CARE OF SELF: CONSTRUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITIES OF LOW-INCOME,

FEMALE SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS THEY PURSUE

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

by

ROBIN T. UNDERWOOD

(Under the Direction of John W. Schell)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this interview-based study informed by poststructural feminism and Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self, was to explore the subjectivities that seven low-income, female survivors of domestic violence construct while pursuing postsecondary education. A homogeneous, purposeful sampling strategy was used to select seven single mothers who had experienced domestic violence in the past, but were presently not in abusive relationships, and who were considered to be low-income. Data collection included semi-structured interviews, observations, field notes, and reflective journaling. Data analysis was performed using a poststructural method called nomadic inquiry that yielded findings that matched data to theoretical concepts within Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self.

The findings indicated that the participants began to construct their subjectivities when they made the decisions to leave the abusive relationships. The most prevalent practice of self that the participants used to create their subjectivities was the use of masters, that is, seeking advice from individuals within the friendship, domestic violence,

and school arenas. The most frequent subjectivities that the participants constructed were

good mother, independent woman, and good student.

INDEX WORDS: Domestic violence, Postsecondary education, Postructural Feminism,

Michel Foucault, Working poor, Low-income, Welfare

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to the courageous women who find a way to survive

IN MEMORY OF

Virginia D. Underwood, my mother-in-law, who always celebrated my

accomplishments and taught me to laugh despite life's tragedies.

Dr. Helen Hall, who was there at the beginning and really wanted to be a part of

this study at the end.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My interest in this study was based on a convergence of multiple factors. I have

always been interested in women's resiliency, specifically, the different ways that women

cope with horrendous experiences and still survive. I've often wondered about the

strategies that these women use to get to that place of survival. During the last 8 years, I

have provided part-time occupational therapy services to women who have had to figure

out how to survive. I've worked at a shelter with low-income, female survivors of

domestic violence [*survivors*]. I have also worked as a faculty member in an occupational

therapy department at a small women's college and during the 13 years that I've been

there, several students have shared their experiences with domestic violence with me.

As part of my work at the shelter, I have assisted survivors in pursuing education

beyond high school so that they could secure higher paying jobs that would allow them to

independently support themselves and their families. In my experience, the inability of

survivors to support their families is often the primary reason they return to abusive

relationships. Within my academic role, I have learned that achieving a postsecondary

education can be a very complex endeavor. When working with survivors at the shelter, it

has often taken me a long time to convince some of them that they could actually be

successful in school. Once this barrier has been removed, the next hurdle is often the

juggling of their jobs, children, and school. To help with this, I have found myself continuously taking on the roles of cheerleader, advocate, navigator, friend, mother, and sometimes, tutor.

Early in my work, I also began paying attention to some of the contextual factors that I believed were influencing the success of survivors. I identified some of these as instructors and others' attitudes towards working-poor women, single mothers, older students, African-Americans, Latinas, women with learning disabilities, and high school dropouts who successfully passed the General Educational Development (GED) exam. Survivors have shared story after story filled with pain and confusion. I witnessed the plummeting of their confidence levels as they tried to navigate through these waters filled with jellyfish and sharks. Their experiences seemed to give new meaning to the phrase "Don't kick a dog when she's down."

So, it is for these survivors in my past and for the ones in the future, that I decided to focus my dissertation research on low-income, female survivors of domestic violence who are pursuing postsecondary education. I chose to address the survivors' constructions of subjectivities or how they actively create themselves because it focuses on what women actively *do* day-to-day within their lives as they survive. Performance of daily activities is the primary focus of my profession, occupational therapy, which is defined as "the therapeutic use of everyday activities (occupations) with individuals or groups for the purpose of participation in roles and situations in home, school, workplace, community, and other settings" (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2008, p. 673). In other words, occupational therapy services assist survivors with being able to do what they want and need to do and I wanted to learn more about how survivors

accomplish this by creating themselves within the multiple contexts of their lives. Consequently, I begin this chapter with a broad overview of contextual issues.

Context

Throughout the world, violence against women by male intimate partners (*domestic violence)* accounts for more deaths and disabilities of women between the ages of 15 and 44 than cancer, motor vehicle accidents, war, and malaria (UNIFEM, 2007). In the United States (U.S.) alone, approximately 5.3 million women are raped and/or physically assaulted by male intimate partners each year and the annual cost of these assaults exceed $5.8 billion (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDCP], 2003). These domestic violence incidents typically involve the use of strategies by men for establishing power and control over women and include physical battering, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual assault, economic abuse, and stalking (Berry, 2000; National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCADV], 2007).

Factors that cause or contribute to domestic violence have been discussed and contested by social scientists for decades with very little agreement about the commonalities (Jewkes, 2005). The exception is poverty; it is the only factor that has consistently been found to be a key contributor to domestic violence (Davies, 2002; Jewkes, 2005; Josephson, 2005; Lyon, 2000; Lyon, 2002; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005)**.** Therefore, it is not surprising that the most recent U.S. Department of Justice (2007) statistics based on an analysis of reported and unreported family violence indicate that persons in households with annual incomes less than $7,500 (below the U.S. poverty threshold) have higher rates of assault than persons in households with higher income levels. Furthermore, the data also indicate that social class appears to be inversely related

to the severity of the violence; more severe domestic violence occurs against women within lower socioeconomic groups (Benson & Fox, 2004; Bograd, 2005; Browne & Bassuk, 1997; Davies, 2002; Lyon, 2000; Lyon, 2002; Rank, 2004; Rice, 2001).

Being poor also has serious implications in terms of whether a woman stays in an abusive relationship. Studies of female survivors of domestic violence (*survivors)* have consistently indicated that a survivor's ability to earn an independent source of income that allows her to successfully sustain her family is the single most significant indicator that she will be able to permanently leave the abusive relationship (The Economic Stability Working Group of the Transition Subcommittee of the Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence, 2002; Waldner, 2003). It makes sense, then, that the lack of a sustainable income is a very significant reason why on average, survivors return to abusive relationships 5-7 times (Adair, 2003; Brush, 2003; Harris, A., 2003; Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2007).

Achieving a level of income with which she can support herself and her family can be very difficult for some survivors. Many of them end up in poverty for multiple reasons including the dynamics of abusive relationships. Domestic violence commonly includes economic abuse in which abusers control women's finances "to prevent them from accessing resources, working or maintaining control of earnings, achieving self-sufficiency, and gaining financial independence" (NCADV, n.d., p. 1). Abusers reason that the lack of financial independence makes it more probable that women will stay in the abusive relationships and it works with a lot of women (NCADV, n.d.). Common methods of economic abuse that men use include refusing to allow women to attend school or training sessions that will yield higher incomes; forcing women to obtain credit

and then ruining their credit ratings; and deprivation that affects overall functioning in the forms of intentionally withholding food, clothing, shelter, transportation, healthcare, personal hygiene supplies, and/or medications (NCADV, n.d.).

Experiencing domestic violence can also affect a survivor's ability to sustain employment (Josephson, 2005). Although there have been conflicting findings from studies about domestic violence and employment since the late 1990s, most studies have supported the fact that women who experience domestic violence are more likely to experience unemployment and more job turnover (NCADV, n.d; Riger & Staggs, 2004; Tolman & Raphael, 2000). One of the most common reasons for this is that abuse often happens at the workplace. Analysis of data from a 2005 national survey by the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence (CAEPV, 2002-2008) indicated that over 75% of abusers went to their partners' workplaces to express remorse or anger towards them, to check up on them, and/or to pressure or threaten them. These actions often led to termination of employment.

Even if an abuser does not come to the workplace experiencing domestic violence can still affect job stability. The CAEPV study also revealed that a high percentage of people who admitted to experiencing abuse stated that their work performance was significantly impacted by their domestic violence situation. Other studies have estimated that between 37% and 96% of women in abusive relationships state that domestic violence affects their work performance (Wettersten, Rudolph, Faul, Gallagher, Transgard, Adams, Grapham, & Terrance, 2004). Common performance issues reported include problems with concentration, problem solving, and decision-making (Tolman & Raphael, 2000).

Aside from the effects of domestic violence on income, leaving an abusive relationship and becoming a single parent can increase the risk of being unemployed or among the working poor in the U.S. The jobless rate for unmarried mothers is almost three times that of married mothers; 8.5% as compared to 3.1% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007a). Women also comprise the highest percentage of the working poor with women who maintain families being about twice as likely to be among the working poor as compared to their male counterparts (Haleman, 2004; Shipler, 2005; U.S. Department of Labor, 2007b).

There are several reasons hypothesized for these income disparities. Women dominate service occupations and about two-thirds of people classified as the working poor are in these occupations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007b). There is also a very high percentage of low wage jobs that don't provide employment-based work supports like health insurance and paid time off and these expenses become women's responsibility (Albeda & Boushey, 2007). It has also become increasingly more difficult for single mothers to earn wages sufficient to pay for general living expenses plus the cost of day care and medical coverage for their children (Tiamiyu & Mitchell, 2001). Additionally, since welfare reform in 1996, women can no longer depend on public welfare programs as their safety net (Kates, 2004; Parvez, 2002).

Although about 90% of the people receiving welfare benefits are women and it is estimated that at least 50 to 60% of welfare recipients have experienced domestic violence, being a welfare recipient pretty much guarantees that single mothers will remain among the working poor (Davies, 2002; Lyon, 1997; Lyon, 2000; Lyon, 2002; Lloyd & Taluc, 1999; Tolman & Raphael, 2000; Tolman, Danzinger, & Rosen, 2002).

The welfare system's "work first" mentality forces women to quickly get any job they can causing most women to be moved into low-wage jobs with average earnings well below the poverty threshold (Hays, 2003; Jones-DeWeever, Peterson, & Song, 2003; Kates, 2004; Weigt, 2006).

The 1996 federal welfare reform law also severely limited working poor women's ability to participate in higher education as a primary means for increasing earnings and social mobility (McLanahan, 2007; Price & Steffy, 2003; Deprez, 2006; Ratner, 2004; Tiamiyu & Mitchell, 2001). Prior to welfare reform, higher education was considered to be a very powerful method for getting women out of poverty and thus, the welfare system (Price & Steffy, 2003). Even though studies of women from 1960-2000 have indicated that there are high correlations between single motherhood, low levels of education, and being classified as working poor, the welfare reform law has made it extremely difficult for low-income single mothers to attend school (McLanahan, 2007). This change in support of higher education was made although there was a lack of reliable data demonstrating that entry-level jobs led to salaries in which single mothers could support themselves and their families (Kates, 2004). In addition, studies of the factors that influenced return to welfare performed prior to reform indicated that while work exits were highly unstable routes off welfare, women who obtained any postsecondary education had a 41% lower chance of returning to welfare as compared to high school dropouts (Harris, K., 1996). Therefore, income based on educational attainment has highly influenced income potential and this relationship is getting stronger.

The differences in income based on education have sharply increased in the U.S. since 1979 with the earnings for women who are college graduates increasing by 34%

during this time period (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007c). As of 2006, full-time, year-round workers with bachelor's degrees were earning 1.8 times as much as workers with only high school diplomas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Therefore, female college graduates aged 25 and older who work full time earn approximately 81% more than women with only high school diplomas (Department of Labor, 2007c). This difference in income equates to college graduates with associate's degrees accounting for only 3.4% and those with bachelor's degrees or higher making up only 1.7% of the working poor as compared to 6.6% of those with high school diplomas (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f). In addition, the estimated work-life earnings over a lifetime for college graduates with bachelor's degrees is twice that of individuals with only high school diplomas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Consequently, attainment of education beyond high school is a very powerful method for preventing low-income, single mothers who are survivors from returning to abusive relationships because they can't independently support themselves and their families (Price & Steffy, 2003; Rank, 2004; Smith Madsen, 2003).

Most of the studies of low-income, single mothers pursuing higher education have been performed with women who are welfare recipients (Adair, 2003; Haleman, 2004; Scarbrough, 1997). These studies are relevant when considering the experiences of survivors because of the high number of welfare recipients who have reported experiencing domestic violence (Davies, 2002; Lyon, 1997; Lyon, 2000; Lyon, 2002; Lloyd & Taluc, 1999; Tolman & Raphael, 2000; Tolman & Rosen, 2002). In addition, even when multiple participants in these studies were not directly asked about domestic violence, many of them indicated that they had suffered abuse from an intimate partner

(Haleman, 2004; Miewald, 2003; Scarbrough, 1997). In these studies, most women reported that their educational experience had changed both theirs and their family members' lives and that these changes were positive and transformational (Adair, 2003; Butler & Deprez, 2002; Haleman, 2004; Institute of Women's Policy Research [IWPR], 2006; Kates, 1991; Mitchell, 2003; Scarbrough, 1997). They credited their higher education with leading to increased opportunities for better jobs, higher pay, more stable employment, and increased community involvement (Butler & Deprez, 2002; Newman). They also viewed education as giving them the tools to advocate for themselves and others (IWPR, 2006; Scarbrough, 1997). Consequently, higher education was perceived as moving them beyond welfare to an increased earning capacity so that they could get beyond poverty (Newman, 2007). This was especially true for women of color (Butler & Deprez, Waldner, 2003).

While these outcomes are indeed positive, low-income women pursuing higher education have also indicated that there are multiple obstacles to initiating and completing their degrees (Sharp, 2004; Ratner, 2004). They discuss having to constantly juggle between family, work, and school responsibilities and not having a significant other to assist them with their obligations. They share that they often feel stressed and conflicted because they don't have enough time for their children or other family members (Butler & Deprez, 2002; IWPR, 2006). Consequently, many women report that they end up leaving school even when they are successful with their studies because they cannot manage child-care, transportation, and work responsibilities (Adair, 2003; Sharp, 2004).

Even entering school can be fraught with many barriers. A major impediment can be paying for school and there are multiple systems in place that can make this very difficult. One of them is the federal higher education financial aid system that is set up for traditional age, single students and not for working parents (Newman, 2007). Another one is the federal work-study program that often conflicts with welfare benefits and can cause large reductions in these benefits (Kates, 1991). In addition, just the combined costs of housing, food, and childcare leave many women with few remaining financial resources so they continuously live in poverty (Haleman, 2004). Many low-income women are also single mothers so their financial situations have far reaching implications and often take a dramatic toll on women and their children (Waldner, 2003).

Financial instability also influences how low-income, single mothers pursuing higher education are treated within multiple areas of their lives. Our contemporary society problematizes poverty and many low-income women are produced as immoral women because of their financial situations. Our American Puritan legacy and decades of poverty research by social scientists have reinforced a focus on blaming individuals for their financial status instead
of examining the social and economic structures that produce generations of impoverished women (Cozzaredi, Tagler, & Wilkinson, 2001; Lyon, 2002; Rank, 2004). As Shipler (2005) explained:

> hard work is not merely practical but also moral; its absence suggests an ethical lapse. A harsh logic dictates a hard judgment: If a person's diligent work leads to prosperity, if work is a moral virtue, and if anyone in society can attain prosperity through work, then the failure to do so is a fall from righteousness. The

marketplace is the fair and final judge; a low wage is somehow the worker's fault,
for it simply reflects the low value of his labor. In the American atmosphere,
poverty has always carried a whiff of sinfulness. (pp. 5-6)

These beliefs and attitudes lead to low-income survivors being blamed for their
financial status being and being produced as lazy, lacking effort, low in intelligence, and
as drug addicts (Cozzaredi, Tagler, & Wilkinson, 2001). These attitudes permeate
academic settings and many low-income women report that they don't initiate or
complete school because they feel demoralized, misunderstood, and misrepresented
within the academic environment (Adair, 2003; Haleman, 2004). They share numerous
examples of how they have felt excluded, unsupported, stigmatized, ostracized, punished,
vilified, and alienated by both faculty and students based on what they perceive as
misperceptions of their social class and values (Adair & Dahlberg, 2003; Megivern,
2003). They report being frequently confronted with negative stereotypes of poor people,
low-income women, women receiving welfare benefits, and single mothers (Megivern;
Mitchell, 2003). They constantly hear comparisons of single-mother-headed families with
two-parent families where single-mother families are deemed to be inferior (Haleman,
2004). Welfare mothers are depicted as being lazy, undeserving, and dependent
(Scarbrough, 1997). They also hear statements that equate people with low-incomes with
having lower intellects or being stupid (Sullivan, 2003). They are often viewed as being
incapable of making logical, reasoned, and rational decisions (Harris, 2003). These types
of experiences are not isolated to classrooms. The negative attitudes about low-income,
single mothers espoused by academic financial aid staff members have also deterred

some women from pursuing their education (Sharp, 2004). One student summed it up well when she described an incident that happened in one of her classes:

It was particularly difficult being in those classes where welfare-bashing was delivered as academic gospel. In one sociology class, the professor opened the discussion by telling the class ridiculous anecdotes about lazy poor women sitting at home collecting welfare checks so they could buy color television sets with which to watch the *Oprah Show.* (Mitchell, 2003, p. 115)

School isn't the only place that low-income women who are pursuing higher education report being treated poorly. Women describe similar experiences with social service providers, store clerks, and medical providers (Haleman, 2004; Mitchell, 2003; Smith Madsen, 2003). Ironically, those who are supposed to help are often the worse culprits. Many welfare caseworkers are perceived as imposing negative stereotypes onto poor women (Haleman). The most powerful example of this is the fact that following the initiation of welfare reform many caseworkers did not inform a large number of women about the possibility of receiving twelve months' exemption from work requirements so that they could continue school. Instead, many women were told that they had no right to go to school and that they had to withdraw in order to perform work activities (IWPR, 2006). This was even the case when women were close to graduation (Kahn & Polakow, 2004; Ratner, 2004).

In public, low-income women deal with grocery store clerks who often deliberately embarrass them when they are using food stamps (Haleman, 2004; Harris, 2003). Women also frequently report that medical providers treat them as if they are ignorant and want a free ride because they are public healthcare users (Mitchell, 2003).

Even attending college while receiving pre-natal care covered by public assistance seems to be cause for healthcare professionals to make comments like, "If you can afford to go to that college, then you don't need to be on welfare"(Moody, 2003, p.88).

Being a survivor of domestic violence in addition to being a low-income single mother can dramatically increase the potential for even more negativity and stigma. Like poverty, domestic violence is often problematized as a moral domain within contemporary society where survivors are produced as morally immature or bankrupt (Busch, 2004; Harris, A., 2003). Myths and stereotypes about survivors portray them as having difficulties distinguishing between right and wrong, incapable of making rational decisions, and making poor choices (Brush, 2003; Harris, 2003). Tragically, they are often viewed as being the cause of the abuse (Busch, 2004; Harris, Wilson, 1997).

These socially constructed negative labels about low-income, single mothers and survivors of domestic violence can strongly influence how these women produce themselves as students and can strongly affect their success with completing their higher education degrees. Although many women report having increased self-esteem, greater confidence, and stronger self-respect due to their participation in education, many others report internalizing these negative societal messages (Adair & Dahlberg, 2004; Butler & Deprez, 2002; Haleman, 2004; Waldner, 2003). Narratives of low-income women pursuing higher education consistently reflect a strong correspondence between the devaluation that the women have experienced and "their expressed fears, self-blame, and feelings of worthlessness, stupidity, and incompetence" (Scarbrough, 1997, p. 2). Some women have even expressed feelings of self-loathing (Waldner, 2003). These feelings may be even more intensified for female survivors of domestic violence because

survivors can have lingering feelings of devaluation and subordination based on their past abuse by men (Brush, 2003; Haleman, 2004; Harris, 2003; Miewald, 2003; Scarbrough, 1997). They can also suffer from depression and symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that are more commonly experienced by survivors than by women who are not abused (Lyons, 2002).

These pejorative statements also reinforce the fact that although education is supposed to be society's great equalizer by leveling class, race, and gender differences, this is often not the case for low-income, single mothers who are also survivors of domestic violence (Adair, 2003; Sharp, 2004). Viewed through the lens of a poststructural feminist theoretical perspective based on the work of Michel Foucault, it becomes evident that these women's bodies have become virtual texts that serve as "the inscribed surface of events" (Foucault, 1971/1984, p. 83) that reflect "the political battleground on which America has waged war against the poor" (Harris, 2003, p. 138). The language of these bodies/texts is organized according to socially constructed rules and discourses and is the product of historically specific power relations (Adair, pp. 26-27). As evidenced in the case of the categorization of low-income, single mothers as immoral women, societal rules "allow certain statements to be made and not others" and "allow certain people to be subjects of statements" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485). In addition, discourses, which are made up of ideas, ideologies, attitudes, terms, and actions that permeate social practices and organize a way of thinking into a way of acting, produce negative attitudes that result in harsh welfare reform (Bove, 1990).

Within this theoretical perspective, power relations involve multiple forces that are embodied within society and laws (Foucault, 1978). They are exercised with a series

of aims and objectives and are constantly present in human relationships where one person is always trying to control the conduct of the other, as in the way that welfare caseworkers control low-income, single mothers' benefits (Foucault, 1975/1977). Foucault called the methods used in these cases, *technologies of power* and he stated that they determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination (Foucault, 1982/1983). Consequently, within this context, power is viewed as disciplining people where discipline is a type of power that makes the formation of subjects (persons) possible and is responsible for the subject positions that are taken up by and reiterated by the subject (Butler, cited in Honan, Knobel, Baker, & Davies, 2000).

In the case of low-income, single mothers who are survivors, power can be viewed as producing disciplined bodies where these women take up *Welfare Queen* or *Immoral Woman* subject positions (Foucault, 1975/1977). The women's occupations of these subject positions within discourse give them the sense of who they are, what is possible or impossible, right or wrong, and appropriate or inappropriate for them to do (Burr, 2001). It also allows their bodies to be branded with the *poor woman* label as Adair (2003) indicates when she reflects on some similarities between the women's subjectivity and Foucault's (1975/1977) gruesome accounts of torture in his book, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*

> It is important to note when considering the contemporary inscription of poverty as moral pathology etched onto the bodies of profoundly poor women and children that these are more than metaphoric and self-patrolling marks of discipline. Rather, on myriad levels- sexual, social, material, and physical- poor women and their children, like the 'deviants' publicly punished in Foucault's

scenes of torture, are marked, mutilated, and made to bear and transmit signs in a

public spectacle that brands the victim in infamy. (p. 28)

It is possible to change this disciplining process. Low-income survivors can resist

the taking up of subject positions that are based on class, race, gender, and domestic

violence because as Foucault (1976/1978) stated, "Where there is power, there is

resistance" (p. 95) and "points of resistance are present everywhere in the power

network" (p. 95). This means that survivors can find "possibilities of reworking that very

matrix of power"(Butler, 1992, p.13). Fortunately, Foucault didn't believe that

technologies of power are the only methods of subjection. Towards the end of his life, he

focused on the methods that individuals use to constitute their own subjectivities. He

called these modes *technologies of the self* or *practices of the self* or *care of the self* and

defined these as practices in which individuals "effect by their own means, or with the

help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls" (Foucault,

1988, p.18). He viewed these operations as involving the performance of intentional

actions in which individual rules of conduct are established and there is an attempt to

transform or change so as to make the person's life into an oeuvre or work of art

(Foucault, 1984/1986). This perspective is reflective of the ancient Greek principle of

epimelēsthai sautou, translated as, "to take care of self," "the concern for self," "to be

concerned," or "to take care of yourself"(Foucault, 1988, p. 19). Within the Greek

culture, *epimelēsthai sautou* involved a focusing on the self and a whole set of

occupations and it didn't just involve an attitude, it also took the form of

a mode of behavior; it became instilled in ways of living; it evolved into

procedures, practices, formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected,

taught. It thus came to constitute a social practice, giving rise to relationships between individuals, to exchanges and communications, and at times even to institutions. (Foucault, 1984/1986, p. 45)

Foucault perceived these activities as being related to what he considers to be an *ethic,* that is, the kind of relationship a person has with him or herself; what he calls *rapport a soi* (Foucault, 1991). This ethic is viewed as being a part of morality because according to Foucault, care or practices of the self involve "how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions" (Davidson, 1994, p. 228). This perception provides a very different view of morality than the one typically produced by society regarding low-income women, single mothers, and survivors of domestic violence.

Foucault also viewed the ethic of the care of the self as necessary for the practice of freedom. He held this conviction because he believed that taking care of one's self is necessary for exercising "properly, reasonably, and virtuously the power to which one is destined" (Foucault, 2001/2005, p. 82). I examined the processes that the participants in this study went through to arrive at a point where they were open for a transformation of their subjectivities; that is, reconstituting their subjectivities. The participants mirrored Foucault's (2005) description of concepts during the Hellenistic and Roman periods about the process that subjects go through from a state of *stultitia*, i.e., " a nonrelationship to the self," (Foucault, 2005, pp. 184-185) to *salvation,* that is, "the vigilant, continuous, and completed form of the relationship to self closed in on itself" (Foucault, 2005, pp. 184-185).

This perception of freedom relates very well to the challenges of low-income survivors of domestic violence. When survivors are with their abusers they are unable to will freely and their abusers construct their subjectivities. Consequently, freedom means being able to construct their own subjectivities and doing this through practices of self. As Rajchman (1985) summarized:

> Thus, our real freedom does not consist either in telling our true stories and finding our place within some tradition or ethical code, in completely determining our actions in accordance with universal principles, or in accepting our existential limitations in authentic self- relation. We are, on the contrary, "really" free because we can identify and change those procedures or forms through which our stories become true, because we can question and modify those systems which make (only) particular kinds of action possible, and because there is no "authentic" self-relation we must conform to. (p. 122)

Even though these concepts relate well to the situation of survivors pursuing higher education, there are presently no studies available that reflect the use of this perspective with the population of this study. Most studies of low-income women pursuing higher education focus on the challenges and barriers (Adair, 2003; IWPR, 2006; Wagner & Magnusson, 2005), experiences (Adair; Clarke & Peterson, 2004), outcomes (Butler & Deprez, 2002; Haleman, 2004), and feelings (Scarbrough, 1997) of women in context to the larger society. While these studies are useful, they don't focus specifically on survivors or the activities or practices that these women actually perform to construct their subjectivities during their educational experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this interview-based study informed by poststructural feminism and   Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self, was to explore the subjectivities that seven low-income, female survivors of domestic violence construct while pursuing postsecondary education.

Research Questions

1.   What processes do the survivors go through to become available to a transformation of their subjectivities?

2.   What practices of self do the survivors perform to construct their subjectivities?

3.   What subjectivities do the survivors construct within the discourses and cultural practices that are available to them?

Significance of the Study

The findings from this study can assist with opening up and expanding societal concepts and labels of low-income women and survivors of domestic violence. Society typically perceives, categorizes, and labels these women as being immoral women. These judgments are most often based on how much individuals are viewed as conforming to societal rules, laws, or values (Foucault, 1984/1985). This study will provide an alternative and expansive perspective of morals with its focus on the everyday activities that women perform to construct themselves as moral subjects. Consequently, it can assist in opening up the terms *moral woman* and *survivor of domestic violence* to multiple significations, constructions, and rewritings. In addition, the study's potential focus on the production/rewriting of survivors' subjectivities based on their own actions can also

present an alternate view of low-income survivors as being active within their own lives versus stereotypic victims. Both of these perspectives can assist with dispelling some of the myths and stereotypes about low-income survivors. They could also facilitate more supportive welfare, financial aid, and academic policies and procedures, thus, opening up more opportunities for low-income survivors.

The findings can also provide useful information for professionals working in the domestic violence, welfare, financial aid, and academic fields so that they are better able to prepare and support low-income survivors as they attempt to complete a postsecondary education. It can increase their awareness of the needs of these students and the potential barriers and obstacles for these students to be successful within their systems. This can also hopefully lead to more sensitivity and to the development of policies and procedures that will make it more conducive for low-income survivors to feel comfortable within their educational settings. These positive educational experiences increase the likelihood that survivors will complete their higher education degrees and will be better able to financially support themselves and their children. In addition, these experiences can promote a higher quality of life for survivors and their family members and this has been found to be significant factors in reducing the possibility of women returning to an abusive relationship (Bybee & Sullivan, 2005).

Finally, this study can assist with expanding some important concepts and practices within the field of occupational therapy. Occupational therapy practitioners can be valuable team members to domestic violence staff and survivors. They can assist survivors with the "development of skills needed for successful role performance of desired roles, independent living skills, environmental adaptations, exploration of new

roles, and education, prevocational, or vocational treatment" (Helfrich & Aviles, 2001, pp. 65-66). However, few occupational therapy practitioners work with survivors within domestic violence centers and there is minimal literature about survivors' occupations. In addition, although most occupational therapy practitioners would agree that "people's occupations are central to their identity and that they can construct themselves through their occupations" (Larson, Wood, & Clark, 2003, p. 23) and "self-esteem and a sense of personhood are linked to the ability to engage in occupations" (Larson, Wood, & Clark, 2003, p. 23), there is limited occupational therapy literature about these relationships. Therefore, this study can assist with adding to the literature about the linkages between occupation and identity.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this interview-based study informed by poststructural feminism and Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self, was to explore the subjectivities that a group of seven low-income, female survivors of domestic violence construct while pursuing postsecondary education. The research questions were as follows:

1. What processes do the survivors go through to become available to a transformation of their subjectivities?

2. What practices of self do the survivors perform to construct their subjectivities?

3. What subjectivities do the survivors construct within the discourses and cultural practices that are available to them?

To gather pertinent information, I reviewed literature from a variety of fields, including public health, education, labor, feminism, poststructuralism, and qualitative research. Information was gathered from the United States Census Bureau, the Department of Labor, Department of Justice, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Coalition against Domestic Violence, the United States Department of Education, and the Department of Human Resources. I also gathered important information from reading women's accounts of their experiences with domestic violence.

Domestic Violence

Definitions

There are multiple terms used as labels for violence against women, including victims or survivors of domestic violence or intimate partner violence; battered women or wives; abused women or wives; and family violence. These terms have often been used interchangeably but often have great variability in terms of what is included within each one. For example, the term *violence against women* has been used to describe a wide variety of situations, including murder, rape, sexual assault, physical abuse, emotional abuse, stalking, prostitution, genital mutilation, sexual harassment, and pornography (Salzman, Fanslow, McMahon, & Shelley, 2002).

Differences in terminology exist based on the source and beliefs about the scope of the problem (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2001; Salzman et al., 2002). The legal system defines physical and sexual violence in narrow terms with definitions varying from state to state (WomensLaw.org, n.d.). Governmental agencies that perform crime surveys also tend to define sexual and physical violence in narrow terms using legalistic language (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2001). This is true for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control's definition of intimate partner violence. With the goal of unifying definitions of violence against women used by researchers, especially those attempting to determine the numbers of women affected by violence, this agency developed the *Intimate Partner Violence Surveillance: Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements,* Version 1.0 in 1999 and revised it in 2002 (Salzman et al., 2002). Within this report, intimate partner violence is divided into four categories: physical violence, sexual violence, threat of physical or sexual violence, and

psychological/emotional abuse and an attempt is made to include all possibilities of acts within each of these categories (Salzman et al., 2002). For example, physical violence includes, but is not limited to:

> scratching, pushing, shoving, throwing, grabbing, biting, choking, shaking, poking, hair-pulling, slapping, punching, hitting, burning, use of a weapon (gun, knife, or other object), and use of restraints or one's body, size, or strength against another person. Physical violence also includes coercing other people to commit any of the above acts. (Salzman et al., 2002)

Researchers in the health, criminology, psychology and sociology fields and advocacy groups also advocate for broad definitions (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2001; Downs, 1996). Most researchers agree to the inclusion of four major components of violence against women: physical violence, sexual violence, threat of physical or sexual violence and psychological/ emotional abuse (Desai & Saltzman, 2001). The U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence against Women, the main governmental agency that focuses on violence against women has a broader definition. Domestic violence is defined as "a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner" and that "domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone" (Office on Violence Against Women, n.d.).

