for Battered Women against the New York City Police Department and Family Court in 1976, brought to public light the charge that government agencies were remiss in extending to battered women and their children the same range of protections and rights constitutionally guaranteed other citizens. Twenty-five references appeared in 1977 to such topics as crisis hotlines, new and proposed legislation, newly opened shelters, public
hearings and conferences, and trials of battered women who killed their assailants. In 1978, nineteen references appeared, and for the first time, "battered wives" was listed as a separate topic. This evidence suggests that the New York Times had ceased viewing events involving wife abuse as disparate occurrences and had begun viewing and construing them as elements in a common theme.

A similar pattern can be traced for the same period of time in popular magazine coverage. Prior to the mid-seventies, domestic violence meant riots and terrorism as far as mass circulation periodicals were concerned. Newsweek ran a sketchy piece on Chiswick Women's Aid in 1973, and in 1974, Ms followed up with one devoted to the same topic. A month after the Ms articled appeared, Ladies' Home Journal ran one on the issue of wife beating. By 1978, the range of popular journals covering the issue expanded to include Vogue, Mademoiselle, Good Housekeeping, and Science Digest to name a few.

The demise of federal violence legislation seemed to signal an important shift in research content and focus in the area of wife abuse. In both the professional and mass media, topic differentiation greatly increased. This had the dual effect of sustaining media and public interest in the issue, while at the same time substantially changing it. Nowhere has this trend been more evident than in the recent expansion of media coverage of the battered women's syndrome. An examination of the importance of this issue in giving the wife beating problem its contemporary expression highlights the role of the media in
determining its future.

**Effects of Media**

In the landmark case, *Ibn-Tamas v. United States*, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals ruled that under certain circumstances, a battered woman defendant charged with killing her husband may introduce expert testimony on the battered women's syndrome which is relevant to her claim of self defense. Battered women's syndrome, as explained by Dr. Lenore Walker, a pioneer psychologist in the field, refers to two sets of related phenomena: the first involving the different stages of a battering relationship, and the second involving the effects of these stages on the battered woman. Briefly, the stages include:

1. a tension building stage in which minor incidents of verbal and physical abuse occur;
2. a violent battering stage in which the woman is frequently seriously hurt; and
3. a compassionate stage in which the man begs forgiveness, swears his love and promises never to strike the woman again.

Dr. Walker has found that the repetition of this pattern causes the woman to develop certain learned reactions to abuse, culminating in "learned helplessness." At this stage, the woman believes that nothing remains to alter her situation; her fate is inevitable.

An important question regarding the acceptance of battered women's syndrome as a legal defense concerns the admissibility of expert testimony. Courts have traditionally limited the use of such testimony on the grounds that such evidence would usurp
the jury's role in forming an opinion based upon the facts in evidence. However, social scientists and writers have argued that popular myths and prejudices may bias the average layperson so that he or she is likely to fault the defendant for not ending the relationship earlier. Additionally, they have suggested that expert testimony can help jurors understand why the battered woman defendant acted as she did.

To settle the issue, most courts have referred to the general, three-pronged test developed by the court in Dyas v. United States:

1. The subject matter must be so distinctively related to some science, profession, business or occupation as to be beyond the ken of the layman;

2. The witness must have sufficient skill or experience in the field to make it appear that his opinion or inference will probably aid the trier in the search for truth;

3. The state of the pertinent art or scientific knowledge must permit a reasonable opinion to be asserted by an expert.

Although still hotly debated in courts throughout the country, these guidelines continue to provide the framework for discussion of the issue.

Clearly, media interest in the battered women's syndrome has played a role in sustaining public interest in the battered women problem. In significant ways, media coverage acted as both an impetus to, and product of, government action. But what has been its overall effect in setting the public agenda for wife abuse? Can it be characterized as good or bad? And what, if any, were its contributions to the battered women's movement
of the 1970's?

First, it seems apparent that sustained media interest in the issue has come at the price of change in its substance and focus. The mass "appeal" of its earlier construction has given way to a new definition of wife abuse, one that is at once "professionalized" and "individualized". However, it is possible to note potentially beneficial and possibly unintended consequences of this shift in definition as well. These fall under two broad categories: short- and long-range outcomes.

