

- **What was the question? • What did we do?**
 - **On the screen at a glance**
-

On the Screen - *goals/objectives*

- to provide adult literacy workers and learners opportunities to link research and practice in a study of the prevalence and effects of violence in the lives of adult learners and educators.
- to bridge gaps in understandings between adult education and human services providers
- to build leadership amongst adult educators and learners in recognizing and building effective strategies to address education-related needs and strengths of survivors and victims of violence.
- to place the effects of trauma on learning **on the screen** of adult literacy learners and teachers so that trauma itself as a barrier to learning can be addressed in ways that lead to improved learning opportunities for women.

What can we learn about trauma / violence that enables us to find strategies needed to assist educators and learners in lowering barriers to learning and teaching caused by violence in our lives? How can we reduce the sense of isolation accompanying trauma, and help women who have faced such trauma, and for whom it is a recurrent obstacle to learning, to succeed in the classroom and in reaching their learning goals?

learning - adults must feel safe in their learning environments; those who teach them must be fully aware of the reasons adult learners come to learning contexts, and of factors impeding or assisting learning, e.g. prior educational experiences, work history, immigration and L1 (first language) literacy , experiences of trauma

practice - assisting one another in dealing with issues of trauma in the classroom, and in our own lives (giving one another support and finding the means to cope with disclosures of violence made by learners and colleagues) so that barriers to learning related to experiences of trauma can be understood, addressed and reduced.

policy – utilizing a systemic change approach to understanding how trauma affects ourselves and our learners in order to build on Jenny Horsman’s research and improve practice, and to build real and enduring supports in programs and communities.

On the screen set out to learn about the impacts of trauma on adult learning.

In order to do this, eight adult educators came together as a group, met monthly, and communicated through electronic mail to explore the issue, discuss their questions and find ways of addressing their own classroom practice in ways described within this report.

As facilitator of this group, I listened to survivors of violence and those who work with them and read fiction and non-fiction in order to have a clearer sense of the nuances of violence and its effects on women and men. I developed two web sites, one a compendium of resources for educators [http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/Literacy_Resources/screen.html] and the second, a collection of resources for readers with limited literacy skills [http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/Literacy_Resources/violence.html]. I began work as a tutor to two women in prison, both of whom are incarcerated because of violent crimes. I facilitated workshops for child protective workers, witnessed men's group sessions within a sex offender treatment program in a locked facility. I wrote a digest for the National Clearinghouse on English Literacy Education about the effects of trauma on adult language learning, presented workshops at educational conferences and to teachers in local programs, and met with therapists, scholars and social service providers to try to understand the ways in which violence affects the society in which I live. Since August 2000 I have facilitated a weekly intergenerational literacy drop-in session at a women's residential shelter, along with federal work study students at the university at which I'm based. As well, I've begun a series of workshops for staff at the shelter addressing ways in which literacy is embedded in the processes of healing and advocacy through which they work with battered women. My two goals have been to assist adult educators in making their own practice safer, and therefore more useful to adult learners, and to work with others in communities to help them understand how access to and ability with literacy affects the clients, patients, friends and neighbors with whom they interact.

acknowledgements

My original proposal to the National Institute for Literacy was greatly strengthened by the patience and input of my colleagues in literacy, Jenny Horsman, Heide Wrigley and David Rosen, and by the support of Kathy Jellison, then executive director of the Women's Center of Rhode Island. While many of the pieces of the work I proposed to do have been accomplished, there have, not surprisingly, been some shifts along the way. I am indebted to the women who participated in the project and assisted in strengthening it. I thank them and the colleagues and friends who have provided encouragement, feedback and support,

including Hal Adams, Suzanne Smythe, Judy Titzel, staff of the Women's Center of RI under Kathy Jellison's directorship, the full time staff at the Swearer Center for Public Service at Brown University and the National Institute for Literacy, without whose support this would all have been impossible. While guided especially by Jenny Horsman's work and generosity of spirit, I am solely responsible for any shortcomings in this document.

Anson Green, whose work in Texas comprises a separate yet related piece of this fellowship, has produced a report and resources which are also available online at [URL] and through the National Institute for Literacy. This text brings together the Rhode Island participants' reflections on the year-long process of learning about violence itself, relating that learning to what we know about adult learners and finally developing changes in our ongoing practice within adult education. The text is divided into five sections: an overview/report of the work completed, a consideration of learning and violence in locked facilities, a review of workshops and teacher education around learning and violence, an overview of classroom-based approaches and written reflections submitted by the women participating in the project. A bibliography and facsimile of the project's web pages also appear as part of this document.

preface

On the Screen came about because in 1994 I had the good fortune of working with a group of Canadian women on a literacy and English language curriculum project, aimed at identifying and addressing issues that literacy instruction often misses; issues of and about women's learning.

At the time Jenny Horsman was in the initial stages of a process of investigating connections between trauma and learning, work that she continues to explore. Her early work, describing the disclosure of violence by a woman she was tutoring at the time, resonated for me and for others as we began to consider the ways in which violence affects adult learning.

Many literacy workers have long been aware of the fact that some topics of conversation or study in adult classrooms seem to trigger intense emotional responses in learners, and in ourselves. Topics such as family, immigration, and previous experiences of school are often difficult for learners who have faced disruption because of the need to emigrate from their countries of origin. Many adult students who were born in the countries in which they study are likely to have experienced disruption of one sort or another in their early education. These disruptions have contributed to their current need/decision to participate in basic literacy or adult learning classes. Many learners return to educational settings with hesitation.

Having 'failed' at school a first time, finding the confidence to try it again poses significant challenges, and often causes intense anxiety for learners **before** even entering the adult classroom. For adults who have had experiences of violence, have been told by abusers that they're stupid, these anxieties and self-doubts can be overwhelming. Whatever the causes of learners' discomfort, adult literacy practitioners are recognizing the need to make classrooms safer spaces for learners. This fellowship has enabled me and the women with whom I've worked to envision what such safer places could look like for **all** learners, and how we could make them come to be.

Jenny Horsman's early work with women in rural Nova Scotia sparked a process of problematizing and challenging educators' perception of "problems" focused on students' behavior, attendance patterns, learning styles and abilities. She named and called into question mainstream teachers' responses to "problems" such as inconsistent attendance - *lack of motivation*, incomplete homework assignments - laziness, lack of participation in classes - *lack of interest*, *daydreaming* reticence to speak - *inattentiveness*. At a recent workshop addressing adult learning disabilities and employment, a case worker recounted an employer's statement that a particular client was being very "limited" in the time she made herself available to work. The case worker had to explain to this employer that the woman in question had to deliver two children to a bus stop for school, get herself on another bus to come to work and reverse the process at the end of the school day. The employer saw the woman's 'limited' availability as an indication of her resistance to work. In much the same way as Horsman has challenged educators' perceptions of learners' motivation, the case manager described here had to help the employer understand the very real constraints placed on this particular woman's time. Such perceptions extend beyond the realm of adult education and employment, as well - stereotypical views of welfare mothers, victims of abuse, single teen moms all contribute to yet another form of subtle violence against people whose lives defy easy description.

Horsman and others have begun to name the fact that adult learners live complicated lives, bring complicated experience bases with them to learning contexts and may be more or less present to and ready for learning than educators had widely understood. Her work, along with that of many others rooted in strengths-based approaches to adult education, has informed and assisted numerous adult educators and learners in many English speaking countries around the world. This report is an attempt to synthesize and contribute to a piece of that learning so that adult educators will become more aware of the multiple impacts of violence on learning and so change their practice in ways that make learning more possible for all.

While the majority of people that I have taught are women and the majority of my colleagues in literacy have also been women, I want to state unequivocally that I understand that violence is not only perpetrated against women. Nor do I want to disappear same sex domestic assault. This report does not cite many statistics because they are not always reliable: police reports may or may not name domestic violence as a cause of an assault; political refugees may be unwilling or unable to name their previous experiences of trauma; trauma itself may be 'normalized' by those who have experienced it. ¹ First Nations and Native American adult students who were forced to attend residential schools have experienced systemic violence, and many may well have been victims of personal and domestic violence as well. Much of that violence has been engendered by the government-sanctioned violence of the residential schools and their subsequent disruption of Native family and community life, yet these experiences of violence are unlikely to appear within volumes of violence-related statistics as such. ² Statistics also blur the fact that any violence is unacceptable, that any or all of us at a given time in a given place are likely to be survivors or victims of violence, and that most of us have had some experience of a traumatic event or events. Knowing who, knowing what is far less important than understanding the possibility of violence having existed in someone's life. That understanding underlies what I have learned and what I hope will enable other literacy workers to make their practice safer and therefore more effective for all learners.

I also want to be very clear in acknowledging that the overwhelming majority of violence perpetrated beyond political contexts (and within them, to an extent) is that perpetrated by men against women. My purpose here, however, is neither to condemn men nor to frame women as victims, but rather to invite adult educators to consider the ways in which all kinds of violence have affected their own lives and those of their learners, colleagues, families, friends, acquaintances. It is through this filter of understanding violence in all its forms that I hope we can begin to learn more effective ways to create safe learning spaces for our students. I also hope that we begin to find ways beyond the classroom to proactively work towards an end to violence – systemic, organized [political] ³, personal and random.

¹ See, for example, "Innocuous' violence triggers the real thing: Behavioral researchers are exploring the more ambiguous forms of domestic violence," by Scott Sleek, *APA Monitor*, Volume 29 Number 4, April 1998. <http://www.apa.org/monitor/apr98/innoc.html>, retrieved September 24, 2000.

"Increasingly, researchers find that the minor, mutual slaps, kicks and shoves depicted in television, movies and comic strips is an all-too-common, and all-too-destructive, feature of real-life love and marriage. Although such acts may seem trivial compared to the type of assaults that force so many wives to seek refuge in battered women's shelters, psychologists have come to accept them as abusive—to the psyche if not the body. And they worry that such fighting can escalate into outright battering, in which the man usually has the physical advantage."

But psychologists are shocked to find that many couples regard such actions as innocuous, even normal in any loving relationship."

² To learn more about residential schools and their impact, see, for example "A personal story by Carol M. Hodgson: "When I go home I'm going to talk Indian" on line at through this project's site for basic level readers, http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Sweaver_Center/Literacy_Resources/violentwrite.html and as part of a larger site, The Reservation Boarding School System in the United States, 1870-1928, <http://www.twofrog.com/rezsch.html>.

³ Agger, in *The Blue Room*, uses the term "organized violence" to describe political acts of violence including physical and emotional torture.

Introduction

I have no problem with this discussion on the listserv, but I have not personally experienced violence nor has anyone told me that she is in a violent situation. I do believe that there is violence against women and that such violence should be stopped. When I began volunteer work, the education coordinator told me that should I become aware of “special needs” on the part of my students,

there were resources available. Fortunately (?!), such a request has not been made. I have not seen any visible signs of abuse so I have assumed that there has not been any violence against my students. My silence stems from inexperience. I do not know what to say so I listen and try to learn.

*Dana Cooper, Volunteer ESL Teacher Philadelphia, PA, Posted to the National Institute for Literacy Women and Literacy list serv, Wed, 27 Sep 2000*³

³ This posting, and all other excerpts from electronic discussion lists, appear with the authors' permission throughout this document.

I began work as project director of Literacy Resources/RI (LR/RI) in February of 1997 believing that a large part of my work should focus on supporting adult educators and learners across the state. I was determined not to impose staff development, or to make decisions about what teachers might need, choosing, instead, to invite practitioners to a number of open discussion and sharing sessions, clustered around different themes and topics – English for speakers of other languages, learning disabilities, intergenerational learning, etc. Through these sessions, practitioners' interests and strengths emerged, as did their questions and requests for outside assistance. In the late summer of that year I met with Midge Kirk, a case manager for Project Opportunity students, women whose participation in educational programs, and preparation for employment, had become inextricably connected to their ability to receive cash assistance from the state. Midge was concerned that we as literacy workers were not meeting the particular needs of women in her programs or those of other women learners. We decided to initiate a monthly sharing sessions for adult educators with an interest in women's issues, carefully wording our invitation to include anyone – male or female – with an interest in the issue. Over the following year, a core group of 6 to 8 practitioners met monthly to discuss our concerns about women and learning in the state.

Repeatedly, violence emerged in our discussions as a common issue for many of our learners and for some of us as well. We read and reflected upon Jenny Horsman's online paper, "But I'm Not a Therapist: Furthering Discussion about Literacy Work with Survivors of Trauma," released in 1998⁵. We tried to imagine ways of raising educators' awareness of the effects of violence on our learners, many of whom we knew to be survivors or victims of domestic abuse and/or political trauma. We invited Marsha Wise, then Director of Community Services at the Women's Center of Rhode Island, to address a group of adult educators on November 19, 1998. Fifteen people attended that session, held in donated space at a branch of the Providence Public Library. Marsha developed an information sheet that she generously allowed us to share with others, and is reproduced below.⁶ She presented information about available resources in our community and about effects of violence generally. Marsha's talk and the participation of our colleagues was a first step for us in bringing the issue of domestic violence to a more diverse group of educators. Individual agencies in the area – particularly those dealing with large populations of women learners – had previously had some interaction with domestic violence providers as they acknowledged the need for their teachers to become aware of issues of violence. We sought to break beyond single agencies and move the discussion out into the broader adult education community.

5 "But I'm Not a Therapist: Furthering Discussion about Literacy Work with Survivors of Trauma," discussion paper, 2/11/98, online at <http://jennyhorsman.com/articles.html>

6 online [at LR/RI's web site http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Sweaver_Center/Literacy_Resources/dv.html]

We wanted not only to raise awareness, but also to find concrete ways of understanding how violence was affecting our students and affecting us. Contacting domestic violence workers in communities to provide speakers and other resources to adult educators – and learners – is one step that many practitioners can take as part of the process of making violence as an issue. Other steps are reported throughout this document, and include provision of workshops on issues of violence to learners and educators and ongoing work to break silences about violence in adult learning contexts so that resource information is readily visible and available to those in need of it.

At the very least, having an awareness of the effects of domestic violence on women's lives must be a part of an ongoing process of professional development that enables educators – teachers, administrators and policy makers – to understand the range of factors impinging upon adult learning and behavior. As well, as members of communities, education workers and stakeholders should be aware of resources and recourses available to their friends, neighbors and families – to those with whom they live in some semblance or another of community.

Domestic Violence and Adult Learners - Possible Adverse Consequences

Marsha Wise, Director of Community Services⁷

⁷ Marsha Wise worked at the Women's Center of Rhode Island in Providence until August, 2000.

Education is Power and the Gateway to Independence

Abusive partner/caregiver forbids the victim from enrolling in an educational program and uses physical or emotional abuse to enforce their edict.

Abusive partner may sabotage child care arrangements by failing to help prepare the children for day care, by not dropping off or picking up the children, or refusing to pay for child care, etc.

The abusive partner may provoke a fight with the victim before class, while the victim is preparing for a test, or during study time.

Victims who have been in long-term, abusive relationships may suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome and may have difficulty with concentration, attention to detail, or suffer short-term memory lapses.

The abusive partner may discourage the victim from talking about her/his schooling, or even belittle the victim's academic achievements.

The abusive partner may become jealous and resentful of the victim's peers at school and discourage contact with others outside of the classroom.

Refusing to help the victim with transportation to and from school as a form of sabotage.

The abusive partner may stalk the victim on the way to school or at the end of the school day.

The abusive partner may place unreasonable demands on the victim in terms of household chores, child care, etc. with little regard for the victim's new status as a student.

The abusive partner may undermine the victim's self-esteem in a variety of ways (i.e. "Since you started school, you're not a good mother, partner, etc.").

How educators can help abuse victims

Let your students know that you care about their lives and well being outside of the classroom. (For example, you might encourage students to write 'feeling words' to describe their lives at home in their personal journals. Arrange a private meeting with any student who describes a harsh or problematic home life in their journals.)

Realize that you may be the victim's only supporter or "cheerleader" for her/his educational pursuits.

Initiate a conversation with your students about the challenges of managing their school work along with their other responsibilities. Talk about the negative feedback some students have received from loved ones about their educational pursuits (i.e. "I guess you think you're better than me now that you are in school.").

If you have assigned a group project or have encouraged students to participate in study groups, let your students know that they can speak with you privately about these arrangements if necessary.

Try to accommodate abuse victims who need to arrive early for class or to stay after class to have quiet time for study.

If someone discloses abuse

Acknowledge the students' courage in disclosing abuse.

Express concern for their safety.

State that the abuse usually only gets worse over time.

Let them know there are community resources available to help.

(Women's Center 24-hour confidential Helpline: [401] 861-2760)

Find out if it will be safe for the victim to have hotline cards or other materials on domestic violence in their possession.

Realize that the victim must decide when the time is right to seek help.

In March of 1999, we invited Jenny Horsman to facilitate a full day workshop on issues connecting trauma and learning. That session was attended by 13 people; (although 35 had pre-registered, a freak snowstorm in early March made travel to the workshop impossible for many). Nonetheless, everyone who had signed up for the workshop had received a copy of "But I'm not a Therapist." We felt that we were making slow slow progress in addressing issues of violence in an intentional manner. We continued to meet monthly, tried to find funding to support educators in exploring the topic more deeply, but were ultimately

dissatisfied with the efforts we were able to make. While we believed that it was imperative to broaden our understandings of the ways in which violence impacts learning, and also to help our colleagues do the same, I felt hesitant to push the issue without additional support. I feared that if teachers 'suddenly' became aware of connections between violence and learning they risked doing more harm than good – perhaps pushing well-intended, but unwelcome invitations to learners to disclose histories of abuse, taking on more of a counseling role than would be appropriate, or creating more confusion among those learners who choose to come to programs and 'leave their issues at the door.'