There is not a single feminist definition of domestic violence because there are multiple types of feminism. However, in general, the terminology used for domestic

violence by feminist organizations reflects the foundational feminist belief that "the personal is political" (Walker, 2002). Therefore, most feminists view violence against women as both a personal event and as a political concept, not as scientific or objective data (James-Hanman, 2000; McLaren, 2002; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Domestic violence is perceived as being culturally produced out of the intersections of gender, race, social class, and sexuality (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005).

Feminist organizations reflect a preference for using the term *domestic violence* because this was the terminology used by feminists during the second wave women's movement (Walker, 2002). The language that is used is also reflective of the strong influences by radical and liberal feminists during the Second Wave Women's Movement (Berry, 2000). Consequently, the language is permeated with wording that addresses oppression and disempowerment; and the rights of women to control their own bodies and lives and to be treated as equals to men (Berry, 2000). Domestic violence is perceived to be one form of oppression and social control against women within the intersectionality of multiple systems of power and the main purpose of domestic violence is the establishment of power and dominance (Freedman, 2002; Wilson, 1997). Abusive behaviors by men against women are viewed as being based on the male's perception that all of his needs can be met by controlling "his" woman and "training" her to do what he wants (Walker, 1997). Men are perceived as exercising control through fear and intimidation; male privilege; economic control; isolation; emotional abuse; minimizing, denying, blaming behaviors; and using the children (NCADV, n.d.).

Feminist organizations also desire to be as inclusive as possible and their definitions reflect this value (National Organization of Women [NOW], n.d.). The

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV, 2007), the primary advocacy

agency for women survivors of domestic violence, defines *domestic violence* as "the

willful intimidation, assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior

perpetrated by an intimate partner against another." They include physical battering,

emotional or psychological abuse, sexual assault, economic abuse, and stalking as part of

domestic violence and state that violence against women is often accompanied by

emotionally abusive and controlling behavior and is part of a systematic pattern of

dominance and control in intimate relationships (NCADV, 2007). In addition, "societal

abuse of power and domination through sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, anti-

Semitism, able-bodyism, and ageism" is addressed as causes of violence against women

(NCADV, n.d.).

The National Organization of Women (NOW, n.d.) emphasizes the inter-

relationships between different aspects of violence against women that "result from

society's attitudes towards women and efforts to 'keep women in their place." Included in

their definition is "domestic violence; sexual assault; sexual harassment; violence at

abortion clinics; hate crimes across lines of gender, sexuality and race; the gender bias in

the judicial system that further victimizes survivors of violence; and the violence of

poverty emphasized by the radical right's attacks on poor women and children" (NOW,

n.d.).

It is difficult to choose one definition of domestic violence to use for this study

because acceptance of one automatically means rejection of others. In addition,

poststructural feminists, *trouble* or question, but don't reject, all of these definitions of

domestic violence because they believe that they are essentializing and support a

singular, unifying, concept of identity (Bograd, 2005; Wilson, 1997). For the purposes of this study, I will use the definition from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence because it reflects a feminist perspective and it is the one that is used by shelters and domestic violence organizations throughout the U.S. Since I received assistance from shelter directors in finding my participants and my participants will be affiliated with shelters, it would be beneficial to use the same language.

History of domestic violence

Since ancient times, in patriarchal societies husbands have been legally allowed to verbally and physically punish their wives (Freedman, 2002). Husbands ruled over their wives and violence against women was considered a private matter (Mirchandani, 2004). An excellent example of this was the English common law "rule of thumb," which allowed husbands to beat their wives as long as they used sticks that were no thicker than their thumbs (Berry, 2000). Challenges to these laws and attitudes were pursued by individuals like author Mary Wollstonecraft, philosopher John Stuart Mills, and Suffragist Susan B. Anthony (Berry, 2000). However, it wasn't until the Second Wave Women's Movement during the early 1970s that violence against women began to be viewed as a serious social problem (Mooney, 2000; Wilson, 1997). The women's movement's focus on changing power relations and increasing the equality between men and women catapulted domestic violence from the privacy of homes into the public arena (Walker, 2002).

The consciousness-raising groups prevalent during the feminist movement encouraged women to talk about their lives and it soon became apparent that there were multiple women who were having similar abusive experiences (Sullivan & Gillum, 2001;

Wilson, 1997). This realization led to the promotion of legal and social change by grassroots feminists, abused women, and community activists (Berry, 2000). One of their major agendas was to develop safe places for women and children to stay as they attempted to leave abusive relationships (Sullivan & Gillum, 2001). The first shelter specifically for victims of domestic violence opened in England in 1971 (Walker, 2002). It received international attention when one of its founders, Erin Pizzy, published her book called, *Scream Quietly or the Neighbors will Hear,* about her experiences with women who had experienced domestic violence (Walker, 2002; Wilson, 1997). Following this, Del Martin published the book, *Battered Wives,* in 1976 in the U.S. and also called attention to abuse as a social problem (Downs, 1996). Concurrently, advocates in the U.S. began housing women and children in their own homes and the first shelter opened in 1974 (Sullivan & Gillum, 2001; Wilson, 1997). Advocates also focused on promoting community awareness about domestic violence, changing the criminal justice system, and getting states and federal governments to acknowledge the problem (Sullivan & Gillum, 2001).

The first White House meeting about domestic violence was held in 1977 and included testimonies by battered women, prepared statements by advocates, and recommendations for the improvement of federal agencies and legislation (Wilson, 1997). Following this, over 100 advocates attended the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights' hearing on battered women in 1978 (NCADV, 2005). These hearings served to legitimize the problem and facilitated national recognition about the movement (Wilson, 1997). One of the major outcomes of these hearings was the creation of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence that remains the primary organization providing grassroots

shelter and other services for abused women (NCADV, 2005). Today, there are more than 2,000 shelter and service programs throughout the U.S. (NCADV, 2005; Sullivan & Gillum, 2001).

Grassroots advocacy continued throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s and as a result, The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act which allocated federal funds for victims of domestic violence was passed in 1984 (Wilson, 1997). The same year, the court system in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania started the first Protection from Abuse Court and thus began the movement towards specialized courts that focused only on domestic violence cases (Mirchandani, 2004). In 1979, psychologist, Lenore Walker, published her landmark book, *The Battered Woman*, where she described the *cycle of violence* and *learned helplessness* theories to explain the dynamics of abusive relationships that were beginning to be used in court cases (Downs, 1996). Walker also was an expert witness during the 1995 O.J. Simpson trial. Also occurring during the 1970s were two major murder trials that were highly publicized: the Francine Hughes' *burning bed* case and the Jennifer Patri *burning corpse* case in which the *battered woman syndrome* defense was first used (Downs, 1996).

The 1990s yielded two major efforts towards preventing and decreasing the incidence of domestic violence. The first was the initiation of a national media campaign called, *There's No Excuse for Domestic Violence* by The Family Violence Prevention Fund (Ghez, 2001). The other was the passage of The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994 that was composed of a set of federal laws and grant programs aimed at specifically addressing and ending domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking (Valente, Hart, Zeya, & Malefyt, 2001). During the next year, the televised O.J. Simpson

trial for the murder of his ex-wife yielded historic gains in the nation's awareness of domestic violence (Ghez, 2001). The VAWA was reauthorized in 2000 and 2005 and both improved the original act by reauthorizing grant programs and establishing new programs that addressed the needs of immigrants, child witnesses, persons with disabilities, and survivors of sexual assault and dating violence (Office on Violence Against Women, n.d.). As part of the legislation, the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice, was established in 2002 to oversee the VAWA and subsequent legislation; and to administer financial and technical assistance to communities throughout the country (Office on Violence Against Women, n.d.).

Incidence of Domestic Violence

Although domestic violence occurs against both women and men, women are more likely than men to experience nonfatal intimate partner violence (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007). Women comprise at least 73% of all family violence victims and it's been estimated that they may even constitute 90% of all of the victims of domestic violence (NCADV, 2007). It is estimated that women make up 84% of spousal abuse and 86% of abuse by boyfriends (NCADV, 2007). Women are most often abused by someone that they know or with whom they have an intimate relationship. Thus, domestic violence is also commonly called *intimate partner violence (IPV)* (CDC, 2004).

Current estimates of the incidence of domestic violence or IPV against women in the U.S. are difficult to ascertain because of the different definitions used and the fact that domestic violence is frequently not reported. Multiple sources do provide corresponding results based on available data. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2007), during 2005, the rate of nonfatal IPV for females was about 4

victimizations per 1,000 persons aged 12 or older. Findings from the 1998 National

Violence Against Women (NVAW) Survey and the 2003 census data (NCADV, 2007)

indicate that approximately 1.5 million women are raped and or physically assaulted by

an intimate partner annually in the U.S. (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). The estimate

becomes more like 4.8 million with taking the multiple victimizations of the same person

and the knowledge that a lot of IPV is not reported into account (NCADV, 2007).

Analysis of the 2003 National Violence Against Women Survey estimates the incidence

of IPV closer to 5.3 million that results in 2 million injuries with more than 550,000

requiring medical attention per year (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003).

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV, 2007) concurs with these

estimates and adds that an estimated 1.3 million women will experience domestic

violence in their lifetimes.

Both the findings from the 2000 NVAW Survey (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) and

the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2007) reports agree that

females are much more likely than males to be victims of nonfatal IPV. Both reports

indicate the following trends: In the year 2005, females represented 22% of IPVs versus

4% for males age 12 or older. Females aged 35 to 49 were at the most risk for nonfatal

IPV. Separated or divorced females reported the highest rates of nonfatal IPV. The

average annual rate of nonfatal IPV was the highest for American Indian and Alaskan

Native females while rates were similar for white and black females. The average rate for

Hispanic females declined between 1993 and 2005. Females living in households with

low annual incomes had the highest annual rate of nonfatal IPV, with victimization of

females residing in rental property experiencing more than three times the rate of IPV

than females living in owned property. In addition, it is estimated that emotional or psychological abuse, defined as "the systematic perpetration of malicious and explicit nonphysical acts against an intimate partner, child, or dependent adult," happens in 95% of the cases in which there is physical abuse (NCADV, n.d.).

Causes of Domestic Violence

There are many different theories about what factors contribute to domestic violence against women and the causes of domestic violence have been contested by social scientists for decades (Jewkes, 2005). Cross-sectional analyses of studies have indicated there are certain high-risk social factors and although domestic violence is found in every social group, it is not evenly distributed in each of these (Jewkes, 2005). Richard Gelles, a director of a family violence program, identified the following ten *risk markers* for male batterers:

1. The man is unemployed

2. The man uses illegal drugs at least once a year

3. The man and woman are from different religious backgrounds

4. The man saw his father hit his mother

5. The man and woman cohabit but are not married.

6. The man has a blue-collar occupation, if employed.

7. The man did not graduate from high school.

8. The man is between the ages of 18 and 30 years old.

9. Either the man or the woman use severe violence toward children in the home.

10. The family income is below the poverty level (Berry, 2000).

Findings from multiple studies of domestic violence support these factors and add others. Other studies have identified common signs of a male battering personality as including extreme jealousy; controlling behavior; quick involvement; dependency on the woman for all of the man's needs; attempts to isolate the woman; blaming others for problems and feelings; hypersensitivity; cruelty to animals and children; playful use of force during sex; and a "Jekyll and Hyde Personality" (Wilson, 1997).

Higher incidences of domestic violence have also been correlated with women having low levels of education; disparities in income, education, race, and occupation between men and women; concentration of the power is in the hands of the male, African American couples, and women who have disabilities (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). In addition, being a victim of child maltreatment, especially sexual abuse, has been found to be a strong link with subsequent victimization (Browne & Bassuk, 1997; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Being verbally abused has also been found to be a highly predictive variable for abuse by an intimate partner (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey Study (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) of telephone interviews with a national representative sample of 8,000 women, indicated that women whose partners were emotionally abusive and controlling were significantly more likely to report being raped, physically assaulted, and/or stalked by their partners. This was even the case when other socio-demographic and relationship characteristics were controlled.

Substance abuse does not cause domestic violence but studies have indicated that there is a correlation between the two issues, so it is considered to be one of the leading risk factors for IPV (NCADV, n.d.a). Although the relationship between alcohol and

domestic violence remains controversial, it is estimated that approximately 60% of abusers and 36% of female victims have substance abuse problems (NCADV, n.d.a). Numerous studies have indicated that IPV is higher for men who drink excessively versus those who drink in moderation (Leonard & Quigley, 2005). The possible reasons given for this are the fact that heavy drinking creates problems within a marriage and intoxication facilitates violence (Leonard & Quigley, 2005). Opponents of these theories argue that men who are intoxicated and abuse women still exhibit some controls over their behavior and that being abusive is a choice (Zubretsky & Digirolamo, 2005).

A common view held by some feminists is that domestic violence is caused by patriarchy that has been institutionalized within our laws and cultural practices (Marin & Russo, 2005). Within this perspective, IPV is seen as being intrinsically connected to oppression of women, children, people of color and other marginalized groups (NCADV, 2005). The evidence of this patriarchy can be seen in beliefs that men have a natural, God-given right to have power over women; the male head of the household should be in charge and hold all of the power; masculinity is defined by power, control, and domination; women and female sexuality pose a threat to male power and need to be controlled; and that violence is a legitimate and effective means for enforcing male privilege (Marin & Russo, 2005; Nichols, 2001).

Poverty and unemployment and subsequent stress due to these factors have consistently been found to be key contributors to domestic violence (Browne & Bassuk, 1997; Jewkes, 2005; Rank, 2004). In the following section, I discuss the relationship between domestic violence and poverty.

The relationship between Domestic Violence and Poverty

Whatever people believe about the causes of domestic violence, studies of IPV strongly support the feminist concept that domestic violence against women is "culturally produced out of intersecting relations of gender, race, social class, and sexuality" (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005, p. 1). These intersecting dynamics yield a strong relationship between domestic violence and poverty. As Jewkes (2005) explains:

> Unlike many health problems, there are few social and demographic characteristics that define risk groups for intimate partner violence. Poverty is the exception and increases risk through effects on conflict, women's power, and male identity. Violence is used as a strategy in conflict. Relationships full of conflict, and especially those in which conflicts occur about finances, jealousy, and women's gender role transgressions are more violent than peaceful relationships. (p. 105)

The interrelation between domestic violence and poverty only began to be studied during the past 10 years. Browne and Bassuk (1997) initiated one of the first studies by researching intimate violence in the lives of 436 homeless and poor women. The findings from their longitudinal study not only indicated that a high percentage (60%) of the women had experienced physical assault by a male partner, but that the severity of the violence also seemed to be related to socio-economic status. Nearly a third of the women reported severe violence from an intimate partner. In addition, a very high percentage (83%) of the women reported experiencing extreme levels of physical violence, injury and/or sexual abuse during childhood.

Another more recent study by Benson and Fox (2004) concurred with Browne and Bassuk's findings. They found strong connections between IPV, women's personal and economic well-being and the types of neighborhoods in which women live. Once again, violence against women occurred more often and was more severe amongst economically disadvantaged women. Consequently, IPV was more prevalent in poorer neighborhoods and women appeared to be more reluctant to leave these neighborhoods. The most recent U.S. Department of Justice (2007) analysis of reported and unreported family violence statistics upholds these findings. The data indicate that persons in households with annual incomes less than $7,500 (below the U.S. poverty threshold) have higher rates of assault than persons in households with higher income levels.

Many of the women within these low-income households are being assisted by their state welfare system and multiple studies of women on welfare have consistently supported the strong relationship between low income and physical abuse (Rice, 2001). The findings from studies by Lyon in 1997, 2000, and 2002, Lloyd and Taluc in 1999 and Tolman & Raphael's review in 2000 of the literature on welfare and domestic violence, have consistently indicated that over half of the women receiving assistance through the welfare system have experienced physical abuse. In addition, women who reported having difficulties complying with welfare requirements have even higher rates of abuse (Lyon, 2002; Rice, 2001). These findings are in contrast with the estimated 22% of women in the general population reporting experiencing domestic violence during adulthood (Lyon, 2002; Lyon, 2000; Tolman & Raphael, 2000).

There are multiple dynamics within abusive relationships that facilitate women ending up in poverty. Domestic violence commonly includes economic abuse in which

abusers control women's finances "to prevent them from accessing resources, working or

maintaining control of earnings, achieving self-sufficiency, and gaining financial

independence" (NCADV, n.d.c.). Common methods that men use include refusing to

allow women to attend school or training sessions that will yield higher incomes, forcing

women to obtain credit and then ruining their credit rating, and deprivation in the forms

of intentionally withholding food, clothing, shelter, transportation, healthcare, personal

hygiene, or medications (NCADV, n.d.c). Abusers reason that the lack of financial

independence makes it more probable that women will stay in abusive relationships and it

works with a lot of women (NCADV, n.d.c.). An independent source of income is the

single most significant indicator that a woman will be able to permanently leave an

abuser (The Economic Stability Working Group of the Transition Subcommittee of the

Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence, 2002).

Although there have been some conflicting findings from studies about domestic

violence and employment since the late 1990s, many studies have supported the fact that

women who experience domestic violence are more likely to experience unemployment

and more job turnover (NCADV, n.d.c ; Riger & Staggs, 2004; Tolman & Raphael,

2000). A 2005 national survey by the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence (2007)

found that over 75% of abusers went to their partners' workplaces to express remorse or

anger towards them, to check up on them, and/or to pressure or threaten. The same study

found that 21% of full-time adult workers were victims of domestic violence; and 64% of

people abused stated that their work performance was significantly impacted. Between

37%-96% of women in abusive relationships report that domestic violence has affected

them at work (Wettersten, Rudolph, Faul, Gallagher, Transgard, Adams, Grapham, &

Terrance, 2004). Common issues affecting performance include problems with concentration, problem solving, and decision-making (Tolman & Raphael, 2000).

An estimated 30% of abused women report the loss of their jobs due to domestic violence and 37% of women report that domestic violence had a negative effect on their job performance; it caused them to miss work and made it difficult for them to advance their careers (Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, 2007; NCADV, n.d.b). It's been estimated that victims of IVP lose a total of nearly 8 million days of paid work, which is the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs and nearly 5.6 million days of household productivity as a result of violence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003).

The physical and mental consequences of domestic violence are thought to also be strong influences on abused women's employability and job performance (Lloyd & Taluc, 1999; Riger & Staggs, 2004; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Tolman & Raphael, 2000). Women who experience abuse report higher levels of medical and mental health problems and the estimated annual national cost of these is $4.1 billion (NCADV, n.d.b). These health conditions include depression, anxiety, and Posttraumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) (Lloyd & Taluc, 1999; Taylor & Barusch, 2004; Tolman & Raphael, 2000). Complicating this picture is the fact that studies of welfare mothers have shown that prolonged depression is associated with welfare dependency, once again demonstrating that the picture of domestic violence and poverty is very complex (Riger & Staggs, 2004).

The Feminization of Poverty

Just being a woman increases the possibility of being poor and become impoverished through different processes than men, thus, generating diverse forms of poverty (Rodriguez, 2004). The term *feminization of poverty* is increasingly being used globally to reflect the fact that women make up 70% of the poor throughout the world (Moser & Moser, 2005). The term was originally coined by Diane Pearce during her 1978 study of gender patterns in the evolution of poverty rates in the U.S. between the 1950s and mid 1970s (Medeiros & Costa, 2007). Pearce developed two definitions for feminization of poverty. One definition was adopted by the 1995 Fourth United Nations (U.N.) Conference on Women to describe the increasing tendency for poor populations throughout the world to be composed mostly of women. The other one reflected "an increase of female headed households among the poor" (Medeiros & Costa, 2007, p. 116; Tiamiyu & Mitchell, 2001). Both definitions are still relevant today and have facilitated multiple studies about women and female-headed households.

The picture of the feminization of poverty in the U.S. reflects the fact that working does not cure poverty. No longer can women live up to the American dream that if you just work hard enough you'll prosper. In the U.S., the predominant face of the poor female is an unmarried, single, working woman of color, less than 24 years of age with less than a high school education or a high school diploma and who heads a household with children under the age of 18 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f). Life is a constant struggle for this woman as Shipler (2005) reflects in his description about the women he encountered while studying the working poor throughout the U.S.:

Moving in and out of jobs that demand much and pay little, many people tread

just above the official poverty line, dangerously close to the edge of destitution.

An inconvenience to an affluent family- minor car trouble, a brief illness,

disrupted child care- is a crisis to them, for it can threaten their ability to stay

employed. They spend everything and save nothing. They are always behind on

their bills. They have minuscule bank accounts or none at all, and so pay more

fees and higher interest rates than more secure Americans. Even when the

economy is robust, many wander through a borderland of struggle, never getting

very far from where they started. When the economy weakens, they slip back

toward the precipice. (p. 4)

In 2006, according to the U.S. Census Report (2007d), women in the U.S. were

40% more likely to live below the poverty threshold than men. The *poverty threshold* is a

measurement used by the U.S. Census Bureau to define poverty levels in the U.S. as a

certain maximum annual income level based on the number of people in a family and the

number of children under the age of 18 who live within the family. For example, the

poverty threshold in 2006 for a family of four with two children under the age of 18 was

$20,444 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007b).

Over 14 million adult women, compared to 9.5 million adult men, or one in eight

women as compared to one in eleven men, lived below the federal poverty threshold

(Women Work!, 2007). Women of color were the most likely to be classified as poor

(Women Work!, 2007). Black and Hispanic women were greater than twice more likely

to live below the poverty threshold than white and Asian women (U.S. Department of

Labor, 2007f). These directly correlated with the fact that Asian women had the highest median earnings, followed by non-Hispanic white women, black women, and finally, Hispanic women (Webster & Alemayehu, 2007).

Despite the fact that in 2006 approximately 59% of women participated in the labor force and there were more women employed than men (170 million women as compared to 81.3 million men), the median earnings for all women still averaged only 77.3 percent of men's earnings and throughout all 50 states women's median earnings were less than men's (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007d; U.S. Department of Labor, 2007h; Webster & Alemayehu, 2007). This wage gap didn't just occur for women without college degrees (American Association of University Women, 2007; U.S. Department of Labor, 2007c; U.S. Department of Labor, 2007e; Webster & Alemayehu, 2007). A recent study by The American Association of University Women (AAUW, 2007) found that despite having a bachelor's degree, one year after graduation, women working full-time earned just 80% as much as their male colleagues. The situation got worse with increased time. Ten years after graduation, women earned only 69% of what men earned, despite controlling for hours, occupation, parenthood, and other factors in the study. The study also indicated that males dominated the higher-paying fields and women who majored in and worked in these fields tended to earn more than women in other fields.

In 2006, women were also paid at or below the minimum wage rate more frequently than men (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007c). Women made up approximately 60% of minimum wage workers and approximately 3% of women were paid at or below the federal minimum wage rate as compared with less than 2% of men (U.S. Department

of Labor, 2007c). White women were twice as likely to earn at or below the minimum wage than men (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007c). The greatest proportion of female minimum wage earners tended to be below the age of 25, never married, have less than a high school diploma, white, black or Hispanic, and work in a service profession (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f).

The federal minimum wage, which was established in 1938 because our nation "believed in the basic human dignity of work: no job should pay so little that it impoverishes Americans," (Shulman, 2007, p. 115) currently does not accomplish this goal, especially for female-headed families (Weldon & Tagg, 2004). One of the major reasons for this is that the minimum wage has never been indexed to inflation (Rank, 2004;). For example, a single mother working full- time for 52 weeks per year who is paid at the current minimum wage of $5.15 per hour has an annual income of $10,712, which falls far short of the poverty threshold of $14,348 for a family of three (Schaeffer & Van Horn, 2003).

Minimum wage is also strongly correlated with occupation. Nearly 75% of workers earning minimum wage or less in 2006 were employed in service occupations and women made up the highest percentage of these workers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f). Women's predominant employment in these service professions or what are called "pink collar" jobs segregated them into some of the lowest-paying jobs in the U.S. (Rodriguez, 2004). In 2006, women made up the highest proportion of occupations that paid less than $400 per week: secretaries and administrative assistants, cashiers, childcare workers, home health aides, and hairdressers (U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, 2007).

Age and gender also affect employment rates and consequently, poverty levels. Although approximately the same percentages of men and women ages 16-19 were employed in 2006 and the unemployment rate for men ages 20-24 was higher than for women of the same age, less 20-24 year old women (64.2%) than men (72.7%) were employed (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007d). The employment participation rate differences were even greater for 25-34 year olds: 72.9% for women as compared to 89% for men and these differences increased with age (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007d).

Although the unemployment rates for women and men in 2006 were identical at 4.6% in 2006, there were differences in labor participation based on family composition (U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, 2007e). Overall, approximately 82% of families had at least one employed member, while 6.4% had at least one unemployed member for a total of 4.9 million families employed (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007d). However, a lower percentage of families maintained by single women had a family member employed (76%) as opposed to households maintained by single men (84.9%) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007e).

Employment status is affected by age of family composition, race, and education. In general, in 2006, mothers with children ages 6-17 were more likely to participate in the labor force than mothers with children below the age of 6 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007g). More unmarried mothers with children under a year old were working, 59% as compared to 55% of married women (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007d). The overall unemployment rate for all mothers with children under 18 was approximately 5% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007d). However, the jobless rate for unmarried mothers was almost three times that of married mothers: 8.5% as compared to 3.1% (U.S. Department

of Labor, 2007d). Race also strongly influenced employment status. Black families were approximately twice more likely to have an unemployed family member as compared to white and Asian families (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007d). Hispanic families were about 30% more likely than white and Asian families to have an unemployed family member (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007d).

Education is also strongly correlated with type of employment and with poverty. The differences of income in terms of education have increased sharply since 1979 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007d). In 2006, reflecting the increasing differences in income based on education, female college graduates aged 25 and older working full time earned approximately 81% more than women with only a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007e). People who completed college had higher earnings and people who were high school dropouts tended to be the most impoverished (Newman, 2007; Rank, 2005; U.S. Department of Labor, 2007e). Women ages 16-24 without a high school diploma and who were not enrolled in school participated in the labor force at significantly less (52.9%) frequency than women who had a high school diploma (72%) and high school dropouts were twice as likely to be unemployed (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007e). In addition, there were major differences between women and men in terms of labor force participation. The National Center for Education Statistics (2006a), defines the Labor Force Participation Rate as the percentage of the civilian population who are employed or seeking employment. In 2005 (the latest year data can be obtained), women ages 20-64 years of age who were high school dropouts, high school graduates, or had associate degrees participated in the labor force at lower rates than men (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006a). For example, women, ages 20-24 years old who

had less than a high school diploma had a labor force participation rate of 49.2 as compared to 79.3% for men (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006a).

Women's dominant role in domestic work and childcare also influence their economic status (Freedman, 2002; Tong, 1998). Even when women are living with a man and are working full-time outside the home, most of them are still primarily responsible for taking care of the household, children, and dependent family members (Barrett, 1988). Findings from the U.S. Department of Labor's American Time Use Survey (2007a) indicated that in 2006, 84% of women versus 64% of men spent time doing household activities. Women spent 2.7 hours and men spent 2.1 hours performing household activities. However, only 20% of men as compared to 52% of women did household activities such as cleaning and laundry. Thirty-seven percent of men did food preparation and cleanup as compared to 65% of women being responsible for these tasks. On weekdays, in households with children under the age of 6, women spent 1.2 hours per day providing physical childcare versus 25 minutes spent by men (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007a).

These tasks performed by women are typically not valued as paid work. Marxist/socialist feminists have argued for years that women's domestic role keeps them oppressed and that women should be paid for this work (Tong, 1998). They advocate for the view that the women's household and childcare work are productive work, they create surplus value, and are necessary for all other work (Tong, 1998). Therefore, women should be paid for their time and efforts.

In addition, all of these tasks in addition to reproduction are labor intensive and fatiguing for women and can cause missed workdays in low-wage jobs that don't offer

paid time off or health care benefits (Barrett, 1988). These responsibilities can also lead

to women not working for periods of time. Dropping out of the labor force even for a

year or two can have profound long-term effects on women's earning potential. For every

two years she is out of the labor force, a woman's earnings fall by 10% and her earnings

are lower for the rest of her working life (Boushey, 2007).

<div align="center">The Working Poor</div>

The *working poor* is defined by the U.S. Department of Labor (2006f) as a

"person who, during the year, spent 27 weeks or more in the labor force during the year

(working or looking for work), but whose incomes still fell below the official poverty

level (p.1). Being female increases the possibility of being considered among the *working*

poor population (Cadena & Sallee, 2005; Tiamiyu & Mitchell, 2001; Women Work!,

2005). In 2005 (the latest year data can be obtained), 7.7 million people in the U.S. were

classified as the working poor, representing 5.6% of all persons 16 and older who were in

the labor force for 27 weeks or more (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f). Many of the

people were classified as working poor despite the fact that they were working full-time;

approximately sixty percent of people classified as the working poor held full-time jobs

(U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f). More women than men made up the working poor

population. The working poor rate for women was 6.1% as compared to 4.8% for men,

despite the fact that about the same number of women and men who were working were

considered to be poor (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f).

Marital status and family composition are strongly correlated with being classified

as the working poor. Unmarried women with children comprise the highest percentage of

the female working poor population (Shipler, 2005). In addition, studies of women from

1960-2000 indicate that there is a high correlation between single motherhood and having low levels of education (McLanahan, 2007). Both of these factors increase the probability of being considered working poor. In 2005, families who had children under the age of 18 were about four times more likely than those without children to be among the working poor (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f).

The level of education completed is also a strong indicator of being classified as the working poor and the importance of education in protecting specific women from poverty tends to build across the life course (Rank, 2005). On average, in 2005, people who completed college had higher salaries than those who had not and being classified as the working poor was pretty much guaranteed for high school dropouts (Newman, 2007). College graduates with a bachelor's degree or higher accounted for only 1.7% of the working poor as compared to 14.1% of those with less than a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f). Approximately 7% of people with less than a high school diploma, 6.6% of high school graduates and 3.4% of people with associate degrees were considered to be among the working poor (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f).

According to Department of Labor analysis of data from 2005 (2007f), being of certain race also increased the probability of being considered among the working poor. Even though whites accounted for approximately 70% of the working poor, blacks and Hispanics had the highest working poor rates: 10.5% each as opposed to 4.7% for whites. In addition, a higher percentage of black women than black men were considered working poor (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f).

During 2005, age and type of work strongly influenced whether someone was considered to be part of the working poor population. The younger someone was the more likely he or she was to be classified as working poor. Ten percent of 16-19 year olds and 12% of 20-24 year olds were working, yet living in poverty (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f). In addition, about 2/3 of people classified as working poor worked in service occupations; sales and office occupations; and production, transportation, and material moving occupations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007f). People working in service occupations had the highest levels of working poor rates and women dominated these professions (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008)

Lack of employment benefits and continuous out-of-pocket expenses also strongly affect the income of single, working- women and therefore increase their chances of being considered among the working poor. Many women are unable to earn wages sufficient to pay for general living expenses plus the cost of day care and medical coverage for their children (Tiamiyu & Mitchell, 2001). The high percentage of low wage jobs that doesn't provide employment-based work supports like health insurance and paid time off also increase the likelihood that women, especially single mothers, will be classified as working poor (Albeda & Boushey, 2007).