The precedent-setting effect of allowing the introduction of expert testimony on battered women's syndrome could have far-reaching and long-term implications. Whereas it has been argued that emergency shelters have been used by funding agencies to divert wife abuse cases from the criminal justice system, the acceptance of battered women's syndrome testimony as relevant to a plea of self defense effectively channels them into it. Admittedly, the numbers are small and the distribution skewed, but the effect may be quite large.

In his analysis of the processes by which society ascribes "victim status" to some individuals and denies it to others, David Meirs\textsuperscript{37} discusses the factors which affect the way in which individual sufferers or those acting on their behalf manage and present their suffering so as to elicit a favorable response from society. A very important dimension of this process involves the "negotiation of suffering" in formal settings such as courtrooms with relevant professional observers.\textsuperscript{38}
... the significance of these conventions and their negotiation is that we base decisions to allocate resources upon their outcome. When we respond sympathetically to suffering, we make available to the individual those resources -- financial, emotional, organizational, material -- which we have allocated or are prepared to allocate to the alleviation of that particular instance of suffering or to the removal or minimization of its cause. In other words, a sympathetic response gives the individual a legitimate claim upon our resources, whereas rejection denies access to them and may even prompt the invocation of sanctions against him.39

The success of the battered women's syndrome in gaining entree to the court room could result in future gains for battered women in general.

In addition, short-run benefits seem likely as a result of the introduction of battered women's syndrome testimony. Media coverage of cases where battered women "take the law into their own hands" and kill their assailants could have a "chilling effect" on other men who batter. In her study of the changing patterns of regulations of wife abuse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Elizabeth Pleck40 noted that the male perogative to discipline other men was successfully ensured despite changes in the manner of regulation:

... the abusive husband in both the past and the present has been largely deterred, punished, and judged by males acting in the name of the community, who have set the standards for proper behavior and determined the kinds of sanctions to be used. Our modern-day regulators, like those of the nineteenth century, are mostly men, whose standards of justice are embedded in notions about proper definitions of manhood and womanhood and concepts of moral purity. Men, acting for the community, whether they be judges, churchmen, or vigilantes, have reserved the right to regulate the behavior of other men.41
The legal admission of battered women's syndrome testimony may actually serve the very different purpose of empowering the victims of wife abuse.

Having surveyed the range of government responses to the problem of domestic violence in Chapter 3, and analyzed the role of the media in facilitating and shaping these responses in Chapter 4, I turn now to examining their structure. Specifically, I hope to address two major questions. What were the patterns of interaction and negotiation which developed as a consequence of official recognition? And what incentives influenced the actions of agency sponsors and shelter leaders?
ENDNOTES

1. "Issue creation" refers to the process by which an issue reaches a substantive decision point, whereas "issue maintenance" describes the process by which an established issue is periodically re-examined.


3. Lipsky, op. cit., p. 1152.


5. Edie Goldenberg argues that news coverage is used by groups in gaining visibility and status, in expanding the scope of conflict, in activating third parties on their behalf, and in gaining a hearing in the political process (E. Goldenberg, op. cit., Chapter 1). Similarly, Michael Lipsky emphasizes the importance of receiving publicity outside the immediate arena of activity to protest groups (M. Lipsky, op. cit., p. 1151).


8. A. Downs, op. cit.

9. The cycle includes: (1) a pre-problem stage where the objective conditions are severe and pervasive, but unnoticed by the wider public; (2) a problem stage, characterized by "alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm," when the public and media take notice of the condition; (3) a stage of more sober realization that significant progress will be costly; (4) a state of gradually declining public interest in the issue; and (5) a post-problem stage in which whatever response has been initiated by government becomes institutionalized (A. Downs, op. cit.).

11. I checked the following subject headings in the New York Times Index for reference to the subject of battered women: assaults, battered wives, divorce, domestic relations, families and family life, marriage, violence, and women.


13. Ibid, p. 56.

14. Ibid.


18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.