Receiving this fellowship, then, provided an opportunity to invite my colleagues to join me in a more structured exploration of the issues surrounding trauma and learning, over time, and to secure the support of a trauma counselor, of Jenny Horsman and of one another as we attempted to deepen our understandings of the links between violence and learning; all with the purpose of strengthening educational provision.

first steps

Educators were invited to work on this project through a call for participation that was issued shortly before the fellowship period began in the fall of 1999. The call was distributed through LR/RI's bulletin [posted online and disseminated via fax, mail and email] and is reproduced below:

call for participation

Through funding from a National Institute for Literacy Fellowship, a year long project will begin next month with the goal of assisting literacy / adult education practitioners in recognizing the effects of trauma and violence on learning and in using this awareness to develop learning strategies that are useful in lowering barriers to learning for survivors and victims of trauma, and/or childhood abuse, in particular and for all adult learners generally. I will be reviewing research on the impact of domestic violence on students' learning in the classroom, developing a teacher's guide and catalogue of resources. A large piece of this work entails a ten month study group comprised of practitioners in the state who will participate in monthly meetings and develop their own inquiry projects into the effects of trauma on learning in adult education settings. If you are interested in participating in this project, please send a letter outlining your interest (and responding to the criteria below) to me at LR/RI by September 28th. Participation in the project includes:

- meeting monthly, beginning October 1st;
- attending the state's annual conference on domestic violence, Friday, October 13;
- participating in a full day workshop with staff of the Women's Center of RI on Saturday, Nov. 6
- meeting monthly with me and with other speakers/facilitators through June, 2000
- participating in a workshop in June where you will present your findings/share information with others.

Participants will receive a stipend of \$500. Registration for the October workshop will be paid by the project. [The stipend was later raised to \$600 - \$700, depending on participants' interest in contributing writing to this document; as well, books and other project-related expenses were also covered by the project]

eligibility

Participation in the project is open to adult educators with a minimum of two years classroom experience, who: are reasonably sure of continuing within the field of adult education beyond the year 2000; have or can get access to email and the internet, and are committed to following through on the project and in seriously contemplating what it means to address issues of violence and learning. Participation is not limited to classroom teachers, but is also open to program directors who are able to make the same commitment of time outlined above. Working with or being a victim or survivor of trauma (domestic violence, political violence) bring particular challenges to learning processes. This project is designed to enable its participants to heighten their awareness of the ways in which violence acts as a barrier to learning through exploring through their own practice and ways in which learning occurs. Participants will undertake an inquiry approach to the project, meeting monthly in focused workshops and open sharing sessions. Participants will have the option of having their names and writing incorporated in the final product, a process guide/training guide to be developed for and disseminated by the National Institute for Literacy. If classroom teachers wish to participate, agreement from program directors will be required. Please consider joining in this work.

For information, contact LR/RI, and for a description of the NIFL fellowships for the coming year, please contact LR/RI, or go to <http://www.nifl.gov/activities/flw99pr.htm>

Eleven women responded, of whom eight became participants for the duration of the project. One woman, who had just left an adult education program to pursue an advanced degree, contributed occasionally to the dialogue but was unable to complete the year with us. Another, among the first to apply, missed our first full day training and several meetings after that. Her absence caused me concern, as her reasons for not participating were unclear. I worried about her, but was unable to do more than offer support; after a few exchanges over phone and email, she stopped responding to voice and email messages, although she was kept on the project's list serv. In September of 2000 she responded to a request to share her writing within this report and stated that she had had to leave the project for personal reasons. Another woman, recruited after the program began, was very interested in our work but realized that she could not commit the time the project demanded, and so left the project. Of the eight remaining participants, all had worked in adult education; one had moved into work in child protective services for the state, a second was engaged as an art therapist for adults in a locked psychiatric institution, and a third had left adult education to teach at a middle school. During the course of the project she changed jobs again, this time to work as part of a team of providers of technical assistance to K-12 teachers. Our combined experience and areas of expertise allowed us to push the project in unexpected ways. Our shared background in adult education gave us a common language through which to begin our conversations.

writing/documentation – Participants were asked to submit written statements addressing their interest in the project and their views on trauma and learning at the beginning of the project period, not only to give one another a clearer sense of where we each were, but also so that we would have some baseline information to return to at the end of the project, to assess our own learning and movement with the issue. Some women completed this writing; others did not. Over the course of the year, the closed list serv provided opportunities for written discussion and reflection, as well as for dissemination of information and resources. The accumulated messages, extracted in this report, and cited with the writers' permission, reflect the difficult and slippery nature of the work we sought to undertake. Messages from the list were archived, along with meeting notes, and participants' writing on a shadow web site, the address of which was known only to project participants. These are the statements submitted at the beginning of the project⁸:

⁸ All writing from participants is included with their permission.

Nancy Fritz is an ESOL teacher at the Genesis Center, an agency providing English language, job preparation and child care services to the immigrant and refugee communities. During the spring of 1999 Nancy had allowed me to facilitate a session with her students on the topic of violence, which is described on page [x]. She writes, "I started working in adult education in

1986 when I volunteered as an ESL tutor with the Literacy Volunteers of Northern RI I loved the tutoring and soon went back to school to learn more about teaching ESL. For the past three years, I've been working at the Genesis Center in Providence where I teach a Project Opportunity class of adult women, most of whom are on public assistance."

The reason that I'm interested in participating in the Domestic Violence project is that I feel that I know very little about it and I think it is probably an issue that affects many of my students. I am interested in finding out what kind of impact prior trauma can have on the ability of learners to concentrate and learn in the classroom and also what, if anything, I can do as an instructor to help students who have experienced this kind of violence. Some questions that I have: Is this a topic for the classroom? My initial feeling is that yes, it is, but how do I approach it? What do I do about students who are not interested in talking about it? Can I really be of any help? I don't want to be a therapist. I just want to help my students become happier, more productive, and able to accomplish what they want. In learning about domestic violence I hope to learn more about the problem in general and also how other teachers have dealt with it in the classroom. I'm sure as time goes on I'll find more things I want to learn about.

Sally Gabb is director of adult education and programs at the Genesis Center. Sally has been actively involved in adult education as a classroom teacher, teacher educator and writer for over thirty years, and has also participated in social change work beyond the immediate scope of literacy per se. In recent years, she has worked with teachers at The Genesis Center to recognize and develop sensitivity to the violence of immigration and transition, its effects on learning, and the added burden of cultural dissonance carried by limited English proficient learners.

Putting issues of trauma and violence 'on the screen' for staff dialogue and process at the Genesis Center

I have been at The Genesis Center serving as Adult Ed/Programs director for almost four years. It is my understanding that some staff development around issues of domestic violence has been provided on and off over the years. During my first year, I brought the entire adult ESOL staff to The Women's Center for workshops about issues in domestic violence, sources for referral, etc. In addition, we have often discussed the importance of sensitivity to issues of trauma and violence, not only domestic abuse, but violence of poverty, war, dislocation, etc. Nevertheless, we have not focused on effects of trauma on learning, development of specific curriculum, or development of support within our center for victims/survivors.

As Adult Education Director. I am interested in the agency issues of policy, staff development, and program development to build both awareness and support for staff and learners around

issues of violence and trauma. I believe that this issue is directly related to enhancing the learner centered-ness of our programs, including the recognition by all staff that learners need to be involved at all levels of planning and curriculum development. Many of our staff are well on the road to awareness, but some seem both unaware and resistant beyond a surface/ lip service recognition. I want to be sensitive to the issue for staff members as well as for learners in addressing trauma and violence.

I look forward to working with Nancy, as the classroom practitioner, in pursuing the issues, and participating in the project research. I am hoping that Genesis can serve as a kind of 'lab' for some staff development and staff/learner dialogue possibilities. I will survey staff as to interest/ awareness, and ideas for staff development, and potential for modeling a variety of staff dialogue and classroom processes.

As an immersion ESOL center for immigrant and refugee families, we can look at a wide variety of trauma issues, including the isolation caused by cultural and language difference, and the effects of exposure to extreme violence/war. As a 'survivor' of various kinds of trauma/violence myself, the issues have personal relevance - especially concerning my inability to develop/improve specific skills despite my extensive formal education. I am acutely aware of the intensely personal nature of the venture. I hope to develop some manageable pieces, also to journal about this process.

Julie Nora had been an adult educator before becoming a Providence public middle school ESOL teacher. Julie is currently a Program Planning Specialist for Professional Development at the Northeast Regional Laboratory at Brown University (LAB). Her projects include Bilingual Education: Portraits of Success, a project which identifies and disseminates data of exemplary bilingual programs, and "Constructing Knowledge," a practitioner research project. She has been involved with teaching ESOL since 1992, having taught in adult education, university, and K-12 settings. She is currently pursuing her doctorate in education. Her primary area of interest is the interaction of language, identity, culture and power.

Participating in this reflective practitioner group will enable me to interweave to significant aspects of my life, my profession and my personal history.

As a teacher of middle school in Providence, I work with students who have seen violence at societal and personal levels. Some I am aware of, for instance when a Liberian student arrives from a country where there has been a civil war, and some I am not because the violence is hidden in shame. Having lived the first twelve years of my life with domestic violence, I am very aware of the secret pact a young person has with her or himself not to let anyone in on the secret, for fear of it costing friendship. However, hiding it does not eliminate its effects.

Exposure to such violence affects among other aspects of one's life, one's ability to learn. The clothes one wears to school, the cleanliness with which one arrives, the habits of interaction, one's understanding of love, to name a few - all contribute to the identity of the student who enters a classroom. I can recall personally moments of extreme embarrassment caused by my realizing that my behavior or appearance had leaked out. This distracts a young person's ability to concentrate in a classroom. As a survivor of this, I aim to help young people not hide from their reality, but to overcome it.

While having great personal insight into the point of view of the child who experiences domestic violence, I know little of how to work with students who are in similar situations. It is my hope that through this project I can learn to understand the effects of violence on learning as a professional, not as a victim, and how to develop learning strategies which will aid learners in overcoming barriers.

Nazneen Rahman has taught ESOL for over twenty years at the International Institute of Rhode Island. She has served as program coordinator, Deputy Director and Education Department Coordinator at the agency.

Domestic Violence is an important issue and a worthwhile project for me to get involved in along with my colleagues to explore ways in which to support the victims of trauma cope with learning challenges in the classroom. Additionally reasons for my involvement in the project are listed below:

Domestic violence is a global issue that touches women and children across cultures. As a woman myself, I want to help raise awareness of the traumas of domestic abuse and want to help conquer some of the challenges that women face each day thus making a difference in all our lives. How can I separate my feelings from the traumatic effects of domestic abuse and still make a difference?

As an educator, I know that domestic violence invades the lives of my students and manifests itself in different ways, acting as a barrier to learning and survival. How can I support my students in my classroom in a meaningful way?

I want to share the findings from this project with other women and organizations that help women in other countries where human rights, especially women's rights are seriously violated. How do I build a bridge to include others who need support and outside intervention in their struggle against domestic violence and the violation of the rights of women and children?

Children are the primary and hidden victims of trauma. It prevents women, who are the caregivers of these children, from functioning as normal adults when they discover and/or experience abuse. How do I provide support and safety for the victims and not feel frustrated or helpless? How do I control the outrage and provide meaningful support?

Listed below are some pre-project questions that come to mind as we proceed. I wanted to share them with you, please add your comments, if you wish.

Do we need to develop strategies that help us identify trauma in the lives of our students and the kind of learning barriers that lie behind them?

How much can we get involved with our support efforts not only in terms of our comfort, but also in terms of legal implications? My instincts would be to provide 100% support. This may not be realistic; I know that I am really over estimating my abilities.

Finally, what strategies should we use to provide a safe haven for learners in our classrooms as well as provide a non-threatening, progressive learning environment?

Comments - I feel that inclusion of women who have experienced domestic violence (verbal, mental or physical) and have risen above it to make successful careers for themselves will greatly benefit and enhance the work of our project. We will gather wisdom and direction from their experience and knowledge.

Dina Solomon graduated from Brown University in 1999 and began work immediately after graduation at YouthBuild, an educational agency providing work preparation training to out of school youth in Providence. She trains capoeira, a Brazilian martial arts dance. Dina's been training the past two years. She believes that this training has made her a better teacher because she understands how arduous the process of learning is.

In my work in the education of young adults, which is new work to me, violence is broadly defined, and it touches many people in different ways. I see systemic violence, physical violence, and emotional violence played out between people, between groups of people, and internalized by people. I work with women who have experienced domestic violence, young people who are both the perpetrators and the recipients of parental and spousal abuse, and young people who have grown up in a violent world - a world that is violent in their peer groups and families, and a world that is structured to batter them and their dreams.

The most immediate connection I see between all kinds of violence and learning is the sense of impossibility violence brings to young people's lives. Whether violence is experienced by

the young people I work with on a physical, emotional, spiritual, systemic, or institutional level, they come to YouthBuild at a point where it has already affected, infected, their intellectual lives and the sense of purpose and possibility they have. This is my concern. I am not in a position to effect broad systemic change or to be an abuse counselor, but it is my intention to force my students to forge new visions of what is possible and to help them begin to pursue those strongly, safely, and practically.

Some questions I have are as follows: How can I as an educator serve to intercept broad and stunting messages in a world that I can't change broadly? How do certain kinds of emotional and physical violence affect one's ability to learn, and how can I learn techniques or settings to provide a better learning environment for those who have a history of living in fear of violence? How can the problems of perpetrators of violence be addressed in my curriculum and classroom if I am attempting to have people both acknowledge what needs to change in their lives and determine how to make those changes? Should I address these issues directly? Should I approach them systemically (which I HAVE attempted to do) or individually and personally? How? Can I hold my students responsible for carrying the ideals and visions of broad change into the next phase of their lives? What, if anything, can my own experiences offer my students both directly and indirectly?

I have to offer the perspective of a young teacher, an outsider-insider view if you will, who has experienced some forms of violence in my life, but who has existed in different circumstances than my students. I have copious stories to tell of violence in the classroom and violent histories seeping their way into people's lives and learning experiences. I imagine that I will be a grounding member of the group you propose, as my concerns are not thoroughly theoretical, but mostly about how I can better educate thirty individuals.

If you have further questions about my thoughts or work, as I'm sure neither are entirely clear here, I would be happy to answer them. I look forward to conversations and learning from folks whose work and experiences could provide me with new perspectives to approach mine.

Doreen Perry has worked in adult education for about 10 years and has been with Project Opportunity for the past three. She wrote in September, 2000, "As you know, the women in Project Opportunity have all the myriad problems our learners face, including abuse. That is why I wanted to be a part of the study and I am very interested in your work and outcomes." Doreen was unable to participate in the project beyond its first few meetings due to personal reasons, but has given permission for her statement and comments to be used within this report.

I facilitate a Project Opportunity program in Woonsocket. Most, if not all, of my learners have been abused/traumatized or are currently involved in an abusive relationship. The impact on learning cannot be minimized. How can a woman learn self-esteem and self-confidence while overcoming the tremendous roadblock of past or current trauma? How can she be expected to function in the classroom when issues of security are in the forefront of her thoughts? How can I, as instructor/ counselor/mentor, aid her in these endeavors? Since Project Opportunity is funded through a welfare-to-work initiative, my clients are expected to enter the world of work upon completion. Can we expect them to overcome their many barriers to employment if a basic sense of security is not in place? These are a few of the questions I would like to look at and receive input from other professionals in the field. Individually, we can each contribute to the pool of knowledge and information and then share with others struggling with the same issues and questions.

Sandy Kelleher has spent 37 years in education and/or social service. Often she was involved with both fields. She taught history in NYS for 10 years and was involved as a teacher or director of education for special education students for about 10 years. She worked as an educational consultant for a social service agency for 7 years and was involved in adult education or literacy for 10 years. Many of the adults had various forms of trauma in their lives as they were trying to improve their skills. Some suffered from PTSD disorder-diagnosed or undiagnosed. Currently I work for a child protective agency. Again, interfacing with adults and youth. Additionally, Sandy has worked with various volunteer organizations, and has trained adults who are volunteers or professionals. She has participated in many in-service courses in social service, psychology and education and has a masters degree in education.

Domestic violence and how the violence effects the victims of the violence is a question I have struggled with as an adult educator and a child protective investigator. How can an adult tolerate being abused physically or mentally by another adult? How can an adult tolerate knowing their child or pet is being abused by another adult? Often, the violence is inflicted by someone who claims to love them, their children and their pets. What does this form of domestic violence do to the victim's ability to process information?

As a professional I interact with many adult women who have been abused and seen their children and pets abused by a father, lover or significant other. These women are often put in the position of losing their children to the 'state' as a result of the abusers' actions. If the adult victim chooses the abuser over her children the state will usually place her children in care outside of her home.

These adult victims, whose literacy covers a wide range of levels, protest often they do not understand the danger an abuser presents to them and their children. Recently a victim asked me, "Why are you being so mean to me?" I had just told her partner he had to leave her home. He had been convicted of domestic violence against her and was a convicted child abuser who was on probation for that offense of child abuse. He had been convicted in two states. She had tried to drop the recent domestic violence charges and had dropped the no contact order. She had told a concerned judge and the police he was no threat to her or her eight year old daughter and four year old son.