Women are particularly vulnerable to the loss of health insurance because they are more likely than men to be covered through their spouses' insurance (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2007). In 2006, only 59% of American citizens had employment-based health insurance coverage (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2007). Forty-seven million people or 15.8% of people in the U.S. did not have health insurance (Jones- DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2007). Over 17 million of these people were women (Kaiser

Family Foundation, 2007). The number of uninsured also included the many low-wage workers who were unable to receive government assistance for themselves and their children because their incomes were above the established Department of Health and Human Services *poverty line (*Newman, 2007). The *poverty line* is based on poverty guidelines issued each year in the *Federal Register* by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds for use for administrative purposes, for example, in determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs (United States Department of Health & Human Services, 2007).

In 2006, only 27% of low-wage workers were covered by government health programs (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2007). In addition, almost 9 million or 11.7% of children under the age of 18 in the U.S. did not have health insurance and children living in poverty were more likely to be uninsured than all U.S. children (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2007). Out of the people covered by government health programs, approximately 38 million people were covered by Medicaid and 40.3% were covered by Medicare (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2007). Three quarters of the adults who received Medicaid coverage were women and over half (56%) of the women ages 18-64 who received Medicaid benefits were considered to be low-income (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2007).

There are multiple consequences for women and children when they don't have healthcare benefits. They lack adequate access to care, get a lower standard of care when they do seek care, have poorer health outcomes and have increased health risks including poor nutrition, heart disease, diabetes, dental problems, and mental illness (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2007; Rank, 2004). One-third of non-elderly women on Medicaid rate their

health as fair or poor as compared to 11% of low-income women who have employer sponsored insurance (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2007). Besides the out-of-pocket expenses for healthcare that women must pay, these increased health risks enhance the possibility that single working mothers may have to miss a day of work due to illness. If this happens frequently and their employers don't offer paid time off, their incomes will be reduced and/or their employment may be put in jeopardy. All of these factors increase their probability of staying impoverished.

The working poor single mother with young children also has additional financial challenges related to childcare. The average cost of day care in 2006 was $1,048 per month (Warren, 2007). As indicated previously, if a single mother works full-time and is paid at the current minimum wage rate of $5.15 per hour, she earns $781 per month, which is way below the federal poverty threshold. It's easy to see how the cost of day care can often be viewed as a disincentive to work A lot of single mothers cannot afford to pay for childcare without some type of assistance. There is federal block grant funding allotted to states to assist low-income families with childcare expenses (Greenberg, 2007). However, in 2001, only 14% of the children that were eligible for government assistance with childcare costs actually received financial assistance (Newman, 2007). In 2003, families receiving or leaving the welfare system received the most extensive coverage (Greenberg, 2007).

Nationally, about 90% of the people receiving welfare benefits are women (Parvez, 2003; Sociologists for Women in Society, 2002). Receiving assistance through the welfare system since the passage of welfare reform, called the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, pretty

much guarantees that single mothers will remain among the working poor and will not move towards long-term economic self-sufficiency (Jones-DeWeever, Peterson, & Song, 2003). Reflecting a "work first" mentality, women are forced to find work quickly, that is, get a job, any job, as quickly as they can (Hays, 2003). There are monetary and time sanctions in place if women don't comply with the expectations and the expectations have continued to grow. In 2002, the TANF reauthorization bill passed and continuing with the "work first" mentality, its provisions increased the work requirement from 20 to 40 hours per week and the expected percentage of people involved in work activities from 50% to 70%, while excluding postsecondary education as an allowable work activity for TANF recipients (Center for Women Policy Studies, 2002).

Since welfare reform, there have been many claims that the reform has been very successful. These claims are based on the increased numbers of people participating in work and the decrease in welfare caseloads from 5 million to 2 million (Anderson, Halter, & Gryzlak, 2004; Blank, 2007). However, most of the women who are working have been moved into low-wage jobs and consequently the average earnings of women leaving welfare are usually well below the poverty threshold and less than that of men (Jones-DeWeever, Peterson, & Song, 2003; Weigt, 2006). Reflecting the rest of the labor market, most of the jobs that women have gotten are in the four typically low-wage occupation groups dominated by women: service; administrative support and clerical; operators, fabricators, and laborers; and sales (Jones-DeWeever, Peterson, & Song, 2003). Therefore, only about 50% of women leaving welfare have a higher income.

The Welfare Reform Act includes provisions for monetary assistance for mothers with children living with them through the Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF).

Many women who are working and who are still receiving monetary assistance through TANF have such low incomes that they remain classified as the working poor (Parvez, 2002). Recipients are able to receive these benefits for a total of five cumulative years or less at the state's discretion based upon adherence to strict requirements. Studies indicate that those most likely to be affected by the welfare time limits have little education or work experience. Women with these limitations tend to need to stay on welfare longer than recipients with more work experience (Taylor and Barusch, 2004). In addition, labor market data indicates that achieving higher levels of education dramatically reduces the likelihood that women will be among the working poor (U.S. Department of Labor, 2006). In addition, studies of the factors that influenced return to welfare performed prior to reform indicated that while work exits were highly unstable routes off welfare, women who obtained any postsecondary education had a 41% lower chance of returning to welfare as compared to high school dropouts (Harris, A. 1996). General studies of the benefits of higher education have indicated between a 4-12% increase in earnings for every 30 credits completed of postsecondary education, yet women on welfare are very restricted in terms of pursuing further education (Butler & Deprez, 2002). Consequently, attainment of education beyond high school is a very powerful method for preventing low-income, single mothers who are survivors from returning to abusive relationships because they can't independently support themselves and their families (Price & Steffy, 2003; Rank, 2004; Smith Madsen, 2003}.

Some feminists perceive the Welfare Reform Act as legislating morality for poor women. This is based on what appears to be two competing messages from welfare reform that satisfy two distinct constituencies. One message is a valorization of

independence, self-sufficiency, and the work ethic, as well as the promotion of certain gender equality. The other message can be understood as "a condemnation of single parenting, a codification of the appropriate preeminence of lasting family ties and the commitment to others, and a reaffirmation that women's place is in the home" (Hays, 2003, p. 20).

Being on welfare is also often viewed as an index of morality (Shipler, 2005). There is a pervasive belief that the welfare rolls are predominantly made up of minorities with large numbers of children who have alcohol and drug problems and would rather sit at home and collect benefits than work hard (Rank, 2004). A high percentage of survivors (estimated at more than 50%) receiving welfare benefits report abuse (Lyon, 2002; Davies, 2002). An excellent reflection of how women on welfare are viewed as being immoral can be seen in the provisions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, or welfare reform. Just reviewing Title I in which Congress reflects its findings denotes the values that yielded the provisions of the Act. Included in Title I are the statements, like, "Marriage is the foundation of a successful society" and "Prevention of out-of-wedlock pregnancy and reduction in out-of-wedlock birth are very important Government interests" (U.S. Government, 1996).

The belief that individual attributes cause poverty has also been reinforced by social scientists involved in poverty research with their focus on the individual, not social and economic structures, as the unit of study (Rank, 2004). In addition, the American rags to riches stories propagate the understanding that if citizens work hard enough, they can pull themselves out of poverty (Shipler, 2005). If they can't accomplish this, they are often perceived to have something wrong with their values (Shipler, 2005).

Besides experiencing poverty as a moral issue, being a survivor of domestic violence is also often problematized as a moral domain within our contemporary culture. There are multiple reasons for this problematization. Early studies and descriptions of survivors focused on stereotypic myths about women, including the beliefs that survivors have difficulties with distinguishing between right and wrong (Busch, 2004). Another common misperception was that women do something to cause the battering (Busch, 2004; Wilson, 1997). Consequently, based on these surviving myths, some survivors have been produced as being women who are morally immature or bankrupt (Busch, 2004).

<div align="center">Postsecondary Education</div>

Experiences of Working Poor Women

Most of the studies of low-income, single mothers pursuing higher education have been performed with women who are welfare recipients (Adair, 2004; Haleman, 2004; Scarbrough, 1997). These studies are relevant when considering the experiences of survivors because of the high number of welfare recipients who have reported experiencing domestic violence (Davies, 2002; Lyon, 1997; Lyon, 2000; Lyon, 2002; Lloyd & Taluc, 1999; Tolman & Raphael, 2000; Tolman, Danzinger, & Rosen, 2002). In addition, even when multiple participants in these studies were not directly asked about domestic violence, many of them indicated that they had suffered abuse from an intimate partner (Haleman, 2004; Miewald, 2003; Scarbrough, 1997). In these studies, most women reported that their educational experience had changed both theirs and their family members' lives and that these changes were positive and transformational (Adair, 2003; Butler & Deprez, 2002; Haleman, 2004; Kates, 1991; IWPR, 2006; Mitchell, 2003;

Scarbrough, 1997). They credit their higher education with leading to increased opportunities for better jobs, higher pay, more stable employment, and increased community involvement (Butler & Deprez, 2002; Newman, 2007). They also view education as giving them the tools to advocate for themselves and others (IWPR, 2006; Scarbrough, 1997). Consequently, higher education was perceived as moving them beyond welfare to an increased earning capacity so that they could get beyond poverty (Newman, 2007). This was especially true for women of color (Butler & Deprez, 2002; Waldner, 2003).

While these outcomes are indeed positive, low-income women pursuing higher education have also indicated that there are multiple obstacles to initiating and completing their degrees (Sharp, 2004; Ratner, 2004). They discuss having to constantly juggle family, work, and school responsibilities and not having a significant other to assist them with their obligations. They share that they often feel stressed and conflicted because they don't have enough time for their children or other family members (Butler & Deprez, 2002; IWPR, 2006). Consequently, many women report that they end up leaving school even when they are successful with their studies because they cannot manage child-care, transportation, and work responsibilities (Adair, 2003; Sharp, 2004).

Even entering school can be fraught with many barriers. A major impediment can be paying for school and there are multiple systems in place that can make this very difficult. One of them is the federal higher education financial aid system that is set up for traditional age, single students and not for working parents (Newman, 2007). Another one is the federal work-study program that often conflicts with welfare benefits and can cause large reductions in these benefits (Kates, 1991). In addition, just the combined

costs of housing, food, and childcare leave many women with few remaining financial resources so they continuously live in poverty (Haleman, 2004). Many low-income women are also single mothers so their financial situations have far reaching implications and often take a dramatic toll on women and their children (Waldner, 2003).

Financial instability also influences how low-income, single mothers pursuing postsecondary education are treated within multiple areas of their lives. Our contemporary society problematizes poverty and many low-income women are produced as immoral women because of their financial situations. Our American Puritan legacy and decades of poverty research by social scientists have reinforced a focus on blaming individuals for their financial status instead of examining the social and economic structures that produce generations of impoverished women (Cozzaredi, Tagler, & Wilkinson, 2001; Lyon, 2002; Rank, 2004). As Shipler (2005) explains:

> hard work is not merely practical but also moral; its absence suggests an ethical lapse. A harsh logic dictates a hard judgment: If a person's diligent work leads to prosperity, if work is a moral virtue, and if anyone in society can attain prosperity through work, then the failure to do so is a fall from righteousness. The marketplace is the fair and final judge; a low wage is somehow the worker's fault, for it simply reflects the low value of his labor. In the American atmosphere, poverty has always carried a whiff of sinfulness (pp. 5-6).

These attitudes permeate academic settings and many low-income women report that they don't initiate or complete school because they feel demoralized, misunderstood, and misrepresented within the academic environment (Adair, 2003; Haleman, 2004). They share numerous examples of feeling excluded, unsupported, stigmatized, ostracized,

punished, vilified, and alienated by both faculty and students based on what they perceive

as misperceptions of their social class and values (Adair & Dahlberg, 2003; Megivern,

2003). They report being frequently confronted with negative stereotypes of poor people,

low-income women, women receiving welfare benefits, and single mothers (Megivern,

2003; Mitchell, 2003). They constantly hear comparisons of single-mother-headed

families with two-parent families where single-mother families are deemed to be inferior

(Haleman, 2004). Welfare mothers are depicted as being lazy, undeserving, and

dependent (Scarbrough, 1997). They also hear statements that assume people with low-

incomes have lower intellects or are stupid (Sullivan, 2003). They are often viewed as

being incapable of making logical, reasoned, and rational decisions (Harris, 2003). These

types of experiences are not isolated to classrooms. The negative attitudes about low-

income, single mothers espoused by academic financial aid staff members have also

deterred some women from pursuing their education (Sharp, 2004). One student summed

it up well when she described an incident that happened in one of her classes

> It was particularly difficult being in those classes where welfare-bashing was
>
> delivered as academic gospel. In one sociology class, the professor opened the
>
> discussion by telling the class ridiculous anecdotes about lazy poor women sitting
>
> at home collecting welfare checks so they could buy color television sets with
>
> which to watch the *Oprah Show* (Mitchell, 2003, p. 115).

School isn't the only place that low-income women who are pursuing higher

education report being treated poorly. Women describe similar experiences with social

service providers, store clerks, and medical providers (Haleman, 2004; Mitchell, 2003;

Smith Madsen, 2003). Ironically, those who are supposed to help are often the worse

culprits. Many welfare caseworkers are perceived as imposing negative stereotypes onto poor women (Haleman, 2004). The most powerful example of this is the fact that following the initiation of welfare reform many caseworkers did not inform a large number of women about the possibility of receiving twelve months exemption from work requirements so that they could continue school. Instead, many women were told that they had no right to go to school and that they had to withdraw in order to perform work activities (IWPR, 2006). This was even the case when women were close to graduation (Kahn & Polakow, 2004; Ratner, 2004).

In public, low-income women deal with grocery store clerks who often deliberately embarrass them when they are paying with food stamps (Haleman, 2004; Harris, 2003). Women also frequently report that medical providers treat them as if they are ignorant and wanting a free ride because they are public healthcare users (Mitchell, 2003). Even attending college while receiving pre-natal care covered by public assistance seems to be cause for healthcare professionals to make comments like, "If you can afford to go to that college, then you don't need to be on welfare"(Moody, 2003).

Being a survivor of domestic violence in addition to being a low-income single mother can dramatically increase the potential for even more negativity and stigma. Like poverty, domestic violence is often problematized as a moral domain within contemporary society where survivors are produced as morally immature or bankrupt (Busch, 2004; Harris, 2003). Myths and stereotypes about survivors portray them as having difficulties distinguishing between right and wrong, incapable of making rational decisions, and making poor choices (Brush, 2003; Harris, 2003). Tragically, they are often viewed as being the cause of the abuse (Busch, 2004; Harris, 2003; Wilson, 1997).

These socially constructed negative labels about low-income, single mothers and survivors of domestic violence can strongly influence how these women produce themselves as students and can strongly affect their success with completing their higher education degrees. Although many women report having increased self-esteem, greater confidence, and stronger self-respect due to their participation in education, many others report internalizing these negative societal messages (Adair & Dahlberg, 2004; Butler & Deprez, 2002; Haleman, 2004; Waldner, 2003). Narratives of low-income women pursuing higher education consistently reflect a strong correspondence between the devaluation that the women have experienced and "their expressed fears, self-blame, and feelings of worthlessness, stupidity, and incompetence" (Scarbrough, 1997, p. 2). Some women have even expressed feelings of self-loathing (Waldner, 2003). These feelings may be even more intensified for female survivors of domestic violence because survivors can have lingering feelings of devaluation and subordination based on their past abuse by men (Brush, 2003; Haleman, 2004; Harris, 2003; Miewald, 2003; Scarbrough, 1997). They can also suffer from depression and symptoms of "post traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) that are more commonly experienced by survivors than by women who are not abused (Lyons, 2002).

These pejorative statements also reinforce the fact that although education is supposed to be society's great equalizer by leveling class, race, and gender differences, this is often not the case for low-income, single mothers who are also survivors of domestic violence (Adair, 2003; Sharp, 2004). Viewed through the lens of a poststructural feminist theoretical perspective based on the work of Michel Foucault, it becomes evident that these women's bodies have become virtual texts that serve as "the

inscribed surface of events" (Foucault, 1991, p. 83) that reflect "the political battleground on which America has waged war against the poor" (Harris, 2003, p. 138). The language of these bodies/texts is organized according to socially constructed rules and discourses and is the product of historically specific power relations (Adair, 2003, pp. 26-27). As evidenced in the case of the categorization of low-income, single mothers as immoral women, societal rules "allow certain statements to be made and not others" and "allow certain people to be subjects of statements" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485). In addition, discourses, which are made up of ideas, ideologies, attitudes, terms, and actions that permeate social practices and organize a way of thinking into a way of acting, produce negative attitudes that result in harsh welfare reform or other legislation (Bove, 1990).

Within this theoretical perspective, power relations involve multiple forces that are embodied within society and laws (Foucault, 1978). They are exercised with a series of aims and objectives and are constantly present in human relationships where one person is always trying to control the conduct of the other, as in the way that welfare caseworkers control low-income, single mothers' benefits (Foucault, 1978). Foucault calls the methods used in these cases, *technologies of power*, and he states that they determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination (Foucault, 1983). Consequently, within this context, power is viewed as disciplining people where discipline is a type of power that makes the formation of subjects (persons) possible and is responsible for the subject positions that are taken up by and reiterated by the subject (Butler, cited in Honan, Knobel, Baker, & Davies, 2000).

In the case of low-income, single mothers who are survivors, power is viewed as producing disciplined bodies where these women take up *Welfare Queen* or *Immoral*

Woman subject positions (Foucault, 1977). The women's occupations of these subject positions within discourse give them the sense of who they are, what is possible or impossible, right or wrong, and appropriate or inappropriate for them to do (Burr, 2001). It also allows their bodies to be branded with the *poor woman* label as Adair (2003) indicates when she reflects on some similarities between the women's subjectivity and Foucault's (1977) gruesome accounts of torture in his book, *Discipline & Punish The Birth of the Prison*:

> It is important to note when considering the contemporary inscription of poverty as moral pathology etched onto the bodies of profoundly poor women and children that these are more than metaphoric and self-patrolling marks of discipline. Rather, on myriad levels- sexual, social, material, and physical- poor women and their children, like the 'deviants' publicly punished in Foucault's scenes of torture, are marked, mutilated, and made to bear and transmit signs in a public spectacle that brands the victim in infamy. (p. 28)

It is possible to change this disciplining process. Low-income survivors can resist the taking up of subject positions that are based on class, race, gender, and domestic violence because as Foucault (1978) states, "Where there is power, there is resistance" (p. 95) and "points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network" (p. 95). This means that survivors can find "possibilities of reworking that very matrix of power"(Butler, 1992, p. 13) so that they can rewrite their subjectivities. In the next section, I describe this perspective based on the work of Michel Foucault.

Theoretical Perspective

Introduction

Michel Foucault (1954-1984) viewed himself as an historian of *systems of thought,* which he defined as "the forms in which, during a given period of time, knowledges [*saviors]* individualize, achieve an equilibrium, and enter into communication" (Rabinow, 1997, p. xi). Yet, he didn't consider his work that of an "historian" (Foucault, M. (1985). He did regard his work as "studies of 'history" and "philosophical exercises" in which the goal was to "learn to what extent the effort to think one's history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently" (Foucault, M. (1985, p. 9).

When asked towards the end of his life about his work, Foucault stated that his objective over the last 25 years had been "to sketch out a history of the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves [especially through the fields of] economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine, and penology" (Foucault, 1988, pp. 17-18). He believed that knowledge should not be accepted at face value. Consequently, his goal was to "analyze these so-called sciences as very specific 'truth games' related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves" (Foucault, 1988, p.18). This objective evolved into his creation of "a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (Foucault, 1983, p. 326). Thus, what his work offers us today are models to use for "an analysis for the problematization of subjectivity in modern experience" (Rajchman, 1985, p. 122).

Foucault's work on subjectivity involved three domains of analysis: an investigation of systems of knowledge, which he called *archaeology;* an investigation

into the mutual relations between systems of truth and modalities of power, called *genealogy;* and an inquiry into the self's relationship to itself, which he called *ethics* (Davidson, 1994). Through these analyses, he identified three modes of objectification that he believed transformed human beings into subjects. The first are the methods of inquiry that attempt to give themselves the status of sciences through the objectification of the speaking subject, the productive subject, or the subject within natural history or biology (Foucault, 1982/1983). The second involves the objectification of the subject through what he called *dividing practices.* In these instances, objectification of the subject occurs through division inside himself or by others doing it for him, like in the case of the mentally ill versus the sane (Foucault, 1982/1983). The third method, which was his final focus before he died, was his study of the objectification of the subject through "the way a human being turns him-or herself into a subject" (Foucault, 1982/1983, p. 327).

From these analyses, he identified four major techniques or *technologies* that humans use to understand themselves. The first he calls *technologies of production*, which allow us to produce, transform, or manipulate things. The second is *technologies of sign systems*, in which humans use signs, meaning, symbols, or signification. The third he identifies as *technologies of power*, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination. The final one is called *technologies of the self* (also called *practices of self),* which he stated, "permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls" (Foucault, 1988, p.18). It is this fourth focus, *technologies* or *practices of the self* that Foucault theorizes in the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality* and is

the basis for the theoretical perspective chosen for this study of experiences of female survivors of domestic violence participating in higher education.

Care of Self

Foucault (1990/1985) believed that his primary task when providing a history of thought was to "define the conditions in which human beings 'problematize' what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live "(p. 10). Therefore, in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1 An Introduction (*1976/1978), *Volume 2 The Use of Pleasure* (1984/1985)*,* and *Volume 3 The Care of the Self* (1984/1986), his goal was not to analyze historical practices of sexuality to find final truths about human nature. Instead, his objective was to study the problematization of sexuality from early antiquity through the first centuries of Christianity (Rajchman, 1985). He started with early Christianity in Volume 1 and then goes on to Greek and Greco-Roman cultures in Volumes 2 and 3.

Foucault specifically wanted to study how, why, and in what forms sexuality was constituted as a moral domain and an ethical concern within these cultures (Foucault, 1984/1985). Therefore, he used ancient texts as a tool "to look more closely *at* the workings of those practices in which moral norms and truths about ourselves figure, to submit *them* to a critical analysis" (Rajchman, 1985, p. 88). As with his previous works, throughout these volumes he focused on the different methods in which individuals were made subjects. He specifically studied the methods used for subjection within the realm of sexuality because he viewed these as the connections between the moral code and the self (Davidson, 1986). Consequently, as Foucault asserts, "the general framework of the book [books] about sex is a history of morals" (Foucault, 1991, p. 352)

Foucault defined morals as "a set of values and rules of actions that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies such as family (in one of its roles), educational institutions, churches, and so forth" (Foucault, 1984/1985, p. 25). According to him, morals consist of three factors: the moral code imposed on people, how people behave, and ethics, which he defined as the self's relation to itself or *rapport a soi* (Davidson, 1986). A moral code is a complex interplay between explicit and implicit rules and values (Foucault, 1984/1985). Behaviors are the actions or practices people exhibit in relation to the moral code (Foucault, 1991). That is, "the manner in which they comply more or less fully with a standard of conduct, the manner in which they obey or resist an interdiction or a prescription, the manner in which they respect or disregard a set of values (Foucault, 1984/1985, p. 25). This behavior is different than the third aspect of morals, which is the manner in which people conduct themselves or as Foucault described it, "the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the code" (Foucault, 1984/1985, p. 26). Foucault called this third aspect, *ethics.*

If morality is viewed this way, then, survivors constitute themselves as moral subjects through their practices or technologies of self. This construction is multifaceted because according to Foucault, there are four different ways individuals can conduct themselves morally as ethical subjects of their actions (Davidson, 1986; Rabinow, 1994). The first one he calls the *determination of the ethical substance,* and he defines this as "the way in which the individual has to constitute this or that part of himself as the prime material of his moral conduct" (Foucault, 1985, p. 26). In other words, an individual's ethical substance will determine what part of him or herself is needed to be taken into

account in the formulation of the moral code (Davidson, 1986). Another factor has to do with the *mode of subjection,* which is "the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice (Foucault, 1985, p. 27). Still another is the differences in the forms of *elaboration of ethical work* that people do in order to become ethical subjects (Davidson, 1986). Foucault (1991) calls this the self-forming activity or asceticism in a very broad sense. It involves both the work on one's conduct so as to be in compliance with a given rule and the "attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's behavior" (Foucault, 1985, p. 27). Finally, there is *telos* which refers to the kind of person we aspire to become when we behave morally (Davidson, 1986).

In his quest to gain a further understanding of these principles, Foucault studied *prescriptive* texts, "that is, texts whose main object, whatever their form (speech, dialogue, treatise, collection of precepts, etc.) is to suggest rules of conduct" (Foucault, 1985, p. 12). In Volume two of the *History of Sexuality* (1984/1985), he shared his analysis of the different ways that people can conduct themselves morally in relation to three austerity themes of the moral code: health, wives or women, and boys (Foucault, 1991). In Volume three, Foucault shifted to focusing on a group of practices that were very important to the Greco-Roman cultures that he called variously *arts of existence* or *care of the self* or *practices of self* or *technologies of the self* or *cultivation of the self* (Foucault, 1984/1986). Foucault defined these practices as "those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to

transform themselves to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life

into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria"

(Foucault, 1985, pp. 10-11).

Foucault (2004) discovered that beginning in the the fifth century B.C. and up to

the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., the theme of the care of the self permeated all Greek,

Hellenist, and Roman philosophy. These practices were incorporated into one of the main

principles of civic life: *epimelēsthai sautou* or *epimeleia heautou,* translated as, "to take

care of self," "the concern for self," "to be concerned," or "to take care of yourself"

(Foucault, 1988b, p. 19). This principle became a common, universal, philosophical

theme throughout the ancient Greek and Roman time periods of the first two centuries

A.D., as reflected in Socratic, Epicurean, Cynic, Stoic, and Pythagorean texts (Foucault,

1988). *Epimelēsthai sautou* or *epimeleia heautou* – care of the self- was considered a

primary rule "for social and personal conduct and for the art of life" (Foucault, 1988, p.

19), thus demonstrating that within these cultures, actions that were considered moral

weren't just based on how much people conformed to rules, laws, or values (Foucault,

1985). Rather, they were also related to what Foucault considered an ethic, that is, the

kind of relationship a person had with himself, what he called *rapport a soi* (Foucault,

1991). In addition, care of the self didn't just involve an attitude, it also took the form of:

> a mode of behavior; it became instilled in ways of living; it evolved into
>
> procedures, practices, formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected,
>
> taught. It thus came to constitute a social practice, giving rise to relationships
>
> between individuals, to exchanges and communications, and at time even to

institutions. And it gave rise, finally, to a certain mode of knowledge and to the elaboration of a science. (Foucault, 1986, p. 45)

Epimeleia heautou consisted of three themes. The first, which Foucault referred to as a *general standpoint* involves an attitude towards the self, others and the world. It describes a certain way of considering things, of behaving in the world, undertaking actions and having relations with other people. The second principle has to do with a certain form of attention, of looking. This involves switching attention from looking at others and the world towards more focus on your own thoughts. The final principle is the notion of *epimeleia* and involves a number of actions or practices exercised on the self by the self in order to "take responsiblity for oneself and by which one changes, purifies, transforms, and transfigures oneself " (Foucault, 2005, pp. 10-11). As Foucault (1984/1986) explained,

> The common goal of these practices of the self, allowing for the difference they
> present, can be characterized by the entirely general principle of conversion to
> self- of *epistrope eis heauton.* It is to be understood first of all as a change of
> activity: not that one must cease all other forms of occupation and devote oneself
> entirely and exclusively to oneself; but in the actitivites that one ought to engage
> in, one had best keep in mind that the chief objective one should set for oneself is
> to be sought within oneself, in the relation of oneself to oneself. (pp. 64-65)

Therefore, care of the self required a whole set of occupations and labor. It also involved focusing attention on the self (Foucault, 1984/1986).

Foucault (1984/1994) also viewed care of the self as a practice of freedom because it allowed one "to know oneself… as well as to form oneself, to surpass oneself, to master the appetites that threaten to overwhelm one" (Foucault, 1984/1994, p. 285). Therefore, taking care of one's self was perceived as being necessary for exercising "properly, reasonably, and virtuously the power to which one is destined" (Foucault, 2005, p. 82).

<div align="center">Occupational Therapy</div>

Definitions

Occupational therapy is defined as "the art and science of helping people do the day-to-day activities that are important and meaningful to their health and well-being through engagement in valued occupations" (Crepeau, Cohn, & Schell, 2009a, p. 217). Activities are perceived as "a class of human actions that are goal directed" (AOTA, 2008, p. 669). The term *occupation* refers to the

> ordinary and extraordinary things people do in their day-to-day lives that occupy time, modify the environment, ensure survival, maintain well-being, nurture others, contribute to society, and pass on cultural meanings and through which people develop skills, knowledge, and capacity for doing and fulfilling their potential (Crepeau, Cohn, & Schell, 2009b, p. 1162).

Areas of occupation include activities of daily living, instrumental activities of daily living, rest and sleep, education, work, play, leisure, and social participation (AOTA, 2008). Occupational therapy practitioners are "concerned with the way clients construct

their occupations to fulfill their perceived roles and identity" (AOTA, 2008, p. 641). Thus, occupations are viewed as creating and maintaining an identity (Christiansen, 1999).

Occupational therapy services are provided to individuals for the purpose of "promoting health and wellness and to those who have or are at risk for developing an illness, injury, disease, disorder, condition, impairment, disability, activity limitation, or participation restriction" (AOTA, 2008 p. 673). These conditions can affect what occupational therapy practitioners consider to be *underlying client factors*, that is, the "specific abilities, characteristics, or beliefs that reside within the client and may affect performance in areas of occupation" (AOTA, p. 630). Occupational therapy practitioners also address individuals' skills and patterns and contextual and environmental factors during performance of occupations.

The occupational therapy process begins with an occupational profile in which the individual's important occupations and values are identified. Occupational therapy practitioners also evaluate actual performance of the individual's prioritized occupations and the contextual and environmental that support or impede performance. Intervention approaches include health promotion, remediation or restoration, maintenance, compensation, and prevention (AOTA, 2008).

Occupational therapy's philosophical roots are considered to be within the moral treatment approach that was guided by humanistic philosophy (Schwartz, 2003; Weinstock-Zlotnick & Hinojosa, 2004). The profession was developed following the Age of Enlightenment and under an overarching philosophy known as liberal humanism (Finlay, 2001). This time period was focused on "emancipating mankind through

knowledge, education, and science, from the chains of ignorance, error, superstition, theoretical dogma, and the dead hand of the clergy; to instilling a new mood of hope for a better future" (Porter, 2001, p. 5). These perspectives are considered to be foundational to the field and are credited with propagating the humanistic, holistic, and scientific views of individuals that are believed to be inherent within the profession today (Finlay, 2001).

The Role of Occupational Therapy with Female Survivors of Domestic Violence

Occupational therapy practitioners acknowledge the fact that abuse may come in many forms and is targeted at multiple age groups, including children, adults and older adults (Javaherian, Underwood, & DeLany, 2006). Practitioners may work with survivors of domestic violence in hospitals, clinics, school systems, and community programs with individuals who have sustained injuries, are currently in abusive relationships and have decided to leave an abusive relationship and want to reconstruct their lives (Javaherian, Underwood, & DeLany). In addition, occupational therapy practitioners work primarily with individuals with disabilities and there is an increased incidence of abuse in individuals who have disabilities (Helfrich & Aviles, 2001).

Occupational therapy services can be beneficial to survivors because studies of survivors of domestic violence have indicated that survivors may have difficulties with performing their daily occupations, especially in the areas of work, education, home management, parenting, health maintenance, money management, socialization, and leisure participation (Gorde, Helfrich, & Finlayson, 2004). In addition, survivors may exhibit difficulties with executive functions related to decision making, judgment, problem solving, initiation, and following directions (Carlson, 1997; D'Ardenne & Balakrishna, 2001; Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001; Monahan & O'Leary, 1999).