26. T. Davidson, op. cit.
28. 407 A. 2d, pp. 634-635.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
41. Ibid, p. 74.
V. The Effects of Government Funding

Shelters spread rapidly in the United States in the latter half of the 1970s. As I have argued, the success of these earlier shelters in demonstrating a clear demand for their services as well as a feasible alternative to existing institutional arrangements played a major role in attracting official recognition and support for battered women's programs and services. However, the reaction to official support by shelter leaders and activists varied depending on their underlying philosophies and political goals.

Unlike many other social movements, the shelter movement displayed a remarkable degree of diversity in social composition. Some authors have argued that this diversity resulted in greater adaptability to local and environmental conditions.1 As has been demonstrated, early shelters emerged from the activities of Al-Anon and similar self-help groups, but later ones were sponsored by local churches, professional women's associations, and Junior Chambers of Commerce. Similarly, national and local feminist groups began emphasizing shelter sponsorship after 1975; these activities further spurred shelter expansion by consciousness-raising groups, rape crisis centers, and women's health collectives, to name a few. As a result, different and frequently conflicting ideologies informed the organization and operation of battered women's shelters. These organizational, program and policy differences had a significant impact on how they viewed official support.
Not unlike the feminist movement, the goals of feminist shelters split along traditional "reform" and "radical" lines. Reformists, best characterized by NOW, sought equality of access and opportunity within the existing structure of American society. As a rule, they demanded neither a fundamental restructuring of existing institutions nor a redistribution of the awards they had to offer. This meant that they were better able to accommodate bureaucratic funding requirements, such as formal rules and hierarchical structures, than were their "radical" counterparts. Yet because they also sought deeper societal change in the patriarchal social order, reformists viewed emergency shelters as temporary, short-term solutions to the problem, rather than long-range organizational goals.

Radicals, by contrast, sought fundamental and all-encompassing change, both in terms of woman's status in society and in the very structure of that society. Shelters created by these women differed significantly with respect to organization and living environment, stressing such practices as collective decision-making and household task-sharing. Rather than viewing battered women as "clients" to be taken care of by "staff," radical feminist shelters informally welcomed battered women to join them as full "members." More than any other group, these shelters demonstrated antagonism towards government interference in their daily operations and program development because of the potential destruction such institutions could deliver upon their own anti-institution organizations.
Traditional social service providers constituted a third group. In contrast to feminist shelters which located the cause for abuse within the patriarchal political structure, these shelters focused on the individual woman and her immediate situation. They emphasized such techniques as "therapy" and "counselling" in order to locate possible causes for abuse within the marital relationship. Whereas feminist shelters rejected these techniques as part of a complicated legitimating symbology designed to shore up patriarchal domination, these shelters viewed them as useful in remedying poor personal relationships. Moreover, in their cooperative spirit vis-a-vis the existing societal structure, they represented both an incentive to and an outgrowth of official recognition and support.

Ideals and philosophies about the proper methods and reasons for running emergency shelters thus varied a great deal among different sectors of the shelter movement. However, financial exigencies and expectations played a major role in shaping the nature and direction of their programs. As mentioned in Chapter 1, diverse funding sources emerged in the mid-1970s to sponsor shelters. Although these included both public and private agencies, federal and state agencies exercised the most dramatic influence on shelter development and expansion. For shelters, the two most important programs were CETA and the LEAA family violence projects. But other federal monies were also made available. Given public agency concern with proper financial accountability, these monies usually came with numerous strings attached; funding sources often specified
the nature of the clientele to served, the composition of the shelter, the membership of the board of directors, the extent of data collection or record-keeping required, and the nature of counselling and services to be rendered. By all accounts, official funding significantly altered or modified the nature of shelter programs. 9

While the operation of crisis hotlines and volunteer networks required very little in the way of capital investment, the establishment and operation of emergency shelters necessitated major investments, both in terms of material and human resources. Most operate on a shoestring budget: even those shelters capable of serving only a small number of women and their children require thousands of dollars to maintain their residence. Bake sales, donations, "jog-a-thons," garage sales, and other community fund-raising efforts demand considerable resource commitment, and frequently provide little in the way of payoff. Staff "burnout" and high rates of employee turnover result. Given these conditions, the incentives to shelter leaders to seek and accept government aid become apparent: the continuous demand for crisis services and security, combined with the costliness of the shelter venture, make government financial support an absolute necessity for the continued operation of many shelters.