Is this all too common response a result of a processing or some other form of cognitive problem? Is the response purely psychological? This is what I would like to explore, in a structured fashion, with other professionals who also ponder the questions of what factors are impacting the adult victims of domestic violence? Questions for our consultant or everyone: How does my context fit in? - violence to children indicates violence through out the home. If someone discloses does that mean their children are not safe? Does the person who hears the disclosure have to call Cants? Is the reporting law too rigid? Not so long ago there was no law? Should there be a law to report DV? Elderly abuse? Can all these laws be enforced? What, more bureaucracy? If learners knew the mandated reporting law, would they disclose? I wonder if learners knew I was an investigator would they be open in a classroom. How do you safely connect DCYF and learning (social service)? Should we blindly survey practitioners about their attitudes to DV? I think results would be interesting. Do we tell our learners we have to disclose some things? Counselors do.

The statements submitted by participants (and made available to them through the shadow website) reflected many common areas of concern as well as spaces where we did not always share the same analysis of a given issue. Giving participants the option of posting their statements also enabled them to decide how much or how little to tell one another about their own experiences of violence as well as about their particular hopes and plans for learning within the project. Many of their questions, concerns and reflections are taken up throughout this document.

getting starting: first meeting, identifying direction and focus

preparing for this first session with I'm not sure who all will appear. Reread the proposal, where things can easily make more sense, where it's easy to project with hope and anticipation all the important outcomes; facing now the terror of what happens if we can't pull this off, if we're not able to find actual ways of assisting ourselves and our learners in dealing with violence and all its impacts.

What I'm hoping to accomplish

- *bringing people together to talk about their understandings of what violence does to learning what violence is generally*
- *to learn from and with those who do the work of assisting victims/survivors so that these understandings become better informed, can lead to meaningful action, whatever that action might be. Isserlis, journal entry, September 28, 1999*

Our first meeting was held on the first of October, the official start date of the project. In fact, preliminary work had already been undertaken prior to the meeting. The call for participation had been disseminated and practitioners had come forward to participate in the project. At the first meeting an abridged version of the original fellowship proposal was distributed to participants in order to clarify the project's stated goals.⁹ We introduced ourselves to one another, tried to name our expectations – mine of the participants and theirs of me and of the project work – and also began to lay out a tentative work plan for the project year. The questions and issues named at that first meeting were those to which we returned throughout the project period:

overarching goals:

The project needs to produce a report that will guide practitioners through means of addressing issues of trauma both directly and indirectly.

How does this work affect our classroom practice? What do we do when we take this up this work? What skills, knowledge and behaviors help us make classrooms safer generally for all concerned? The report should include our findings – what happens in our varied contexts, as well as a summary/ overview of the research on violence and a compilation of resources – print, video, and web-based. How will we articulate what we learn? A primary project goal is to develop a document outlining ways of making adult education practice more useful to adult learners by making classrooms safer places, programs better able to accommodate learners' needs and educators more aware of the ways in which trauma impacts upon learning.

⁹ on line at
http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Sweater_Center/Literacy_Resources/proposal.html

My fear early on (and throughout the fellowship period) was that the project would become so diffuse that this central question, about barriers to learning, would be lost. Over the course of the year, it became clear that my concern around *barriers* to learning needed to be reframed to look more generally at what happens when people set about the task of learning – what helps them to learn? What happens to make learning difficult? I needed to find a more positive way of thinking about this issue, rather than framing it as one focused on a deficits-based perspective of *barriers* to learning. Framing the issue overall as one in which barriers to learning were being examined only served to reinforce a deficit approach to literacy learning generally. Horsman (personal communication, November, 2000) also challenges us to move away from a violence-as-barrier frame, asking instead what it is that being violated teaches. How can we value what is learned in the process and aftermaths of traumatic experience? Shifting the frame to encompass both helps and hindrances to learning moves us away from this deficit approach.¹⁰

¹⁰ Also see
Heald and Horsman, 2000.

In addition to the concerns I brought to the group, other issues arose at our first meeting, and continued to draw our attention throughout the project period. Those issues, and the questions we initially posed around the issues, are listed below:

involving learners

How do we invite learners into this process in ways that respect their privacy, are safe and useful to them and also enable us to learn from them about their views of learning?

One participant suggested framing the issue around learning generally - what assists or hinders learning?

She wondered if ongoing conversations in classrooms where community is built would not then enable learners to disclose their own responses to trauma and its impact on their learning

This question about learner involvement echoed repeatedly through our discussions (face to face and via the list serv established for the group). My fear was that we not set up an atmosphere in which disclosure would be inappropriately sought, nor that we encourage learners to disclose to practitioners who were not prepared to hear those disclosures. During the year, when reviewing some of these issues with Jenny Horsman and others, this emphasis away from barriers back towards learning generally began to make sense to me.

In addition to our concerns about women we knew or suspected to be victims of violence we also wondered about learners not in crisis, but enduring chronic silence: how do women carry on? What can be done? Women are often silenced ‘in the world;’ what happens when

emotional abuse and other forms of oppression silence them in ways that impede access to learning or learning itself? Can/should teachers make referrals or suggestions? Is this work not about finding ways of addressing violence and its impacts on learning while also strengthening our own capacity as educators in ways that each of us is able to take on? Some teachers are able to develop relationships with learners through which learners are comfortable disclosing and educators can 'handle' disclosure – by taking on the topic, and/or by finding respectful ways to let the woman know she is not to blame and that there are referrals the educator can make, and/or by simply listening and responding carefully. Throughout the project period, we explored our own interactions with learners in classroom settings and also developed workshop approaches to assisting educators who wanted to learn more about responding more effectively to learners with histories of trauma or abuse.

We also established that we needed to find ways to make it safe for teachers *not* to take on this work. Implicit assumptions about expectations of literacy workers sometimes make us feel we have to do it all. Kate Nonesuch, an instructor at Duncan College in British Columbia, cited in *Too Scared To Learn* (p. 271) talks about 'side support,' recognizing her own strengths and limitations, she is acutely aware of the needs her learners might have in disclosing issues of violence in their lives. Kate provides these students with information about readily accessible support that she feels she may not be able to provide herself. This isn't a contest to see who among us can bear to hear the most difficult stories. This is a field in which ongoing support of learners and of one another needs to be constantly renegotiated and redefined. As well, teachers who feel validated because learners or colleagues trust them with disclosures need to ask themselves what this validation means and why it might be important. We need, too, to be mindful of the cost to us as workers in undertaking support work of this sort.

Recently, Kate contributed this insight to the Women and Literacy list discussion mentioned above:

In my experience, students will disclose no matter what the content of the curriculum. You can be teaching the "coolest" subject imaginable, fractions, for example, but if you treat them with respect, if you show that you are willing to listen, if you pay attention to what they need, many will respond by disclosing their experiences to you, and perhaps asking for help in other areas.

I know I can't take on listening to every story and working in a counselling mode for our students, so I try to get prepared to do referrals. Here are some of the things that work for me.

The College I work for has a couple of counsellors/advisors, whose primary function is academic advising. However, they will see students with “personal” problems and refer them to local counsellors or programs. They are a few blocks away, however, and usually a student in tears does not choose to walk through town to the main College building to see a counsellor. I make sure when we are on the main campus for other reasons to introduce everyone to the secretary in Student Services, and counsellors sometimes come to visit us to introduce themselves.

The First Nations Student Support worker from that department comes to our Centre once a week and holds a friendship circle for any student who wants to attend, and many First Nations and white students do attend. That is a helpful contact for many students, and because it is on-going they get another chance the next week to disclose more, or hold back, depending on their circumstances. That same Student Services department has put together a terrific little folder, that fits in a wallet, listing all the places to go for help in our community. I hand it out and use it all the time.

I think this is one of the advantages of living in a small community—all the possible referrals fit on a little card!

Seriously, most students in my program have lived in Duncan for a long time, and most of them are connected with several programs—welfare, social workers, drug and alcohol counselling, healthy baby programs, and so on. So when a student discloses to me, I can listen, honour her telling and ask if she has someone to talk to. If she says yes, then I know I’m not on the spot for being the main counsellor. If she says no, then I pull out the little card, and because it is a small community, she will usually have a connection at one or two of the programs listed there, and be willing to go in to talk to someone.

This back-up makes it possible for me to refer to violence and abuse in class, in the material we read, for example, or in the activities we do. I give lots of warning before we read it—“the story we are going to read tomorrow is hard to read emotionally. It is about a girl who was sexually abused—” and students have the freedom to come to the reading class or to work in the other room with the other teacher. I give the warning so students who don’t want to hear it can keep themselves safe. Other students come and some will disclose.

I like it better when people disclose to a small reading group, rather than in secret to me, even though they may tell me privately more details than they reveal in group. The culture at our Centre is that abuse is wrong and that nobody deserves violence, no matter what they do. The “provocation” excuse just doesn’t wash here, at least in class. So when someone discloses in group, they get a supportive response, although I wouldn’t like to give the impression that the response is deep or well-thought out or results in any concrete help or action.

*Kate Nonesuch, Posted to the National Institute for Literacy Women and Literacy list serv, Wed, 27 Sep 2000;
reprinted with author's permission*

Although I had wanted to be able to do more work directly with learners – perhaps in focus groups, or in discussion groups – this work did not occur as I had envisioned. While teachers in the group did engage their learners in this work, as is evident in the report that follows, having no formal class of my own made it difficult for me to approach groups of learners myself. In January I began tutoring two women in prison, and in August I began facilitating drop-in sessions for women and their children in transitional residence. My work with women with direct experiences of violence has pushed my thinking and informed much of this work in ways that might be different from what I could have learned in a ‘regular’ class setting. The combined knowledge and experiences of project participants and of all the learners with whom we have interacted informs the content of this document.

confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality are also important issues, particularly in small programs where most students and teachers know one another. Finding ways of alerting colleagues to a learner’s needs while not disclosing something a learner would rather have kept confidential is not simple. Sally Gabb was concerned about issues of confidentiality at the Genesis Center and asked me to facilitate a meeting with her staff. Staff brainstormed ways in which a clear policy about confidentiality could be developed with student input so that students would know that if they raised issues about child abuse, teachers, as mandated reporters, would be compelled to report such abuse. We worried that such a policy would silence students. We learned that we need to have our own first hand knowledge of reporting and other related laws, and/or have direct access to support workers or others who understand those laws well and can assist us in learning what our responsibilities are in terms of reporting abuse of children. Letting learners know that information they share that places teachers or others in a position of knowing about abuse and, subsequently, needing to report it to authorities is a delicate proposition. Learning to speak in ‘hypotheticals’ might be one means of dealing with the issue, but clearly we need support from others in being sure that we protect both mothers’ and children’s rights as well as ensuring safe spaces for disclosure or the means through which to make appropriate referrals.

Another area in which confidentiality is of tremendous concern is in the realm of battered immigrant women. Although women arriving legally in the US can not be deported for reporting abuse inflicted by a spouse or family member, threats of deportation, losing children

or ties to parents are made by abusers so that abused women's isolation is increased by having little, if any, knowledge of or access to help. Caseworkers are advised against taking lengthy notes that could be seized as evidence. The Family Violence Prevention Fund¹¹ strongly cautions caseworkers and others to seek legal counsel in taking on issues of abuse with immigrant women. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), finally having been reauthorized in October, 2000, after much legislative wrangling, provides some legal remedies for battered immigrant women, but clearly far more work needs to be done to make its provisions better known to advocates and victims. Any immigrant wishing to leave a violence domestic relationship in which she or he may be at risk because of immigration law needs legal counsel; teachers must understand that immigration law is complicated and that immigrant learners risk serious consequences if acting without trustworthy legal advice. Find the immigrant support agencies that are best trusted by immigrants and refugees in your community in order to pursue referrals for legal assistance; do not take on or discuss particular cases with anyone yourself.

11 See Trauma and the adult English Language Learner, 2000, <http://www.cal.org/nclle/DIGESTS/trauma2.htm>

systemic issues

How does a learning center implement a staff development process around dealing with political and domestic violence; what about community leadership development?

How can/should educational entities connect to those agencies providing assistance with domestic violence and other community issues?

How do internally and externally imposed constraints impact upon teachers' abilities to support learners' needs?

If a woman has overcome the systemic and institutional barriers that prevent her from even entering an educational program, she may bring other effects of violence with her. Many women display behaviours which are long-term effects of, for instance, child sexual abuse, systemic violence, rape or domestic battering.... These behaviours are defense mechanisms a woman has created in order to cope with trauma in her life; they protect her physical, emotional and spiritual self. When we understand why a woman is behaving in what at first may seem a contradictory manner, we realize that what she is doing makes perfect sense; she is protecting her safety. Our job, as educators, is to help her move to a place of trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, positive self-identity, and safety. A survivor of trauma needs to feel safe.¹²

12 Isolating the Barriers and Strategies for Prevention: A Kit about Violence and Women's Education for Adult Educators and Adult Learners. Prepared by Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, Toronto, Ontario: 1995

Externally imposed constraints on adult education programs have had an impact on what teachers are able to do to support learners for whom violence, or the threat of violence, is an issue. Nazneen spoke of accommodations her program made in its attendance policy because one learner reported that she feared her children were at risk of harm at the hand of another adult living in her home. This learner asked to be able to stay at home with her child until the adult could be removed from the house. The attendance policy at Nazneen's agency dictated that a student missing three classes without a reasonable excuse (illness, most notably), would lose his/her place in the program. In this case, the student was allowed to take the time she needed to sort out the issue with her children. Horsman, [2000, pp. 321-322] and others have taken up this issue as one in which program staffs need to advocate for flexibility within mandatory attendance policies in order to provide safe spaces for women, knowing that in some cases they will need to stop out (leave school for a period of time and then likely return) because of issues such as that named above. In other instances women may leave and come back as part of a larger process of gaining confidence and the wherewithal to attend classes regularly. The accommodation made for Nazneen's student reminded us of very specific and particular steps that can be taken without causing teachers to deal directly with disclosure, necessarily. A policy providing learners with leaves of absence due to a broadly-defined 'family issue' could be one way in which to allow women/heads of households the time away they need to deal with issues outside of the classroom until they feel ready to take on learning again.

While we were generally enthusiastic about this approach to supporting women in protecting their children, our colleague working in child protective services reminded us of mandatory reporting laws and the fact that having even remote knowledge of the possibility of abuse compels one to call child protective services in the state of Rhode Island. Indeed, when Brett Simmons, the art therapist among us, spent time visiting, participating in and substitute teaching classes at the Genesis Center, she reported that the knowledge she has of how systems work made her reconsider the entire project we'd undertaken, indicating that as a mandated reporter she risked doing "much harm by crossing over from therapy to education, because I can't look the other way. That can mean DCYF involvement, police involvement and even deportation." Brett's observation is true for all of us working with victims of violence; the issue is not simple. Knowing of ongoing violence in an adult learner's life and knowing of children present to the violence places us in difficult positions. Making learners aware of mandatory reporting laws may serve to silence those who most need access to assistance; learning of a situation in which a child is at risk places the educator in a precarious position. Sandy Kelleher and others remind us that calling the child abuse

hotline in and of itself may not result in any action being taken; staff on the hotline may be able to provide insight and advice to a concerned caller who may not disclose the name of the family/children in question. Practitioners are urged to think carefully about ways of making learners aware of legislation in their communities while also striving to break silence by making posters, pamphlets and other sources of information about abuse and available resources visible to all in learning centers.

Others in the domestic violence community have expressed concerns that the system itself, designed to assist battered women and their children, often only serves to re-victimize those who have suffered abuse by accusing mothers of failing to protect their children from abusive adults in the household. While deciding to leave an abusive situation is extremely complicated, those with little understanding of the realities involved in leaving tend to make judgements about the woman and the ways in which she is and isn't capable of protecting her children from abusive others¹³. Our group also expressed concerns around "revictimizing the victim;" what happens when child protective workers take children away from mothers who allow abusers back into the home? Where and how can our colleagues in social and child protective services who help us with legal and behavioral issues also assist us in beginning to institutionalize the connections alluded to above between education and social service providers? The questions raised by my colleagues and me within the context of adult learning are also those raised by others with long experience in and of domestic violence:

13 see, for example "Why don't they just leave?" by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, one of many articles addressing the fact that the question to ask is not why doesn't she leave, but rather, Why does s/he abuse her? [online at: <http://www.salon.com/mwt/diva/1997/10/02diva.html>]

"A dear friend of mine is an abused wife, and has determined never to seek redress from the law, or protection from a shelter, because the authorities are more frightening to her than her husband. At times, I feel that seeing things her way is cynical; other times I think NOT seeing things her way is naive." From a closed domestic violence list serv, 1 September, 2000, cited with the author's permission and request for anonymity.

Some adult education programs have domestic violence (DV) support on site, but this isn't always good if other students see a woman going to the DV person. At one agency, for example, none of the students would go to see the DV worker on site because the place was too public - other learners would see someone going to that worker, and so no one utilized the onsite service. Ironically, bringing the counselor to the school (a "safe" place for many, but not all learners), rendered some learners' interaction with the counselor impossible. One of the participants in our group, Nazneen Rahman, an immigrant educator herself, said she'd rather speak to me [a white woman] than to someone in her own community if she were being abused because of the relative privacy of speaking to someone *not* of her community,

adding later that “[I]n domestic violence cases, one needs to save face with their own community and therefore disclosure to people from the same community is a problem.” Clearly issues of assistance – what it is, how it functions, and how it is accessed – were interwoven throughout our work and will continue to challenge those of us who continue to investigate and attempt to proactively work on the impacts of violence on learning.

diversity: sharing issues common to western-born and immigrant/refugee women learners; joining forces, learning more from women of divergent backgrounds and cultures.

What strategies can we develop to assist women/victims in forming support groups?