Occupational therapy services begin with individualized evaluations. Evaluations with survivors may include assessing the level of safety in living situations; determining meaningful roles, habits, and occupations; identifying survivors' self-perception of abilities; analyzing performance of current occupations; identifying enablers and barriers to occupational performance; and identifying desired occupations (Helfrich & Aviles, 2001).

Occupational therapy practitioners may work directly or indirectly with survivors. Direct occupational therapy interventions are based on the findings from the evaluation and the survivors' individual needs and priorities while focusing on "empowerment and active participation in healthy occupations or daily life activities" (Javaherian, Underwood, & DeLany, 2006, p. 4). Occupational therapy practitioners may work with survivors on developing skills like money management and effective parenting. They may recommend and train survivors in compensatory strategies for successful performance of occupations, like the use of electronic aids for organization of daily routines (Helfrich & Aviles, 2001). Indirect services may involve consultation and training with domestic violence agency staff members to assist them with determining best strategies that will enhance survivors' independence (Helfrich & Aviles). Practitioners may also be involved on a population level with educating the public about domestic violence and occupational therapy services.

Summary

In this literature review, I provided background information as a foundation for this study. Beginning with an overview of domestic violence, I shared terminology, history, incidence, and causes. I then discussed poverty in America at length because it is

one of the greatest contributors to domestic violence. I explained the reasons for the

feminization of poverty in America. This naturally led into a discussion about the

economic benefits of postsecondary education. I then provided an overview of the

poststructural feminist theoretical perspective informed by Michel Foucault's ethical

analysis, care of self, used for this study. I ended the chapter with an overview of the

field of occupational therapy and the role of occupational therapy practitioners with

survivors of domestic violence.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe my research design, discuss the decisions made about participant selection, provide an overview of data collection and data analysis strategies, and address issues of validity. The following sections are included: (a) the statement of the problem (b) the research design, (b) the selection of participants, (c) data collection procedures, (d) data analysis procedures, and (e) theoretical perspective

Statement of the Problem

For this interview-based qualitative study informed by poststructural feminism and Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self, I interviewed seven low-income, female survivors of domestic violence to explore the subjectivities that they constructed while pursuing postsecondary education. Specifically, I considered the actions that the participants performed in order to be open to transformation of their subjectivities. I also investigated the practices of self that the participants performed to construct their subjectivities and the subjectivities based on these. The following are the research questions that address this focus:

1. What processes do the survivors go through to become available to a transformation of their subjectivities?

2. What practices of self do the survivors perform to construct their subjectivities?

3. What subjectivities do the survivors construct within the discourses and cultural practices that are available to them?

Research Design

A qualitative interview-based research design was used for this study. This design was chosen because it allowed me to gain in-depth information from participants about the issues that were the focus of this study (Patton, 2002). In addition, this type of design has been used in several studies of low- income women pursuing higher education (e.g., Haleman, 2004; Scarbrough, 1997). Therefore, I thought that it would be applicable to my participants and this was indeed the case.

This overview provides a brief description of the main features of the methodology used in this study. A more detailed description follows within each part of the research process. This interview-based study was designed to gather data with which to study the subjectivities that low-income, female survivors of domestic violence constructed while pursuing postsecondary education. The study's research questions were based upon Michel Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self. They focus on exploring the practices of self that the survivors use to construct their subjectivities, the subjectivities they construct, and the process that they used to be open to transformation.

Seven survivors of domestic violence were identified through their affiliations with domestic violence shelters surrounding a large, urban city in the Southeast United States. These participants were no longer in their former abusive relationships, were single mothers, were considered to have low-incomes, and spoke and understood English. Following informed consent, data collection was performed using a semi-structured

interview guide that was used to facilitate an informal, conversational interview. All of the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Field notes were written following each interview and thoughts and reflections were written as they emerged.

Data collection and data analysis were performed concurrently. Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self, was used to direct the analysis. Re-reading of Foucault's writings about care of the self while performing data collection assisted me in making sense of what I was hearing during the interviews. Relevant concepts, related to care of the self, especially in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*: *Lectures at the College De France 1982-1982* (2005), were identified and an ongoing list of these was developed based on what was shared by the participants. Parts of interview transcripts indicative of the concepts were added and combined and an approximately 125- page document evolved. This document was used as a tool for data analysis as I attempted to discern what seemed to be the most important to my participants. It also led to changing my research questions. I made these changes based upon what I was hearing from the participants, as Creswell (2003) indicated about the research process in qualitative studies:

Expect the research questions to evolve and to change during the study in a manner consistent with the assumptions of an emerging design. Often in *qualitative studies* [original italics], the questions are under continual review and reformulation. (p. 107)

There were other changes to my initial plan. I had originally planned to complete two interview sessions per participant. My preliminary goal was to complete the first interview, transcribe it, and determine if there were any other questions that I needed to

ask during the second interview session scheduled for the next week. I had also planned to only do one to two interviews per week so that I could keep up with the transcriptions and analysis. Several simultaneous events happened that changed this plan. The initial interviews were scheduled around the winter/holiday break from my job at the university. The first week in which I started conducting the interviews ended up being the week prior to Christmas. Three of the participants asked me to interview them prior to Christmas so that they could use the money received for being participants to buy some last minute Christmas presents for their children.

The first interviews were full of rich information and I didn't feel the need for the second interviews. I had also hoped to transcribe all of the interviews myself. Unfortunately, during this time period I was dealing with back pain and I couldn't sit for long periods of time. So, I ended up transcribing two interviews and paying someone to transcribe the other five. I had also originally planned to give the participants $25 gift certificates to stores of their choice for participating in the study. I ended up giving the participants cash because they indicated to me that this was their preference.

<center>Participant Selection</center>

Participants were selected using a homogeneous, purposeful sampling strategy so as to select similar cases that met the inclusion criteria (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The inclusion criteria consisted of the following parameters: (a) speaks and understand English; (b) has experienced domestic violence in the past; (c) is presently not in an abusive relationship; has been out of the relationship for at least 6 months; (d) is a single mother with children living at home; (e) is considered to have a low-income.

I was concerned about being able to get enough participants for the study because of my population's confidentiality and safety issues. However, these factors didn't seem to affect the participants. I had hoped to have 5-7 participants and I ended up with 7 participants.

Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) and my committee's approval to begin my research process and with the assistance and support of the executive director of the shelter where I am employed, I identified g*atekeepers* to assist me with gaining access to potential participants (Glesne, 1999). The gatekeepers were directors of domestic violence organizations located within a 100-mile radius of my home. I sent e-mail letters to these directors that included a) information about my work at a domestic violence shelter (to give me more credibility); (b) an overview of the study; (c) the inclusion criteria; (d) the request for assistance with locating potential participants and the methods to use for contacting me; (e) methods used to assure confidentiality; and (f) the benefits of the research study. I asked the directors to ask any prospective participants to call or e-mail me. Several staff members at the domestic violence agencies e-mailed me during the next few weeks with potential participants whom they had contacted to alert me to the fact that these women might be calling me.

While on the phone with prospective participants, I obtained informed consent to collect data from them and gathered information on a Potential Participant Information Form (Appendix A). I shared an overview of the study and the expectations of participants. I made sure to briefly share about my eight years of experience working with female survivors of domestic violence. I tried to keep these conversations very

informal so as to not sound like an authority figure and to put the prospective participants at ease. If the potential participant agreed to participate in the study, we scheduled the interview at a time that was convenient for her. There were a total of seven participants.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of interviews, field notes, and reflections. Interviews were completed with 7 participants and field notes were written following every interview. Reflections were written throughout the research process. I describe these in detail in the following sections.

Interviews

I had planned to do a pilot study with a current client of mine who met the inclusion criteria. The objective of doing this was to work out the kinks in my interview protocol before interviewing the other participants. I was hesitant to use the interview with my client as a pilot study because she tended to be very guarded and typically shared very little information. However, I decided to attempt this because I was unsure how she would behave within the research context. My client agreed to participate in the study and I completed the interview with her several days prior to interviews with the other participants. Unfortunately, my concerns were justified and this participant ended up being less forthcoming with information than the other subsequent participants. However, I was able to glean some relevant information from this interview, so I included her in my sample. Six other survivors contacted me and I scheduled dates with them for the interviews for a total of seven participants. As I've already indicated, I thought that I

would need two interviews to get at the depth of data that I needed and I found that this was not the case. Each of the participants was interviewed one time. Each interview lasted from 1 ½ -3 hours. Participants agreed to be called if I had any questions.

At the beginning of each interview, I provided an overview of the study, including the purpose, benefits (including $25 cash), and potential risks. I shared that the potential risks included potential breaches of confidentiality and safety risks and what I was doing to assure confidentiality. I also reviewed the informed consent form (Appendix B) and explained the consideration of a waiver of signed consent so that their names would not be on any documents. Each participant agreed to the waiver of signed consent. I gave the participants the choice of using a pseudonym or their initials on all files, tapes, transcripts, field notes, and observation notes. Two participants stated that they didn't care if I used their actual names. One participant wanted to use a pseudonym. However, for consistency I used initials only on all the documents including in my dissertation. I also told the participants that all records would be stored in a secure, locked cabinet.

I asked the participants for their permission to audiotape the interviews. All of the participants agreed and indicated that they were willing to speak directly into the external microphone that I provided. I informed them that the tapes would be destroyed within 6 months of the interviews.

I used a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C) and an informal, conversational interview strategy for the interviews and I remained very open and flexible about the process. There were a limited number of questions in the interview guide because within an informal conversational interview, "questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of things; there is no

predetermination of questions topics or wording" (Patton, 2002, p. 349). The prewritten

questions served as a guide in case the participant needed prompts to share information.

They also prompted me to think about the parts of a participant's life related to my study

that I wanted addressed. I never asked all the questions on the guide and I deviated from

the wording based on the interactions between the participants and me. The interview

process should be very flexible, spontaneous, and responsive to participants (Atkinson,

1998). I used probing questions throughout the interviews to attempt to fill in background

information and to elicit richer details, opinions, values, and feelings (Patton, 2002).

Sometimes I mirrored back what the participant said and other times I asked very specific

questions so as to elicit elaboration (Owens, 2007).

This interview strategy supported the poststructural feminist researchers'

challenge about the use of structured interviewing because it is believed that it supports a

focus on objectivity, not subjectivity, a belief in one "right" answer, and it facilitates

power differentials between the researcher and the participant (Lather, 1991; Reinharz,

1992; Tierney, 2000). It supported the poststructural feminist views that research is a

social process in which knowledge is subjectively constructed and the researcher

becomes an active participant of the process (Owens, 2007). Using the active,

conversational type of interview style with the participants also allowed me to adopt a

form of feminist interviewing in which I attempted (but knew that it was impossible) to

establish an atmosphere where my participants and I were considered to be, "coequals

who are carrying on a conversation about mutually relevant, often biographically critical

issues" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 643). Therefore, it assisted me in trying to navigate

away from being seen as the authority and promoting hierarchical relationships in which

the participants are in subordinate positions to the researcher (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hollaway & Jefferson, 2004; Lather, 1991). These power issues were especially relevant when performing research with women who have experienced domestic violence because they have been forced into powerless positions many times (Enosh & Buchbinder, 2005).

Besides concerns about power and authority, I was also initially concerned about the interview being "therapeutic" because of my professional background. However, I quickly gave this up because as Lather (1991) indicated, self-disclosure by the researcher is required. All of the participants except for the one who was my client, (she had therapy sessions with me aside from the interview) asked me for advice and I also found myself sharing information to try to comfort them.

All of the interviews were transcribed. However, they were not transcribed *verbatim*, that is, every word and utterance was not included in the transcript. I didn't believe that this was necessary in order to analyze the data (Glesne, 1999). Long pauses and sounds related to nonverbal communication, for example, sighs, were included in the transcripts. In addition, there were parts of interviews, especially the one with S.I. in the restaurant, that were difficult to hear. In these cases, the missing parts of the transcript were indicated and the basic gist of what the participant said was typed.

Participant observations

Observational methods were used alongside the interviews in order to facilitate more breadth and depth of data (Owens, 2007). Many qualitative researchers consider participant observation to go hand-in-hand with unstructured, informal, collaborative interviews (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). This view of observations as part of social interaction supports

postmodernists' critique of traditional participant observation as emphasizing objectivity instead of placing importance on understanding the researchers' situations within the context, i.e., their gender, socioeconomic class, and ethnicity (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2005). I agree with these perspectives. My observations were written in my field notes, as I next explain.

Field Notes

After leaving each of the interviews, I wrote field notes that included impressions about the setting of the interview, the participant, and any questions or thoughts that I had based on the data. The field notes were kept in a locked, secured cabinet. I used the field notes to assist with the summaries of the participants in Chapter 4 and to think about the contexts when I was reviewing the interviews. An example is part of a field note I wrote after interviewing R.P:

> I met with R.P. at 9:00 A.M. She lives in a house in an urban neighborhood that appears to be run down. It reminds me of my old neighborhood. Poverty seems to be reflected based on the number of houses in ill repair and the people walking around that look like they have nowhere to go. The two rooms in the house that I saw were dark and smelled of cigarettes. I hoped that I could stand to be there for as long as I needed to be because I have problems with these types of smells. Her youngest daughter was sleeping on a couch outside of the living area. The coffee table by the couch where we sat was dirty and cluttered with different objects.
>
> R.P. initially spoke very softly, so I was constantly concerned about being able to hear her on the tape, even though she spoke into the external microphone.

She also didn't make eye contact with me, especially when she talked about being raped. About 30 minutes into the interview, after she started talking about her children and her school, she started talking louder and looking at me. She showed me pictures of each of her 7 children and it was obvious that she was very proud of them.

Reflective Journal

I used a notebook as my reflective journal where I wrote my thoughts, feelings, analyses speculations, questions, and interpretations. I did use it for writing, but there were many times that I would have a thought and would write it on a piece of paper. So, I tried to keep a file of all of my pieces of paper and I had difficulties doing so. Sometimes a thought about a participant would come to me and I couldn't write quickly enough. It felt as if I had to get all of what I was thinking out of my body onto the page. At times, it almost felt cathartic. I also wrote about my own failings as a researcher. An example of one of my notes is this entry that I made after completing my first interview. It was with M.D., my client who agreed to participate in the interview:

It was so difficult to get her to talk about what she actually <u>does!</u> I know that she spends time with staff here at the shelter, including me. So, are we considered to be masters? I certainly hope not! How could I be a master when I know so little? She said that she learned during the support groups what <u>not</u> to do. So, a practice of self for her is going to groups and learning what won't work for her? Seems kind of backwards to me, but, if it works for her…It's going to interesting to see if there are differences in the interviews with the participants that don't know me. I wonder if the other participants will talk about the support groups if they are not

living at the shelters or in their transitional living apartments. Or, what if they don't regularly utilize services? Could it be that distance from the groups would affect care of the self?

<center>Data Analysis</center>

Introduction

Data analysis involves both the acts of analysis and interpretation. Traditionally, qualitative researchers organize and sort through data so as to fit the evidence and information into some type of framework that may take the form of classifications, categories, models, typologies or concepts (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). During this stage, researchers do both analysis and interpretation. Analysis can be defined as "the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to come up with findings" while data interpretation involves "developing ideas about the findings and relating them to the literature and to broader concerns and concepts" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 147). The purpose of data analysis is to make sense out of large amounts of data. The methods used for conducting data analysis and for deciding what to pay attention to are shaped by diverse forms of culture and social actions and the researcher's chosen theoretical perspectives (Ezzy, 2002). Consequently, there are multiple methods for performing data analysis (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005).

Researchers make multiple decisions during data analysis, including when data analysis begins, what is considered to be data, how data will be organized, theoretical perspectives to use, and what process to use for analysis. Each of these is discussed in the following sections.

Timing of Data Analysis

Decisions regarding when data analysis begins during the qualitative research process typically fall into two modes. In more conventional views of data analysis, data collection and analysis are separated into two separate phases, with the analysis phase consisting of "a set of analytic procedures that produce interpretations, which are then integrated into a theory or put forward as a set of policy recommendations" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005 p. 909). However, multiple qualitative research traditions advocate performing data analysis concurrently with data collection. Researchers within these traditions view the fluid and emergent nature of naturalistic inquiry as making the distinction between data gathering and analysis far less absolute (Patton, 2002). They also perceive simultaneous data collection and data analysis as building on the strengths of qualitative methods as an inductive method for building theory and interpretations from the perspectives of the people being studied (Ezzy, 2002).

In this study, data analysis was done simultaneously with data collection. The major advantage of integrating data analysis with data collection is that data collection can be guided by theories and ideas developed during each case (Patton, 2002). This was defnitely the case for my study. Using Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self, as an *a priori* theory led to the re-reading of texts about the theory as I was completing the interviews. Consequently, as I reflected about the interviews, I began to notice that there were concepts within the theory that helped to explain what I was hearing from the participants.

What counts as data

As discussed in the previous section about data collection, interviews, participant observations, field notes, and reflective journaling were considered to be data. In addition, as St. Pierre (2005) indicated, I considered my thinking/writing/analysis process to also be considered data. What I consider to be data during this process will also push the limits of traditional qualitative research. Similarly to St. Pierre's (1997) perceptions during her study of the women in her hometown, I was open to considering my emotional responses, dreams that I have about participants and data, and sensual reactions that I have to places and people. Unlike St. Pierre, (1997), I didn't dream about my participants and the study. As was indicated in the discussion about my field notes and reflective journaling, I considered emotional responses and sensual reactions during and after the interviews. If I found myself getting teary-eyed when thinking about a participant's situation, I recorded it. I even recorded when I was "blown away" by what the participants said. For example, I shed a number of tears about R.P. It was difficult to hear about and think about all that she went through during her upbringing. At the same time, as I was typing the transcript from our interview, I kept having to stop the tape because so much of what she said was profound. I thought, "Here is this woman who has had nothing. Yet, she's surviving. Actually, she's trying to go beyond surviving to pull herself and her children out of poverty."

Organization of data

A substantial amount of data can be produced from interviews, field notes, and reflective journals. So, multiple decisions need to be made regarding how to organize data. The first decision needs to be how to organize the different types of data. One

suggested method is to organize them separately based upon how they were generated, i.e., from interviews, transcripts, and field notes or to group all types together. Another possible method is to integrate all the data by organizing them chronologically according to the time phases in the participant's life (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Other possibilities are to organize the data by critical incidents, processes, issues, or the research questions (Patton, 2002).

I physically organized the data by keeping a file for each participant with the transcripts and any other relevant information. These files were kept in a locked cabinet. As stated previously, my field notes and reflections were kept in notebooks and in files. These were also kept in a locked cabinet.

Data generated as I performed interpretation and analysis were kept in a in an ever-growing document on my computer. Headings related to theoretical concepts were developed and moved around throughout the data collection and analysis process. Parts of transcripts that related to a concept were placed under the heading. Parts of transcripts also generated the development of new headings.

Theoretical perspective

For the question of whether or not a position is right, coherent, or interesting is, in this case, less informative than why it is we come to occupy and defend the territory that we do, what it promises us, from what it promises to protect us?"

Judith Butler, 1995, pp. 127-128

In my opinion, the usefulness of theory is to provide language to describe what we are experiencing and to push us to think beyond our typical boundaries. I decided to use Foucault's (1984/1986) ethical analysis, care of the self, as an *a priori* theoretical

approach to my study. During data collection, I remained very conscious of the dangers of superimposing this predetermined theory onto the data (Auerbach & Silverman, 2003; Ezzy, 2002). I did not want to *make* the theory fit, but it did. I took to heart Lather's (1991) assertion that:

> Data must be allowed to generate propositions in a dilectical manner that permits use of a priori theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from becoming the container into which the data must be poured. The search is for theory which grows out of context-embedded data, not in a way that automatically rjects a priori theory, but in a way that keeps preconceptions from distorting the logic of the evidence. (p. 62)

There are multiple reasons for my choice of Foucault's (1984/1986) ethical analysis, care of the self, as the theoretical perspective for this study. Poststructural theories, in general, appear to be consistent with my personal view of the world. I don't believe in objectivity, absolutes and "truths." I view the world as people having multiple subjectivities, as there being multiple truths, and with power relations intimated in everything. Therefore, I agree with the poststructural critiques of other data analysis methods. In addition, I have particularly chosen to employ Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self, because it appears to correspond well with the underlying philosophy of occupational therapy, my professional discipline. It also relates well to my research interests and to my current knowledge about women survivors of domestic violence pursuing higher education.

Foucault's philosophy also correlated well with the underlying philosophy and purpose of occupational therapy. According to the American Occupational Therapy Association, (AOTA) (2004), occupational therapy is defined as:

the therapeutic use of everyday life activities (occupations) with individuals or groups for the purpose of participation in roles and situations in home, school, workplace, community, and other settings. Occupational therapy services are provided for the purpose of promoting health and wellness and to those who have or are at risk for developing an illness, injury, disease, disorder, condition, impairment, disability, activity limitation, or participation restriction. Occupational therapy addresses the physical, cognitive, psychosocial, sensory, and other aspects of performance in a variety of contexts to support engagement in everyday life activities that affect health, well-being, and quality of life. (p. 2)

As can be inferred from this definition, occupational therapy is about what people *do,* that is, their *action.* In addition, occupational therapists help others work on their *selves* so as to improve health and well-being. Therefore, Foucault's *technologies of the self* appear to harmonize well well with the role and underlying focus of occupational therapy.

Foucault's (1986) philosophy also appears to help describe the basis of my work as an occupational therapist with female survivors of domestic violence, and consequently, my research interests. As an occupational therapist working with this population, unlike counselors, I am interested in the different actions that these women *perform* or what is termed within the field, their *occupations.* Occupational therapists use the term *occupation* to refer to the common meaningful activities that make up a person's

day and that have purpose within an individual's life (Rogers, 2005). In order to assist people with performance of these occupations, in my career, I assess what occupations are meaningful to the woman, what occupations she is actually performing, and which ones she would like to be able to perform more successfully. I also consider the factors that affect performance, including bodily functions, habits, routines, behaviors, and relevant contextual issues (AOTA, 2004).

Contextual issues that I pay close attention to when I am working with a woman on her pursuit of education include gender-related concerns, power issues, and the woman's subjectivities. I strongly agree with the perception that "culture and community interact with social structural, economic, and political conditions to shape women's experiences of violence, the individual, institutional, and state responses to violence, and most important, women's patterns of resistance to domestic violence" (Sokoloff & Laughon, 2005, p. 115). Therefore, I believed, and my bvleief was confirmed, that Foucault's care of the self, with its focus on these important contextual factors, is an effective theoretical analytic..

Some of the concepts in *Care of the Self* (1984/1986) that Foucault described were very useful for analyzing the practices of self that survivors exhibited as they moved beyond the initial aftermath of leaving an abusive relationship to pursuing postsecondary education. Foucault viewed the ethic of the care of the self as necessary for the practice of freedom. He held this conviction because he believed that taking care of one's self is necessary for exercising "properly, reasonably, and virtuously the power to which one is destined" (Foucault, 2001/2005, p. 82).

In order to explore the processes that the survivors went through in order to be available to practice care of the self and thus, freedom, I focused on the different actions that Foucault (2005) described regarding how people in ancient Greece and Rome transformed themselves. Foucault described the state of *stultitia,* which was the worst state that a person could be in because there was a disconnection or a non-connection between the will and the self (Foucault (2005). According to Seneca, a Stoic philosopher during the Roman period, a *stultus,* is a person who is totally open to the external world and lets all the representations from the outside world into his mind. In order to move out of this state, the person requires a master to assist with movement towards achieving *salvation.* Unlike the religious connotations that salvation has today, salvation during this time period involved*,* "the vigilant, continuous, and completed form of the relationship to self closed in on itself" (Foucault, 2005, pp. 184-185). *Saving yourself* meant, "escaping domination or enslavement; escaping a constraint that threatens you and being restored to your rights, finding your freedom and independence again" (Foucault, 2005, p. 184). This required *conversion* which required that the person turn toward self while turning away from everything that surrounds the self so that the self is no longer enslaved, dependent, and constrained (Foucault, 2005).

This perception of freedom relates very well to the challenges of low-income survivors of domestic violence as they pursue higher education. Typically, when a survivor leaves an abusive situation and seeks assistance, her initial focus is establishing safety and stability while creating support networks for herself and her children (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999). During this early period, most women prioritize their children and others, just as they previously prioritized the abuser. This correlates well with the

backgrounds of many survivors in which they were raised to believe in traditional sex-roles and their role as being the primary caretakers of the family. They view themselves as being the ones who are responsible for "holding things together" (Berry, 2000). Consequently, during this time period, they continue to devote themselves to the care of others while *not taking care of the self*. Concurrently, they have to deal with meeting income and housing needs (Giles & Curreen, 2007).

Survivors typically begin school when they are in the *post-crisis* stage of recovery. During this period, women often report that they feel truly free for the first time and they can address their needs by performing activities that they want and need to do for themselves, like going to school (Dinemann, Campbell, Landenburger, & Curry, 2002; Giles & Curreen, 2007; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999).

Care of the self's focus on morals also relates to survivors of domestic violence from both personal and societal perspectives. Early studies of survivors have focused on stereotypic myths about women, including the belief that survivors have difficulties distinguishing between right and wrong (Busch, 2004). Consequently, some survivors have been perceived as being morally immature or bankrupt. Our contemporary society also problematizes poverty and many low-income women are produced as immoral women because of their financial situations.

In addition, the use of a feminist perspective added another important dimension to my data analysis. I considered how the issues of the body and gender are implicated throughout my data and how the body is considered to be "the prime signifier of gender and sex differences" (Gergen, 2001, p. 73) within narratives (Tanesini, 1999). I also

focused on the gendered nature of everyday life; social, economic, and political agendas; power relations; subject positions, and social transformations (Christopher, 2004; Raghuram, Madge, & Skelton, 1998)

The major disadvantage in using a poststructural perspective is that there are multiple criticisms of poststructuralism within the educational community and other disciplines. Educators and researchers especially based within positivist and postpositivist philosophies have even gone so far as to accuse poststructuralists of being destructive and dangerous (Danforth, 2004). They have also charged them with "relativism, nihilism, nominalism, solipsism or subjectivism" (Dumont, 1998, p. 218). and believing in "anything goes" since they don't advocate for a universal, independent standard of truth (St. Pierre, 2000a, p. 25). They are perceived as facilitating a detached "voice from nowhere" because of their views of multiple voices and multiple truths (Lather, 1991, p. 40; St. Pierre, 2000a). They have also been called separatists and elitists based on their use of what is perceived as overly complex, unclear language (Constas, 1998; Lather, 1996; Pillow, 2000).

I view the criticized characteristics of poststructuralism as strengths. However, I do perceive some of poststructuralism's factors as somewhat of a disadvantage when trying to put theory to work in a research study. As Ezzy (2002) asserts, "theories shape both how qualitative data analysis is conducted and what is noticed when qualitative data are analysed" (p. 4). Therefore, the use of a poststructural theoretical perspective definitely affects the data analysis process of this study and I believe, presents multiple challenges.

Some of the concepts of poststructuralism are difficult to grasp. In addition, there are no clear guidelines about how to use theory for data analysis and since poststructuralism critiques traditional methods, I can't automatically rely upon these. The use of this theory requires me to be knowledgeable enough about theories that sometimes appear to be elusive. It forces me to constantly monitor myself to assure that I don't naturally slip into performing traditional methods or perceiving concepts, like data, one dimensionally (St. Pierre, 1997). Therefore, it demands that I constantly push myself to be creative and innovative while considering alternative methods and concepts. In addition, it obligates me to be self-conscious and aware of my own subject positions throughout the process so as to, as Richardson (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) states, "understand ourselves [myself] reflexively as persons [a person] writing from particular positions at specific times" (p.962). Though these challenges may yield multiple struggles, I was committed to using a feminist poststructural perspective for data analysis.

Data Analysis Method: Nomadic Inquiry

During the data collection/data analysis/data interpretation processes, I attempted to use St. Pierre's (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) poststructural data analysis method that she called *nomadic inquiry.* This method is used to expand the thinking processes by performing what St. Pierre (2000b) describes as *rhizomatic* thinking. A rhizome "is like crabgrass that multiples and spreads and can never be rooted or contained" (St. Pierre, 2000c, p. 507). It is a liberation of something from foundational concepts by the proliferation of external, productive outgrowths that produce maps that are always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and that have multiple entryways, exits and its own lines of flights (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987). It involves nomadic thought

that is smooth and open-ended, has multiple entryways, no preset or identifiable points, fixed paths, or hierarchies and that produces a type of mapping that reveals what something does, how it functions, what enables it to function in certain ways, and what it produces; not what it means (Youngblood Jackson, 2003). Therefore, the goal of rhizoanalysis is to open up spaces of thought through the decentering of key linkages and by finding new ones while "remaining open to the proliferation of ruptures and discontinuities that in turn create other linkages" (Alverman, 2000, p. 118). In addition, within this method, unlike traditional views of what counts as data, multiple types of data could be analyzed, including the data produced by me during my thinking, interpreting, and analysis (St. Pierre, 1997). Using this rhizomatic technique, St. Pierre (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) viewed writing as "a field of play where anything can happen- and does" (p. 971) and she was able to make connections that she didn't foresee or control.

St. Pierre (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) used *writing as a method of data analysis* and I found this to be the case for me also. I attempted to constantly push myself to think beyond traditional perspectives. Typing the concepts and transcripts; writing my field notes and reflections; and writing interpretations, allowed me to put concepts together and to generate new ideas that I had not imagined. As I continued to perform interviews and observations, I reviewed
my previous writings to see connections between the multiple pieces of data. I wrote myself notes about these perceived connections and continuously revisited them as I continued to organize the data.

As stated previously, data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection. Data analysis started during the initial phone conversation that I had with the participants

to schedule the interview. Similarly to St. Pierre's (2004) use of care of the self for her research with the women in her hometown, in order to answer my research questions, I analyzed my data for moral codes; changes in the ability to construct subjectivity; modes of subjection; practices of self or self-forming activities; changes in subjectivities, and constituted subjectivities.

I developed the areas of focus based upon the simultaneous re-reading of texts about care of the self while completing the interviews. Beginning with the first interview, I worked on connecting what I heard during the interviews to theoretical concepts (Appendix D is an example). I typed an ongoing running list of concepts with their definitions and my thoughts about them. Following the transcription of each of the interviews, I placed bits of the interviews under the concepts and I added new concepts. I also switched transcripts and concepts around. Some were deleted and some were completely changed as I learned more. The document actually grew to be approximately 125 pages!

In order to study the survivors' practices of self, I focused on actions, i.e., what the participants stated that they actually did during the day. Several of the practices of self became very long, so it became easier to determine the predominant practices of self. Throughout this process, I worked on connecting these practices to subjectivities. I listened carefully to the stories that the participants told about their lives with their abusers, the day they left, and how they

viewed their lives currently. The participants' actions mirrored the ancient Greek and Roman concepts of moving from not being able to perform practices of self to practicing freedom by performing care of the self.

Validity and Reliability

There are multiple perspectives and concerns about what may or should be used to make judgments about qualitative work (Lincoln and Guba, 2005). Traditional criteria for evaluating research within interpretivist paradigms include internal and external validity; reliability; trustworthiness; transferability; credibility; confirmability; accountability; reflexivity; grounding; lived experience; multiple representations; emancipatory; praxis; and multivoiced representations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b)**.** Strategies for attempting to successfully achieve these measures consist of achieving triangulation of data; including peer debriefers; performing member checking; spending extended time in the field; completing audit trails; performing careful documentation; and providing thorough descriptions of design and method (Freeman, DeMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, St. Pierre, 2007; Patton, 2002).