The incentives to sponsoring agencies to support battered women's programs were at once subtle and diverse. 10 At least three explanations could account for increased involvement and interest in the issue of wife abuse by government officials.
First of all, traditional social service agencies stood to gain clients by supporting the activities of the shelter movement. To agencies accustomed to working with society's more stigmatized populations such as the mentally ill, battered women and their children probably constituted a very attractive clientele. As one agency official of a mental health organization expressed, the decision to fund a battered women's shelter as opposed to other programs or services rested on the sponsorship's benefit to the funding agency:

The shelter gives us publicity... It is the kind of program that captures the imagination of the community, based on honest-to-God, real need. It's a little harder when the client you're dealing with has been in the state hospital for twenty years, is bizarre in dress and appearance, trying to find a place to live in the community. Because of the kind of visibility and acceptability the shelter gives us, we can in turn pay off for those clients who are not as acceptable. So there is a mutual payoff... it helps if mental health clients are seen as people who look all right, who might have the same problem.

Thus, many agencies stood to gain from supporting battered women's programs because of the positive, progressive image investment in the shelter movement offered them.

A second explanation advanced for increased agency interest and involvement in the sponsoring of battered women's shelters is that the area of family violence witnessed considerable "social control," "program," and "professional enterprise" during the mid-1970s. In other words, it offered established bureaucracies and interests the opportunity for program and organizational expansion. Official, lay, and professional groups, seeking to expand the realm of their social
power and influence, created programs designed to fit into existing or new entrepreneurial hierarchies. This greatly facilitated the co-optation of the shelter movement, which accepted offers of funding from official sources without always fully comprehending the consequences of such actions. Indeed, "a major reason for co-optation, and one seldom observed or appreciated, is that financial support from official agencies often carries various kinds of benefits to the officials who underwrite and/or support program enterprise." For example, in 1978, the Community Services Administration (CSA) approached a coalition of battered women's groups in Massachusetts, and asked them to submit a proposal for $100,000. Assured of funding, the coalition applied for, and shortly thereafter received, the full grant. However, it soon discovered that it objected to some of CSA's policies and attempted to return the funds. The agency made policy exceptions for the group rather than take back the funds. Similarly, a group applied for CETA funding, only to be told by a CETA official to increase its grant request. Upon doing so, it received even more funding the following year. That sponsors often volunteered support to battered women's programs suggests that they anticipated future gains in supplying resources to the movement.

I would like to advance a third explanation for this course of events, not addressed in the first two, though not necessarily conflicting with them either. In addition to the incentive program enterprise offered potential agency sponsors, involvement in battered women's programs allowed them to
actively encourage some responses to the problem and to
discourage others. Not only did the area of domestic violence
represent an uncharted territory for government agencies seeking
to expand their range of influence and control, but it also
offered the possibility for successfully structuring an official
response to the problem which conformed to agency interests and
ensured that agency work would go undisrupted.

The LEAA family violence projects and their forerunner,
the Neighborhood Justice Program, offer a case in point.
Designed to reduce the number of cases reaching the criminal
justice system, as well as case-processing costs, these programs
reflect the underlying LEAA conviction that law enforcement
agencies or the courts should not be responsible for providing
remedies for battering. As one LEAA official stated, that's a
job for the entire community:

... the approach recommended is called 'comprehensive'
because it foresees the need for interaction with local
service agencies and community based organizations.
By concentrating on the role of the criminal justice
system, LEAA does not imply that the part which
criminal justice systems play in the resolution of
family violence should be enlarged.18

Another LEAA official stated that the criminal justice system
could not respond to the wife battering problem:

Advocates for battered women will have to understand
that the criminal justice system has nothing inherent
in its structure or function that would lead it to make
battered women cases a priority... Advocates will have
to understand the dynamics of social action and
political pressure that lead the criminal justice
system to allocate resources to certain areas not
because such allocation is good or wise but because,
somehow, it becomes expeditious or necessary.19
In the case of its family violence program, LEAA sought to divert wife abuse cases from courts by "referring" them to shelters and other programs. An important incentive to LEAA and other potential agency sponsors, then, was that official recognition and involvement in the issue enabled them to structure an organized response to the problem which conformed to agency interests and needs, and ensured that agency work would not be disrupted by outside demands for specific reform. Moreover, they might have been forced to do something more drastic had they not responded in this fashion.