How to recognize needs and develop support systems into the work we do in educational settings? How to recognize that domestic violence affects men and women of all classes and races?

How do we collaborate with community-based providers who have understanding of and trust built within diverse ethnic and linguistic groups?

Practitioners and others to whom I spoke, and whose writings I studied, often stated that violence was more predominant in some cultures than in others. *Machismo*, patriarchy and other forms of “other” societies were mentioned frequently. I found this troubling. Again, Jenny Horsman was very helpful in pointing out that all societies contain violent people and that violence is never acceptable in any of them. Some people say that violence is acceptable; some people accept it themselves while it is resisted by others/by activists; for me this is problematic. Some cultures normalize violence in ways that “our” western culture may pretend not to, but in fact, whether or not the violence is ‘accepted’ by some members of a society, it exists in all of them and it isn’t OK. What does a society allow? If women are violent, against whom are they violent? Horsman (personal communication, November, 2000) cites therapist Clarissa Chandler’s assertion that people are violent because they can be. Batterers don’t beat their bosses; they beat their partners. How is a society complicit in enabling/ allowing its members to perpetrate violence against one another? What does society condone?

The literature also speaks of the stresses of immigration, the threat to men’s roles in the settlement country, and again, mitigates – almost rationalizes – violent behavior as being somehow ‘understandable.’ What I’ve said to immigrants with whom I’ve worked to raise awareness is that the *law* says that assaulting another person is not OK. Terrorizing, stalking,

hitting, kicking, slapping or otherwise bodily hurting another person is not OK. Men in groups I've spoken to have acknowledged the stresses they encounter at work, the pressures they face in supporting their families. I am continually challenged to refrain from judging or criticizing, to be an active listener as I've heard these remarks. In workshops with students and others I've tried to speak of alternatives to violence, supports available and others ways of dealing with rage and frustration.

A perception persists that within various immigrant communities certain forms of violence are condoned; women in these communities themselves see such violence as "normal," and understand that they, as daughters in law, for example, will one day become mothers in law and will have 'earned' the respect of the household by having endured abuse silently. People outside those communities will 'disappear' this violence by not intervening, by not imposing values; the silence will not be broken. The notion of a dominant culture telling another group what to do is abhorrent, especially when the dominant cultures in most western countries *themselves* normalize violence. Breaking silences, disrupting families and communities is tremendously difficult in any culture; to lessen the importance of making all women aware of the legal rulings against violence is to merely condone the violence itself and to become complicit in its continuation. As practitioners we must be cognizant of the complexity of the nuances of violence, working to make the issues visible while *not* imposing them upon learners. Our task is not to become therapists, or advisors, per se, but to be active listeners, to be facilitators of conversations, conveyors of information, sometimes, and sometimes to step aside and know where, when, how to make an appropriate referral.

Sue Taylor, an adult educator working in the United Kingdom posted this message to the Women and Literacy List in September, 2000:

Part of my work is with women from a Pakistani-origin living here in London. Violence in the family tends not to be discussed for two reasons: first women who admit to having been abused feel that they dishonour their families and themselves if they admit to an outsider their problems at home. Second, they accept that Islam permits men to 'punish' their wives - not to beat them, I've been told, just to "correct" them. It seems from this that abuse is culturally defined and what some may see as abuse other people define another way.

Several women have expressed genuine surprise when I criticize any situation where violence is used within a domestic situation. They have excused their husband's or mother-in-law's (I've said this before - women abuse as well!) behaviour as being deserved because of some action on their part or just accepted it happens without question. What concerns me is that

young women, like their mothers, accept that they may be physically abused within their family and so the cycle goes on. Some do not see the violence as abuse – or even violence! One young woman told me that ‘correction’ is carried out in love.

The UK has seen a couple of well publicized cases where Pakistani-origin young women have been killed by male relatives because they have had male friends/ lovers. I discussed one of the articles referring to such a case with a group of 18 year old female students as part of a literacy task. Every member of the group justified the killing by saying that the woman knew the rules and should have obeyed them, or she should have more careful about concealing her affair, rather than condemning the men who hunted down the unfortunate woman and murdered her. From what you and other women have said here and elsewhere, women tend to blame themselves rather than the abuser - why? It makes no logical sense and enables abusers to continue to abuse with a clear conscience.

The layered nature of cross-cultural understandings precludes easy answers. Collaborations between and among educators and cultural workers may be one way towards heightening awareness of the legalities of violence, as part of a larger process of addressing and working to eliminate it. We live in violent times. Talking about laws and consequences is one way of raising awareness. Moralizing and judging is not going to change behavior. Talking about the law is less likely to as well. For the moment, though, it’s the place from which I start in looking at introducing the topic of violence with mixed gender groups of adult learners. Heidi Brinig, project director of Families Together, a program of the Children’s Museum of Rhode Island, brings another perspective to difficult discussions about violence and culture. Challenged by those who insist that particular cultures condone violence, Ms. Brinig invites them to examine the research in order to learn the effects of the repeated perpetration of violence against adults and children. That research alone is sufficiently compelling as a means of shifting the challenge back to those who would ‘disappear’ violence in communities that ‘condone’ it by looking at its effects on the physical and mental wellness of those who are victims of violence and abuse. Moving the discussion to personal as well as legal consequences enables us to ask what we learn from violence, how we are changed by it and how we can work towards its elimination.

classroom content

DV as content of curriculum we teach: Where can you introduce this content ‘safely’? (e.g. Columbine High School, or other sites of ‘public’ violence are impersonal and broadly enough known so that the discussion can go anywhere; physical abuse by a partner, though, is far more specific and likely to open up difficult memories/realities for others)

Is it true that different kinds of trauma have different effects on people (group trauma differs from individual trauma)? From our first meeting on, we acknowledged the need to talk amongst ourselves about how to take these topics up with learners – and amongst our colleagues. Other areas that emerged throughout the project period include:

- *physical and emotional violences, child sexual abuse – effects on learning*
- *resiliency*
- *same sex abuse*
- *teen hate crimes against homosexual teens*
- *disaster aftermath – how things such as floods, house fires and other externally-produced events add to stresses and exacerbate the possibilities for violence against women and children*

collaboration :

How to learn about and coordinate efforts among existing service providers, connecting bridging, while not losing the focus of what we hope this work will help us do (assist adult learners and their teachers).

Some of the project goals relevant to deepening collaboration across provision areas were realized and continue to be developed beyond the fellowship period. Although I had hoped to work more closely with immigrant community workers beyond the Women's Center, I was unable to move that work very fully mostly through a lack of time to follow up on initial contacts I had made with those workers, most notably those working within Southeast Asian communities in the state. However, another project, Women, Violence and Adult Education, recently undertaken by World Education, is working with six literacy programs in New England to address violence and learning within a multi-year project . through which programs are identifying and addressing ways in which violence impacts upon learners within their particular contexts. Through this project, staff at the Genesis Center have entered into a contract to collaborate on culture-based approaches to addressing violence with the Socio Economic Development Center, an agency comprised of Southeast Asian service providers who employ a Cambodian bilingual worker specifically to address issues of domestic violence within the Southeast Asian community. The collaboration with the Women's Center, however, has grown beyond my initial thinking and shows great promise for extending the very premise of this work well beyond the fellowship period. While the Women's Center has

undergone shifts in staffing, a number of staff remaining at the center are committed to undertaking work that focuses on the differing and similar needs of a diverse group of women in their shelter.

process

While this report attempts to present key findings and possibilities for practice, it is worth noting the course of events through which our work occurred. Quarterly reports¹⁴, provide a chronological overview of events. The reports do not, however, give a sense of the starts and stops, the frustrations and the inevitable difficulties of working with a group of busy practitioners all trying to understand a very complicated and layered set of issues.

The original schedule for the project period appears below. Speakers were scheduled and times were left open for planning, reflection and discussion amongst the group:

OCTOBER 1	-	first full group meeting
OCTOBER 15	-	all day conference, Let's Make Domestic Violence History
OCTOBER 29	-	meeting to check in and to meet Margie Parsons
NOVEMBER 6	-	all day training with staff of the Women's Center
DECEMBER 3	-	meeting with Margie
JANUARY		[open]
FEBRUARY	-	Richard Hoffman, author of Half the House
MARCH		[open]
APRIL	-	catching up; initial findings
MAY	-	Jenny Horsman
JUNE	-	our conference

- [January or March] workshop to plan with a representative of the Women's Resource Center of South County on rural issues - other speakers/sessions for us?

¹⁴ online at http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Sweater_Center/Literacy_Resources/proposal.html

clinical supervision - hiring a counselor - what do we want from her? [from a message I sent to the group via email on October 11th:] The schedule did, of course, change.

Counselor/support for literacy workers: In addition to the support that the fellowship provided in terms of stipends for participants, I realized as soon as the proposal had been submitted that it would be necessary to have access to a counselor for the group so that we could both learn more about trauma generally and also have access to her as a counselor for our own needs as they arose. After the full group met with Margie Parsons, a trauma counselor in Rhode Island, additional meetings were held with her, with attendance optional for participants who had been asked to commit to only one meeting a month. More than half the group chose to attend sessions with Margie during the winter months.

Margie was recommended to me by staff of the Women's Center of Rhode Island, for whom she has provided clinical support. She provided support to our group, not as a trainer, but as someone who was available to answer our broad questions about trauma itself, as well as to respond to particular questions, concerns and incidents encountered by members of the group. She met with the group as a whole four times during the project year, and was also available to participants to seek on an as-needed basis. While no one called Margie for private appointments, funding was set aside to enable that to occur. It was understood that Margie would bill in for that time, but would not disclose who had booked appointments unless those people wanted me to know they'd been to see her. In the event, no one chose to contact her, but having access to that support was vitally important to me in order to ask participants to take on such work.

The working group met monthly as a full group between October and June. Several women in the group also met additionally with Margie for open-ended sessions at which we were able to pose questions and enter into discussion guided by Margie's knowledge of trauma and its effects on women generally. She was able to respond to our questions through her own therapeutic lens and led us to additional learning about violence/trauma issues through sharing readings and explorations of our questions about classroom implications. I engaged her support not for 'training' per se, but as a knowledgeable professional open to this kind of processive work. I wanted participants to have access to a therapist themselves so that if they found a need for personal support, a qualified counselor would be available to them. While seen as a luxury, access to this support is essential. Over time, will a new computer be as important to a program's well being as access to a qualified counselor, available to staff and students? If we remain mindful of the need to address the whole person (educator/learner) we need to be aware of *all* the supports likely to be needed over the course of an academic session.

Acknowledging that many programs are unable to allocate funding to ensure access to counseling, a staff/program priority could be developed within adult education programs to seek low and no cost counseling services, or to invite trauma workers to address staff concerns about finding suitable support for the those who need it when dealing with issues of trauma and learning. Such collaboration across disciplines is part of On the Screen's larger goal and will, I hope, be incorporated by others developing capabilities for practitioners who work with victims and survivors of trauma. While finding support people such as Margie might be more or less difficult for adult education programs, the budget allocation is as important as any other workshop or professional development expense when seen as a concrete means of assisting teachers in understanding the particular needs and strengths of learners who have experienced trauma.

We had originally planned to have a speaker and/or group meeting every month. The list serv also provided an ongoing form of communication for the group. While not everyone was able to attend every meeting, because of scheduling conflicts, I met with each participant at least once a month between October and June, and with everyone individually or in small group meetings during the summer.

Following the all day workshops (the statewide conference in October and the training provided to us by the Women's Center in November), we realized that we needed time to process the information we'd heard and also to reflect as a group upon the consequences of our learning in our particular settings. One of the casualties of our re-thinking was the Women's Resource Center of South County, an agency that I had hoped would provide us with an overview of issues surrounding domestic violence in rural settings. Because none of the teachers in the project worked in rural areas and also because of our need to begin to narrow our focus, that workshop never occurred. I did speak to Diane D'Errico, now-former director of the South County center, and met with her staff late in the summer of 1999. Diane was able to make contact with an adult education provider in the area, in hopes of working with his staff on issues of violence and learning. Diane's staff would have provided information about their resources to the educators (and their learners, possibly) and I would have worked more closely with educators to focus on impacts of violence on learning. The three of us had hoped to meet in June but one individual had an urgent health issue arise, and another was compelled to devote energy to writing a grant for refunding a key program. To date that work has not been continued, but I hope that it will be in the coming academic year within the parameters of my work at LR/RI

Richard Hoffman, author of Half the House, provided the group a shift of perspective when he spoke to us in February about his experiences as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. Where we had focused largely on impacts of violence on women, and had thought more about domestic violence and its perpetrators, Richard gave us insight into the aftermath of childhood sexual abuse as well as ways of coping with the enormity of the tasks we'd undertaken.

Richard spoke about the "toxic curriculum of boyhood," challenging the very word *pedophile* (a lover of children) and asserting that this one manifestation of evil is something that has always been with us. He posited that boys in this society are raised to be violent, and that boyhood is the antithesis of empathy, citing kids' sports coaches as people quite likely to push a toughness beyond that needed to be 'fit' to play little league baseball. He cautioned against growing disheartened, and spoke of the sex offenders' inability to abide the innocence of children. Interestingly, it was another teacher – a different sort of authority figure – who later helped Richard back towards trust and boundaries; towards realizing that some adults in the world wanted to help him while asking for nothing in return.

I had struggled prior to Richard's talk with issues of forgiveness, with wondering how do we deal with someone who has hurt another person, has asserted power and control in a violent way? Richard pointed out that to forgive is a transitive verb. S/he who forgives has agency to do so or not. Richard helped me understand that the issue I need to grapple with is not one of forgiveness but more about what happens when offenders reenter communities. In many ways, he helped me turn my outrage away from men, something that had been troubling me (I live with a man, I love many men and women). I turned my outrage instead to a society that enables children to be unprotected and those who harm them access to their innocence.

In addition to a tape from *Dateline* (a television news magazine) that he shared with us (providing a factual overview of what had happened to Richard and to his abuser once Half the House had been published), he also shared his own writing and that of others, as well as resources for those of us wishing to access writing as a means of healing. One of the resources he shared with us is the text Writing and Healing : Toward an Informed Practice (Refiguring English Studies), Charles M. Anderson (Editor), and Marian M. MacCurdy.¹⁵

Richard's generosity with us – sharing his own story, his unequivocal views on those who abuse children sexually and his own ways of coping contributed to our ongoing thinking about violence and its effects and moved us beyond 'merely' considering 'adult' violence to a larger consideration of the whole spectrum of violences – including those likely to have been part of our own lives or those of our learners. We met at five o'clock on a Friday afternoon, viewed the tape, talked,

15 As well, Richard pointed us to Human Equity through Art – HEART, a web site community outreach projects that combine artistic expression with diversity and tolerance-focused learning. <http://trfn.clpgh.org/heart/>

stopped for dinner and came back together to explore writing and poetry. (This having of food, time to stop and eat and chat was a critical part of all our activities; a small, small piece of self-care that the fellowship funding afforded us. Looking after people who work hard often seems to be a frill that we think we don't need. It isn't. It's important).

Jenny Horsman, who gave a half day workshop to our team as part of a full day in Providence working with both the team and interested others from the community was the group's only other outside speaker. The group agreed that we weren't capable of processing more input from outside experts, but rather needed time to process the reading, thinking and discussion we had engaged in. The team read Too Scared to Learn well before Jenny arrived in June, and we framed many of our discussions around issues named in the book. Jenny's workshop pulled together many of the points we'd been considering throughout the year, and that content is reflected throughout this document.

Throughout the course of the fellowship year, participants themselves were able to be more or less present to the work we'd undertaken. In some instances, there were bursts of activity – numerous workshops for staff and learners at the International Institute of Rhode Island, meetings with Margie or the full group every other week – and at other times the list serv went quiet, group meetings were small. Nonetheless, every woman who had begun the project has given permission for her words to be included and many continue to proactively work on issues of violence within their learning settings.

As of this writing, it is not clear if participants want to host a half-day conference for colleagues here in Providence. We will re-convene the discussion group focussed on women's issues in literacy in 2001, and I will continue to support the Genesis Center staff in its work on the World Education project. The Women's Center's intergenerational literacy program is funded through June, 2001.

Beyond the work reported here, I will facilitate workshops through the fall of this year, serve as a resource to the World Education regional work, continue as a tutor in the prison and facilitate the literacy work at the Women's Center. I will continue to develop the web sites and I hope that the women in the group continue to reflect on and change their practice, and continue to raise and maintain awareness of impacts of violence on learning on the screen within and beyond adult education communities beyond the project's end.

The following extensive extract from a 1996 study of adult learners explicitly identifies violence and other stressors in adult learners' lives. I include it here to give a sense of the awareness

in the field about impacts of violence (personal, domestic and systemic [poverty]) on adult learners' lives. The study, *Perceptions of adult literacy learners about themselves and their lives*, points to factors that adults consider in relation to learning and the support they need in order to do so; however the literature is generally sparse in acknowledging violence itself as a factor in adult learning.¹⁶

16 For an overview of the study, see Malicky and Norman, <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/pat/vol6no1/page3.htm>

Violence

At times, either explicitly or just beneath the surface of talk on relationships was another theme that of violence. Sometimes it was the adults in the literacy programs who perpetrated the violence, (e.g. one man was charged with assault following a fight in a bar, and one woman was charged and convicted of manslaughter). In general, however, the adults in the study were more frequently victims than perpetrators of violence, and it was generally women who were the victims. Some of this violence was verbal. For example, one woman indicated that if she had still been married, she would not have been allowed to attend school or do homework. When she attended a family reunion, her father criticized her for going to school, and she reported that her brothers and sisters were not supportive either. She broke up with her boyfriend near the end of the study because he was “trying to change her.”