Poststructuralists view traditional concepts, measures, and methods of assuring validity and reliability with caution, doubt, and suspicion because they believe that no method can deliver an ultimate truth (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). To them, knowledge is "always partial, local, and situational and that our selves are always present no matter how hard we try to suppress them" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 962). Consequently, claims of validity within studies are seen as "the conditions of the legitimation of knowledge in contemporary postpositivism" (Lather, 1993, p. 673). These views lead poststructuralists to advocate for a de-centering and reframing of validity as "multiple, partial, endlessly deferred" (Lather, 1993, p. 675). Several poststructuralists have developed concepts and strategies to assist with achieving this shift. In particular, Laurel Richardson's (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) crystal concept and Patti Lather's

(1991) strategy of using deconstructive questions appear to be particularly relevant to my study and I will adopt their concepts as measures of validity and reliability.

Richardson attempted to "problematize reliability, validity and truth in an effort to create new relationships: to her research participants, her work, to other women, to herself" (Lincoln & Guba, 2005, p. 208). This led her to propose another form of validity, one that is considered to be a deliberately "transgressive" form, the *crystalline*. Richardson proposed that "the central imaginary for 'validity' for postmodernist texts" (p. 963) should not be triangulation because it's too rigid and fixed. Rather, validity should be viewed as a crystal because it reflects "an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach" (p 963). Using Richardson's concept of the crystal as my concept of validity means that I considered multiple sides, angles, and possibilities during the research process and I acknowledged that I represent only a partial understanding of the topic.

In order to accomplish crystallization, I used some of the questions developed by Lather (1991) as she deconstructed the text of her study on student resistance to liberatory curriculum. I used the following questions as my guide throughout the research process: Did I encourage ambivalence, ambiguity and multiplicity or did I impose order and structure? How have I policed the boundaries of what can be imagined? What is most densely invested? What has been muted, repressed, unheard? How has what I've done shaped, subverted, complicated? Did I create a text that was multiple without being pluralistic, double without being paralyzed? Have I questioned the textual staging of knowledge in a way that keeps my own authority from being reified? Did I focus on the limits of my own conceptualizations? Who are my "Others"? What binaries structure my

arguments? What hierarchies are at play? Does my study go beyond critique to help in producing pluralized and diverse spaces for the emergence of subjugated knowledges and for the organization of resistance? (p. 84).

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS

Introduction

Seven women who met the inclusion criteria volunteered to participate in this study. All of the participants contacted me after hearing about the study from a staff member at a domestic violence agency. Five interviews were completed in the participants' homes. One occurred at a shelter and one at a local restaurant. I felt privileged to be invited to listen to these women's stories and insights. Some of the details were difficult to hear and the reader may find some of the information difficult to read.

I tried to assure the participants that their words would be written in a way that maintains their dignity and privacy. However, at the same time, I acknowledged the poststructural perspectives that I was "placed in a position of speaking with, of, and for others from partial, situated, densely invested positions" (Lather, 1997, p. 234) and that I could never represent their lives. Within a poststructural perspective, there is no core, essential self who is waiting to be revealed (Flax, 1990). Subjects are viewed as being constituted in language and are produced within discourses and social practices (St. Pierre, 2000). Therefore, meaning is always contingent and I realize that what is written about the participants will have multiple meanings to readers. With that in mind, I ask that as you read each participant's story, you try to do so through a veil of kindness and with an openness to trying to understand that there are many issues that you may find

difficult to understand. Please remember that these women volunteered to open their lives to being re-presented here and that this act should not be taken lightly.

A.W.'s Story

I met with A.W. in her apartment located in a suburb of a large urban city. Her apartment was small and full of toys and equipment for her granddaughter. Her granddaughter was taking a nap while we sat at her kitchen table for the interview.

A.W. is a 47-year-old woman who left her abuser 2 years ago. She currently lives in an apartment with her 4 year-old granddaughter. Her 3 sons are adults and do not live with her. She shared that she has custody of her granddaughter because her daughter-in-law died and her son wouldn't accept the responsibility of raising her. She shared that she always wanted a girl because she had 3 sons, but stated, "I didn't know what I was asking for. She's a handful but I wouldn't give her up for the world."

She was married to her abuser for 10 years and suffered from ongoing physical and emotional abuse. When he began to hit her in front of her granddaughter, she decided that she had to leave. She described her thinking during this time period as:

I learned that love is really not what we believe or have been taught love is. Because my mother was in a domestic [violence] situation with my father and she would always say she's staying in it because of us. And the fact that he would help her take care of us, but he really wasn't. But, I think the key thing is love is really not staying in a situation where it really hurts you more as far as your morals. It's not worth it. That's not love. That's really not love.

With a friend's support, she relocated to another state because she was afraid that her abuser would kill her. She left her family and the hair salon that she owned. She

shared that she cried the whole time that she was driving away because she really didn't want to go, but she realized that she had no choice. Life was very difficult when she and her granddaughter first arrived in the new location. She shared what this time period was like for them:

> Yeah, we lived in a truck. We would go to different McDonald's to have our breakfast, and our lunch and our dinner and then we would sleep in the truck, then go in and just use the facility to kind of wash up, brush our teeth and change our clothes. It was hard but it was fun. It was a lot of fun 'cause she kept me laughing and kept me from really thinking about the fact that the situation I was in as well as she was in a bad situation, but she had no idea you know. She was just happy to be with me and not knowing, she was really acceptable of going into places, washing up, brushing her teeth and me wiping her down and stuff like that. It was really a challenge. We didn't even allow her to go and visit and see that part of the life she had to face. So she really was just happy to be with grandma. That was her thing.

She heard about the domestic violence center when she went to the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFACS) to apply for financial assistance. She contacted her local domestic violence shelter and she and her granddaughter lived there for several months. The shelter staff assisted her with everything from helping her apply for Section 8 housing, to giving her granddaughter clothing, to involving her in groups and counseling. Although it's been over a year since she was at the shelter, her advocate still checks in with her. She described how this helps her:

Anytime if I feel like I want to kill myself, or I'm going through a crying spell, I'm really tired, I don't want to be by myself, I don't want to be alone, I'm having a hard time, I don't have anyone to watch my daughter when I need some free time. They'll send somebody out to talk with me or give me some wind down time. Or some of the girls here at the shelter, we stay close to each other. And when I'm going through some tough times, I can call them and they will watch my grandbaby. If I'm going through some tough times, they will give whatever I need at that time, be a comfort to me at that time.

A.W. stated that she doesn't want to do hair anymore because she has arthritis in her hands. She currently works at a local grocery store as a deli clerk and a greeter 5 days a week. She has always wanted a college degree, but she had her first baby when she was 15 and her education had to be placed on hold. For the past year, she has been going to a local business college with the intention of getting her associate's degree in business. Her school schedule varies between 2 and 4 evenings a week because there are different courses offered every month. She hopes to be finished in February 2010. She would have been done sooner, but she took 3 months off to get her granddaughter situated in school and because she needed the rest. A friend from the shelter takes care of her granddaughter while she's in school. She gets by financially with financial aid for school; loans, and food stamps. She shared that if it wasn't for food stamps, she and her granddaughter probably wouldn't eat much. She's very happy that she recently got a car. Prior to this, she had to use public transportation and walk everywhere with her granddaughter.

After she finishes school, A.W.'s dream is to own her own business so that she can be her "own boss" and be independent. She would like to do something that helps other people and is especially interested in opening a nonprofit shelter. When A.W. was asked at the end of the interview how she felt after talking about her life, she stated:

I feel much better now. I feel that it was never my fault and that I need to focus on me and stay positive. And go ahead and achieve the things I want to do with my career. Go for my career.

<div align="center">M.D.'s Story</div>

I met with M.D. in a children's playroom in a domestic violence shelter. Her 13 month-old son was present during the interview and he played with toys as M.D. and I talked. M.D.'s attention was on her son often and she intervened with him multiple times, so there were interruptions in the interview.

M.D. is a 27 year-old woman who is currently living with her 13 month-old son in a transitional living apartment at a domestic violence shelter. This is the second time that she has come to the shelter and she's been there for about 6 months this time. She has been trying to get out of the abusive relationship off and on for the past 2 years and states that she is determined that this will be the final time. She has sole custody of her son and states that his safety is her number one priority. She actually has another apartment she is renting near the college that she attends, but her abuser is considered to be too dangerous for her to live there. This decision was reinforced when her abuser found her about 2 months ago and stabbed her in the stomach.

The move to the transitional living apartment happened after M.D. and her son stayed in the crisis shelter for about 30 days. As part of her program, M.D. has

participated in individual and group activities. M.D. currently works part-time at a children's daycare center as a teacher. Her son is at the same daycare and he also stays there while she goes to school. M.D. is majoring in sociology with a minor in psychology. She stated that she chose her major and minor by accident and that "they just sounded really good together."

It is difficult to get information from M.D. and she doesn't share a lot of details about her abuse. She stated that she doesn't trust a lot of people. She has actually received occupational therapy services from me since she's been living at the shelter, but she still doesn't offer a lot of information. She has alluded to suffering physical and emotional abuse when she lived with her abuser and to being abused during her childhood. She has also indicated that she believes that it just a matter of time until her abuser finds her again. The police have attempted to find him multiple times so that they could arrest him, but so far, they have been unsuccessful.

M.D. is presently a full-time student at a state university in a nearby city. However, she is currently not attending a lot of her classes and is completing most of her assignments online because it is too risky for her to be on campus. She stated that her professors have been very understanding and they have been willing to work with her so that she doesn't have to drop any courses. She receives financial aid for school and supports herself and her son through her work and assistance from vocational rehabilitation. Her goal is to work with children who have been in similar situations to her because: "I know that my biggest thing is in the beginning not realizing that there

were other people who had been in similar situations and who were trying to do what I was trying to do." When asked to elaborate about the situations she was talking about, she stated:

> Not having family support, being a teen girl and having a child, going to school, working, basically trying to do everything by their selves. They may have or may not have been in an abusive situation in the past. But, just…not really knowing what they're doing, but knowing that they have to do something.

When M.D. was asked at the end of the interview how she felt after talking about her life today, she stated, "I feel okay. It's a part of life and it will always be a part of my life."

M.H.'s Story

I met with M.H. in her apartment located within a large transitional living complex run by her local domestic violence center. The complex is located in a rural part of the state. Her apartment was very clean and orderly. Her eldest son was present during some parts of the interview and her younger son was taking a nap. M.H. and I sat and talked at her dining room table.

M.H. is a 26 year-old woman who has been out of the abusive relationship for approximately 2 years. She lives in her apartment with her two sons, ages 8 and 3. She has sole custody of both, but her eldest son's father has visitation. The abuser is the father of her youngest son. They were never married and he was physically and emotionally abusive to M.H. The relationship ended when he abused their son. She defined this period in her life as being very painful. She described the circumstances of this abuse as follows:

I was going to school and I had midterms on Saturday, so I had to have [youngest son's] dad watch him. When I came home from school, he [the dad] had burned him [youngest son] 11 times with a cigarette butt.

M.H. appeared somewhat uncomfortable when she shared this with me. However, she stated that she did so because she wanted to ask my advice about what to tell her youngest son when he asks about his father. His father is presently in prison and is projected to be released next January.

As part of the requirements for living in the transitional housing complex, M.H. must   consistently participate in domestic violence services. She attends weekly support groups and receives some financial assistance for childcare while she works. Her sons also participate in groups and her eldest son is involved with a men-mentoring- boys program.

M.H. works as a shoe department manager for a large discount store. She stated that she doesn't like her job because she has to work weekends and it is difficult to get childcare during these days. She has been working on an associate degree in early childhood education at a local technical school. She became interested in this field when she worked as a lead teacher in a daycare. She went to school two nights a week and a Saturday. She stated that she enjoyed the education classes, but hated math and English classes. She stated that she took a leave from school this past quarter because she felt like she couldn't handle everything.

M.H. stated that her goals include setting up a savings account for her sons. She also wants to get a new car. She worries about finances because she has had to file bankruptcy in the past. Without her knowledge, her former boyfriend got 35 credit cards

in her name and she ended up owing $35,000. She now "wants to be able to survive without having to worry about bills." Her dream is to finish school and to work for a school system so that she would have the same schedule as her children. She would also like to be able to buy a home for her boys and her.

O.M.'s Story

I met with O.M. in her apartment in a suburb of a large, urban city. Her apartment was nicely decorated and there were pictures of her son all over the apartment. We sat at her dining room table during the interview.

O.M. is a 23 year-old woman who has been out of the abusive relationship for 2 ½ years. She lives in her apartment with her 4 year-old-son and sometimes with a male friend who comes to visit. She was married to her abuser for 3 years and during that time she left him twice before she left for good. Her husband was in the army and was deployed to Iraq for 7 months during their marriage. She decided to leave him several months after his return.

O.M. shared that it took her a while to realize that she was experiencing domestic violence. She described this process as follows:

In my freshman year of college I learned in social sciences class, a survey class, about domestic violence. And to say that I was in a relationship at that time when that was going on… he physically was not, but emotionally he was abusing me tremendously and it took a whole summer to rebuild my self-esteem. And I made a vow that I would not go through that again. In a marriage, I didn't know that

that's what was going on initially but then I started dealing with financial abuse and other types of things-- those were signs that I knew that something was not right.

According to O.M., her husband used multiple methods to exert power and control over her, including physical, emotional, and financial abuse. She worked on and off during the marriage, but her husband controlled all of the money and he used it to punish her. For example, he wouldn't allow her to get her hair done if she didn't buy the exact items on his grocery list within the amount of money that he allotted her.

O.M. stated that her reason for leaving her husband had to do with her son being a witness to the physical and emotional abuse and just being "fed up." When she left, she went to a domestic violence shelter and she stayed there for 30 days and then she lived in the shelter's transitional living apartment for about 3 months where she states, she "got her life back together." Her involvement with this domestic violence agency included attending weekly groups and counseling services. She stated that she learned a lot during this time period. She then moved to the state where she currently resides and has had contact with the local domestic violence center on a nonresidential basis.

O.M. has sole custody of her son, but allows him to visit his father several weeks at a time. His father lives in another state. She has lived in her present living situation for about 6 months. She works at least 40 hours a week at an upscale restaurant. She also coaches cheerleading two afternoons a week, and is attempting to get a motivational speaking business off the ground. Even with all of these jobs, she stated that she would still be considered to be among the working poor. She receives no child support and doesn't qualify for any government assistance, like food stamps or TANF. Her son has

health care coverage under Medicaid, but she does not have any coverage. In addition, her car stopped working the day that we met and she didn't know what she was going to do because she did not have the money to repair it or to purchase another used vehicle.

O.M. has gone to four-year colleges off and on for the past 8 years without completing a degree. She is presently going to a state university part-time where she is majoring in speech/communication and political science. She decided to withdraw from classes during this semester because she was taking three courses and wasn't able to keep up with the work. She was also concerned that she wasn't spending enough time with her son. She's learned that that she needs to stick to two courses per semester. However, she is still on track for her goal of completing her bachelor's degree by December 2010. After this, her dream is to go to law school to become a civil rights attorney.

O.M. ended the interview by asking me for advice about parenting. She especially wanted to know how to deal with her son's questions about why they no longer live with his daddy.

R.C.'s Story

R.C. and I met at her aunt and uncle's house located in a mountain community. She and her sons have been living there for the past two years. As I drove up the driveway to the house, R.C.'s uncle came out to greet me and to let me know that he and his wife think that their niece is a very special woman. He stated, "When she was with him (the abuser), we always thought that she was just a redneck like him. Little did we know what was going on and how intelligent and strong she is!" R.C. met me at the door of the house and introduced me to multiple family members who were there to celebrate the holidays. She then took me to a small sitting area within her bedroom for our talk.

R.C. is a 34 year-old woman who has been out of the abusive relationship for the past 2 years. She was married to her abuser and he is the father of her 2 sons, who are 12 and 10. She has primary custody of her sons and her husband has visitation every other weekend and some holidays. She attempted to have her husband get supervised visitation because he was abusive to her sons, but the judge did not award this. She has pursued a divorce, but her husband refuses to sign the divorce papers.

R.C. shared that she and her sons suffered from both physical and emotional abuse. Her abuser also isolated them from friends and family. She wasn't allowed to visit anyone or go to any of her family's holiday gatherings. This isolation made it even more difficult for her to leave because as she stated, "I didn't know who else to rely on." She also wasn't allowed to be her sons' mother. Her abuser and his parents constantly demeaned her, especially in front of her two children. Consequently, she stated that she "was not seen as much of an authority figure to my kids because I was treated by his parents and him like I was another child." In addition, she suffered sexual abuse and this served to further increase her feelings of inadequacies as she described:

> I would cringe when he would touch me when he was intimate with me. It was usually against my will and he was very involved at looking at online pornography and he wanted to try different things and if I didn't try things he would call me a prude. He would tell me I wasn't adventurous enough.

R.C. found some ways to fight back. She gained a lot of weight and tried to make herself look 15 years older, in the hopes that her abuser wouldn't want to come near her. R.C. also contacted some family members and let them know what was going on. They encouraged her to leave. The day that she decided to do it, she saw a bruise from a belt

buckle on her eldest son's upper thigh and witnessed her husband hitting her youngest son on the head with a cereal box. Her aunt and uncle came to get her and the children, but didn't immediately take them to their house. R.C. and her children hid in a hotel room for several days because they were afraid that their abuser would find them. Although her abuser didn't find her, he found other methods to try to control her. He transferred her cell phone over to another one so that he could retrieve all of her messages. He also blocked all of her e-mail accounts.

R.C. described her years of living with her aunt and uncle as a "total transformation." During the first year, she lost 50 pounds. She also got involved with the local domestic violence center. She received counseling at the center and realized that she was also physically abused by her father while she was growing up. She gives herself credit for stopping the multi-generational cycle of abuse. R.C. also started going to college so that she can fulfill her dream of becoming a pediatric or ob/gyn nurse. She hopes to be finished with school by 2012. She is currently not working outside the house. She receives child support and her uncle and aunt assist her with finances. She stated that it's tight, but she's making it.

In the future, R.C. stated that she would like to eventually get a place to live of her own with her sons. However, she is still afraid to do so because as she describes:

Everywhere we go, I'm looking over my shoulder. Is he going to see me, is he going to find me? Is he going to be out somewhere where I am and come and confront me? Even up here, two years later. I still feel like I have to look over my shoulder. It bothers me that I'm still that way.

She admitted that she doesn't take good care of her health. Her sons have Medicaid, but she doesn't have health insurance. She has to pay for everything out-of-pocket. So, she limits her doctor visits and prescriptions. Unfortunately, she suffers from panic attacks and described what happens when she has them:

> I feel my chest tightening. Sometimes I just freak. All of a sudden I feel like I got something sitting on my chest. I'm short of breath, I'm sweating and I feel like I've been running and I think, okay, I've got to take a deep breath. I've got to calm down.

She stated that she has had very little ability to control them, but she won't pursue medical treatment because she can't afford it.

When asked how she felt about the interview, R.C. stated that she felt good and that she believes that it always helps to talk about it.

R.P.'s Story

R.P.'s house is located in an urban area mostly comprised of people with low incomes. The interview took place in the living room of her home. There was minimal furniture in the home and it was very cold and unclean. There were pictures of R.P.'s her children everywhere. R.P.'s youngest daughter was asleep on the couch while we talked. The chirp of the smoke alarm went off every few minutes throughout the interview.

R.P. is a 29 year-old woman who has been out of her abusive relationship for 2 years. She presently lives in a HUD Section 8 low-income, rental home in a large metropolitan city with her seven children, ages one to sixteen. She was with her abuser for several years in which he was very controlling and she experienced physical abuse.

She stated that she left him because of her children. She decided to relocate to another state because he is very dangerous and she was afraid that he would kill her. She described this process:

> He actually bust my head open and you know that was my last straw because when I went in for my Food Stamps interview, I used some of that time to go to the library and go on the computer and find out where I want to come. I let the caseworker know that I wanted to hurry up and get transferred to [city]. When I came here I already been saving money. Took all that money. We stayed in a motel until our house was officially ready here. And I just disappeared from him because he did that with my temple, it could have killed me and I was like, what will my kids do without me? So that was just it.

Prior to this decision to move, R.P. had other experiences where she had to stand up for herself. When she was 13 years old, she pursued becoming an emancipated minor. On her own, she went to legal aid and asked for help. Within two months, she was awarded emancipation from her mother and went to live with her grandmother. Her grandmother passed away approximately 15 years ago, but R.P. feels that she continues to influence her life.

R.P. did not pursue domestic violence services prior to moving to her new state of residence. She stated that she didn't know about them. She found out about the services while applying for Food Stamps and other public aid. She got involved on a nonresidential basis and attended support groups weekly and received counseling services. When asked what she liked about the groups, she stated

It was everything. You get a chance to get away and express your feelings and

know that you're not alone in the same situation. Know that you're not the only

survivor that somebody else has been through it and has survived.

Her involvement with the domestic violence center led to her receiving assistance with

getting furniture for her house, receiving a scholarship for school, and Christmas gifts for

her children. She shared that she still tries to go to the groups as often as possible because

she feels like she continues to benefit from them. However, it is very difficult for her to

get to them because she has to rely on public transportation. She gave the following

explanation about why she feels like she needs to get to the groups right now:

The hardest thing for me was that when I was 12, I got raped and I had a stillborn

out of that. Her birthday is on December 7th. She would have been 17 years old.

So I keep myself tied up around Christmas.

R.P. has been out of the abusive relationship for two years. She has sole custody

of all of her children and their fathers are not involved with them. She has six biological

children and one child that she adopted because the mother was in a domestic violence

situation. R.P. does not work outside of the home while she is going to school full-time.

She has free housing and family members help her financially. However, it's difficult to

make ends meet, as she described:

Yeah. It becomes stressful especially on days when I can't find – because I use

[city] transportation and on them days when I can't find help to get back and forth

to school or I'm running low on bus money, it's amazing everyone around here

kind of pull together. We're like each other's backbone. Even my kids, they're

happy for me for going back to school. They're real excited. So I stay focused on

that because they'll even help scrape up change around the house and make sure I get to school. And I'd be like you know that's something that just touches your heart.

R.P. stopped going to school in the 12th grade because she already had two children and was pregnant with a third. However, after she relocated, she attended classes at a technical school and received her GED last year. While she was at the technical school, she started exploring professions and she originally wanted to go to school to be a pharmacy tech. However, one of the teachers told her that she could make a lot more money working in medical billing and coding. They suggested that she go to a private business school that offered a certificate program. She started the program about 6 months ago and hopes to be finished in about 6 months. She would have been finished sooner, but she took a 6-week leave of absence this quarter because of her children's needs around Christmas time. She receives financial aid that pays for tuition. Her goals are to work in medical billing and coding for two years and then she would like to go back to school to become an Obstetrician/Gynecologist. She stated that she wants to do this because she loves babies and it's "good money, good way to hold babies when I'm delivering them." Her plan is to go to a four-year college and to save up money for medical school by working doing medical billing and coding while she's in school.

When asked at the end of the interview how she felt about our time talking together, R.P. stated, "I feel good. I feel like somebody is gonna get something useful out of what I talked about today."

S.I.'s Story

The interview with S.I. took place at a restaurant near her home. When we discussed arrangements on the phone prior to our meeting, S.I. did not offer to have the interview in her home, even when I shared about the need for quiet and privacy. The restaurant she chose was crowded and very noisy. Even though S.I. spoke into the external microphone that I provided, it was difficult to hear everything that she said. Consequently, there are several words missing from the transcript of the interview.

S.I. is a 42 year-old woman who has been out of the abusive relationship for 7 years. She is presently living with 3 of her 4 children in a HUD Section 8 rental house in a suburb of a large metropolitan city. She has been married twice and both relationships have been abusive. When she suffered physical and emotional abuse from her second husband, she made her decision to leave. She explained, "I had already been down that road—why go there again?" She left her second husband much sooner than she left her first husband. When asked what was different about the second abusive relationship compared to the first, she stated:

> It was because I was pregnant. There's something that happens in a woman when she's pregnant. I think that there pushed me to make that decision and to say, "No more." I truly believe that because that's a great question. And I think about that and I truly believe 'cause I was pregnant. I didn't know it at the time. I was tired. I wasn't about to go through it again. I had already experienced the worst kind of abuse.

S.I. went to a domestic violence shelter when she left her second abuser. She stated that the shelter offered her a "safe haven" when she really needed it. She also

received assistance with finances and transportation. While there, she participated in the center's support groups, which she felt were very, very encouraging. As she was leaving the shelter, she found out that she was pregnant and she recounts this time as being a very difficult one. However, she stated, "With the support of the shelter, with the people around me at the time, I made it."

S.I. has 4 children, two boys and two girls, ages 19, 15, 8, and 6. The youngest three presently live with her. Her 19 year-old-son is currently in prison. Talking about him was obviously very difficult for S.I. During this part of our conversation, she intermittently looked away from me and there were multiple times lapses in the conversation. She shared that she also has a brother who is in prison and that this situation with her son is "devastating" to her. Her outlook is, "God puts all of us in places where mommy can't help me anymore." She shared the following about what she considers to be the useful part of his incarceration:

> So he's learnin' the lesson called following orders… respecting authority. You
> understand? He's in there for six to eight months for violation of probation, for
> not completing community service, for not paying the fine, for not visiting the
> probation officer. He doesn't respect authority. So he's sittin' in there, learnin'
> that.

S.I. presently supports herself and her children financially through running a daycare center in her home. She also receives financial assistance for school. S.I. shared that she dropped out of high school in the 11th grade. She then went back to school 10 years later and got her GED while she was pregnant with her 15 year-old. She is presently working on a bachelor's degree in business administration within an online

college program. She is the first person in her family to go to college. She really didn't know much about how to get a college education, but she stated that there "was a burning inside of me--such a longing for me to go to school. I always wanted to go to school. It presented itself and I took advantage of it." She views school as being for her children and her because as she stated, "I thought that we deserved better than that because their dad was not in their lives. He was nowhere around- emotionally, spiritually, financially." She is presently going to school full-time and is scheduled to complete her Bachelors of Business Administration in the spring of 2009. She already has plans to begin her Master's in Business Administration following her graduation.

S.I.'s dream for the future is to open up a nonprofit youth shelter. She would like to be able to help children who don't have anyone else. She described what she wants to accomplish as, "I wanna to grab the kids, and bring 'em in, feed 'em, clothe 'em, offer them moral support, lift them up, love on them—let them know somebody cares and I'm listening." In order to accomplish this goal, S.I. wants to work on her communication and networking skills. She's considering joining Toastmasters as a method for improvement.

At the end of the interview, S.I. stated that she enjoyed our time together and that she actually felt better after sharing. She finished our time together by stating, "It's amazin' what God will do. It's amazin'. I've been through a lot, but I know God has so much more waiting for me."

<div align="center">Summary</div>

I have provided an overview of the 7 participants in my study. The participants' ages range from 23 to 47 and they all have between 1 to 7 children. Most of the participants have been out of the abusive relationship for about 2 years; one has been out

of it for 7 years. All of the participants stated that they left their abusers for their children. Three of the participants had to leave the state or the city they were living in because their abusers were so dangerous. Everyone stated that they benefited from participating in the domestic violence services. The schools they are attending include business schools, technical schools, and four-year colleges. I learned a great deal from these women about courage, endurance, fortitude, and caring. It is my hope that their stories will inspire others.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

Poststructural perspectives problematize received wisdom in social theory

regarding identity, subjectivity, and agency. Context and meaning in everyday life are

posited as co-constructions, multiple, complex, open and changing, neither pre-given not

explainable by large-scale causal theories, but made and re-made across a multiplicity of

minor scattered practices.

Lather, 1991, p. 42

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the current literature about domestic violence, poverty,

low-income women, single mothers, and the relationship between education attainment

and pay. I also provided overviews of the poststructural theoretical perspective that was

used for this study and the field of occupational therapy. In Chapter 3, I discussed the

methods used for this study and in Chapter 4 I summarized the backgrounds of the

participants. I now turn to the presentation of the findings based on the purpose and the

research questions that guided this study.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this interview-based study informed by poststructural feminism

and   Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self, was to explore the subjectivities that

low-income, female survivors of domestic violence construct while pursuing

postsecondary education. The research questions were as follows:

1. What processes do the survivors go through to become available to a transformation of their subjectivities?

2. What practices of self do the survivors perform to construct their subjectivities?

3. What subjectivities do the survivors construct within the discourses and cultural practices that are available to them?

In order to address my purpose and research questions, I start with a broad overview of Foucault's perspective of morality and the three factors that comprise it. I then discuss the first factor, moral codes that permeate my participants' lives and therefore influence the construction of their subjectivities. I then turn to the third factor of morality, ethics, and the primary focus of this study. I begin the discussion about ethics by addressing the steps that the participants performed in order to be able to perform care of self. I follow this with the specific practices of self and the current subjectivities that the participants have constructed based on these practices. I end with an overview of the future subjectivities that the participants would like to construct.

<div align="center">Morality</div>

As I shared in Chapter 2, Foucault (1984/1985) defined morality as, "a set of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies such as the family (in one of its roles), educational institutions, churches, and so forth" (p. 25). In his view, morals consist of three factors: (a) the moral code that is imposed on people by prescriptive agencies, (b) people's behaviors, and (c) *ethics,* which he described as the self's relation to itself or *rapport a soi* or *care of the self* (Foucault. 1991).

Foucault (1984/1985) viewed ethics or the relationship with the self to be much greater than "self-awareness." He described it as involving:

> self-formation as an 'ethical subject,' a process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. (p. 28)

This perception of self-formation requires an individual to "act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve, and transform himself" (Foucault, 1984/1985, p. 28). Foucault asserted that the forming of the ethical subject requires what he called, *modes of subjectivation*, that is, "the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice" (Foucault, 1984/1985, p. 27). It also requires work on the self and this work is what Foucault referred to as *ascetics* or *practices of self* (Foucault, 1984/1985). 6

Ethics was Foucault's primary interest, as it is mine in this study, because it allowed me to explore both *how* my participants formed their subjectivities based on the prescriptive elements or moral codes within their lives and *what* subjectivities they formed based upon their practices of self. In this chapter, I focus on these two objectives by first defining the moral codes that were influencial in my participants' lives. I then address the practices of self that the participants performed within their daily lives and the subjectivities that they constructed based upon these. Following this, I present an overview of the practices of self that the participants performed to transform their subjectivities and end with a look at the future subjectivities that the participants would like to construct.

Moral codes

Foucault (1984/1985) believed that codes of behavior and the forms of subjectivation could never be entirely separated even if they developed independently of each other. Therefore, when studying moral codes, Foucault stated that it is important "to focus on the instances of authority that enforce the code, that require it to be learned and observed, that penalize infractions" (Foucault, 1984/1985, p. 29). In other words, moral codes need to be explored in relation to power relations where these codes could be perceived as a form of power that

> applies itself to immediate everyday life [and] categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects. (Foucault, 1982/1983, p. 331)

These considerations led me to ask the following questions when listening for the moral codes within my participants' lives: "Where are moral codes to be found?" and "How do these moral codes function?" and "What are the effects of these moral codes?"