In this chapter I have attempted to analyze the patterns of interaction and bargaining which characterized the battered women issue's elevation to the governmental agenda. As argued earlier, wife beating rose to the popular and professional agendas before reaching governmental agenda status. There, the demands of both communities --lay and professional-- were given concrete expression in the creation of battered women's shelters. These early grass roots responses to the problem of wife abuse attracted official interest for a number of reasons. First, they allowed agencies to expand and diversify their clientele. Secondly, they promoted social control, program, and professional enterprise by official, lay and professional groups seeking to expand their realm of social power and influence. Lastly, they afforded them the opportunity to structure a response to the problem which effectively ensured that agency practice and goals would not be disrupted by outside demands for specific reforms. For their part, individual shelters sought
and accepted government aid more often than not to ensure their financial solvency: the continuous demand for emergency shelter and services combined with the costliness of the venture made official support not only attractive, but absolutely essential in many cases. These diverse incentives formed the parameters within which ownership and redefinition of the problem occurred. It has been suggested, further, that rather than devising and implementing new responses to the problem of wife abuse, official agencies sought to lay claim to existing responses. In this chapter I have described the processes and exchanges by which this occurred. In the final chapter I will examine the outcomes.
ENDNOTES

1. See, for example, Tierney, op. cit., p. 212. In terms of structure, the shelter movement can be characterized as "segmentary, polyccephalous, and reticulate" (L. Gerlach and V. Hine, People, Power, and Change (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970). Movement organizations range from those with a national scope to those that operate on the local level. Groups are linked to each other through overlapping memberships, professional ties, and lines of membership. This decentralized, loosely articulated structure enables effective resource mobilization and greater adaptability to local conditions [B. Judkins, "The Black Lung Movement: Social Movements and Social Structure," in Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change, Louis Kriesberg, ed. (Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press, 1979) volume 2, pp. 105-129].


4. L. Ahrens, "Battered Women's Refuges: Feminist Cooperatives or Social Service Institutions?" Aegis (Summer, 1980) pp. 9-15. One such example was the Austin Women's Center, whose "radical" goals were disintegrated when the board of directors disagreed with the Center's operating procedures.


7. Johnson writes: "From the traditional perspective, efforts are made to locate the 'causes' of violence within the marital relationship itself; thus it is seen as appropriate to render 'therapy' or 'counseling' to the woman, as if the problem could be solved through some form of tinkering with the marital equation" (Johnson, op. cit., p. 832).

9. Ibid.

10. In addition to the explanations offered in the following analysis, other reasons for social welfare support of battered women's programs include: an interest in capitalizing on feminist issues, moral entrepreneurship, and the more general goal of maintaining the family unit (Martin, op. cit.; D. Klein, "Can this Marriage be Saved?: Battery and Sheltering," Crime and Social Justice 12 (Winter, 1979) pp. 19-33).


14. This phenomenon has been discussed and analyzed in Johnson, op. cit.; Warren, op. cit.; Ahrens, op. cit.; and Andler and Sullivan, op. cit. Similarly, A. Mauss argues that co-optation by official organizations of social problem movements is a likely consequence of movement growth [Mauss, Social Problems as Social Movements (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1975)]. The same argument is advanced with regard to professional movements which lack a broad membership base, in J. McCarthy and M. Zald, The Trend of Social Movements in America: Professionalization and Resource Mobilization (Princeton: General Learning Press, 1973). Lastly, in Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail (New York: Random House, 1977), F. Piven and R. Cloward argue that policy elites will attempt to co-opt protest groups by reintegrating and guiding them towards less politically disturbing forms of behavior, and moving to isolate them from potential supporters so as to dissipate movement morale.


VI. Conclusion

In most states today, battered women must qualify for public assistance in order to gain access to emergency shelter and services. Those who are employed face the dubious choice of either quitting their jobs to go on welfare or remaining in violent homes. Their options remain limited, indeed.