Some of the women, however, did not feel that they were able to leave abusive relationships. one immigrant woman got pregnant a few months after she entered the literacy program and quit school because she was not feeling well and had missed several classes. After she had the baby, she was virtually confined to the house. A few months later she indicate that her husband had hit her and that she had called the police on two occasions. The last time the police told her that if she called again, the baby would be taken away from her. By the end of the study, she was pregnant again and she was both sick and depressed. She said that neither she nor her husband wanted the baby, and that her husband didn't care for her and she didn't care for her husband. She was planning to go to her country of origin to be with her family until her baby was born, but she felt she had no choice but to return to Canada eventually because she didn't know what else she could do with two children.

Not all violence against women involved family members. One woman reported that she was attempting to find a new place to live because her landlord made her feel “uncomfortable” and another woman indicated that she was moving because she did not feel “safe” in the neighborhood in which she was living. Violence was also not restricted to women. One man described living with violence on an almost daily basis while he was going to school. <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/pat/vol6no1/page11.htm>

It's pretty hard when you've got other things on you mind. You have to, when you got to deal with a drunk in your family like with my dad, eh, it's hard... He's over here banging at the door or something. I broke up with my girlfriend. Last week she broke the window here and everything. Well my mom's not talking to me now. I don't like her boyfriend... because he's abusive to her. And we got into a fight one night. He was drinking and now my mom doesn't want me back over there. (male, Canadian-born)

While violence was a theme in only some of the interviews Collected in this study, it is important to keep in mind that we, like Rockhill (1987), did not ask any questions about violence but rather focused on aspects of people's lives related to their attendance in literacy classes. Hence, the information collected related to this theme likely provides an underestimate of the extent of violence in the lives of the individuals in this study.

Time Pressures and Stress

While both women and men reported increased stress and pressure from dealing with the combined demands of home and school, this was reported more frequently by women than men. This is again partly related to the fact that more women were single parents. Typical of the responses provided by women in the study were the following:

I go to school, then I go home, feed the kids and do my housework and then by that time I'm dead. (female, Canadian-born)

I'm finding with raising the children on my own and going to school it is, you know, not only is it a pain but it's just too much of a load. (female, immigrant)

Two women who reported that they were not able to do as much cooking or house cleaning as they had prior to admission to literacy programs received very different reactions from their families; in one instance the family was very supportive, in the other the husband was highly critical.

There were few instances of other services available to women who found the increased pressures of home and school too much to deal with. One single parent, who reported very early in the literacy program feeling "burned out", had so much difficulty that social services eventually provided her with a parent aide. However, even this was not enough. She eventually had an "emotional breakdown" and her children were placed in foster care. <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/pat/vol6no1/page12.htm>

online at the National Literacy Database; from Grace V. Malicky and Charles A. Norman, Perceptions of Adult Literacy Learners about themselves and their lives, Adult Basic Education, Volume 6, Number 1, Spring 1996, pp. 3 - 20

violence as a health issue

The study cited above suggests that violence is one of a number of issues and distractions pervasive in adults' lives generally and amongst those of adult learners in particular. One of the ways in which violence is taken up within classrooms is under the umbrella of health or community wellness.

A report by Rima Rudd and Barbara Moeykens¹⁷ suggests that “adult educators with experience in teaching health units need to be involved in collaborations with public health and medical professionals to develop curricula to foster functional health literacy with methodology that they successfully apply to building basic skills.” While Rudd and Moeykens define functional health literacy “as the ability to use written materials to function in health care settings and to maintain one’s health and the skills needed to advocate for and request needed clarification,” I would also argue that general coping with bureaucracies, the perceived shame of disclosing abuse and otherwise dealing with violence is additionally compounded by limited access to print as a resource. Interestingly the survey on which their report is based states that 93% of teachers responding viewed adult learning settings as “appropriate... to teach and learn about health,” although they thought that their students would be less interested in pursuing health as a topic. The survey also suggests that health seems to be of greater interest to older learners, speakers of languages other than English and/or adults with health issues. I would suggest, however, that an awareness of health issues and their impact generally, as well as an understanding of the effects of trauma specifically, will greatly enhance learning opportunities for adults in formal and informal adult education settings (classes, community colleges, one-to-one tutoring situations, etc.)

17 Rima E.Rudd,Sc.D. and Babrabra A.Moeykens, M.S.,Harvard School of Public Health.(1999). Adult Educators'Perceptions of Health Issues and Topics in Adult Basic Education Programs. Cambridge, MA: NCSALL Reports #8.

Regardless of the findings cited above, literacy practitioners are increasingly turning their attention to health as a topic within their classrooms – either because students bring up questions related to health, environment and/or structural issues such as access to health care and/or insurance – or because particular funding streams enable practitioners to address

specific elements of health and its impact on communities. Christina Zarcadoolas, a colleague at Brown University, made me aware of the concept of 'infusing' health content into literacy work, a practice common among many educators who encourage learners to bring specific content (current events, questions about politics, concerns about their children's schools) to the learning process. For all of this attention to health, we are well cautioned by Horsman who states:

Because the medicalizing discourse is so pervasive that it is hard even to notice when we are using it or operating within its framework, beginning to pay attention and notice how it structures our thinking will be an important task for educators. Noticing how teachers and learners speak about trauma and opening up frameworks can help avoid the slide into deficit models and seeing trauma as solely an individual health problem. This shift is important to allow us to move away from assumptions about a simple separation between literacy and therapy. If the impact of trauma creates a health problem, it is easy to suggest that survivors should address that health problem and return when they are ready to learn. However, impacts of trauma will always be present in the classroom and need to be recognized. We teach whole people even when our educational practices ignore the presence of anything but the mind, and many learners will bring to class a legacy, or present reality of violence. (Horsman, 2000 pp.325-326).

Horsman goes on to speak of the necessity of making violence visible, or shifting the onus away from the individual who has experienced violence and bringing to everyone's attention the ways in which violence impacts on all our lives. One practitioner at the International Institute of RI, where I conducted several workshops, spoke of working to incorporate a focus on violence into her minority health grant. Others take the approach of a community wellness analysis, asking learners to consider what makes their communities safe or healthy, and where it might be possible to change those things that are unsafe and unhealthy. I prefer to think of this assets-based, proactive approach to incorporating violence as a topic – be it under the umbrella of health, current events, women's rights or other broader topics through which literacy learning occurs.

post traumatic stress disorder

Post traumatic stress has been widely discussed both in terms of refugee experiences of organized violence and also in the context of survivors/victims of personal violence. PTSD refers to behaviors such as hyper vigilance, sensitivity to sudden noise, or changes in the environment. Symptoms of PTSD can exist in those who have not been traumatized to a

greater and lesser degree. Numerous resources providing additional information about PTSD are available¹⁸; the purpose of this section is to throw into question its overuse in discussions of learning and violence. Horsman writes clearly about the problems associated with medicalizing trauma when we consider its role in learning. My purpose is not to say that some people, *other* people, have experienced trauma and so we must be mindful of how we teach *them*. I'm saying, rather, that to be alive at this time in history means to have had some experience of violence – through media images, through direct experience, through having heard of others' encounters, through having inflicted violence on other people – and that regardless of the extent to which an individual has experienced trauma, there are ways of interacting with one another – both in and out of classrooms – that can minimize re-inflicting yet more violence.

18 One resource recommended by Margie Parsons, the counselor to this group: Expert Consensus Treatment Guidelines for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Guide for Patients and Families, prepared by Edna B. Foa, PhD, Jonathan R.T. Davidson, MD, Allen Frances, MD and Ruth Ross, M.A. online <http://www.psychguides.com/ptsdhe.pdf>

According to Foa et al, “[a]s many as 70% of adults in the United States have experienced at least one major trauma in their lives, and many of them have suffered from the emotional reactions that are called PTSD” [page 1]. They state that a “diagnosis of PTSD requires exposure to an extreme stressor and a characteristic set of symptoms” lasting at least a month. Extreme stressors they name include combat exposure, rape or sexual assault, serious accident or natural disaster, witnessing a traumatic event and child abuse (physical or sexual) or neglect. The most widely cited definition I've seen of trauma is that of Judith Herman, who defines “traumatic events [as those] overwhelm[ing] the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning,” a definition encompassing the range of responses to violence in many forms.¹⁹ Tanya Lewis and others have challenged Herman's work for the distinctions it makes between who and what *normal* is and looks like. While Herman and others in the therapeutic community strive to help victims of trauma recover towards 'normal' life, Lewis frames this recovery process, rather, as a struggle to *live beside* trauma, and to come to terms with it as one can, realizing that the trauma will never be disappeared from one's memories or experiences. Rather than feel as though one has failed by not reaching “normal,” Lewis asserts that a certain degree of living beside the trauma and its aftermath is a more realistic way of viewing recovery from (in her case) incest; and, arguably, from other forms of trauma as well.²⁰

19 Judith Herman, (1992) Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence -- from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror, p. 33.

20 Tanya Lewis. (1999). Living beside: Performing normal after incest memories return. Toronto: McGilligan Books.

The relevance of an understanding of PTSD to our work is not that it enables us to take on therapeutic roles. Such an understanding is important to increasing our awareness of what it takes for a victim/survivor of violence to interact with the world on a daily basis and to force ourselves to reconsider what 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' classroom

behavior might be. Jenny Horsman, speaks of *presence*, or the ability to be fully attentive to what's going on in a classroom as a key piece of her understanding of what PTSD can do and mean to adult learners and teachers. She also speaks of the ability to gauge the level of attention needed to accomplish whatever needs to be done by knowing what one needs; and of learners' ability to be attentive enough to learn new material (personal communication, November, 2000). This notion of being attentive enough can also be extended to the notion of our work as educators sometimes being good enough as well. While not advocating for a lowering of our own expectations of ourselves or others, there are times when that extra, extra effort – while desirable, while making the task at hand that much better – is sometimes simply too much in terms of the costs of time and energy. Sometimes our work just is good enough. And sometimes, yes, we do need to push ourselves harder and go a bit further. Finding the balance is important in determining how good the work needs to be, how attentive one needs to be, what is gained and what is lost in making efforts that sometimes simply drain us.

In reviewing work she has done with adult learners in Toronto, she speaks, for example, about the importance of the physical space in which learners come together. Furniture in adult education settings is often old and uncomfortable, lighting is bad, space is cramped. Horsman argues that we challenge these givens and find creative ways to make spaces more welcoming, suggesting that a comfortable chair or chairs within the class space but away from the working table could give a learner permission to acknowledge that she needs time away from task, but also enables her to let others know that she is still interested in returning to her work and remaining within the learning community.

I found Jenny's discussions about 'presence' to be very relevant to any classroom situation. This is a concept that I've never discussed with my students before. I think it will be interesting to talk with students about what helps them be more present. The ideas of distracting problems and how to deal with them should be helpful to everyone... There can be any number of other reasons that s/he is not 'present' and I shouldn't blame their lack of attention on their lack of interest or my boring teaching style. I also like Jenny's idea of providing ways for learners to stay with the group even if they're not 'present.' Providing a chair where someone can sit & listen even if she doesn't want to fully participate seems like a good solution and an idea I want to try. Nancy Fritz, final reflections, August/2000

behaviors associated with post traumatic stress disorder

Foa et al delineated three main types of symptoms of PTSD: re-experiencing of the traumatic event; avoidance and emotional numbing, and increased arousal.

Dr. Whitley, describing the recognition of dissociative symptoms, lists incongruous behavior, 'spacing out' or 'blips,' verbal and non-verbal signals, and "other symptoms indicating partial reexperiencing of trauma," which she lists as follows:

1. 'Seeing slides' or 'snapshots'
2. Brief bursts of intense feelings
3. hearing words of phrases
4. Somatic sensations such as chest tightness, abdominal, pelvic or genital pain; difficulty swallowing or gagging, inability to breathe.²¹

21 from Dealing with
Dissociative Symptoms,
undated handout, Kathleen
P, Whitley, M.D

Some of the symptoms she describes within these parameters include losing train of thought, distraction, staring into space, often with nonverbal indications of distress, misidentifying persons or surroundings, inappropriate behavior to surroundings, inappropriate affects in context to surroundings, body tremors, facial expressions of distress, confusion, sense of numbness. An awareness of these symptoms is important in helping educators understand that seemingly 'inappropriate' behaviors in the classroom could be related to symptoms of PTSD; however we can not assume that someone displaying these behaviors is necessarily suffering from the disorder. Our task is to understand that these symptoms might appear in anyone, and to find ways to accommodate the particular needs that learners with these behaviors have, as well as to help learners identify other strengths they also possess.

While the word *symptoms* appears throughout this discussion, it is one with which I am not entirely comfortable. In stressing the need to *not* medicalize learners' responses to various stimuli and circumstances, we need to remain mindful of the fact that many of these 'symptoms' – or, more accurately, behaviors – are present in the general population – regardless of one's previous experiences of trauma per se. In learning about PTSD, even within a medical frame, it is useful for educators to see the behaviors described above not as symptoms but as behaviors. Horsman's observation (Alphaplus list re: Impacts of trauma on learning 12/28/99) brings the issue into focus:

Gradually I came to see that the medicalized, individual approach to trauma as leading to a disorder or sickness (e.g PTSD) while it may have offered some useful clarity about after effects of trauma also contributed to an assumption that trauma leads to 'problems' to be addressed in private with your doctor or therapist. These approaches move us away from focussing on violence as a public issue very present in education. They also move us away from focussing on the need for society to change, rather than the individual who experienced the trauma and can't 'cope' in situations that don't feel safe.

In a classroom, behaviors might look like this:

A student goes quiet. She smiles, barely, and participates minimally. For days on end she may or may not contribute to the conversation. She does handwork in front of her – doing handwork to build something decorative for a school project with colored straws. One day she laughs and can't stop laughing until she cries. She doesn't come to class anymore.

or maybe it looks like a quiet, strong woman, who smiles and is sometimes assertive, not aggressive in conversation group, but who makes it known, somehow, that she's left a husband behind in Calgary and would prefer that her whereabouts not be made known.

Or it looks like someone who is hypervigilant, sensitive to sudden noises, chatty, maybe, or withdrawn.

Or it looks like you. or like me. Studying, sitting in a group, taking notes at a conference, crying at a movie, laughing at a joke.

Adults have varying response to stressors – both extreme stressors and not-so extreme ones (parking tickets, children who forget to call home, money worries, and who's to say that one person's extreme stress isn't someone else's no problem and vice versa?). Reacting to those stressors, finding ways to name one's ability to be present, knowing where it's acceptable to vent, or to remove oneself from a meeting or classroom is also part of the process of making trauma and its effects visible and assisting people in knowing how and where they can be safe.

balance - what can be heard, what can be spoken

Throughout the project, many of us had moments of feeling that the work was too big, the problem too pervasive. One of us does not like poetry; others find poetry and fiction wonderful ways of getting at the essence of difficult issues and teasing them apart.

Some of our speakers and some of our approaches were cognitive in nature; others reached us more deeply on affective levels. We heard a range of speakers at the state's annual domestic violence conference in October. Survivors of violence, working together as SOAR – Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships – spoke eloquently of their experiences. Other speakers presented facts and data relative to statistics and policies in place locally and nationally. Richard Hoffman, a writer and survivor of childhood sexual abuse, brought a videotaped segment of an interview he gave on NBC television's Dateline program and also read poetry to us at the end of the evening as part of his process of helping us understand

issues of abuse more fully. The woman who couldn't hear poetry was unable to stay for all of Richard's talk. Others found the video to be useful in giving a sense of what Richard's experience had been in writing the memoir which subsequently led to the arrest of his abuser. For me, the poetry worked best. While wanting to make safe space, the ground rules have to allow participants to be more or less present to those pieces they can hear, and the group to neither judge nor dismiss those who leave. Our own responses to various speakers and varying forms of information helped us understand how learners might respond differently not only to 'difficult' topics, but also to the ways in which those topics are presented.

The work of the Adult Multiple Intelligences project led by Silja Kallenbach and Julie Viens also holds promise in assisting learners in finding multiple ways of hearing and responding to information and to getting around 'barriers' to literacy²².

22 See Focus on Basics, Volume 3, Issue A, March, 1999 <http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/1999/fobv3ia.htm>

The work we do in adult education is not only about sharing information, facilitating learning, and assisting students in naming and meeting their educational goals. The work is about relationships. Developing communities and supporting learners is critical to this work. Comments made during a taped conversation among members of the fellowship project in August illustrate the importance of community among learners and teachers as a necessary component of our work:

***Nazeen:** One of the key things, I think, in adult ed is – I'm thinking in terms of a new teacher going into a classroom with all good intentions of teaching and doing well... I think the key to whatever you're saying as far as the way I work or the way Dina works or the way Nancy works, what happens with us is when we get into a classroom, we build a community. We have that sixth sense alertness where we see what is comfortable and uncomfortable for each student... That community building is, I think, key to getting anywhere with anybody. If you think back to your own teaching you do that automatically having been seasoned teachers.*

Later during the conversation, I revisited the notion of community, speaking about the difficult nature of balancing what feels safe to share with what the effect of telling might be upon others in the group. How can community engender safety so that deciding what one can tell and what others might be able to hear can be made visible, so that we don't lose energy deciding what to tell and what to hide, but we also don't risk harming one another:

***Janet:** [A colleague of mine was helping me prepare a workshop for camp counselors on issues of child abuse]. She said, "You can't sit there and cry [upon hearing a difficult disclosure] because you've got to hear the story. What if the kid is saying 'You know, here's my story. I've got to tell it to you?' " ... I think, as people who work together, who know each other ... I think we're mindful of different ways of telling and of what people can hear. Not only*

how vulnerable do I want to make myself be. But maybe you've already heard ... five horrible things today, so I don't want to add to that burden. And so all those different kinds of balances where, I think we all acknowledge when there's community, that stuff can get told safely, or not get told safely. So when [my colleague] was talking about how she's done this workshop [about reporting child abuse], [she ask participants to] 'think of when your parents did this, when your parents did that.' And later in the conversation she said, "And I also preface the workshop by saying 'I don't assume that people have or haven't had experiences like these themselves.'" And I said, "I'm really glad you brought that up because I'm so hyper-cautious, rather than say, 'Tell me about your parents,' I would say, 'What is a good parent?'"