Foucault (1984/1985) did not spend a lot of time studying moral codes because as he stated, "One notices that they [moral codes] ultimately revolve around a rather small number of rather simple principles" (Foucault, 1984/1985). On the other hand, he asserted that it is important to identify moral codes within people's lives because they serve as a component of the formation of subjectivities. At the very least, the "small number " of moral codes that permeated my participants' lives were generated based on gender, class, educational level, and race. These functioned to discipline and repress my participants' lives because they were poor, white or black, female, had high school

educations or the equivalents, and were working at low paying jobs. These codes were similar to the ones addressed in Chapter 2. So, I have chosen not to elaborate on them here because they are not the primary focus of this study. However, I do want to address two specific codes that emerged that strongly influenced my participants' constitution of their subjectivities. These had to do with the expected roles of mothers as being protectors of the children and prioritizing them.

Mothers protect their children. A powerful moral code imposed upon my participants' lives was what I call, the *protective mother code*. This code relates to the societal belief that mothers have the primary responsibility to protect their children. This code is very powerful and laws and agencies have been established to assure that this code continues to regulate mothers. Lack of compliance with this code can lead to the involvement of a state agency and to the children being removed from the home. Most of us agree that this moral code is necessary. However, it can also be used inappropriately in the case of mothers who have experienced domestic violence. Mothers who don't leave their abusers and who expose their children to domestic violence are often perceived as failing to protect their children. They, not the fathers, are considered to be responsible for exposing their children to significant harm (Hague, Mullender, Kelly, & Malos, 2000). This view has permeated regulatory agencies as indicated by studies of social service caseworkers who work with survivors of domestic violence. Despite there being no evidence of neglect or abuse towards her children by a survivor, abused women are often viewed as "parenting problems," because it is believed that they should have been able to control their abusers' behaviors (Pence & Taylor, 2003). Within some states, these attitudes have resulted in removal of children from their mothers (Goodman, 2004).

The protective mother code was pervasive in the participants' narratives from their descriptions about leaving the abusive relationships to how they lead their lives today. The women reflected the belief that R.C. summed up when she stated, "To me, that's being a good mom letting them know that I'm not going to let anything bad happen to them." This protection was even more poignant for the participants because of their former dangerous experiences.

All the participants stated that they left the abusive relationships for their children. They each described a pivotal experience in which they experienced terror about the current and future effects of the abuse on their children (Quaid & Itzin, 2000). A good example is O.M.'s account of the Holy Spirit making her pay attention to the protective mother code that led to her decision to leave

> And that altercation that day our son woke up and he was sitting in the room and we were physically fighting in that room and the Holy Spirit came to me and said, "O.M., you have to be careful. Stop. And that's what made me stop. He said, "[her son] needs a parent. And if I was to quote kill him unquote, I would have been in jail, he would have been dead, and my kid would not have a parent. And I had to make a very intelligent decision and say, Okay, you know what? And I called the police and they removed him. And that's why I knew when I'm at that point when the man that I love dearly and I feel a rage where I know that I can't take this betrayal, you know you need to suffer, that was the time that said, It's time to go.

A.W. had a similar epiphany even though the abuse did not happen in front of A.W.'s granddaughter and her sons didn't live with her. However, she projected danger to them if she allowed herself to stay in the abusive relationship as she explained

It kind of like knocked my jaw bone off a little bit and I couldn't hardly talk. I couldn't really open my mouth and talk. And just the fact for her [granddaughter] having to see me with my eyes and stuff bruised up. I don't want her to see that. It may come to the point he would do that in her presence and I couldn't face that. And then the fact that my sons, now, they were at the point where they were ready to kill and they couldn't stand it anymore. So, I didn't want to put them in a position for them to lose their freedom and all. I had to make a change.

R.C. shared that there were times when she was with her abuser that she "would lay my hands on him and I would pray for him to die so I would not have to deal with him anymore." She struggled with the dueling values of keeping a family together and protecting her sons:

It's a lot of times you don't realize it's happening and once you realize it's happening and you got children involved in the mix, you don't want to break up your family, but when it starts trickling down to your children, and you see what his abuse is doing to them, that is really when you rethink it and say okay is it really worth staying? I finally figured out no, it's not worth staying because the boys were being affected negatively. We got out in time enough for them to realize what's happening and then my oldest son the week before I left, he was

playing with a lighter and trying to light the house on fire and he told me many,

many times, Mommy, I want to leave Daddy. I just want it to be just me, you and

[her youngest son].

None of the participants stated that they left the abusive relationship for themselves. The

second moral code that influenced them is also related to their children.

Children are the priority. The protective mother code was intricately entwined

with another prescriptive element that permeated the participants' lives: the *children are

the priority* code. The applications of this moral code were pervasive throughout the

participants' descriptions of their daily activities. All of them stated that their days

revolved around their children because taking care of them was their number one priority.

Adoption of this moral code yielded very little separation between the

participants' children's lives and their own as S.I. summarized, "Taking care of my kids

is taking care of me. As long as they're fine, I'm fine." O.M. concurred with this

perspective and added the following about what happens to a woman when she has

children: "Your life to me is not your life anymore. Your life belongs to your children."

This view was exemplified when she talked about

the time that she would like to have with her son although she works 40 hours per week,

coaches cheerleading two nights a week, is trying to get a consultancy business off the

ground, and goes to school two days a week

(Big sigh). It's really about my son. I would like to cook dinner for him. I'd like

to sit at our table and eat dinner together and talk. I just love to see him eat my

food because he eats and he eats. He just loves mommy's cooking. I'd like to

definitely take that time to read a book to him. Whatever book he picks out.

Usually, it goes from one book within our timeframe. We're supposed to do only

10 minutes; 15 minutes and we wind up doing for 30, 45 minutes because he goes

from one book to the next book, to the next book. (Laughs). But, I notice that it's

helping him a lot. I'm a speech major and I will not accept anything less for my

son and his verbal skills. And so that's fine. And I don't mind doing it. We're still

working on his colors and so forth. I want to volunteer more with his school too to

kind of be around. I used to work in daycare like when I got to the military

base before I started working in youth sports. So, work with the kids and you get

to see mommy around.

R.P., who has seven children, agreed with these views and went further to

describe how her focus on her children helps her:

Sometimes when you get that kind of breakdown…I just thank God that I had

kids because I don't know where in the world my strength would have came from.

I probably would have stayed there if I didn't have kids. I can't take anymore. But

when you have kids, it's like you have a different care, a different love, a different

feel, a different touch …everything.

M.H., whose children were removed from her in the past, described her daily

struggles regarding spending equal time with her two sons when she was not working or

going to school:

We have to do homework of course and I try to fit it in. In the mornings me and

[younger son] have a little bit of time without [older son]. So in the afternoon or

before bed, [younger son] has to go to bed just a little bit earlier before [older

son], so I have 30 minutes or so with him. He likes to play board games and stuff.

We try to do that. I just want them to feel like they equally get the same amount

of time because I worry that [older son] doesn't think he gets the same amount of

time as [younger son] does because he doesn't leave for daycare as soon as [older

son] leaves for school. So I think he thinks that I'm going to be home with him all

day but I'm only here for like an hour before I have to go again.

A final example of the good mother code has to do with the scheduling of three of

the participants' interviews with me. Each of these participants asked me to interview

them prior to Christmas. This was because they wanted to use the money that they were

going to receive in exchange for their time with me, to buy last minute Christmas

presents for their children.

Ethics

Ethics, or the care of the self, is the third aspect of Foucault's perspective on

morality. Foucault (1984/1985) identified four elements of ethics. He named the first one,

the *determination of the ethical substance,* and he defined this as, "the way in which the

individual has to constitute this or that part of himself as the prime material of his moral

conduct" (Foucault, 1984/1985, p. 26). In other words, an individual's ethical substance

will determine what part of him or herself is needed to be taken into account in the

formulation of the moral code (Davidson, 1986). For my participants, the ethical

substance consisted of the bad mother who didn't take care of her children; the dependent

woman who couldn't accomplish anything or survive without a man; and the

nonproductive woman who is a burden on society.

Foucault's (1991) second factor is the *mode of subjection,* which is defined as, "the way in which people are invited or incited to recognize their moral obligations" (Foucault, 1991, p. 264). In other words, it involves "the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it it into practice" (Foucault, 1984/1985, p. 27). The mode of subjection for my participants was their desire to be good mothers who serve as role models for their children.

The third aspect involves the differences in the forms of *elaboration of ethical work* that people do in order to become ethical subjects (Davidson, 1986). Foucault called this the self-forming activity or aestheticism in a very broad sense (Foucault, 1991). It involves both the work on one's conduct so as to be in compliance with a given rule and the "attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's behavior" (Foucault, 1984/1985, p. 27). Referred to as *practices of self, care of self, or technologies of self,* this part of ethics is about actions and practices. The primary practices of self performed by the participants were reading, writing, listening, and the use of friends, domestic violence center staff, teachers, and me as life coaches or masters.

Finally, there is *telos,* the fourth aspect, which refers to the kind of person we aspire to become when we behave morally (Davidson, 1986). The participants in my study aspired to be independent women who are beyond survival, who take good care of their children, and are able to help others.

All of these aspects of ethics were evident within my participants' lives and they influenced their construction of their subjectivities. The purpose of this study was to explore the subjectivities that the participants constructed through their practices of self. Therefore, the third aspect of ethics, practices of self, is my main focus. Prior to

addressing these, I found it necessary to investigate the steps involved in performing practices of self. Specifically, it was important to gain a better understanding of how subjects whose abilities to perform practices of self were extremely limited and whose relationships with selves were almost nonexistent, go about performing practices of self.

Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915) is credited with stating, "You have to know the past to understand the present." This was one of the first lessons that my participants taught me. Each of the participants shared details about her abuse even though I didn't ask her for them. However, I quickly learned that this information was very important because these past experiences affected the participants' current practices of self. So, I will take the women's lead and begin this discussion about practices of the self in their current lives by looking backwards. I begin with the question about how the participants came to be who they are now. got here to begin with. What I mean is, what did they do to begin their journey towards their relationships with themselves, and thus, care of the self.

Becoming Available to Transformation

How is it that we become available to a transformation of who we are, a contestation which compels us to rethink ourselves, a reconfiguration of our "place" and our "ground," if we demand, in advance, to know that, as subjects, we are intact, uneroded, uncontested, presupposed, and necessary?

Butler, 1995, p. 131

The participants used words like *prison* and *24 hours a day closet* to describe their lives while they were in the abusive relationships. Their stories reflected multiple methods used by their abusers to constrain and control their lives. R.C. summed up this dynamic when she stated: "These men weaken the women so much with their confidence

and with their spirit and they just stomp on them and then they turn it around on them."

This stomping was figuratively and literally evident throughout the participants' stories

as they shared example after example of feeling powerless while in the abusive

relationships. O.M. shared a poignant example of this lack of power and control

> I had no access to any money until I got my own job again. And this was after I
>
> had our son. He was—he opened a bank account, I did not have access. He would
>
> take money, put it in my account and tell me what I needed to bring home for
>
> groceries or whatever and if I wasn't on my best behavior, I couldn't go get my
>
> hair done. It would just be a lot of things where I would be okay are you serious?
>
> Because you're not my father and I love my father but he doesn't even control me
>
> because he knows that he can't. So, I mean I would go through some things and I
>
> would have to bring receipts for penny for penny and if I didn't bring it, oh I was
>
> in some trouble. I mean, it was just a lot—a lot of mental and
>
> emotional…psychological.

The other participants shared very similar stories. If we view these experiences

through a Foucaultian lens, the abusers can be perceived as blocking the participants'

power relations through *states of domination* which resulted in extreme limitations of the

participants' practices of freedom and therefore, their available subject positions

(Foucault, 1984/1994). In order for this process to be successful, the participants had to

allow external forces to construct their subjectivities rather than constructing their own. .

R.P shared an example of this vulnerability as she shared how her abuser's

representations overpowered her own

You just get stripped of all your self-esteem. You get the feeling of the dumbness, you know. They make you feel like the lowest piece of crap on the earth. And I always thought that I was a pretty black girl.

A.W., who was a hairdresser when she was in the abusive relationship, related how her subjectivity was constituted based on obeying "the rules" that were developed by her abuser (Foucault, 1985)

You don't have time for a quick brush out because you know you have to hurry up and get home before he gets home. You've got to make sure his food is ready and the clothes. You've got to have all that ready because you're pleasing him. *It's no longer about you anymore* [italics added]. It's all about pleasing him. When the beater gets angry enough, he can punch your eye out. He can kick you in your side and in your ribs. You do what you need to do around the house 'cause you can't hardly walk and you're hurtin.' And you can't go to the hospital because now you have to give an explanation and you don't want to give him up because you love him. Yeah. Been there.

The other participants shared very similar accounts. Remarkably, the ancient Greco-Roman concepts of care of the self supplied me with relevant language to use to describe what the participants had experienced related to their subjectivity while in the abusive relationships. Specifically, the concept of *stultitia* seemed to capture what the participants were describing while they were entrenched in these relationships. This term was used frequently in Stoic philosophy to describe a certain type of pathological state in which people had not yet taken care of themselves (Foucault, 2005). Considered to be the opposite pole of care of the self, stultitia was viewed as the worst state that a person could

be in because there was a disconnection or a non-connection between the will and the self (Foucault, 2005). According to Seneca, a Stoic philosopher during the Roman period, a *stultus,* is a person who is

> blown by the wind and open to the external world, that is to say someone who lets all the representations from the outside world into his mind. He accepts representations without examining them, without knowing how to analyze what they represent. The *stultus* is open to the external world inasmuch as he allows these representations to get mixed up in his own mind with his passions, desires, ambition, mental habits, illusions, etcetera, so that the stultus is someone prey to the winds of external representation and who, once they have entered his mind, cannot make the *discriminatio*, cannot separate the content of these representations from what we will call, if you like, the subjective elements, which are combined in him. (Foucault, 2005, p. 131)

Remnants of this state of stultitia could still be heard from the participants even though each of them had been out of their abusive relationships for at least two years. The women shared multiple examples of how the abuser had continued to influence their constructions of subjectivity. S.I., citing emotional abuse as the primary cause of her current lack of confidence, shared, "You've been told this and to a certain degree, you start believing it." When discussing her interactions with others at her job, A.M. shared that she believes that the abuse took away some of her positive attributes and she currently feels like she's not worthy because, as she stated, "Maybe it was me. Maybe I did cause you to hit me. Maybe my mouth and my strength. Maybe it did." R.C. agreed with S.I. and A.W. and views her abuser's verbalizations as causing her self-doubt. She

stated that she still has frequent flashbacks of being with her abuser where he is telling her, "You know, you will never be anything without me" and "You're not smart enough to go back to school." Just as all of the other participants did, R.C. expressed feeling guilty for staying with her husband as long as she did. She blames herself and asks, "Why did I let this happen?" All of these feelings swirl around together and serve to reinforce negative feelings about herself. This even happens in dreams, as she shared:

> I had a dream that I was in the kitchen cooking, in this kitchen cooking and out of nowhere he comes up and he says when's my dinner going to be ready and you know I don't like to eat that stuff. I'm not going to eat that, that's crap. He throws the plate across the room and you just have moments of self-doubt. I think that comes to me in dreams.

Even though the participants stated that they continue to struggle against their abusers' subjection of them, each of them demonstrated movement towards what the Greeks and Roman called *salvation,* that is, "the vigilant, continuous, and completed form of the relationship to self closed in on itself" (Foucault, 2005, pp. 184-185). Unlike the religious connotations that salvation has today, *being saved* in Hellenistic and Roman times meant maintaining yourself in a continuous state where nothing could change no matter what events occurred around the self (Foucault, 2005). Therefore, within this context, s*aving yourself* meant, "escaping domination or enslavement; escaping a constraint that threatens you and being restored to your rights, finding your freedom and independence again" (Foucault, 2005, p. 184). A good example of this progression is M.D.'s comments about how she has been attempting to establish a different relationship to self based upon different perceptions of the abuse:

the biggest thing is just learn from it… you can't let it dictate who you are for the rest of your life. But if you do, you're not very likely to accomplish very much. So you just have to learn from it and be willing to grow from the decisions you've made and the things you've done.

According to Foucault, (2005), establishing the relationship with self doesn't mean that a person just attends to herself; it requires shifts, trajectories, efforts, and movement. It is a long and continuous process that Foucault (2005) called a *self-subjectivation* whose purpose is to move from what can't be controlled to what can be controlled. Metaphorically, it allows a woman to be "independent in its [her] own fortress; and every weapon hurled falls short of the mark" (Foucault, 1984/1986, p. 65). Consequently, actions like protecting, defending, arming and equipping the self are necessary in order to establish the relationship of the self with the self (Foucault, 2005).

The Greek concept of *conversion* seems to be descriptive of the first step in the participants' movement towards salvation. Foucault (2005) defined conversion to self or *epistrophe eis heaton* as the actions of turning around towards self while turning away from everything that surrounds the self so that the self is no longer enslaved, dependent, and constrained. The end goal of conversion is "to establish a full and adequate relationship of self to self" (Foucault, 2005, p. 214). Foucault (1984/1986) stated that when a person achieves conversion, "Not only is one satisfied with what one is and accepting of one's limits, but one 'pleases oneself" (p. 66). I found *anakhorei,* one of the Greek words used to describe the conversion process, to especially relate to the

participants' actions because one of its meanings reflects the flight of a slave who takes off into the countryside in order to escape subjection and his status as a slave (Foucault, 2005).

The type of activity involved in conversion to the self was called *ascesis,* which means exercise of self on self. Ascesis is linked with knowledge. While making the acquisition of true discourses possible, ascesis also enables a subject to become "the subject of these true discourses, [and] to become the subject who tells the truth and who is transfigured by this enunciation of the truth" (Foucault, 2005, p. 332). Consequently, Foucault (2005) viewed the function of ascesis in Hellenistic and Roman times, as a method for ensuring the subjectivation of true discourse.

Conversion seemed to begin for the participants during the process of leaving the abusive relationships. This was the beginning of their resistance to the blocking of the power relations by their abusers. Each of them described some pivotal experience that happened to make each of them stop and pay attention to themselves. All of them stated that they left for their children and they related stories about a specific experience that made them understand that they had to leave and couldn't go back. Several of them described what they considered to be religious or spiritual experiences, as O.M. did about her last fight with her husband that was described earlier. S.I felt as if the voice of the Lord had come to her following a bad altercation with her abuser

> I'll never forget it. I sat on the couch and I just had this thought come to mind--it was like, battered women's shelter. I had never heard this term before in my life but I got the yellow pages and looked up battered women's shelter. Got the phone book.

Other participants relayed that they felt like family members who had passed on were there for them. R.C. felt her deceased mother's presence and she felt like God and her mother were telling her, "Get off your butt and do it"' R.P. shared that following a particularly brutal attack from her abuser, her deceased grandmother, who had raised her, came to her in a dream. Her grandmother specifically challenged the messages that she was constantly hearing from her abuser. She told her:

> It's time to go. I've always told you that you're beautiful. You're carrying my name. You're carrying my looks. You're carrying my smartness so I know you've got my strength. You know that when you had your first son you said you would never leave him. You know, baby girl, you're fixing to be here with me if you don't get out soon… I got out.

Conversion also requires that a person turn towards the self and establish a focus on the self. This process is known as *turning the gaze towards the self.* In ancient Greek and Roman times, turning one's gaze on the self meant turning it away from others initially and then, later, it meant turning it away from the things of the world (Foucault, 2005). It involved the subject looking closely at her own aim and "keeping before our eyes, in the clearest way, that towards which we are striving and having, as it were, a clear consciousness of this aim, of what we must do to achieve it and of the possibility of our achieving it" (Foucault, 2005, p. 222). When a person turns away from others, she is supposed to turn away from being concerned about the imperfections of others towards a focus on her our own flaws and misdeeds (Foucault, 2005). Foucault (2005), described the objective of this process as:

If we free ourselves from this malign, malicious, and malevolent gaze directed at other people, it is so as to be able to concentrate on keeping to the straight line we must follow in heading to our destination. We must focus on ourselves. It is a matter of deciphering oneself. It is an exercise of the subject's concentration, an exercise by which all the subject's activity and attention is brought back to this tension that leads him to his aim. (pp. 221-222)

All of the participants expressed difficulties with keeping a focus on themselves versus others, especially their children. They also found it to be very difficult to not dwell on the wrong that was done to them by their abusers. S.I. described her reasons for her struggle related to the past, "When you are in an abusive relationship, it robs you of your joy… even loving… it robs you of your determination…it drains you mentally, emotionally, spiritually. You don't have a focus." However, several of the participants demonstrated signs of turning the gaze toward self. For example, R.C. described her perspective of what she needs to do in order to keep the focus on herself especially when she has to still deal with her abuser:

I have to forgive him and what he did to be able to move on myself, to be able to go on with my life and to be a healthy individual. Forgiveness is important. I'm going to have to let go of a lot of anger. That's the main thing that's holding me back is anger. Not so much as what he did to me but what he's still doing to my children. Manipulating them, trying to brainwash them so I need to get past that anger.

Difficulties with turning the gaze were also reflected in the concerns some of the participants expressed regarding what other people thought of them. This was especially an issue for M.H. because she stated that many people have judged her negatively for letting her boyfriend burn their son. She described her strategy for dealing with this concern as:

> I put up a guard. I don't want anyone else to know anything else. That's the way it was when I first started working. I didn't want anyone to know my story. I just wanted to live it and I've only let two people know everything that's happened. And they understand because they've been through a similar situation. I just don't want people to judge me and I feel like they do, especially when there are so many issues in the work environment that it's like really, really hard.

On the other hand, M.H did express some reduction in her dependence on others' opinions when she stated that she now feels like she doesn't have to have someone in her life to feel whole. She stated that she feels like she can now do things alone and can make her own decisions.

O.M. uses her relationship with God as methods for getting focused on herself and for blocking thoughts of others out. She described her ability to do this as

> I know how to not care about who is around me. If I feel it, I'm gonna do it. Take a moment if I feel it in my spirit. Like if I'm on the phone talking to somebody, I have to get off the phone and I need to spend time with the Lord and get into my praise. Whatever is going on, I've learned how to do that and that's gonna be my goal with this one.

The concept of ancient *ascesis,* i.e., activities involved in conversion, was especially applicable to my participants because its function is to equip a subject with defensive equipment that allows protection of the self and the attainment of the constitution of self. The Greeks called this equipment or technique, *paraskeue.* They defined paraskeue as "the preparation of the subject and the soul so that they will be properly, necessarily, and sufficiently armed for whatever circumstance of life may arise" (Foucault, 2005, p. 240). In other words, by involving a set of necessary moves and practices, paraskeu*e* enabled subjects to be strong no matter what challenges were thrown their way (Foucault, 2005). Stoic philosopher, Marcus Aurelius, provided the following analogy about paraskeue that reflected this goal and is especially poignant for my participants: "The art of living is more like wrestling than dancing, in that you must stay on guard and steady on your feet against the blows which rain down on you, and without warning" (Foucault, 2005, p. 322).

Paraskeue was composed of *logoi* (discourses) of statements with a material existence that reflected rational propositions that constituted acceptable principles of behavior. Used as an aid, paraskeue was made up of actual persuasive phrases that brought about conviction and actions (Foucault, 2005). These inductive schemas of action eventually became as one with a subject's reason, freedom, and will and were available whenever a subject needed them (Foucault, 2005). Consequently, paraskeue made it possible for subjects to resist impulses and temptations so as to achieve their goals by remaining stable and not easily swayed by others. R.P. shared an excellent example of the persuasive statements that she tells herself when she falters. She credits

her willpower and strength as helping her as she says over and over again, "I have the will to live, the strength to go on, and I have the power to succeed."

The necessary equipment for dealing with these struggles and for achieving goals and accomplishments was called *phusiologia* (Foucault, 2005). Phusiologia was viewed as the knowledge of nature that became the principle of human conduct. It also served as

the criterion for setting us free, and also insofar as it can transform the subject

(who was filled with fear and terror before nature and by what he had been taught

about the gods and things of the world) into a free subject who finds within

himself the possibility and means of his permanent and perfectly tranquil delight.

(Foucault, 2005, p. 241)

Phusiologia provided subjects with boldness and courage in order to stand firm against the beliefs and authority that others tried to impose on them (Foucault, 2005). It facilitated finding resources within self, a dependence only on self, and a pride in what is one's own (Foucault, 2005).

Throughout the participants' narratives, I heard examples of strategies that the participants developed to stand firm so that they could form their own subjectivities. All of them described focusing on their children as a method for staying strong. O.M.'s description of how she eventually left her abuser for good is an excellent example of how she armed herself against her abuser's influences:

I learned that one of the keys was that I was talking to him on the phone every

time I left and that would make me weaker and weaker and weaker. But then, that

third time when I left him, it was a very bad time, a very bad time, and there was

no communication unless it was through a third party. And that's how I kept my strength and I gained my power back little by little. And it took a while.

Another example is A.W.'s description of how she arms herself so that she doesn't do something to lose her job when she has to deal with male customers who she feels are mean to her. She finds these experiences to be especially difficult because they often cause flashbacks to her abuse:

I think about my granddaughter all the time in that she doesn't have anybody. So, I have to think positive things about her future and where I am going with my future. I have to come up with a happy thought and bring myself back down to reality that they is [sic] butts today. Maybe they are going through something and they don't know how to deal with it. So I kind of do positive happy thoughts about where I am going and why I am here.

R.P. shared about faith keeping her in focus. She stated, "Once you get on that right path and get your mind free and you know, you just stay on that right path and get a closer relationship with God, everything will come out good." She also tries to attend a domestic violence support group meeting when she's especially feeling down.

M.D. reflected arming herself by focusing on "what not to do" based upon what she learned from being in groups with other survivors:

It kind of sounds bad, but you're seeing people that are stuck in one place… and I don't want to do that. I don't want to get stuck there and just focus on being in an abusive situation or growing up in abuse. Yeah, but do I let that make who I become or do I change that? I guess the biggest thing is just learn from it. I mean you can let it dictate who you are for the rest of your life…but if you do, you're

not very likely to accomplish very much. So you just have to learn from it and be

willing to grow from the decisions you've made and the things that you've done.

On the other hand, M.D. shared that one of her major strategies is to listen to the

domestic violence center staff and to keep telling herself to trust them. She described this

as a decision on her part "to make a conscious effort instead of comparing everyone to

people in my past." Basically, she worked on " Just trying to see people for who they

are."

M.D.'s *listening* practice was especially important to pay attention to because

listening is considered to be the "first step, the first move in ascesis and the subjectivation

of true discourse (Foucault, 2005, p. 334). In other words, the practice of listening begins

the transition from what is heard to what is adopted and forms the person's rule of

conduct. Listening requires experience, competence, diligent practice, attention, and

application. Listening to others plays a big role in my participants' practices of self as

will be discussed in the next sections.

Practices of Self

I would argue that there is no possibility of standing *outside* of the discursive

conventions by which "we" are constituted, but only the possibility of reworking the very

conventions by which we are enabled.

<div align="right">Butler, 1995, p. 136</div>

Introduction

Finding the time to perform practices of self aside from their daily routines in

order to maintain, change and transform their subjectivities was extremely difficult for

my participants. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the participants had multiple

responsibilities and they prioritized the needs of their children. Therefore, the participants described schedules jam packed with work, children, school, and other responsibilities and unfortunately, they had very little assistance with performing any of their activities. All of the participants were single mothers who had primary custody of their children; only two had children whose fathers had visitation rights. The number of children to be cared for per family ranged from one to seven with the children's ages ranging from one to sixteen. Two participants were not working while going to school. R.C. was living with family members who provided free housing for her and her children and assistance with meeting her financial obligations. R.P. had 7 children and lived in abject poverty. The other five participants worked full-time outside of the home while going to school. Despite having jobs and some family assistance, the socioeconomic status of all of the participants fell within the low-income range and five participants who were working would be considered to be among the working poor. Two of the participants lacked independent means of transportation.

The participants' lack of time and energy to perform care of the self in order to grow and change seemed to parallel the "economic and social kind of exclusion" (Foucault, 2005, p. 126) for care of the self that was experienced by certain classes of people within the Greco-Roman cultures. As Foucault (2005) admitted:

We can say that all individuals are in general terms "competent": [sic] able to practice themselves, able to carry out this practice of self. There is no *a priori* exclusion of an individual on the grounds of birth or status. However, from

another angle, although access to the practice of the self is open to everyone in

principle, it is certainly generally the case that very few are actually capable of

taking care of the self. (p. 118)

For example, within the Roman aristocratic circles, families had private consultants for

care of self "who served in a family as a life counselor, a political adviser, a potential

intermediary in a negotiation" (Foucault, 1986, p. 52). As Foucault (1986) described

about the "golden age in cultivation of the self" (p. 45), it was understood that the

practice of care of the self "concerned only the social groups, very limited in number, that

were bearers of culture and for whose members a *techne tou biou* could have a meaning

and a reality"(p. 45).

Somehow, despite their low-incomes and their many responsibilities, the

participants found time to practice care of the self in order to change and transform their

subjectivities. Of course, they had been in the process of doing this at the very least since

they left their abusive relationships. The participants identified friendships, domestic

violence agencies, and schools as powerful sites of performing practices of self that led to

the construction of new subjectivities. These will be discussed in detail in the next

sections.

Reading, Writing, and Listening

Despite their multiple responsibilities, most of the participants still found

opportunities to perform practices of self that led to the construction of new

subjectivities. For example, R. P. shared that when she was riding the buses and trains

back and forth to school, she used the time alone to read. There were also some limited

examples of writing as a practice of self. Although O.M. acknowledged that her

journaling "is something that comes in handy when I am going through a lot of things emotionally and I'm frustrated and I don't have anybody to talk to," she had difficulty sustaining the practice. She described how this happens

> I mean every year that's my new year's resolution. I always fall off from it. So, I do well like the first 3 months. If I pulled my journal now, I wrote up until April and then I stopped. And then I may get an entry every blue moon.

R.C. stated that she would like to keep a journal, but her abuser and eldest son have read parts of it in the past, so she doesn't feel safe having one again. However, she uses the web as a method of writing by regularly blogging on MySpace. Her entries are filled with reflections about her abuse and her current life, along with intermittent information about domestic violence. An example is this part of the blog that she wrote around Thanksgiving:

> People around me keep telling me how strong I am. Ha! If only they could hear my insecure thoughts twittering about in my head, they wouldn't tell me that. A lot of times at night, I cry myself to sleep, finally exhausted. Sleep doesn't come easily these days and my nerves tell me that this court hearing is close.

R.C. received multiple responses to her blogs and most of these were focused on giving her support and advice. An example of a reply she received is: "Just wanted to say that I appreciate your friendship and I accept you for who you are. Just let God have it all…trust him and just be… he'll bring it all to you." This reciprocal process mirrors Foucault's (2005) description of the Greco-Roman practice of self in which the subject wrote letters to others and this practice became a sort of social relationship. Foucault

(2005) described this practice of self as a "verbal relationship with the Other" (p. 164) characterized by the notion of *parrhesia*, which is translated in this case to mean, "frankness."