Some cities have moved to remedy this situation. In New York City, for example, government officials at the Human Resources Administration (HRA) instituted a procedure in the fall of 1984 whereby working women could receive sheltering services for battered women.1 Under this policy, working women may qualify for emergency sheltering providing they submit their entire paycheck to shelter administrators. In return, they receive $37 every two weeks in expenses money for themselves plus $40 for each child they have with them. The severity of these provisions has promoted critics of the HRA procedure to note that its effect is to impoverish the victims of domestic violence rather than to assist them. As one observer remarked:

Clearly, they cannot save up the money that would allow them to find decent housing, and all they are given for this purpose is the same meager household allowance that others on welfare receive.2

Nor can they build their sense of confidence and independence in the kind of environment that early shelter leaders envisioned.

Only half of the city's HRA-funded shelters for battered women agreed to adopt this new procedure.3 Of the remaining one-half, many chose to deny access to working women rather than implement its seemingly punitive requirements. Aegis Battered
Women's Shelter offers one such example. According to its director, Anne Paulle, this shelter decided not to accept working women because "we considered the terms of the agreement so punitive that we didn't want to implement it."4

Complementing this new procedure for extending eligibility for shelter services to working women, the HRA initiated a new and different sheltering program for the victims of family violence in October of 1984. Dubbed the "Sanctuary for Families," this program shelters battered women and their children in a network of private homes and religious facilities.5 One critic of the HRA's Sanctuary for Family program had the following to say:

Rather than give the already existing shelters the non-restrictive funding that would permit them to take in working women without impoverishing them, HRA chose to use these tax-levied monies to create the Sanctuary for Families.6

The result was that two separate and distinct systems were set in place to deliver emergency shelter services to battered women and their children.

Despite the fact that it remains theoretically open to all women regardless of income or employment status, Sanctuary for Families has evolved into a shelter that serves primarily working women.7 This has occurred, at least in part, as a consequence of the incentives built into the HRA policy discussed earlier. Because of the punitive terms under which working women can enter New York City's shelters, many shelters have sought to divert them to the Sanctuary for Families program
which places a high priority on working women. Thus employed women making contact with the city's shelter system will very likely be referred to the Sanctuary for Families. 8

These developments have evoked the criticism that the HRA's policies and practices are creating a two-tiered shelter system based on class which threatens to substantially alter the nature of its services. Because of excessively stringent bureaucratic funding requirements, these shelters find themselves implementing segregationist policies: working women are referred to the Sanctuary for Families, and women on public assistance to the shelters. Alisa Del Tufo, executive director for the Sanctuary for Families, explains:

Because we're the only viable option for working women, if we get two calls, one from a working woman and one from a woman on public assistance, we'll try to take the working woman. 9

Moreover, she admits that "present conditions are creating a self-fulfilling class system." 10

In this paper I have argued that the extension of government funds to battered women's shelters fundamentally altered the nature of battered women's programs and policy. Rather than aiding in the creation of an environment of healing and empowerment as envisioned by early shelter leaders, government funding placed battered women's shelters under the iron rule of bureaucratic funding requirements. The case just described illustrates this point: by defining and redefining the conditions under which battered women are entitled to receive services, funding agencies act as policy-makers. Their actions
serve to continually construct and reconstruct the very substance of our national social policy as it relates to battered women.

In a normative sense, I am prepared to defend the right of government to restrict and direct the actions of programs to which it disburses public monies. The goal of accountability to elected officials, as well as the general public, dictates such action if society is to ensure the proper and best distribution of its resources. However, overly restrictive or punitive funding criteria, such as those implemented in the policy arena of domestic violence, may serve a purpose quite distinct from that of fiscal accountability. They may actually serve to subvert, if not radically transform, the substance of domestic violence policy as it has been discussed and defined by the public and publicly-elected bodies. Such actions have profound implications for future attempts to remedy the problem of wife abuse in this country.
ENDNOTES

1. These developments are discussed in D. Berg and P. McAllister, op. cit., p. 18.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid. This remark was reiterated in a phone conversation I had with Anne Paulle, the Aegis Battered Women's Shelter's Director.


6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Personal phone interview.
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