Jenny Horsman, serving as guest moderator on the National Institute for Literacy's Women and Literacy list serv, succinctly describes the tensions between tell and hearing in the following excerpts from a message posted on September 20, 2000:

One thing I wrote about in the book was the idea that some students will want the program to be a safe place to tell their story and others will want it to be a safe place not to have to hear stories. I found it challenging but fascinating exploring with a group of learners how we could meet conflicting needs of this sort.

Talk about violence I think can often lead to a slide into talk about "them" as if "they" are not also us - It's so much easier to talk about the problems "they" have rather than our own - whether the "they" is learners or another culture. I worry about how we can work with that. I've tended to think in terms of most cultures (I don't know about every one - but I wonder) accepting some aspect of violence against women and children and activists in every culture struggling to make changes. ... we are all shaped by the social norms of the societies we live in, but those norms do change over time - so how can literacy workers and programs support changing norms and attitudes????

Sometimes the issue of violence can unite us across other divides, I found teaching a women's group where we were focussing on how to draw your whole self into strengthening learning made a tone of "fellow traveller" possible as we all talked about the struggle to look after ourselves and learn to relax, or how to cope with blanking when we panic - whereas when we focus only on literacy I experience the divide between teacher and student as much more stark. I do think there is an important piece to "worry at" about the tensions we may feel as workers to be "together," have already "got over it" if we have experienced violence ourselves. I'm not sure that there is any such state as one of having "got over it" - so I think there is a complicated pressure for literacy workers.

Jenny's message, a response to an ongoing and rich conversation which she moderated over the course of two weeks in September, 2000 (archived at http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/nifl-womenlit/women_literacy.html) points back to the conversation about community described above. For many educators the notion of community is familiar and might provide a means of broadening the conversation to include a concept of 'fellow traveller' in ways that enable teachers to support learners in varying ways and to varying degrees.

During this extended conversation a number of participants raised concerns about how, why, if to take up the subject of violence in their classrooms. Andrea Wilder, on September 26, offered this insight:

It seems to me to be useful for the teacher to have a fairly clear idea of why they feel this topic should be brought up, and what to do with it when it is brought up. It can usefully become a topic of writing for example, because in this way cognition—thinking—can be used to master and use the emotion. Many others have noted that it can be used as an entree into a discussion of what shelters are available, etc., and perhaps a fulcrum for group effort of a political nature. I mention these two areas because both are ways out of helplessness. Andrea

Andrea later added that access to a counselor, a good active listener, is an important component of the self-care process for educators. Access to counselor for staff and students is consistently recommended by many within that discussion frame, as well as within Horsman's concluding set of recommendations (Horsman, 2000, pp 315 - 335).

presence²³

Until recently, Mayra had been a top-notch student. Her folders may have been messy, but her work was always turned in on time, and though her contributions to class discussions were infrequent, her observations were keen. In the last month, though, Mayra's entire persona seemed to have changed. She'd been coming to school late almost every day, and at least once a week she didn't show up at all. Even when she was in class physically, her mind was obviously elsewhere, and her work had pretty much disappeared. From Holler if you hear me: The Education of a Teacher and his Students by Gregory Michie. NY: Teachers College Press, 1999

23 I am indebted to Jenny Horsman for the use of this term and its connotations

Adult educators are not unfamiliar with the experience of sensing that a learner, or learners, might give all appearances of being inattentive to classroom activity. Adults, generally frequently have the experience of being in a meeting of one sort or another, and noticing that others seem to have ‘left the building,’ being present in body but not in spirit. Sometimes people are bored, uninterested and otherwise not really paying attention to a teacher, an employer, a speaker. Sometimes, though, a person is having trouble being present to what’s going on for any number of reasons. Horsman helps students name that experience – of needing to be less present to learning, or being unable to attend fully – in ways that remove layers of shame and build, instead, on assisting learners in finding ways to become more fully present while also giving them permission to take time out. This time out could be spent in a comfortable corner of the classroom, where the learner can be aware of what’s going on. However, having moved to that part of the learning space, s/he’s made it known that s/he won’t participate in the discussion/the work at hand, but would like to know what’s going on, or simply wants to be within the classroom.

Adults do similar things all the time – we get up during long meetings, maybe stand against a wall because our backs hurt, or maybe take a walk outside just to breathe. Rarely are we criticized for taking that time; why, then, not accord the same choice to learners in programs?

As the excerpts from the Malicky and Norman study suggest, and experience bears out, adults have multiple sources of stress and interest in their lives, and numerous events competing for their time and attention. Sometimes these stressors can become the content of the reading and writing activity; at other times they interfere so thoroughly with learning, that learners are compelled to stop out, take time away from the work at hand, or to leave the class altogether until they’re able to return to learning.

Days and nights seem to pass by slowly and I still can't get myself together; So many times I tell myself that it's going to get better and it's all in the past but everything is one dark cloud of mist, and I'm in the middle trying to find my way out. Once there was a helping hand that was guiding me out of the mist but the hand let go, and I was taken back into the middle, lost in the depths of mist once again. [Michie, page 118]

all or nothing

In “But I’m not a therapist,” Horsman brought to light a concept that seemed familiar to adult educators, but had not been named. She called our attention to the notion of all or nothing – a phenomenon through which a learner might come to register for class, proclaiming that this time she was going to begin and finish all five GED tests, or read this book and take her

licensing test for one job or another, only to discover very early on in the course that finishing all five tests meant sitting down and slogging through difficult content, doing dull exercises, maybe, or being challenged to study new and unfamiliar material. For many survivors of trauma, this 'reality' of the complexity of beginning a task and seeing it through can be overwhelming. They leave the program, unable perhaps to recognize or name the frustration and instead internalize yet another form of their own failure. Having had little, if any, experience in breaking down tasks, taking small steps and achieving a measure of success, learners are likely to assume, once again, that they have no skills and are therefore incapable of achieving any learning whatsoever.

Horsman also speaks of the difficulty of setting goals. If a learner has had only experiences of failure, or has had only very limited success in school, it is difficult for her to know how to set realistic goals that break away from a notion of all or nothing and identify, instead, small doable steps that can lead her towards a larger goal, or indeed, to any named goal at all. Naming and understanding 'all or nothing' has been invaluable to me as I think about past frustrations with learners and my own tendency to blame them for what I've perceived to be their lack of commitment to a goal. Understanding that a learner might set an unrealistic expectation, knowing that I may or may not be able to assist her in clarifying her expectations is tremendously helpful for us both. I can talk to her, suggest that finishing an entire chapter in a night may not be doable, but that she can still take a week to do the reading – or whatever it is – without making the learner feel that she is incapable of doing any good work at all.

Recently (November, 2000), Horsman has indicated that she is rethinking the paradigm of all or nothing, wondering if we might not celebrate those 'bigger' goals as dreams towards which one can strive, while (I would suggest) being mindful of the realities enabling and blocking access to those dreams. Horsman suggests, rightly so, that imagination itself is beaten out of victims of violence; a challenge, then, to educators and learners is in finding the balance between supporting dreams and not setting learners up for failure to meet impossible goals. A difficult balance, but one necessary to attempt.

Other behaviors that may be present amongst survivors/victims of violence – as well as amongst those who have not necessarily experienced trauma include bouts of self-doubt, panic attacks, uncertainty over appropriate boundaries and neediness. All of us at one time or another experience these things; being sensitive to the degree to which they affect us/our learners is part of a larger understanding of the ways in which violence and trauma affect

learning and finding ways to accommodate the particular supports a learner may need at arriving at a place where she can become more fully present to her education work.

not just a head, a whole person

Priscilla George is Anishnawbe from the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation in Southern Ontario. Her Anishnawbe Spirit Name is Ningwakwe, which means Rainbow Woman. She is Deer Clan.

Priscilla has been involved in education since 1965, when she graduated from Stratford Teachers College and started teaching with the Toronto Board of Education. She became involved in Native literacy in 1987, when she developed the literacy program at the Native Women's Resource Centre in Toronto. Priscilla was the Provincial Native Literacy Coordinator with the Ontario Ministry of Education from 1988 to 1994. She has also authored books and articles on Native literacy for national projects with Parkland Regional College, and Beverly Anne Sabourin and Associates, as well as with the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (ONLC), where she was a consultant from 1995 to 1999. Priscilla's work with the ONLC also included developing workshops on various aspects of literacy, such as program development, learning outcomes and training plans. Priscilla coordinated the first ever in Canada National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering (NALG). She is now working on the NALG Follow-up Strategy, which includes recommendations for policy to the federal government, more NALGs, and a national Aboriginal literacy organization.

Priscilla was asked to develop the Rainbow Approach to Aboriginal Literacy for the Parkland Regional College project, which was then adapted by the National Aboriginal Design Committee (NADC), with whose guidance and direction Priscilla coordinated the NALG. She firmly believes in the holistic approach to literacy and to life; i.e., working towards balance of our spirit, heart, mind and body. Her work has informed those of us who participated in a discussion list focussed on impacts of trauma on learning that Priscilla moderated for the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women on Alphaplus, a Canadian literacy resource center/web site. This following is a summary she composed of the concerns raised on that list:

Impacts of Trauma on Learning

This electronic discussion had participants ranging from B.C., Minnesota, Manitoba, Atlanta, Rhode Island, the Yukon and Ontario. It touched on a number of issues, and to varying

degrees of intensity. For this reason, there was as much, perhaps more, of a sharing through individual e-mails to the moderator, as there was in the on-line discussion. The topic touched participants in many ways (hence the preference for some to communicate through individual e-mails).

Trauma was taken to encompass a wide range - spiritual, emotional, mental, physical, institutional - e.g., institutions making the rule more important than the individual, thereby not taking into account very real, human dynamics, and, in so doing, creating more blocks to learning. Participants shared their experiences with the impacts on learning they saw in the classroom, their feelings around the impacts, and the various ways in which they dealt with it.

Several recurring themes emerged for which participants either posed questions and/or offered suggestions. The questions and suggestions are as follows:

How do we balance the needs of the learners with our own needs, while recognizing that we need to honour the learners and ourselves spiritually (pray), emotionally (share with someone who will listen - without judgement), mentally (learn as much as we can about the topic, e.g., signposts, or even the medical, scientific explanations of what is happening - read validation) and physically (exercise, proper breathing)?

How much do we reveal of our own lives to the learners? When? How?

For What Purpose? (To let learners know that they are not alone, and that we, as instructors, really do understand what they're experiencing)

What resources (human, print and non-print) have been effective?

How do we allow the fear and silence of learners to move, so it is not a barrier, but so that also enriches and enables their learning process?

How do we work with the imbalance of power? (As instructors, we are mandated reporters of abuse - legal/moral responsibility.)

A rather controversial topic was that of forgiveness. When does that happen? (First and foremost, it's important to validate the learners' feelings.) Who does the learner forgive? (In most cases, it would have to be herself for buying into the negative determinisms brought on

by the abuse/abuser. e.g., “I’m not worthy.” or “I’ll never amount to anything.” We often don’t get to work with the learner long enough, or in depth enough, to arrive at forgiveness of the perpetrator, rather than the act.)

In the view of the moderator, one of the most important outcomes of this electronic discussion was the stimulation of thought which contributed to a synergy amongst participants around balancing academic achievement with emotional/spiritual growth. Priscilla George, February 2000, ALPHAPLUS list serv, violence and learning

Priscilla, and another colleague, Nancy Cooper, Field Consultant, Native Community worker for Alphaplus, Ontario, have taught the importance of culture-based approaches to learning and particularly emphasize the need for balance in addressing mind, body, spirit and emotion. Horsman’s forthcoming work, delineating a pilot project she undertook in Toronto (the Parkdale Project Read Woman’s Success course), touches on the importance of recognizing all four elements of the whole person. She too, says that she’s learned from First Nations educators that the “whole person is ‘damaged’ by violence. A person can feel fragmented and disconnected from the self. In education we need to pay attention to each aspect so that it doesn’t block learning. Each aspect may also be drawn in and enhance learning.”²⁴ That the whole person is ‘damaged,’ may also be an inadequate way to conceptualize impacts of violence; as indicated earlier, we need to understand the possibilities that a person can also have been strengthened by her experience of violence (Horsman, personal communication, November, 2000).

I have had the honor of being present at a number of talking circles at which Priscilla has shared her teachings, and through which each participant has had an opportunity to speak and be heard. Priscilla and I were asked to co-facilitate a workshop on violence and learning in Toronto last spring; in the event over twenty people participated in the session. We had thought that we would begin with a talking circle so that participants could share whatever they chose and that we would then talk about our respective work with violence and learning. The women in the circle, one of whom spoke for a very long time, another, a deaf-blind woman who spoke through a mediator, and a number of whom had had direct experiences of violence, spoke the workshop for us and for one another. I was reminded of learning from other Native educators; it takes as long as it takes. Having the gift of the women’s joint attention and energy and courage in sharing their doubts, their questions and their stories created a powerful means of learning in ways other than those provided through ‘typical’ conference workshops.

I can not appropriate the talking circle, or bring in sage and smudge people to cleanse and heal them. I can learn from the model of speaking in a circle, allowing each person to speak for the amount of time she needs and understand that this important means of learning can and must be available to us – practitioners and learners – in addition to those other ‘school’ like activities we undertake.

In describing the work of the Parkdale project, Horsman spoke about incorporating yoga, breathing, healthy snacks, comfortable and visually pleasing surroundings as elements of the learning situation that were equally important as the more traditional trappings of adult education – chalk and paper, dictionaries, books, maybe, sometimes, a kettle for tea or coffee. Finding safe ways to incorporate the body, mind, spirit and emotion without imposing particular exercises or activities poses an exciting challenge to educators who may never speak about issues of violence but who, nonetheless, are aware of the need to teach to the whole people in their classes.

power and control

The power and control wheel is a tool developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project²⁵

25 Horsman, undated workshop handout, distributed spring 2000

and used widely in examining and understanding the dynamics of abuse.

Several web sites, listed below, reproduce and contextualize the power and control wheel, as well as using it as the basis for creating visual frameworks for equality and collaboration.

Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters

Women Helping Battered Women

<http://homepages.together.net/~whbw/WHBWwheel.html>

Kent Domestic Violence Power and Control Wheel

<http://www.ci.kent.wa.us/DomesticViolence/GeneralInfo/Wheel.htm>

Power and Control Wheel - Rape & Domestic Abuse Center,

300 N. Dakota Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD 57104

<http://www.rdac.org/fvp02.html>

Equality Wheel <http://www.rdac.org/fvp03.html>

Teen power and control wheel <http://www.acadv.org/teenpcwheel.html>

Domestic Violence Information Manual

THE DULUTH DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT

Copyright (c) Ellen Pence, Michael Paymar, Springer Publishing Company, Inc.,

1993. <http://www.infxchange.net.au/wise/DVIM/DAIP.htm>

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Domestic Violence

<http://www.rainbowdomesticviolence.itgo.com/>

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NOTES for the Physician Assistant

<http://www.nova.edu/pa/domvnotes.html>

Variations of the wheel have been developed to help analyze violence against women, teen violence, same sex violence as well as their converse, equality and collaboration.

The wheel is useful in that it focuses attention upon behaviors rather than characteristics. Instead of saying implicitly or explicitly that “that batterer is an evil horrible person,” it enables one to analyze the patterns of behavior typical of batterers in order to understand what is going on. Many women and men might feel that their partner’s violence is not unusual, having had little, if any, experience of life in a household without verbal or physical abuse. Children who have witnessed violence don’t always know that this is not the only alternative to responding to things that make them angry. Women who have been abused may not be able to pull apart the strands that separate the behavior of their abusers from the general chaos that can be present within abusive relationships.

Starting with the key concepts delineated in the power and control wheel provides adults an opportunity to examine what violent behavior looks like in very concrete ways. Discussing the actions described in the wheel can enable women to articulate their own observations of characters in films or on television. It can serve as a useful, if somewhat depersonalized means of getting into discussions of violence if learners raise the issue generally, or if they wish to speak about it very specifically. The wheel can also be a useful tool in a classroom where the students and teacher might not want to focus necessarily on domestic violence, but might wish to discuss violence generally in their communities. Such a broadened focus can

encompass an examination and analysis of neighborhood, city-wide, state and national crime rates, and inquiry into root causes of violent and criminal behavior. Focussing on very public crime, such as high school shootings, gives most learners distance from the events (assuming these are not learners living in communities where such events have occurred) and enables them to dictate the extent to which more personal forms of violence can and should be discussed within the classroom context.