All of the participants practiced listening to others and this was performed primarily with people who served to give them guidance and assistance. The Greeks perceived "the care of the self to require listening to the lessons of a master" (Foucault, 1984/1994). This practice of self was the major one that the participants performed for support and growth and was referred to by the Greeks and Romans as the use of a *master*. It involved "a certain action carried out on the individual to whom one offers a hand and whom one extricates from the condition, status, and mode of life and being in which he exists" (Foucault, 2005, p. 134). The master's role was to serve as "the mediator in the individual's relationship to his constitution as a subject" (Foucault, 2005, p. 130). Consequently, work with a master was viewed as being necessary in order for the subject to move out of a state of *stultitia* towards salvation as Foucault (2005) explained:

> Inasmuch as *stultitia* is defined by this nonrelationship to the self, the individual cannot escape from it by himself. The constitution of the self as the object capable of orientating the will, of appearing as the will's free, absolute, and permanent object and end, can only be accomplished through the intermediary of someone else. (p. 133)

Within Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman communities, there were multiple types of masters based upon diverse relationships. In addition, there were both formal and informal structures where kinship and friendship relationships played as much of a role as schools and professionals (Foucault, 1984/1986). Aristocratic Romans used masters as

private consultants to their family, with these masters serving as life counselors, political advisers, or mediators in negotiations (Foucault, 1986). Masters within the neo-Pythagorean communities and the Epicurean groups were often more informal. These masters were not expected to instruct the person by sharing theoretical knowledge and know-how or by imparting truths, facts and principles (Foucault, 2005). Instead, these masters functioned as "professors, guides, advisers, and personal confidants and these roles were often interchangeable and could be played by the same person" (Foucault, 1984/1986, p. 52). The participants' shared examples of diverse practices of self with masters. These were performed in the arenas of friendship, domestic violence agencies, school, and even with me, during the interviews. These practices of self revolving around the use of masters are described in the next section, beginning with friendship.

Use of Friends as Masters

When writing about friendship, Foucault (2005) described the Epicurean concepts of friendship because they exalted friendship while acknowledging its usefulness. However, they assert that, "The person who always seeks what is useful and only seeks what is useful is not a friend" (Foucault, 2005, p. 194). The Epicureans conceived friendship as being "just one of the forms given to the care of the self" (Foucault, 2005, p. 193) thus reinforcing that everyone who cares for self must provide themselves with friends. They even established social networks to support this practice of self (Foucault, 2005).

Friendship as a practice of self was evident throughout all of the participants' narratives. The participants talked about the importance of friendships in the past and in the present and several of them had ongoing friendships with women that they had met at

the domestic violence agency. The participants also indicated that it was very difficult to maintain friendships while they were in the abusive relationships because the abusers tried to isolate them from others. These attempts to diminish the participants' support systems strongly increased the abusers' abilities to control the participants' subjectivities because as S.I. stated, one of the major strategies used by abusive men is to get "the victim to believe there's no one else that cares." However, several of the participants still attempted to keep as many friendships as they could, as illustrated by O.M.:

> I had a best friend and she was in Iraq at the time. He [the abuser] ended our friendship but we still loved each other and we communicated through e-mail kind of behind his back so that he wouldn't know because he wanted to break down that support network.

For many of the participants, it was their friends that helped them make the decision to leave and that supported them when they did leave. These friendships reflected the Greco-Roman conception of friendship:

> From time to time these friends will enter the network of social exchanges and utility. This usefulness, which is an occasion for friendship, must not be removed. It must be maintained to the end. But what gives this utility its function within happiness is the trust we place in our friends who are, for us, capable of reciprocity. And it is reciprocity of behavior that makes friendship figure as one of the elements of wisdom and happiness. (Foucault, 2005, p. 195)

Examples of the utility of the participants' friendships, especially regarding serving as a master, include O.M.'s account of her friend who kept urging her to leave and when she finally decided to leave, her friend sent her money to help her. Similarly, A.W. had a

friend who urged her to leave her abuser and she credits this friend with giving her the courage to do so. A.W.'s friend kept reinforcing the harm that exposure to abuse was doing to A.W.'s granddaughter. This friend even offered to help A.W. move to another city if she would leave and she assisted A.W. with doing just that when she was ready to leave.

As stated earlier, the care of the self requires "the other's presence, insertion, and intervention" (Foucault, 2005, p. 134). The participants' friends served as this "other." These friendships served to help participants begin their movement out of a state of stultitia to one in which the they were striving towards the "self as the only object one can will freely, absolutely, and always" (Foucault, 2005, p. 133).

The participants also discussed their current friendships as practices of self. For example, R.C. stated that she talks to her best friend everyday and that she views this as working on herself because she can "vent to her and she can give me her advice and we can go from there and kind of see how things work out from there." O.M. also calls her friends frequently to talk with them about difficult situations in her life. She stated that they listen and give her advice. S.I. described one particular friend who "will give me different points and share with me areas that I could use the work in." For example, this friend has advised S.I. to be more direct in her communication. M.H. talks to her sister daily and views this as a friendship that makes life a little bit easier for her.

Several participants shared that they had friends that they made during their involvement with a domestic violence agency. Having friends who had had similar experiences appeared to be important to them, as S.I. explained:

There were a couple of people from the shelter. They motivate me and encourage

me. It's like when I went to school, there were people I ran into who supported

me and motivated me that way. There are family members who were supportive,

but very few though. But they've never had that experience so they don't know.

Current friendships were also perceived as being very important to the participants during

their attempts to complete their degrees, as A.W. shared:

I always tell them I'm so happy that I have friends like you. Someone to be

honest, to have an ear to hear, give me good advice and support me. To support

what I want 'cause now it's about what I want and not about trying to please

nobody. And I want to go to school, and I want to finish school, and I want to get

my degree, and I want to have a business, and I want to help people like me--

abused, rejected, hurt. I want to help those people.

R.C. stated that she has made some friends at school and she keeps in touch with them.

They support each other during the semester.

Use of Domestic Violence Agency Staff and Groups as Masters

The work with masters, i.e., counselors, caseworkers, and/or group members

within domestic violence agencies, was the most common practice of self performed by

the participants. The participants described these masters in their lives as being very

caring about them and this seemed to be especially important to them, as R.P. summed

up:

If there's something going on with your family, the domestic violence groups are

good for you even if you still in the domestic situation. Find time to get there.

There's people that genuinely care and they—it could become your backbone.

The participants' described their work with these masters as focused on improvement and transformation. Therefore, this practice of self was typically very goal-directed and was perceived as helping them move towards "becoming self-sufficient." M.H. reflected this focus when she described her meetings with her case manager. She meets with her case manager weekly and she also participates in support groups. She stated that she views these practices of self as helping her learn how to productively focus on herself. She stated, "I've learned how to set my goals and do something, how to achieve it and make it happen even though it might take a while. I can do it. " She was proud of how much she had accomplished:

> Yes, one of my goals was to get [son] in karate and for him to focus his time. We got that done. I want to get the boys a savings account. I'm hoping to do that with my tax refund this year. I'm going to put a little money aside for them. But the new car and stuff! I did have to file bankruptcy because my credit was ruined because of him. I ended up having 35 credit cards that I never knew of, like $35,000 so I had to file bankruptcy, so that's done. I accomplished that. I got it done, so now I can start rebuilding my credit.

M.D. has also worked with a domestic violence staff member on developing and implementing goals for improvement. She credits this staff member with helping her realize "what I need to work on about myself." Her current primary goal is "to take a hold of myself and the decisions I make." In order to accomplish this, she needs to "continue working with the people I'm working with and do what I know I need to do."

O.M. shared that she goes to domestic violence groups to "work on some character issues." Her primary goal right now is to decrease what she calls her "co-dependency, " which she defines as taking care of and rescuing other people instead of prioritizing the care of her self. She stated that she realized that she needed to work on herself through participating in both domestic violence and Al anon groups (support groups for family members of substance abusers). She reflected an awareness of the need to move towards salvation when she stated that she needed to learn how to not be what she calls "a people pleaser."

S.I. agreed with O.M. about the benefits of participating in support groups and stated that she received the support and encouragement she needed to go to school. A.W. has an advocate from her domestic violence program who checks in with her twice a week to make sure that she is okay and to see if she has any needs. This advocate even stops by her jobsite. A.W. described this advocate/master as offering her time to talk and to give her advice about how to deal with problems that arise. A.W. described the following reasons why her advocate/master would help her

> Anytime if I feel like I want to kill myself, or I'm going through a crying spell, I'm really tired, I don't want to be by myself, I don't want to be alone, I'm having a hard time, I don't have anyone to watch my daughter when I need some free time, they'll send somebody out to talk with me or give me some wind-down time.

Although, all of the participants found these practices of self to facilitate growth and movement, several of the participants shared that they have been unable to participate in the services due to all of their responsibilities, including school. For example, O.M.

stated that she considers going to domestic violence groups as taking care of herself, but she has been unable to consistently go due to her constantly changing school schedule. As she explained

> I know that when I first started school I was going. I probably haven't been in about 6 months because I know that during my first semester I would go over there to meetings on Wednesdays. And now they have, yeah, my classes are on Mondays and Wednesdays
>
> so that's when, in the summertime, that's when I stopped because I was going on Tuesdays. And now my days for schools are Tuesdays and Thursdays instead of Mondays and Wednesdays and going downtown is just not really working. *But,* I can say that there are moments where if I feel led to go, I get in my car and I go.

Last year, R.P. was able to go to the domestic violence groups every week because it worked out with her school schedule. However, even though she believed that going to the groups on a regular basis was very beneficial, she stated that it has become increasingly more difficult for her to get to groups because of all of her responsibilities, including school. Lack of personal transportation also hindered her ability to get there.

Use of Teachers as Masters

When the participants talked about their experiences at school, they focused on school being a means to an end, i.e., leading to an increased earning potential. School was not portrayed as being transformational for them. However, working with a master at school as a practice of self was also evident in the participants' narratives. Professors and school counselors served as masters for most of the participants. All of these masters were female and were described as being extremely caring. This caring was especially

evident in M.D.'s relationship with her professors. When they were told that it was very dangerous for her to be on campus because of the potential danger to M.D., her professors worked with her on establishing alternative methods for classroom work. The participants did not talk about their practices of self with their professors as being focused on constructing the good student subjectivity. These practices were more related to constructing good mother and independent woman subjectivities. Consequently, these professors were viewed as going above and beyond their jobs, as M.D. described:

One of my professors…we've talked mostly… not about school stuff. At [college], most of the professors come across as it's not just about--they're not just caring about the grades or the evaluations that you give about them, but they care more about you as a person too.

R.P.'s description of her master was somewhat similar to M.D's account. She also spent time with her master in and out of class talking about her life. R.P. recalled one experience where she wrote an essay for class that included some very personal information about her life. After reading it, her teacher began making time outside of class to talk with R.P. on an individual basis and R.P. stated that the two of them have become close. Similarly, S.I. shared that she went to a few of her professors to "pour her heart out." They would give her words of wisdom and they said that they would pray for her.

Both A.W. and R.C.'s masters were the counselors at school. A.W. shared that she found them to be very helpful and she spent time meeting with them even though she didn't initially want to because:

At times I'll be so tired driving out there and falling asleep at the wheel. And no, I

would say I have to get me some rest. At times I would be so tired that I couldn't

even get out of the car. I would need to stop and get me some rest

However, A.W. realized that they would listen to her and would give her good advice.

She stated that they always told her, "If you are no good for yourself, how much good

could you be for the world? You're in a career now that you are not only just going to be

helping yourself, you will be able to help other people. I did want to take that time**."**

R.C. 's account of her work with Melissa, a counselor at her college, reflected the

fact that masters can be based on choice and not formal relationships or role expectations**.**

R.C. acknowledged that she had an academic advisor at school, but she's only met with

her once. She always goes to Melissa, as she described:

So I just go to Melissa and say, "Hey Melissa, what kind of classes do I need to

take or who is a good professor to take for this class?" And she was one of the

ones who wrote a letter for me for the Sunshine Lady [a foundation focused on

education for survivors]. She's a great lady. I love her.

Use of Me as a Master

Starting with the second interview, I began to notice a trend in the conversations

that I was having with the participants. During each of the interviews, the participants

asked me for advice. In addition, at different times during the interviews, I felt myself

compelled to comfort the participants when they blamed themselves for the abusive

relationship and not leaving sooner. While reflecting on these dynamics, I realized that

the participants were performing practices of self with me as a master! I wasn't sure that I

liked this, but, I acknowledged what the ancient Greco-Roman wrote about the use of a

master: "When, in the practice of the care of the self, one appealed to another person in whom one recognized an aptitude for guidance and counseling, one was exercising a right" (Foucault, 1984/1986, p. 53) and the person has to consider it a duty to assist. I also reminded myself about feminist interviewing being conversational and reciprocal. In addition, although I wouldn't call my study emancipatory research, I think that my study has similarities to what Lather (1991) described when she proposed the goal of this type of research being "to encourage self-reflection and deeper understanding on the part of researched at least as much as it is to generate empirically grounded theoretical knowledge" (p. 60).

Most of the participants asked me for opinions about domestic violence and how I viewed women who had been abused. To answer this, I shared personal experiences and research-based information. A lot of the participants' questions involved both technical issues, like parenting, and reassurance that the person was a good mother and person. For example, M.H asked me for advice about what to tell her 3 year-old-son about his father who is in prison because he burned him with a cigarette. She shared that her son had started asking her and his older brother questions like, "You have a daddy, where is my daddy?" and "Why don't I see my daddy?" I found myself putting on my occupational therapist persona and teaching her about the cognitive level of 3-year olds. I then provided coaching regarding what was appropriate to share and what wording might work best during her discussion with him. In addition, I found myself working hard to reinforce that she wasn't a horrible mother because this happened and that people who haven't been through abusive situations probably do not understand the dynamics.

O.M. also asked me questions related to parenting. She shared that her 4 year-old-son told her that when he visits with his father, his father often yells at him and scares him. I asked O.M. whether she had worked with her son on developing a safety plan, which is a pre-determined route used to get away if something bad happens. When she stated that she hadn't done this and that she wasn't sure how to do this with a 4 year-old, I shared strategies with her that were developmentally appropriate for her son while making sure to reassure him.

Several participants shared negative perceptions about themselves with me. I have encountered this continuously during my work with my clients at the shelter. Through the years, I have developed several effective responses to use with my clients to help them expand their thinking. Consequently, I felt ethically compelled to not just let these feelings go by without offering some productive responses. The interview with A.W. is a good example of this dynamic. During the interview, she made comments about blaming herself for getting into the abusive relationship and then not leaving it sooner. When she shared about being sexually abused as a child, I shared information with her about the correlation between sexual abuse and domestic violence. I also shared information about how the issue of not being believed about the sexual abuse affected her relationships. My purpose was to reinforce that it wasn't her fault. A.W. quickly took this information and applied it. I told her:

> Nobody believed you. That's another reason women doubt themselves because you tell the truth and no one believes you. And they tell you your feelings or thoughts are not valid. You get that message that whatever you say, it doesn't matter. You got that message loud and clear, it sounds like.

A.W. stated after I said this, "I was just a child myself… I was just a kid." I then said, "Right. You had to grow up fast." A.W. immediately turned towards a more positive focus with her next statement, "Yes and I grew up fast but I grew up smart 'cause I got out. I escaped."

R.C. expressed concerns about her ability to meet all of her challenges. She stated during the interview

> Sometimes I wonder if I'm strong enough to make it. It's like my uncle says all the time, he says you're tough, you're strong, you just don't see it. I don't guess I do and I've got people telling me you're strong. I guess I don't see it. I just see myself as going through my daily activities. Doing what I'm needing to do.

I then asked R.C. how she defined being strong. She described this as:

> I guess I can give you an example. Like my mom, she had breast cancer for 7 years and she never complained. She went for radiation, went for chemotherapy, she lost her hair. Yes, she cried, she never complained-- she was just to me-- a pillar of strength. I mean I know she had her moments. I'm sure she felt like everything was hopeless. And that's the way I feel some days. Like everything is hopeless. He's [her abuser] never going to go away. He's never going to let me go. It doesn't matter what I do, he's not going to let me go because we have those 2 little ties-- those 2 little boys.

I followed up with sharing some alternative perspectives of strength and she appeared to be open to considering these.

Current Constituted Subjectivities

There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to.

Foucault, 1991, p. 331

Introduction

As you will recall, Foucault defined practices of self or care of self as "those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria" (Foucault, 1985, pp. 10-11). Therefore, practices of self are involved in the day-to-day activities that people perform and the practices that they do in order to change and transform themselves. Thus, care of the self or practices of self constitute subjectivity (Foucault, 1985). In Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman cultures, care of the self involved a whole set of occupations or practices of self, including meditation, listening, reading, writing, speaking, talking with friends, and working with a guide or life counselor who was often referred to as a master (Foucault, 1986). It also required that time be set aside within a person's day in order to perform the practices of self focused on the cultivation of self.

It is important to be aware that subjectivities are constituted within discourse, that is, "practices that systematically form the objects, [subjectivity] of which they speak" (Foucault, 1969/1972), while the participants manipulated discourse at the same time

(Burr, 2000). Therefore, the participants' subjectivities reflected adoption of rules of conduct based on the prescriptive codes within their lives. The moral codes related to protecting and prioritizing their children weighed heavily within the women's lives.

Practices of self performed by the participants within their day-to-day lives led to the construction of good mother, independent woman, and good student subjectivities, with the good mother subjectivity being the most prevalent of the three. The independent woman subjectivity was considered to be very important because it meant that the participants were able to keep themselves and their children safe. Other subjectivities, i.e., responsible worker, caring friend, and survivor of domestic violence were also constructed through daily practices of self, but these played supportive roles to the three primary subjectivities. These priorities were summed up well by A.W. when she shared what's most important to her: "taking care of her, my granddaughter…and my school and my job… in that order." O.M. concurred A.M.'s sequence when she talked about what was most important to her: "Everything else is important to work on-- dealing with school and obviously maintaining an income with the job, but when it's all said and done, that's the most important thing to me—my son." The three most prevalent subjectivities are discussed in the next section. The names of the subjectivities are based on how the participants addressed these parts of their lives. Therefore, as the reader will note, I do not use cute or fancy names for these subjectivities.

Good Mother

Almost all of the participants stated that they were *good mothers*. Therefore, I am cautiously using *good mother*, as a label for this subjectivity, with the assertion that I do

not want it to be perceived as a descriptive identity category that totalizes or summarizes my participants. My hope is that it will become a site of openness and resignification (St. Pierre, 2000c).

The participants' primary reason for calling themselves good mothers was the fact that they are keeping their children out of abusive environments. Consequently, their descriptions of being good mothers reflected an eye on the past as well as their view of the present. For example, R.C. shared, "I know I'm a good mom. My kids are surviving now and I've been told that I've done a good job over the past 2 years." When asked for specific examples, R.C. stated, "I learned to enforce rules and they actually follow them." She stated that this was of great value to her because her abuser did not allow her to discipline her children. O.W. also stated that she's a good mother and explained her perspective as, "I mean, he's [her son] been through so much and now he's in a routine. He knows where home is. He told me he didn't want to go back to his dad."

Taking up the good mother subject position required more than the participants calling themselves good mothers. It required the construction of this subjectivity through practices of self performed within the participants' daily routines. Although a lot of us would take for granted performing practices of self to construct the good mother subjectivity, this was not the case for the participants. Being able to perform these practices on a regular basis was a practice of freedom for the participants because they were unable to construct this subjectivity in the past.

The participants' construction of the good mother subjectivity was reflected in their daily scheduled activities. Despite multiple responsibilities, the participants'

schedules were filled with activities that revolved around their children's needs. M.H.'s description of a "typical" day is a good example. She and her 3 year-old and 8 year-old sons are presently living in an apartment in her domestic violence agency's transitional living complex where she pays very little for rent since it is considered to be Section 8 housing. She works as a shoe department manager in a discount store six days a week and even with the low cost of rent, she has difficulty making ends meet. She was going to school two nights a week and all day on Saturdays. She tried taking an online course, but as she explained, "it was kind of rough because it was hard getting on the computer and watching the kids and doing a class at the same time." Her oldest son has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and his behavior can sometimes make it more difficult for her to concentrate on schoolwork. Physical activity seems to help him, so she prioritizes getting him to these types of activities. The following is the schedule of activities that she shared:

> I get up at 6 and I have to get their breakfast made, get [eldest son] up by 6:30 and he has to be at school by 7:30. Then I come back and get [youngest son] and myself ready to go to work and then I take [younger son] to daycare and then I have to be at work. It's a long day. I usually work 10-4, then I get off, I have to pick both kids up and then we're probably home around 5:00. [Eldest son] has to be at karate by 6:00 at least 3 times a week-- sometimes more, it depends on if he has good behavior in school. Then we come home, homework, dinner, baths, and do it all again the next day.

Working on Saturdays makes it even more difficult for M.H. to fit everything into her days. So, she has been trying to find another job that doesn't require her to work

during the weekends. She decided to take time off from school this past quarter because she felt extremely stressed and like she couldn't handle everything.

S.I. 's description of a weekend day also reflected her construction of the good mother subjectivity. She spoke very enthusiastically about her children and shared, "I love being a mother. There's no greater feeling than being a mom." Despite the fact that she has three of her four children living with her, she runs a small daycare center in her home and she's completing her bachelor's degree in business in a full-time, online program. She described her weekends as follows:

The weekends are a lot different [than during the week] because the kids are home so I have to take a lot into consideration. I have to plan activities for them if I'm not too bogged down with homework and things like that. But, for the most part, they're home, [so] we may go out and just go to Burger King, whatever. Just something for the kids is really what the weekend is about.

A.W. is raising her granddaughter while working 11:00-5:00 four days during the week and one day on the weekend at a large grocery store and she is going to school 2-4 nights a week. Somehow, she has figured out how to juggle everything and she constructs her good mother subjectivity based on meeting her granddaughter's needs. She described her granddaughter's schedule as follows:

She's [her granddaughter] in Pre-K and the bus picks her up. She's in Pre-K until 2:30. From there, the day care bus picks her up and keeps her until 4. My neighbor and my friend take care of her on Saturday. I make dinner before I leave. I make dinner for her and for whoever watches her. Like if she goes to my friend's house, I take dinner to their house. I make sure whoever watches her,

eats. And then she has her pajamas and stuff out. At 6:15, I go [to school] in the evening. She'll be asleep by the time I get out of school because there are days I have to work and go to school. Then I just bring her home. Then, the next day, the routine starts over again-- over and over again.

The construction and prioritization of the good mother subjectivity was also evident in the decisions that the participants made about their practices of self. When perceived to be necessary, the participants dropped one or more subjectivities in order to maintain the good mother subject position. For example, several of them took time off from school in order to focus on their children, as is exemplified in A.W. 's account of when she will be done with school:

I would have been finished in October of this year but I had to take 3 months to get my granddaughter in school, get her situated and placed in here. I had to take some time off because I wasn't feeling too well. I had to get some rest. So for 3 months, the school understood. They told me to go ahead and take that time off.

Similarly, R.C. stopped the practices of self that produced her good student subjectivity in order to prioritize the needs of her 7 children, as she demonstrated when she was shared the following about her school program:

It's a 9 to 10 month program but I should have been finished in March but actually I took a LOA [Leave of Absence] during these Christmas holidays because I didn't want to be trying to find out how am I gonna do this and do this for my kids. Trying to do work and trying to be [there for my kids is] stressful. So I just took a 6 week LOA and go back for sure in January.

Although the participants prioritized the good mother subjectivity, it was not without its problems. Both A.W. and R.C. shared that they have neglected their health while using their money and resources for their children's needs. For example, A.W. always assures that there is food available for her granddaughter and her babysitters, but not for herself. As she shared, "Sometimes I eat but I've lost a lot of weight. I'm gaining it back now. Sometimes I have enough time for a quick snack--a bite here and there." R.C. has uncontrolled high blood pressure and has delayed dealing with this. A big contributor to this is her stressful lifestyle as she explained:

> I overdo and overextend myself in the process. I don't have very good sleep habits. I go to bed too late. It's hard for me to get tired. It's hard for me to wind down at night. I have too much going on in my mind. Sometimes I feel like I'm a nervous wreck. I mean, sometimes I have panic attacks. I think, how am I going to make this work, how am I going to pay my bills, you know, how am I going to do this with the kids, how am I ever going to get on my own if I can't pay these simple bills that I have?

R.C. acknowledged that she needs medication for her high blood pressure and probably for her anxiety. However, she stated that she wasn't committed to pursuing this because she didn't know how she would be able to afford the medications.

Independent Woman

The participants revealed an eye on the past, an acknowledgement of how far they have come, and the joy of being able to constitute their own subjectivities. All of the participants made comments about how wonderful it was to be able to live free from

abuse and to be able to do what they wanted to do. They emphasized that they don't take their freedom and independence for granted. R.P. summarized these beliefs well when she shared her definition of taking care of herself as, "being free and being me."

Like the good mother subject position, the independent woman subject position was constituted in daily practices, as A.W. exemplified

> I'm making my own schedule. I'm on my own time doing what I want to do. And going to school. I'm making my own money. I'm paying my own bills. And I'm thinking for myself. I'm making my own choices.

S.I. shared that despite the fact that it's often difficult to get everything done, she values being able to perform daily activities of her choosing as she described about a "typical" day:

> For the most part, I'm payin' the bills, or, I'm online… you know, chattin', whatever. But generally my day starts out waking the kids up, getting them on the bus. Then, that is my time. I'm writing letters, paying bills. I'm off running errands, grocery shopping… I hate it with a passion. The laundry. Then all that being done, it's time to come in. So, we're doing homework, have a snack, may watch a little T.V., reading,' and going off to bed. Then it repeats. It just repeats itself.

M.H. summed up the differences between how she feels now as compared to the past. She stated, "I can handle things, I'm stronger. Like before I stayed with him because I don't want to be a single mom again. Even though I made it worse." On the other hand, being independent is difficult, especially with children and the need for assistance

with babysitting. There are costs to this independence as M.H. shared about what she wishes she was able to do:

> be able to survive without her [her mother] helping me." I will be able to set those limitations but I've got to get to the point when I don't need babysitting help, or I'm in the hole and need the money for something. She can help me. It's hard to let her help me because I know when she does help me I have to hear about it for a long time, so it' s rough. I'll never do enough to make my mom happy. That's just basically it.

Good Student

All of the participants described themselves as good students. This seemed to be an accurate self-appraisal since their daily practices of self performed led most of them to have Grade Point Averages (GPA) of around 3.6/4.0. The participants also shared very positive perceptions of their practices of self that they performed to construct the good student subjectivity. Several of them described themselves as hard workers. R.C. shared that she is very diligent about studying. S.I. stated that she is very determined, thorough and has a hunger for knowledge. She believes that her teachers would agree with her description. A.W. stated that her teachers would probably describe her as being outgoing and smart and debative [sic]. What she meant by "debative" was that she sometimes challenges them about the program.

Most of the participants found ways to go to school and to perform their schoolwork within their busy schedules. When they didn't think that this was possible, they took leaves of absence, as was discussed earlier. They did acknowledge that it was

difficult to go to school with their other responsibilities, but they knew that they needed to do so in order to be able to independently support their families. R.C. shared what keeps her going:

> Going to school will give you the confidence. Once you see that first "B" or that first "A" pop up your grades, it's worth it. It's worth every minute, every second you spend slaving over those books reading and studying. It's worth every minute. I wouldn't change a thing. I definitely wouldn't change a thing.

The participants viewed their good student subjectivity as a role model for their children. S.I. shared what her going to school means to herself and her children:

> They [her children] are excited. They love it. [I want it] to inspire them, to encourage them, to show them there's nothing you cannot do at whatever age in life. It motivates me that they get excited and it kind of excites me. So, it's great. It's wonderful.

The participants' positive perceptions of the good student subjectivity came through loud and clear when they shared the advice that they would give to another survivor who is considering going to school. A.W. and S.I. shared insights that are good examples of these perceptions. A.W. stated, "I would tell her to go for her dreams. Whatever she choose to do… do it. 'Cause she can do it 'cause she is a survivor." S.I. stated

> I would actually encourage her to go… and don't look back. My motto in school is failin' is not an option. Givin' up is not an option. This task has to be completed. Hopefully, you're testin' the water. Make sure you can swim.

Future Subjectivities

When the participants were asked how they think they would like to be viewed in the future, they indicated that they would want a continuation of their present subjectivities. For example, R.C. stated that she would want to be seen as being "smart and successful and nurturing my children." She also stated that in her perspective, success would be "having a job that you love and enjoy doing." R.P. stated that she wants to construct herself as an "independent, strong, black woman."

All of the participants indicated that they wanted to construct helper subjectivities. As O.M. shared about her dream:

I love to teach people and help build their confidence and just a small compliment that they might ever hear in their life. For me to give them that compliment, it means the world to them. And it means the world to me.

A.W. shared specifics about how she would like to construct her helper subjectivity

I want to be my own boss and I want to open up a shelter. I want to give back. I really do. I want to give back. Do something positive. Talking to people. Hearing their story. Being a counselor for them. Charm them. Tell them my story. Making them believe in themselves. I can do it that way.

S.I. stated that she also wants to open a shelter. She described what is important to her, as, "I'm very big on helping people, one way or another. If I can give them my last dime-- that's part of who I am." She wants her shelter to focus on children where she can accomplish the following: "Well I wanna grab the kids, and bring'em in, feed'em, clothe'em, offer them moral support, lift them up, love on them… let'em know

somebody cares. And I'm listenin'." She wants to be viewed "as someone who genuinely cares about people--positive leader [and] positive motivator."

M.D. also wants to construct a helper subjectivity, specifically related to children. When asked what type of population she would like to work with, she stated

If I *had* to pick something right now, I would say that it would be mostly working with kids with very similar situations. Because I know that my biggest thing is in the beginning *not* realizing that there were other people who had been in similar situations and who were trying to do what I was trying to do.

When asked to be more specific, she stated that she wants to work with people who don't have family support and she shared the following description of her potential population:

Being a teen girl and having a child, going to school, working, basically trying to do everything by their selves. They may have or may not have been in an abusive situation the recent situation in the past. But just…not really knowing what they're doing, but knowing that they have to do something.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The focus of this chapter was the examination of the subjectivities that my participants constructed through their practices of self. I began with a discussion about the moral codes or prescriptive elements that were in play within my participants' lives and that affect the formation of their subjectivities. I described two moral codes that were specific to the participants: *mothers protect their children and children are the priority* and I shared examples of the influences that these codes have had on the participants' lives. I then turned to the main focus of this study, ethics, that is, the self's relationship with self, and described the participants' progression from the inability to perform care of

the self to their freedom to construct their own subjectivities. I followed this with an overview of the three subjectivities that the participants were constructing through their daily activities, *good mother, independent woman and good student*. I then provided a synopsis of the practices of self that the participants are performing in order to improve and transform themselves. I completed the chapter with a summation of the future subjectivities that the participants would like to construct, with the *helper* subjectivity being the most prevalent.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Introduction

And, in constituting oneself both as a subject of true knowledge and as a subject of right action, one situates oneself within or takes as the correlate of oneself, a world that is perceived, recognized, and practiced as a test.

Foucault, 2005, p. 486

I initiated this study because of my interests in women's resiliency, specifically related to women who had experienced domestic violence. I wanted to learn more about survival; i.e., how women who have been through a situation where they were completely controlled by another are able to successfully transform themselves. I was particularly interested in looking at this related to going to school because of my part-time work with survivors, my role as a professor at a women's college, and my Ph.D. in the School of Education. I specifically wondered what survivors do to move themselves from total subjection by their abusers to constituting their own subjectivities. Based on using a poststructural feminist theoretical perspective informed by Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self, I was also curious about the practices of self that survivors perform to construct their subjectivities and based on these, what subjectivities they do construct.

In this chapter, I summar3ze my research process and the findings related to the purpose of my study and the research questions. I also discuss possible Implications based on these findings.