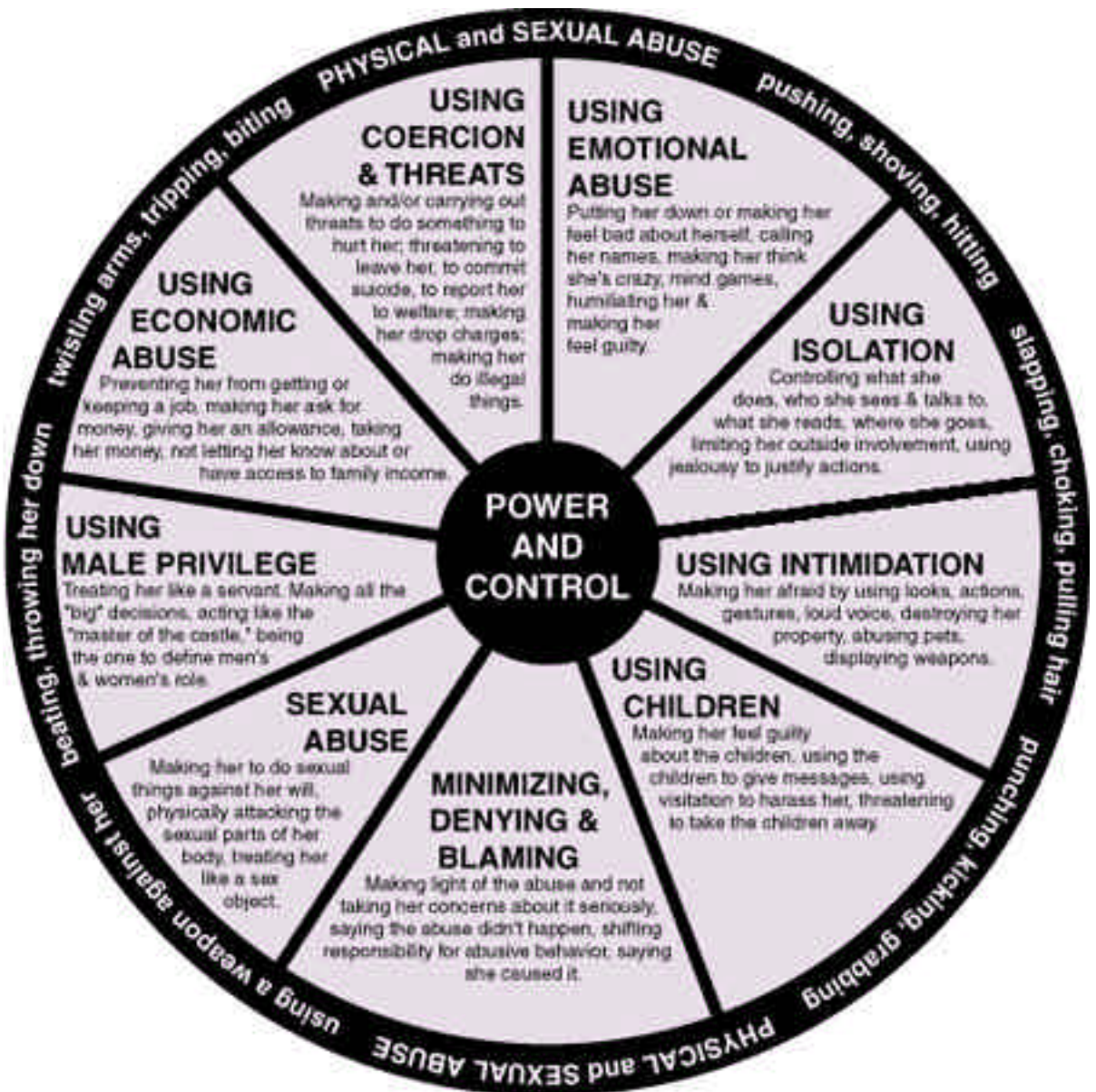
Another approach to discussions of violence might be through thinking about the cycle of violence, another tool used by domestic violence workers to assist people in understanding the dynamics of violence. Typically, the cycle occurs in three stages: stage one, where tension, anger, blaming and arguing begin to mount, to stage 2, the actual abuse itself – physical, verbal or both, to the calming stage where violence decreases, the batterer apologizes and promises never to hurt the partner again. This third stage had been referred to as the ‘honeymoon’ phase, but is more appropriately labeled the ‘calm’ phase as honeymoon provides all the wrong connotations. Some in the domestic violence community would argue that this calm stage, during which the batterer promises never to hurt her/his partner again is really a period during which manipulative behavior is most present; the abused partner is drawn back into the relationship by promises of the partner s/he loves and sooner or later, advocates/dv workers claim, the violence will only escalate again. Looking at violence through this lens of stages may be helpful in analyzing angry children’s and parents’ responses to one another, as well as in understanding the dynamics of power, control and abuse among adults.

Similarly, discussions about parenting and media influences on youth are likely to touch on issues of violence; again the power and control wheel (below), and its more positive counterparts (see web sites above) provide concrete ways of entering into complicated and often abstract discussions.

Although not examined within the stages of violence, it is critical to note that a woman is most at risk for stalking, verbal and physical abuse once she has actually left an abusive relationship. While teachers, domestic violence advocates, friends and family members are repeatedly cautioned not to tell a woman what to do, and to accept that the woman herself knows when – or if – she might be ready to leave, it is necessary to know that leaving itself poses the greatest risk to a woman’s life. While this information may or may not be part of a classroom discussion, it is imperative that those working with men and women in abusive relationships be aware of this risk and be able to provide reliable referrals for learners who might share their plans to leave.

The **workshop** section of this report contains references to safety planning generally; practitioners are encouraged to have access to reliable and available shelter and support information in their communities, and when possible, to leave literature, pamphlets, posters and other relevant materials in public areas where all students can plainly see and access them. Making violence a public issue in this way provides yet another way of breaking silence and possibly enabling someone to seek information that s/he may not have known even existed.

The section below on border crossing also suggests other ways of building relationships and alliances with providers across fields (social service, education, health, domestic abuse, victims of crime) and of strengthening avenues of support available to any victim of violence.



The power and control wheel looks like this:

Anson Green and others have used the headings on the wheel as a prompt to invite adult learners to discuss what the elements of power and control might look like to them, and to describe those elements in their own words. Some have criticized the wheel for its 'gender isolation' and suggest gender neutral terminology be utilized; regardless of this critique, the wheel provides a powerful tool in breaking apart the component pieces of abuse by examining specific actions and behaviours, while avoiding particular judgmental characterizations of batterers.

26 A useful handbook is available from the Family Violence Prevention Fund; general information about battered immigrant women is available online at <http://www.fvpf.org/immigration/index.html>

I have used the headings on the immigrant power and control wheel, (adapted from the Duluth model by the Family Violence Prevention Fund) as a way of introducing some of the language to immigrant and refugee learner groups as part of community/information workshops²⁶ Those headings are:

isolation

emotional abuse

economic abuse

sexual abuse

using children

threats

using citizenship of residency privilege

intimidation

(For more about the uses of the wheel in workshops, please see *workshops*). These headings can also be incorporated into other classroom work address violence generally, or as part of broader discussions about refugee and immigrant issues. In workshops specifically addressing violence in immigrant communities amongst people whose first language is not English, an understanding of these key words is critical to furthering discussion amongst workshop participants and ensuring that everyone understands what the law says and what help is available to those who need it.

27 Women's Center of Rhode Island training handout, updated March,1999

The Women's Center of Rhode Island also acknowledges Power and Control in the helping role, identifying behaviors that "tend to contribute to an unsafe atmosphere." Such behaviors include violating confidentiality, using labels ("addicts, former prostitute") and thinking in generalizations ("all battered women are like that.."), not accepting mistakes as part of learning, not allowing others to vent, developing false "victim norms," (again, stereotyping victims – this time as passive, lacking self-esteem, etc.)²⁷ Discussing power and control and their negative and positive uses provides a means of coming to a relatively depersonalized analysis of violence as part of the larger, more difficult work of understanding violence behaviors in our own lives and relationships.

collaborations

The graphic on the following page is reproduced from the web site of the Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse. The model provides a useful way of considering the kinds of collaborative activities suggested in this text, and also as starting points for discussions amongst providers hoping to work interactively on issues of violence.

Through the project year I found myself going relatively far afield, meeting with people whose work encompasses assisting victims of childhood sexual abuse and those who work with abusers and offenders. I met with case workers from the state's Department of Children, Youth and Families and with colleagues mentoring university students who do work with children and adolescents. I read news reports about violence against women, immigrants and teens, and about hate crimes perpetuated against Jews, gay people, pro-choice supporters and more. There is a connection between all these violences and amongst those who work with victims and perpetrators; literacy often serves as a link through which questions are asked, solutions are suggested. The wheel below provides one concrete model for considering these collaborations. The text below is included, in its entirety, per the permission given on line to reproduce.



Coordinated Community Action Model

<http://www.mincava.umn.edu/ccam/index.html>

This Model demonstrates, in abbreviated form, ways communities can accountably act to support battered women and children, and hold batterers accountable for their behavior. It is not a definitive representation. This Model identifies heterosexual males as perpetrators, as they comprise 95% of the batterers in this country. This Model was developed by Mike Jackson and David Garvin with the feedback of over 115 reviewers. We are grateful for their input, and acknowledge the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project for the wheel format. Permission to reproduce is given if there are no changes and credit is given. To obtain an 18 x 24 poster of this Model contact DVIM at 313-769-6334, print and mail the order form, or send email to ADACSS.

Some of the areas in the grid contain additional information; on line this information can be accessed by clicking on the areas. The text included in those additional areas appears on page

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INSTITUTE of MICHIGAN

PO Box 130107, Ann Arbor, MI 48113-0107 (313) 769-6334

Retrieved September 27, 2000

File Last Modified: 8/25/00 3:01:10 PM

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MINCAVA's mission is to support research, education, and access to information related to violence. MINCAVA is directed by Jeffrey L. Edleson, PhD and coordinates the following projects: MINCAVA Electronic Clearinghouse website, The Link Research Project, Child Abuse Prevention Studies (CAPS) program, Violence Against Women Online Resources website, and the applied research section of the VAWnet website. We are housed out of the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota.



Desire to make a difference

Education System:

1. Provide mandatory classes on conflict resolution and communication in elementary and secondary school (at appropriate developmental stages).
2. Create curriculum to address violence in homes and sex role stereotypes.
3. Provide students with a means to critically analyze battering within the context of our male dominated society, thus promoting future research, activism, and education about the issues of violence against women.

4. Redesign curriculum to include antisexist/nonsexist subject matter, information about gender roles/oppression/etc., and health and sex education.
5. Educate teachers, staff, and administrators in order to facilitate their delivery of information to students about what domestic violence is (it is not o.k. for dad to rip the wires out of mom's car) and when clearly defined, that domestic violence is a crime!!
6. Develop policies within the environment of the school which reinforce that battering is not tolerated and "young" batterers will encounter consequences on a school level regardless of whatever steps are taken, or not taken, through the legal system. These policies would keep in mind the priority of ultimately protecting the victim and to not re-victimize her in any way.
7. Educate students about dating violence and date rape.
8. Require teachers and professors to receive training on recognizing signs of domestic violence in students.

Social Service Providers:

1. Create accountable standards for batterer intervention services.
2. Not participate in conducting couples/marriage counseling in domestic violence cases.
3. Ask questions on violence between intimate partners as a regular part of interviewing/intake.

Government:

1. Pass laws which vigorously and progressively punish all forms of men's violence (sexual harassment, etc.).
2. Pass laws which define battering as criminal behavior without exception.
3. Create mechanisms for speedy response to violations of injunctions or court orders.
4. Monitor and enforce accountability to their own laws.

Employers :

1. Hold women's jobs for them even though being stalked may make them less productive.
2. Clarify the need to support women who are being battered and stalked on the job.
3. Prevent punitive action against, and protect the right to work of, survivors who are stalked in the workplace (that is, women get threatened with disciplinary action when their batterers phone/assault them/enter the workplace.)
4. Negotiate flexible hours and leave for battered women in crisis.
5. Develop accountable employee assistance programs for batterers they employ.
6. Develop policies and protocol to assist battered women who are employed and hold batterers accountable when they are employed.
7. Train supervisors to recognize signs of battered women in their employ.

Justice System:

1. Insert questions on domestic violence into bar exams.
2. Commute sentences of battered women who killed in self-defense.
3. Provide mandatory intervention for incarcerated batterers in jails and prisons, with accountable aftercare conditions upon parole/probation.
4. Make battery and rape criminal, as well as civil, violations of civil rights laws.
5. Enforce custody orders/injunction violations, etc.
6. Hold itself accountable by publishing statistics on numbers of domestic violence incidents such as # of arrests made, # of cases made, # of cases successfully prosecuted; # of cases resulting in incarceration, treatment, fines, and community service.
7. Hold attorney's ethically bound to refrain from persuading battered women not to prosecute.
8. Enforce all laws related to protecting battered women and children, and holding batterers accountable for their behavior.

9. Acknowledge the role of judges as the controlling power in the justice system and hold the judges accountable for their systems.
10. Refer batterers to long-term batterer intervention services.
A one year intervention program seems to be the appropriate term.
11. Adopt a policy of mandatory arrest when probable cause exists that an act of domestic violence has taken place.
12. Charge and prosecute batterers in a manner that does not rely on the victim signing a criminal complaint.
13. Impose conditions on bond designed to promote the safety of the victim.
14. Refer batterers to specialized intervention programs.
15. Provide easy access to legal recourse for victims when a violation of a conditional bond takes place.
16. Send an offender to jail when he repeats, fails to complete intervention, or violates a conditional bond.
17. Investigate domestic violence cases as if victims will not cooperate.
18. Protect victims and their children, including with custody and supervised visitation orders.
19. Provide the mechanisms to legally retain batterers in intervention programs.
20. Develop and enforce accountability/ethics actions when victims rights are violated by the system.
21. Ensure gender fairness in courts.
22. (Civil justice system) Accountably place restrictions on child custody awards to batterers, and understand the need for supervised visitation.
23. Increase the number of hours of domestic violence intervention training received by police.
24. Allow testimony of prior history of assaults in court proceedings.
25. Require training on domestic violence for judges, attorneys, probation officers and court clerks.
26. Root out gender and racial bias toward women, African American attorneys, and battered women.

other venues/collaborations/border crossing

The amount of information available online about violence in its many forms is overwhelming. In the course of the past two years, I have read mainstream accounts of domestic violence, in which lawyers, law enforcement officers, social workers, abused men and women have all expressed their points of view. While attempting to focus my work on the impacts of trauma on adult learning, it has been impossible to ignore the wealth of information available about violence. In considering this work in other contexts, I would urge educators to consider their own relationships to other providers in their communities. Who do you know, personally and professionally who understands the laws about and effects of domestic violence, immigration, child abuse, teen homosexuality? What resources exist in your community?

In preparation for a workshop for male and female adult ESOL learners, I tried to find ways to focus attention *not* on moralizing, or imposing my own views, but on what the law says and on what resources are available to residents of our community. I contacted domestic violence advocates, called hotlines (local and national) to see what kinds of information would be asked for, what, if any, other languages would be spoken by hotline operators, and what, if any, implications there might be for battered immigrant women trying to find safety from family or partner abusers. I also wanted to focus on violence as a health issue and on community wellness generally. As a result, I developed the following resource sheet for the workshops, and explained what each resource provided and possible consequences of contacting them to seek assistance. I put this information on an overhead, and also distributed it to the learners at the workshops.

Most of the resources described on the sheet on the following page (and reproduced in the workshop section of this report) exist in many communities. Pamphlets are often available in health centers, at libraries and in newspapers. As well, many communities now have web sites with information about community services listed; local women's shelters are increasingly posting information on line. One concrete step that adult educators can take is to assemble this information for their learning centers, and/or check numbers and contacts on pamphlets that might already be gathered to be sure that contact information is current and correct.

Posters, available from health centers, national anti-domestic violence centers and other sources, visibly displayed in learning centers also send a powerful message that assistance is available to women and men in communities. Many hotlines are explicitly designed for victims of crime – men and women – so that presentations such as the ones I describe here can be made not to focus entirely on violence against women, but more generally on consequences of violence perpetrated by anyone against anyone else.

resources for domestic violence assistance in case of emergency: 911

for women who are being abused

- 1. for referrals (more information) within Rhode Island* *1-800 - 494-8100*
 - 2. for the language line (people who speak languages other than English, call the Blackstone Valley Shelter:* *723-3057*
 - 3. for referrals [from other states - national hotline] 24 hours a day. Answered in English and Spanish; AT/T language line is also available* *1-800-799-7233*
- internet: National Domestic Violence Hotline <http://www.ndvh.org/>*

men who batter/hurt women

*New England Batterers' Intervention Program - 461-6979
(Spanish, Cambodian, Laotian, Portuguese, and English) 807 Broad Street*

Registration \$20; first 10 classes \$10, last 10 are \$15.

Law enforcement advocates for domestic violence and sexual assaults

<i>in Cranston.</i>	<i>Jessica Ayers</i>	<i>942-2211 ext. 5098</i>
<i>in Warren, Barrington and Bristol.</i>	<i>Renée Belmore</i>	<i>245-3727</i>
<i>in Warwick</i>	<i>Jessica Warwick</i>	<i>468-4372</i>
<i>in Woonsocket, Smithfield, North Smithfield and Burrillville</i>	<i>Mikel Nicolo</i>	<i>766-3628</i>
<i>in Providence,</i>		<i>call 272-3121,</i>

ask for the domestic violence unit; call about a complaint, to report an assault, or [verbal] threat – anything that puts you in fear - (of a boyfriend, roommate, husband or other person living with you)

If the people on the phone understand your language, they will contact the language line [Police say they don't check the immigration status of the complainant - the person who makes the complaint]

To report abuse of children: 1-800-RI-CHILD [1(800) 742-4453]

[find someone who can help you speak English - there are not always people who speak other languages on that line]

general health referral information

Providence Community Health Centers, Inc. 444-0400

Take more insurance and Rite care; have people who speak Spanish, Cambodian and Laotian.