Summary of the Research Study

This was an interview-based study of seven female survivors of domestic violence who were pursuing postsecondary education. A homogeneous, purposeful sampling strategy was used to select similar cases that met the inclusion criteria (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The inclusion criteria consisted of the following parameters: (a) speaks and understand English; (b) has experienced domestic violence in the past; (c) is presently not in an abusive relationship; has been out of the relationship for at least 6 months; (d) is a single mother with children living at home; (e) is considered to have a low-income. Participants were recruited through domestic violence agencies surrounding a large urban city in the Southeast. Seven participants volunteered and data collection was performed through interviewing, field notes, and reflective journaling. One interview was completed per participant and a conversational interview style was used. All of the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Data analysis was performed using St. Pierre's (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) poststructural data analysis method that she called *nomadic inquiry* that allowed me to expand my thinking processes by performing what St. Pierre (2000b) describes as *rhizomatic* thinking. A rhizome is something that multiplies and has no set roots or foundations. Consequently, this type of thinking allowed me to push the boundaries of traditional data analysis so as to think in ways I could not have predicted. Data related to the purpose and research questions were matched with theoretical concepts within Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self. Continuous writing facilitated the analysis and interpretation.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this interview-based study informed by poststructural feminism and   Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self, was to explore the subjectivities that low-income survivors of domestic violence construct while pursuing postsecondary education. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What processes do the survivors go through to become available to a transformation of their subjectivities?

2. What practices of self do the survivors perform to construct their subjectivities?

3. What subjectivities do the survivors construct within the discourses and cultural practices that are available to them?

In the following section, I discuss the results specific to each of the research questions.

How the Results Address the Purpose of the Study

Research Question #1: What processes did the survivors go through to become available to the transformation of their subjectivities?

Ancient Hellenistic and Roman concepts assisted me with putting language to what the participants shared about their transitions from having their subjectivities completely controlled by their abusers to their construction of their subjectivities. While in the abusive relationships, the participants were in what was called a state of *stultitia,* where there was a non-relationship with self. The survivors were open to representations from outside and they were unable to will freely (Foucault, 2005).

The opposite of stultitia is *salvation,* that is, "the vigilant, continuous, and completed form of the relationship to self closed in on itself" (Foucault, 2005, pp. 184-185). When salvation is reached, the participants would not be open to subjection from others. Unlike today's religious definitions of salvation, to the ancient Greeks and Romans, "saving yourself" meant, "escaping domination or enslavement; escaping a constraint that threatens you and being restored to your rights, finding your freedom and independence again. (p. 184).

Starting with their decisions to leave, the survivors demonstrated *conversion* to self, which is defined as the actions of turning around towards self while turning away from everything that surrounds the self so that the self is no longer enslaved, dependent, and constrained (Foucault, 2005). This step involved *self-subjectivation* whose purpose is to move from what can't be controlled to what could be controlled. This seems to mirror St. Pierre's (2004) thoughts about constituting oneself: "The freedom of the subject, then, lies in these propitious junctures of language and practice that enable new mappings for crossing over limits we once thought foundational and necessary" (p. 329). During this progression, the participants struggled with keeping the focus on themselves, mostly because of their prioritization of their children. However, this focus on their children was the major reason why the participants left the abusive relationships. This is in line with other studies of survivors that have indicated that during the early period after leaving, most women do prioritize their children and others (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999). Consequently, during this time period, they continue to devote themselves to the care of

others while oftentimes not taking care of themselves (Giles & Curreen, 2007). However, this is a concern because as the Neo-Platonists believed (and we promote today), people have to take care of themselves in order to take care of others (Foucault, 2005).

The survivors found ways to strengthen themselves so that they would continue their own constitution of their subjectivities and wouldn't go back to abusive relationships. The Greeks called these techniques, *paraskeue,* which they defined paraskeue as, "the preparation of the subject and the soul so that they will be properly, necessarily, and sufficiently armed for whatever circumstance of life may arise" (Foucault, 2005, p. 240). They also found support from friends, staff and other survivors at domestic violence centers and teachers at school.

Research Question #2: What practices of self do the survivors perform to construct their subjectivities?

Practices of self performed by the participants within their day-to-day lives led to the construction of good mother, independent woman, and good student subjectivities, with the good mother subjectivity being the most prevalent of the three. Other subjectivities, i.e., responsible worker, caring friend, and survivor of domestic violence were also constructed through daily practices of self, but these played supportive roles to the three primary subjectivities. The participants expressed that they experienced stress while trying to juggle all of their practices of self during their daily schedules. These findings were similar to other studies of low-income women who were in school (e.g., Butler & Deprez, 2002; IWPR, 2006) who were constantly juggling family, work, and school responsibilities without a significant other to assist them with their obligations. In addition, several of the participants took time off from school when they felt they had too

many obligations, especially if these involved their children. However, unlike other studies with similar populations, so far, they haven't withdrawn from school due to child-care, transportation, and work responsibilities (Adair, 2003; Sharp, 2004).

Somehow, despite their low-incomes and their many responsibilities, the participants found time to perform several practices of self that were focused on change and transformation of their subjectivities. Not wor/ing outside of the home seemed to make it easier for some survivors to perform more practices of self. For example, R.C. was able to blog on MySpace. A few of them performed reading and writing practices of self that was focused on transformation. The participants identified friendships, domestic violence agencies, and schools as powerful sites for performing practices of self that led to construction of new subjectivities.

The predominant practice of self that the participants practiced to construct, maintain and transform their subjectivities was the use of *masters*. Masters today seem to have very similar roles that they did during the ancient Greeks and Roman time periods. Masters performed, "a certain action carried out on the individual to whom one offers a hand and whom one extricates from the condition, status, and mode of life and being in which he exists" (Foucault, 2005, p. 134). The participants used masters in multiple areas of their lives, including friendships, domestic violence agencies, school, and with me during the interview. As with the Greco-Roman masters in the past, these masters served as supporters, counselors, advisors, confidants, and/or coaches.

Friends who served as masters for the participants were very influential while the participants were in the abusive relationships. They advised the participants to leave these relationships and supported them when they did leave. As the participants began their

lives away from abuse, friends assisted them with moving out of a state of stultitia. Several of the participants had friends from the domestic violence agency and these continued to be influential within their lives.

The participants viewed staff members at domestic violence agencies as being very valuable in terms of helping them change and grow. They performed practices of self around using these staff members as masters when they needed advice, were having a hard time, or needed someone to keep them focused on their goals. They also viewed domestic violence support groups as very helpful, but it was difficult for some of them to get to the groups because of all of their other responsibilities.

Surprisingly, the participants didn't view going to school as a practice of self leading to transformation. Other studies of low-income women engaged in postsecondary education indicated that most of the women in their samples reported that their educational experience had changed both theirs and their family members' lives and that these changes were positive and transformational (Adair, 2003; Butler & Deprez, 2002; Haleman, 2004; Kates, 1991; IWPR, 2006; Mitchell, 2003; Scarbrough, 1997). Instead, as other studies have indicated, they viewed school as leading to increased opportunities for better jobs, higher pay, more stable employment, and increased community involvement (Butler & Deprez, 2002; Newman, 2007). In other words, they perceived it as being a means to an end. Several of the participants indicated that they did view school as helping them be able to advocate for others in the future when they pursue the helper subjectivity (IWPR, 2006; Scarbrough, 1997).

On the other hand, the participants did perform practices of self at school with their teachers where they used them as masters. These practices involved talking with

teachers and counselors about their lives, not about their education. These teachers gave advice and supported them. They viewed these practices as being transformational.

The survivors did not portray feeling misunderstood, excluded, and unsupported, in their academic environments, as low-income women in other studies have indicated (Adair, 2003; Haleman, 2004). However, in general, as with other studies, several expressed having to work on pushing aside the negative labels from their abusers while going to school (Brush, 2003; Haleman, 2004; Harris, A., 2003; Miewald, 2003; Scarbrough, 1997). The survivors expressed that they did feel comfortable talking about their pasts with teachers and counselors at school. They reported feeling supported, something that the women in other studies didn't report (Adair, 2003; Scarbrough, 1997).

Research Question #3: What subjectivities do the survivors construct within the discourses and cultural practices that are available to them?

In order to address this research question, it was necessary for me to first consider the moral codes that were influential within the participants' lives. While the common moral codes related to gender, class, educational level, and race were present in my participants' lives, there were also specific moral codes related to mothering that were evident. These codes strongly affected the survivors' practices of self and therefore, their subjectivities. The *protective mother code* was evident in the participants' descriptions of leaving the abusive relationships and continued to influence how they currently led their lives. The *children are the priority code* was reflected in the participants' daily activities. Their schedules and their resources revolved around their children and sometimes this was to the detriment of themselves.

The most frequent subjectivities that the survivors constructed were good mother, good student, and independent woman. The participants' construction of the good mother subjectivity was reflected in their daily scheduled activities. Their schedules revolved around their children. The construction and prioritization of the good mother subjectivity was also evident in the decisions that the participants made about their practices of self. When perceived to be necessary, the participants dropped one or more subjectivities in order to maintain the good mother subject position. For example, several of them took time off from school in order to focus on their children.

Each of the participants made comments about how wonderful it was to be an independent woman who is able to live free from abuse and is able to do what she wants. They also stated that they didn't take for granted being able to be independent. Their descriptions appeared to be similar to Wuest and Merritt-Gray's (2001) description of the women in their study who demonstrated what they called the, "Putting it in its rightful place" stage beyond survival. Similar to the survivors in my study, the women in their study stated that they didn't want the abuse to affect their lives anymore.

All of the participants stated that they were good students. This appeared to be accurate because their grade point averages were high. School was fit in around their children's activities. If they felt like going to school got in the way of their parenting, they took leaves of absence from school. Unlike Wagner and Magnusson's (2005) study of the impact of experiencing violence on learning in higher education, the participants didn't seem to be struggling with negotiating the demands of academia. I believe their relationships with their teachers mitigated this issue.

Implications

In the following discussion I address implications for different stakeholders, including the survivors, service providers, educational settings, public agencies, and the field of occupational therapy.

Survivors and their Service Providers

Inevitably, in every group that I have led at the shelter, newcomers have asked the more seasoned women about the strategies that they used to get out of the abusive relationships and to stay away. As I think anyone would in their situation, they seem to want a magic answer. Indeed, there have been many times when I wished that I had a magic wand.

When women have asked me these questions, I've always told them that studies have indicated that if they keep being involved in the domestic violence groups and with their family advocates for at least a year, then they have a better chance of not going back to the abusive relationship. The findings from my study seem to support staying involved with the domestic violence organization because the staff members may be perceived as masters who are there to support the survivors and to give them advice. However, the service providers need to be aware of some factors about their influence. If a survivor is at the stage of just coming out of *stultitia* and she is therefore is very open to outside influences, the staff member needs to be careful that the survivor doesn't take on the staff member's perceptions about her. In addition, if the survivor is going to school, I would encourage her to develop relationships with her teachers.

I typically tell my clients that they need to work on themselves in order to be able to care properly about others, including their children. This is the perspective based on care of the self as follows

> The person who takes care of himself properly- that is to say, the person who has in fact analyzed what things depend on him and what things do not depend on him- when he has taken care of himself so that when something appears in his representations he knows what he should and should not do, he will at the same time know how to fulfill his duties as part of the human community. (Foucault, 2005, p. 197)

In addition to reinforcing this principle, I believe that the survivors could benefit from hearing that in order to reach the point where they have a full relationship with themselves, they need to perform conversion, that is, turning towards the self while not focusing on external forces, including the abuser.

On the other hand, based on the findings of this study, I think that it would be beneficial for survivors to know that keeping their focus on their children may help them stand firm as the abuser continues to try to control them, even when their children tell them that they hate them for taking them away from their father, and as they face other challenges. In addition, I would reinforce the fact that having close friends can be the key to having the emotional and financial resources to leave. This is especially a concern because a 2004 study by Levendosky et al. compared social supports of a group of pregnant battered women with pregnant nonbattered women and found a statistically significant difference between the two groups, with the battered women having much less support.

Educational Settings

Practices of self through the use of teachers as masters seemed to be very beneficial to the participants in this study. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of the possibilities that their female students have experienced violence. As Wagner and Mqgnusson (2005) stated

Universities could help by acknowledging the fact that women are victimized at an alarming rate, thereby normalizing the experiences of these women. It is critical to remember that experiences of violence cross all boundaries and affect women of all classes, races, and other social locations. A myriad of structural supports could be established within university communities, for the benefit of both students and faculty. (p. 459)

As you recall, the practices of self that pertained to the use of the teachers as masters did not have to do with actual academic work. Participants reported talking with their professors about life in general and several of them confided to their teachers that they had been abused. Therefore, it may be that in order to assist students, it would be beneficial to have some teachers who feel comfortable with having this type of relationship with students. In addition, if they haven't done so already, colleges and schools need to provide ongoing training sessions for the faculty and staff about domestic violence and the appropriate strategies for them to use if a student approaches them.

As stated earlier, the participants prioritized their children and they even took time off from school when they felt they were unable to meet their children's needs. Consequently, if we want survivors to complete their degrees, academic institutions need to continue to provide flexible methods for these types of students.

Public Agencies/Policies

Finding the time to perform practices of self was very difficult for my participants. Yet, these practices of self are needed in order to maintain and transform their subjectivities, including the independent woman and the good student subjectivities. The continuous construction of these subjectivities by low-income survivors decreases their financial burden on society. Yet, none of the survivors were receiving public financial assistance because of welfare reform. In addition, only one of the participants was receiving financial assistance for childcare and Vocational Rehab was helping only one other participant.

Studies have indicated that women without postsecondary degrees need to stay on welfare longer than recipients with more work experience (Taylor & Barusch, 2004). In addition, labor market data indicate that achieving higher levels of education dramatically reduces the likelihood that women will be among the working poor (U.S. Department of Labor, 2006). Therefore, if we want to decrease the number of women who are in abusive relationships and who are considered to be low-income, then, survivors need more financial support. This means that the criteria for receiving TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) funds and the amount of financial assistance need to be adjusted. In addition, the policy where postsecondary education is an allowable work activity needs to be reinstated (Center for Women Policy Studies, 2002). These benefits need to be tied to assistance with childcare expenses and expansion of childcare options so that women can go to school at night and on the weekends and can have support when they need to study or complete school assignments.

Occupational Therapy

The findings from this study can have multiple implications for the field of occupational therapy. The practices of self or daily occupations that the participants performed can add to the literature about meaningful occupations to consider when working with survivor populations. The study can also serve to reinforce the importance of considering the influences that contextual issues, like moral codes, can have on occupational performance. Furthermore, the participants' predominant use of masters as practices of self and the Greek and Roman concept of stultitia to salvation in terms of relationship with self could be used to add to the field's continuous dialogs about what constitutes independence versus dependence.

While these implications are indeed important, time and space prohibit me from addressing all of these factors. Hopefully, they will be addressed in future research. I have chosen to elaborate on two other implications that I believe are the most important to the profession based on the findings from my study and the use of a poststructural theoretical perspective: the concepts of identity and subjectivity and the therapeutic use of self. I begin the discussion with identity and subjectivity.

Identity and subjectivity. Occupational therapy's philosophical roots are based in the moral treatment approach that was guided by liberal humanistic philosophy (Finlay, 2001; Schwartz, 2003; Weinstock-Zlotnick & Hinojosa, 2004). Occupational therapists define humanism as "a philosophic stance focusing on concern with human beings and their values, capacities, and achievements" (Spear & Crepeau, 2003, p. 1030). Therefore, throughout its 92-year history, the valuing of the individual has remained a constant focus within the occupational therapy field (Clark, 1997). Occupational therapists view

individuals as "active, capable, free, self-directed, integrated, purposeful, and an agent who is the author of health-influencing activity" (Yerxa, 1992, p. 79). This perception of the individual is reflected by the AOTA's Core Values and Attitudes of Occupational Therapy Practice (1993), especially the description of the core concept of *dignity*:

> Dignity emphasizes the importance of valuing the inherent worth and uniqueness of each person. This value is demonstrated by an attitude of empathy and respect for self and others. We believe that each individual is a unique combination of biologic endowment, sociocultural heritage, and life experiences. We view human beings holistically, respecting the unique interaction of the mind, body, and physical and social environment. (p. 1006)

Some occupational therapy practitioners have expanded these definitions and assert "people's occupations are central to their identity and that they can construct themselves through their occupations" (Larson, Wood, & Clark, 2003, p. 23) and that "self-esteem and a sense of personhood are linked to the ability to engage in occupations (Larson, Wood, & Clark, p. 29). Another view is that an individual's history of participation in occupations generates the "composite sense of who one is and who one wishes to become as an occupational being" (Crepeau, Cohn, & Schell, 2009, p. 1163). Thus, occupations are viewed as creating and maintaining an identity (Christiansen, 1999).

Although these practitioners acknowledge that there is a linkage between occupation and identity, the individual is still viewed from a humanistic viewpoint as an "understandable self" whose identity can be defined and categorized (Christiansen, 1999). As the findings from my study indicate, an alternate view of identity outside of the

humanistic perspective can add to the occupational therapy literature about identity and occupation and can reflect contemporary concepts of contextual issues that affect occupational performance.

Poststructuralists question the humanistic belief that individuals can be defined and perceived as being "conscious, stable, unified, rational, coherent, knowing, autonomous, and ahistoric" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 500). Poststructuralists believe that individuals are subjects in process and that they exist in relationships in which they take up subject positions (St. Pierre, 2000). They question the concept of autonomy because they believe that subjects are produced in relationships, and therefore, cannot be autonomous. Subjects are viewed as not being born with agency or power and as not being able to be essentialized, defined, or categorized because there is no stable, coherent, self (St. Pierre, 2000). They challenge the concept of categorization because categories are viewed as a subjection of difference or the "Other" by functioning to "suppress the anarchy of difference, divide differences into zones, delimit their rights, and prescribe their task of specification" (Scheurich, 1995, p.251). This is typically exemplified by the viewing a person as defined by some term, for example, mad or sane, sick or healthy, or in the case of occupational therapy, a Stroke patient or a hand patient (Foucault, 1982)

Adopting a poststructural perspective of the individual would have multiple effects on the occupational therapy field. Viewed through this lens, the individual would be viewed as being produced though discourse and as occupying subject positions (Burr, 1995). Discourses are seen as producing the world and are defined as the "organized and regulated, as well as the regulating and constituting, functions of language… whose aim

is to describe the surface linkages between power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, the control of populations, and the modern (Bove, 1990, pp. 54-55). Discourses relate to social practices and they "are not merely bodies of ideas, ideologies, or other symbolic formulations, but they are also working attitudes, modes of address, terms of reference, and courses of actions suffused into social practices" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 494).

If practitioners considered a poststructural view of the individuals then they would no longer categorize and essentialize their consumers. They would not view them as a body part or as someone to place on the grid of disease classifications. Language would change to reflect these beliefs and would produce practice that truly addresses the complexities of performance. Each person would be viewed as multiple subjects and practitioners would have an expanded knowledge of context so that they could better assist individuals with doing what they need and want to do in multiple arenas of their lives.

Therapeutic use of self. Occupational therapy defines *therapeutic use of self* as the "planned use of his or her personality, insights, perceptions, and judgments as part of the therapeutic process" (AOTA, 2008, p. 653). This study can serve to expand this concept related to the issues of power and influence. As indicated earlier in the discussion about domestic violence service providers, when working with a survivor population, occupational therapy practitioners need to be constantly aware of their potential influence on survivors. A facilitative, collaborative, therapeutic relationship is indicated so that survivors can feel safe with making their own decisions. Directive and authoritative therapeutic styles can reintroduce the dynamics of power and control that survivors

experienced with their abusers. In addition, practitioners need to be careful not to impose their values onto survivors, especially if survivors are working on their progression from stultitia to salvation as described in this study.

If, as the findings in this study indicate, practices of self related to the use of masters are important occupations for survivors that practitioners work with and these survivors use occupational therapy practitioners as masters, then, practitioners need to be cautious about imposing their own personal values onto survivors. Survivors may constantly try to elicit opinions and advice about daily occupations like parenting and will create their subjectivities based upon this practice. Therefore, practitioners will need to determine how to facilitate the client's independent decision-making while also sharing information about useful and healthy strategies that clients can use for performance of occupations. As indicated in interventions with other types of populations, practitioners will need to utilize evidenced based practice when sharing insights and opinions.

<div align="center">Future Research</div>

I limited my participants in this study to survivors who were involved with domestic violence agencies. Another study using the care of the self theoretical perspective with participants who were not involved could shed some more light about survivors' experiences. However, it would probably be more difficult to find participants for this type of study.

Since Foucault's ethical analysis, care of the self, seems to relate well to some of the occupational therapy theories, it could be beneficial to analyze data from similar participants using one of these theories. This might facilitate some pushing of the

boundaries within my humanist-based profession. In addition, actually observing the

different practices of self that survivors perform might yield a whole new perspective.

Finally, it would be interesting to do a study with domestic violence staff

members about their perceptions of the survivors and their constructions of subjectivities.

Particularly, I'd like to know more about the influences that these staff members have on

the survivors' constructions.

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Appendix A
Potential Participant Information Form

Name: _____   Date: _____

Referral from: _____   E-mail: _____

Address:

_____

_____

Phone(s): _____   _____

Meets criteria:

__   Experienced D.V. and out of relationship: _____

__   Single Mom: _____

__   Considered to be low-income: _____

__   Going to school: _____

_____

Provided overview:

__   Voluntary participation and can stop at any time

__   Informed consent to collect data during phone call

__   Waiver of signature on Informed Consent Form

Scheduling Issues:

Other Information Shared:

Appointment Scheduled for Interview:

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTSWHO ARE SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

I, _____ (Pseudonym) agree to participate in a research study titled " Care of the Self: Everyday Activities of Low-income Female Survivors of Domestic Violence as they Pursue Postsecondary Education" conducted by Robin Underwood from the Department of Workforce Education at the University of Georgia (706-542-1682) under the direction of Dr. John Schell, Department of Workforce Education, University of Georgia (706-542-4206). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of this study is to explore the everyday activities that female low-income survivors of domestic violence perform as they construct themselves as students within institutions of higher education. The study involves between 3-4 participants. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:
1) Schedule between two to four sessions to meet with the investigator. Each session will last approximately one hour.
2) Share stories with the investigator about my past and current life.
3) Share relevant papers and photographs with the researcher. Papers may include transcripts, academic program descriptions, and school projects. Photographs may include ones of you and your family members in the past or present. No actual photographs or papers will be used in the researcher's dissertation. All papers and photographs will be returned within 6 months following the interviews.
4) Schedule between one to three sessions in which I allow the investigator to observe my participation in activities at home and in the community.
5) Share the names of domestic violence staff members who have worked with me as I have pursued school. I will consider allowing the researcher to interview these staff members.
6) Following the interviews, answer questions that the investigator may ask for clarification.

I may receive benefits from helping to advance knowledge about low-income survivors of domestic violence who are pursuing higher education. This information can assist domestic violence, welfare, financial aid, and academic organizations with being better able to prepare and support low-income survivors as they attempt to complete higher education degrees, thus leading to an increased ability to support themselves and their

children. In addition, I may receive benefits from sharing my own experiences and/or being able to hear about previous research studies about women in similar situations.

No risk is expected but I may experience some discomfort or stress when I share information about my life with the investigator. If this is the case, I can choose to talk with the investigator about this or will be referred to staff members at my domestic violence organization. I understand that interview sessions will be audio-taped and that these tapes will be destroyed within 6 months following the interviews. No individually identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, including my location, will be shared with others I understand that I will be asked to choose a pseudonym and this name will be used on all oral and written information. All records of my participation will be kept in locked equipment. Transcripts of the interviews with me will be destroyed no later than August 31, 2011.

I understand that I will receive $25 at the end of my participation for my participation in the study. The type of gift certificate will be discussed during my interview sessions and I will receive it during my last interview session. The gift certificate will not have my name on it or any other identifiable information.

The investigator will answer any further questions about the research now and/or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am verbally agreeing to take part in this research project and that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my records. I agree to a waiver of signed consent so as to prevent any breach of confidentiality.

_____   _____

Name of Researcher   **Signature**   **Date**

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address: IRB@uga.edu.

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Initials: _____   Date of first interview: _____

Demographics:

1.   How old are you?

2.   How many children do you have?

  a. Do they live with you?

3.   What is your present living situation?

4.   How long have you lived here?

5.   What school are you going to?

  a. How long have you been going to school?

  b. What are you majoring in?

  c. Are you receiving any financial aid?

  d. When do you hope to be finished?

6.   Are you presently working? If so, what type of work are you doing?

7.   How are you financially supporting yourself and your children?

  a. What's it like to try to make ends meet?

8.   What domestic violence program were or are you still involved in?

  a. What types of services did you receive or participate in?

9.   How long have you been out of the abusive relationship?

Interview Protocol Continued: page 2

Initials: _____

Interview Questions:

1.   Is there a story that you'd like to share about your domestic violence experience?

    a. What did you learn from this experience?
        i. What did you learn about yourself?

    b. How do you think that you learned what you've learned?

2.   How would you describe yourself today?

    a. What's different about you today versus the past?

3.   I realize that there is probably not one day that is like the rest, but what are the activities that you typically perform during a weekday?

    a. A weekend day?

    b. What activities are most important or a priority to you? Why?

    c. How did you learn to do these activities?

    d. Have you invented things to do that just make sense to you but that no one taught you?

4.   What do you think you do well?
    a. How do you think you learned to do these well?

5.   What are your current goals?
    a. What areas do you currently want to improve in?

    a. How did you develop these areas of improvement? What are these based on?

    b. How are you going about working on these areas?

    c. Are there any "typical" activities that you do frequently to work on yourself or just for you?

    d. What and who have helped you work on these areas?

Interview Protocol Continued: page 3

Initials: _____

      e. Has there been anyone who has helped you work on these areas? Who is it and how did she help?

      f. What have been the barriers for you to work on these areas?

6. How would you describe your experiences with school?

      a. How would you describe yourself as a student?

      b. How would you like to be described as a student?

7. In general, how would you like to be viewed in the future?

8. If you were asked to give advice to another woman who experienced domestic violence who was considering going to school, what would you tell her?

9. Is there anything that you'd like to share with me that we haven't discussed?

10. How do you feel after talking about all of this?

11. Would it be okay to call you if I have any questions about what you've said?

Appendix D

Example of Analysis

Use of Master as Practices of Self

The master is an effective agency for producing effects within the individual's reform and in his formation as a subject. He is the mediator in the individual's relationship to his constitution as a subject (p. 130). The subject can no longer be the person who carries out his own transformation, and the need for a master is inserted here (HOS, p. 130).

(Related to *stultitia):* Inasmuch as *stultitia* is defined by this nonrelationship to the self, the individual cannot escape from it by himself. The constitution of the self as the object capable of orientating the will, of appearing as the will's free, absolute, and permanent object and end, can only be accomplished through the intermediary of someone else (HOS, p. 133).

Very important: In Letter 52: About the someone else needed: …it is clear that this other person is not an educator in the traditional sense of the term, someone who will teach truths, facts, and principles. It is also clear that he is not a master of memory. So it is not *educare* but *educere*: offering a hand, extricating from, leading out of. You see then that this is not at all a work of instruction or education in the traditional sense of the term, of the transmission of theoretical knowledge or of know-how. But it is actually a certain action carried out on the individual to whom one offers a hand and whom one extricates from the condition, status, and mode of life and being in which he exists (HOS, p. 134).

This effective agent who puts himself forward is, of course, the philosopher. (Not continuous quote). Philosophers provide us with advice on what it is appropriate to do (HOS, p. 135).

Philosophy is the set of principles and practices available to one, or which one makes available to others, for taking proper care of oneself or of others (HOS, p. 136).

Use of DV Workers as Masters/DV Groups/Counselors:

M.H.: Um, yes, I like this better because it's everyone from here so they all know your situation so you don't have to worry about it. Do know what I'm saying, like other people? Because we went to a support group when everything happened to J. and I just didn't feel right in it. This one, everyone is going through the same thing so I feel more comfortable in it, and it's here. It's people who work here and live here. So …

R: What about case manager?

M.H.: Yes, one of my goals was to get C. in karate and for him to focus his time. We got that done. I want to get the boys a savings account. I'm hoping to do that with my tax refund this year. I'm going to put a little money aside for them. But the new car and Use of DV Workers as Masters/DV Groups/Counselors continued:

stuff. I did have to file bankruptcy because my credit was ruined because he, I ended up having 35 credit cards that I never knew of, like $35,000 so I had to file bankruptcy, so that's done. I accomplished that. I got it done, so now I can start rebuilding my credit (p. 16).

M.H.: I've learned how to set my goals and do something, how to achieve it and make it happen even though it might take a while. I can do it (p. 17).

M.H.: Through the Family Center, they helped with J's daycare and they were going to help for   months, so in March will be up and 6 months, so I'll have to do it on my own. They help with that and classes during the week so the boys can go to, they have art, stuff to keep them busy. They have men mentoring boys, which Christopher goes to and then they had a class on Tuesday night we go to for support group (p. 4).

A: Well actually the shelter program they have like an advocate and the advocate checks on us. She calls us to make sure we are alright. If we don't, we have a phone number we can call our advocate if we have any problems or if we need to talk, they are there to talk to. That's good, that's a real good resource that they have in place. **Anytime if I feel like I want to kill myself, or I'm going through a crying spell, I'm really tired, I don't want to be by myself, I don't want to be alone, I'm having a hard time, I don't have anyone to watch my daughter when I need some free time. They'll send somebody out to talk with me or give me some wind down time**. Of, some of the girls here at the shelter, we stay close to each other. And when I'm going through some tough times, I can call them and they will watch my grandbaby. If I'm going through some tough times, they will give whatever I need at that time, be a comfort to me at that time (p. 8).

R: Right. So, how long has it been since you went to groups?

R.P.:   I actually attended one in November, the day before Thanksgiving. (pause)

R.:   What did you like about the group?

R.P.:   It was everything. You get a chance to get away and express your feelings and know that you're not alone in the same situation. Know that you're not the only survivor that somebody else has been through it and has survived, you know. (pause) **(GROUPS)** (p. 8).

R.P.:   I think support groups or something during this time of year I'm gonna always need for the rest of my life. **(GOING TO SUPPORT GROUPS TO HELP)**

R.:   So, you think these support groups or another kind of support groups?

Use of DV Workers as Masters/DV Groups/Counselors continued:

R.P.:   If I could find another kind of support group, that would be good. But the D.V. touch on so many areas, like a one wrap thing. So, it's like okay.

R: It sounds like you feel very comfortable there.

R.P.:   Yeah.

R: Was there a time when you went to groups like all the time there?

R.P.:   Yeah I used to last year I used to go every week. That's when I first got here last week. I used to go every week. I had time to go. Before school or if I had to come into classes late I explained to my teacher and she was fine with it. **(LACK OF TIME TO KEEP GOING TO GROUPS WITH SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES)** (pp. 8-9).

R.P.:   Advice to other women who are abused: Get out as soon as you can even if you don't have no kids **(PRIORITIZING KIDS—REASON TO LEAVE)** Love yourself because you're somebody's child—somebody's daughter; you're somebody's niece, you know. Get out. Somebody loves you. Never draw away from your family. If there's something going on with your family, **the domestic violence groups are good for you even if you still in the domestic situation**. Find time to get there. There's people that genuinely cares and they—it could become your backbone. **(THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GROUPS TO TAKE CARE OF SELF)** p.9).

R: What types of services? You were living there and what kinds of services or programs did they have there at the time that you were involved in?

S: Pretty much for the most part just a safe haven is really what I needed. They gave me all sorts of resources. How to get to certain locations. They gave me transportation or even the tokens or the passes to get on the bus. For the most part it was just having that safe ability right then. That safe haven.

R: Did they have groups?

S: They had support groups. They were exciting (?). They were very, very encouraging. Very encouraging (p. 6).