This section touches on possibilities for other forms of collaboration between/among adult educators and other community service providers. Readers of this report may wish to begin or strengthen collaborations with providers in their communities. While not all learners or clients in community-based and government-funded programs have necessarily experienced violence, the same principles of establishing safety in community settings must apply to any literacy work done within those settings. As well, working with staff in community agencies and sharing information about the ways in which literacy can be a barrier to their work with participants in their programs is another way of deepening relationships amongst community workers and strengthening the quality of provision for those seeking services.

Framing issues of violence more broadly in adult learning contexts has implications for the work done in battered women's shelters, where children and their mothers seek refuge from abusive relationships, and also for women and children in homeless shelters – some because of issues of abuse, others because of economic hardship. For whatever reasons women and their children find themselves in shelter, the experience itself is unsettling and for many, traumatic.

battered immigrant women

Issues relevant to battered immigrant women are issues relevant to adult educators, whose learners within both ESOL and adult basic education classes include numbers of immigrants and refugees. Xenophobia (itself a form of systemic violence) and the additional burdens of isolation experienced by immigrant/refugee victims of domestic abuse contribute to the burden of coping with violence in a language and culture to which one might have very little connection. Building alliances with agencies and individuals who assist and advocate for battered immigrant women, children and men is one way through which to assist learners by learning more about legal recourse while also assisting those providers in understanding ways in which language and literacy development affect the already complex processes of coping with abuse, trauma and/or their aftermaths.

The article below encapsulates the multiple layers of difficulty experienced by women coping with violence in a language and within a system that isn't their own. It does not, however problematize issues of trust – *is it warranted?* – of those in authority. Can those in power (police, immigration officials, even medical workers) be relied upon *not* to question a victim of violence's immigration status? Can any advocate clearly guarantee a victim's safety relative to her immigration status, and assure here categorically that she is *not* at risk of deportation should she avail herself of opportunities such as those described below?

Abused illegal immigrants can get assistance By Gregory Alan Gross STAFF WRITER

October 6, 2000 <http://www.uniontrib.com/news/uniontrib/fri/metro/index.html>

[contact = <http://www.uniontrib.com/about/ut/contacts.html>] permission to be sought

In many ways, Rosa's story is familiar. Beaten bloody and emotionally tortured for two years, she said she remained bound to her battering spouse by a combination of personal shame and financial dependence.

But her husband held an extra threat over her. She said that if she reported him to the police he would report her to U.S. immigration officials, la migra. Rosa, 30, who asked that her last name not be used, is an illegal immigrant from Tijuana.

"Every day, there was violence in my house," she said yesterday. "Physical violence and psychological violence. He threatened me every day. He threatened to report me to immigration and have them take my children away."

Today, Rosa and her four children are free, and she is getting help from a most unlikely source: the U.S. Border Patrol.

A unit of three Border Patrol agents is making a specialty of dealing with domestic violence cases involving illegal immigrants. They train social service professionals and fellow law enforcement officers in ways to help battered victims, regardless of their immigration status.

The unit is headed by Karen Cortez, an 11-year Border Patrol veteran. The unit has been in operation for two years, but this summer its focus changed, Cortez said.

"In the beginning it was more about prosecuting domestic violence cases against illegal aliens or lawful U.S. resident aliens, because domestic violence is a deportable offense," she said. "Now, instead of going after abusers, we're trying to address the victims of domestic violence."

A big part of the unit's job is getting the word out to battered women's shelters and other social service agencies that deal with illegal immigrants to let them know that, even though they are not in the country legally, they do not have to accept being beaten.

A big part of that, Cortez said, is letting women know that they have the right to apply on their own to temporarily remain legally in the United States while their immigration status is decided.

Before, a woman needed her spouse to co-sign that petition, and abusive husbands could and did use that fact as a weapon against their wives, Cortez said.

"He could always say, 'Keep your mouth shut or I won't sign,' " she said. "It was a trap. This is a way now for these women to get out from under that control."

Rosa's is not an isolated case. According to a San Diego Association of Governments report, 30 percent of the women turning up in shelters in San Diego County are in the United States illegally.

Cortez said she thinks that the figure is conservative. "It's probably higher than that, because there are going to be a lot of women who don't want anyone to know (their immigration status) out of fear," she said.

Until recently, fear was a major part of Rosa's life. That did not begin to change until she staggered into the office at Smythe Elementary School in San Ysidro, which her children attended.

"She walked into my office with a black eye, a busted lip, contusions, bruises and a dislocated arm," said Pearl Quinones, a counselor at the school. "I was horrified."

Quinones remembered hearing about the Border Patrol's domestic violence unit, so she gave it a call. Before long the unit had put Rosa in contact with civil attorneys, who handled her immigration case without charge.

Today she has a Social Security card and a work permit.

"Nine days after she got her work permit, she had a job," Quinones said. "She's looking forward now to buying a car and going to school."

It is not always easy to convince domestic violence victims that they need not fear the Border Patrol because of their immigration status, Cortez said. Fear has kept the Border Patrol unit from helping more than a handful of battered immigrants.

"They see the green uniform (and) they automatically think we're out to get them and that's all we care about," Cortez said. "So we work through the peer counselors at the shelters to try to get the word out that they have options. They don't have to just stay there and take the abuse."

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Carl Krueger, an immigration attorney at the International Institute of Rhode Island recently met with a group of ESOL educators interested in understanding immigration law more clearly. Among the topics discussed was the Violence Against Women Act and its ramifications for immigrant women. Carl's talk represents one concrete way in which educators can expand their knowledge and understanding of laws and conditions relevant to learners' lives and, in this instance, also expand their awareness of the multiple ways in which domestic violence creates additional layers of stress for immigrant and refugee learners. Carl was a participant at workshops I facilitated at the International Institute; his generosity with his time and energy have helped our ESOL community broaden its understandings of the trauma of immigration law itself, and has also helped demystify some of that law, enabling us to more clearly understand some of the constraints and conditions governing learners' lives.

Marie de Santis of the Women's Justice Center shared this following with a closed domestic violence list on October 9, 2000, and permission to distribute:

Special for Immigrant Women Women's Justice Center mariedesantis@hotmail.com
Feel free to copy, repost, and distribute. Please keep the English and Spanish text together and keep credit intact.
Spanish text follows English.

If you are an immigrant to the United States, and you are a victim of domestic violence or rape, here are some suggestions we hope will help you.

1. *You deserve help, and as a crime victim, you have a right to all the same crime victim services as any crime victim born in the United States.* Please don't be shy about calling police, using women's shelters, calling rape crisis centers, applying for victim assistance funds, or going to restraining order clinics. You do not have to reveal your immigration status to receive these services, and it is very unlikely you'll be asked.

If you're still afraid to call for help because you fear that authorities might deport you, here's what you or a friend of yours can do. You can call police, for example, don't give your name, and say something like this. I have a friend who is a victim of domestic violence. But she's afraid to call police because she's an immigrant in the United States and she doesn't have documents. If my friend calls you for help, and you find out she doesn't have documents, what will you do?

But remember, we only suggest this so you can convince yourself that you won't be deported. In the past, it is true that some immigrant women had this problem. But today, agencies that give services to crime victims do not require that you are legally in the United States in order for you to receive crime victim services. In a recent informal survey we did of victim advocates around the country, not one reported that they knew of a case in the last five years where a woman with no documents was reported to the INS and deported because she had called the police for help or sought other victim services.

2. *What if the person abusing you says that he will call INS and get you deported if you call police or try to get help?* It is very, very common for violent men to make this threat to immigrant women who are their victims. But it is virtually impossible for these men to carry out this threat. To our knowledge and experience, the INS does not act on calls from one individual who calls up to report that another individual is here in the United States illegally.

It's important to take men's threats seriously. But in the case of this common threat made by abusive men, -that they'll report you to the INS and get you deported,

-the men simply cannot carry it out. So please don't let this threat stop you from getting help.

And if you're depending on your husband to petition for your green card and he's abusing you, or he's threatening to stop the petition if you leave him, remember that under U.S. federal law battered immigrant women have the right to leave the abusive husband and continue the petition on your own. The staff at battered women's shelters and rape crisis centers can tell you how to do it.

3. *If you are still afraid to seek help, ask someone to make the phone calls for you, and to be with you when you deal with police and other crisis workers.* In fact, it's a very good idea when you get help for domestic violence and rape to have someone at your side as often as possible. Having someone with you makes you feel safer, helps you remember information, and greatly reduces the risk that officials might treat you badly or ignore your needs. This is true even if the person who goes with you doesn't speak a word of English and doesn't have any idea how the system works.

4. *What if you can't think of anyone who can go with you or who can make phone calls for you?*

It's very common for domestic violence abusers and men who rape to very successfully isolate you from human contact. This is especially easy for them to do if you are newly arrived in the United States. Here are a few suggestions for finding people who can help you make phone calls or accompany you to more help. Remember, you don't have to tell them everything in order to ask for their help. You can simply say things like "Will you call this telephone number for me and ask if they have somebody there who speaks Spanish?" or "I've been a victim of a crime and I need to go to court. Will you watch my children for the afternoon?" or "My husband is abusive and I need a ride to police."

Here are some people you should consider asking when you need help making phone calls, help with transportation, or help with an afternoon of childcare.

Think about asking family members, friends, neighbors, your minister or priest, people at your church, co-workers, your children's teachers. Even if you don't know the person well, if your intuition tells you the person is kind, they will probably say yes, they will help.

And don't forget to call the telephone operator for the telephone number of your local rape or domestic violence center. These centers have crisis phone lines that operate 24 hours a day, and most of the time they have a staff member that speaks Spanish. Again, if you're afraid to call, ask a friend to call for you.

5. **Remember, telephone communication in the United States is highly mechanized.** When you make a phone call in the United States, there are many times that instead of reaching a human being, you'll get an answering machine or a voice mail system. It's very important that you leave messages. Leave the information slowly. Say your name slowly and give your phone number slowly. Remember, someone who probably doesn't know Spanish perfectly is listening to the message and trying to write it down. Always leave complete information about the best time to call you back. And if you don't want them to call back when your husband is home, be sure and leave that information on the message too.
6. **What if you go to police or to crisis workers and they don't give you the help you need or they treat you badly?** Don't give up! It's true, there are incompetent people in every occupation, there are racist people, lazy people, and sexist people. It's also true that there are competent, respectful, and very helpful people probably right there in the same office. So if you run into someone who treats badly, call again on another shift, or ask a friend to call the person's boss. But please don't give up. You deserve help! So keep asking until you get it.
-

Especial para mujeres inmigrantes Women's Justice Center mariedesantis@hotmail.com

Si eres una mujer inmigrante en los Estados Unidos y sufres violencia doméstica o fuiste víctima de violación, aquí te ofrecemos algunas sugerencias que esperamos te resulten útiles.

1. **Tú mereces ayuda y, como víctima de un crimen, tienes derecho a todos los mismos servicios para víctimas de crímenes como lo tiene cualquier persona nacida en los Estados Unidos.** Por favor, no seas tímida en cuanto a llamar a la policía, utilizar los albergues para mujeres, llamar a los centros de atención a la crisis por violación, solicitar fondos de asistencia a víctimas o acudir a clínicas de órdenes de restricción. No es necesario que reveles tu situación migratoria para recibir estos servicios y es poco probable que te pregunten al respecto.

Si aún tienes miedo de llamar para pedir ayuda pues temes que las autoridades pudieran deportarte, he aquí lo que tú o un/a amigo/a pueden hacer. Por ejemplo, pueden llamar a la policía y, sin revelar tu nombre, decir algo como esto: "Tengo una amiga que es víctima de violencia doméstica, pero tiene miedo de llamar a la policía pues es inmigrante en los Estados Unidos y carece de documentos. Si mi amiga les llama para pedir ayuda y ustedes descubren que no tiene documentos, ¿qué harán?"

Recuerda, sin embargo, que sólo te sugerimos esto para que puedas convencerte de que no serás deportada. Es cierto que, en el pasado, algunas mujeres inmigrantes tuvieron este problema. Pero en la actualidad, las agencias que brindan servicios a víctimas de crímenes no exigen que te encuentres legalmente en los Estados Unidos para que recibas esos servicios. En una reciente encuesta que realizamos con defensores de víctimas a lo largo del país, ninguna de esas personas dijo conocer, en los últimos cinco años, un solo caso que involucrara a una mujer sin documentos que hubiera sido reportada al Servicio de Inmigración y Naturalización (INS) y deportada después de haber llamado a la policía para pedir ayuda o haber acudido a los servicios para víctimas.

2. *¿Qué ocurre si la persona que está abusando de ti te dice que llamará al INS y logrará que te deporten si llamas a la policía o tratas de conseguir ayuda?* Es sumamente común que los hombres violentos expresen este tipo de amenazas a las mujeres inmigrantes que son sus víctimas. Sin embargo, es virtualmente imposible que tales amenazas tengan éxito. De acuerdo con nuestros conocimientos y nuestra experiencia, el INS no actúa basándose en llamadas de un individuo que acude a éste para reportar que otra persona se encuentra ilegalmente en los Estados Unidos.

Es importante tomar en serio las amenazas de los hombres. Pero en el caso de esta común amenaza expresada por hombres abusivos que dicen que te reportarán al INS y conseguirán que te deporten, ellos sencillamente no pueden tener éxito, de manera que no permitas que esa amenaza impida que busques ayuda.

Por otro lado, si dependes de tu esposo para solicitar tu tarjeta verde y él está abusando de ti o te amenaza con detener la solicitud si lo abandonas, recuerda que, según la ley federal de los Estados Unidos, las mujeres inmigrantes que son víctimas de maltrato tienen el derecho a dejar al esposo abusivo y continuar por sí mismas el trámite de solicitud. El personal de los albergues para mujeres maltratadas y de los centros de atención a la crisis por violación pueden decirte cómo hacerlo.

3. *Si aún tienes miedo de buscar ayuda, pídele a otra persona que haga las llamadas por ti y que te acompañe en tus visitas a la policía y a otro personal de atención de crisis.* De hecho, es una buena idea tener a alguien a tu lado tan frecuentemente como sea posible cuando recibes ayuda en casos de violencia doméstica y de violación. Contar con la compañía de una persona de confianza te hace sentir más segura, te ayuda a recordar información y reduce de manera significativa el riesgo de que

los oficiales te traten mal o ignoren tus necesidades. Esto es cierto aun si la persona que te acompaña no habla una palabra de inglés o no tiene idea de cómo funciona el sistema.

4. *¿Y si no se te ocurre ninguna persona que pueda acompañarte o hacer llamadas por tí?* Es muy común que los perpetradores de violencia doméstica y los violadores consigan exitosamente aislarte de otros contactos humanos. Esto es especialmente fácil para ellos si acabas de llegar a los Estados Unidos. Aquí te ofrecemos algunas sugerencias a fin de encontrar personas que puedan ayudarte a hacer llamadas o acompañarte para buscar asistencia. Recuerda que no necesitas contarles todo para solicitar su ayuda. Di, simplemente, algo como: “¿Podría usted llamar a este número por mí y preguntar si ahí hay alguien que hable español?” “He sido víctima de un crimen y necesito ir a la corte. ¿Sería posible que usted cuide a mis niños esta tarde?” “Mi esposo abusa de mí y necesito que alguien me lleve a la policía”.

Algunas personas a quienes deberías considerar acudir cuando necesites ayuda para hacer llamadas, conseguir transporte o cuidados infantiles por una tarde, podrían ser miembros de la familia, amistades, vecinas/os, tu ministro o sacerdote, personas en tu congregación religiosa, compañeras/os de trabajo o maestras/os de tus hijas e hijos. Aun cuando no conozcas bien a esa persona, si tu intuición te indica que es generosa, probablemente estará dispuesta a ayudarte.

Y no olvides llamar a la operadora telefónica para conseguir el número del centro para violencia doméstica o de atención a la crisis por violación en tu localidad. Estos centros tienen líneas telefónicas para atención de crisis que funcionan las 24 horas del día y la mayoría de las veces cuentan con personal que habla español. Y si tienes miedo de llamar, pídele a una amiga o amigo que lo haga por tí.

5. *Recuerda que las comunicaciones telefónicas en los Estados Unidos suelen ser mecanizadas.*

A menudo, cuando haces una llamada en el país, en lugar de ser atendida por una persona te responderá una máquina contestadora o el sistema de correo de voz. Es muy importante que dejes grabados tus mensajes. Comunica la información clara y lentamente, y de igual manera di tu nombre y número de teléfono. Recuerda que el mensaje será escuchado por alguien que quizás no conozca perfectamente el español y tratará de escribir tus datos. Siempre deja información completa acerca de cuándo sería el mejor momento para que te

llamen de vuelta. Y si no quieres que te llamen cuando tu esposo esté en casa, asegúrate de dejar también esa información en tu mensaje.

6. *¿Qué ocurre si vas a la policía o acudes a personal de atención a crisis y estas personas no te brindan la ayuda que necesitas o te tratan mal? ¡No te des por vencida! Es cierto que hay personas incompetentes en cada ocupación; también las hay racistas, holgazanas y sexistas. Pero también es un hecho que, probablemente en esa misma oficina, existen personas competentes, respetuosas y muy colaboradoras. Entonces, si te atiende alguien que te trata mal, llama de nuevo en otro turno, o pídele a un/a amigo/a que llame al jefe de esa persona. Pero, por favor, no te des por vencida. ¡Tú mereces ayuda! Así que sigue pidiéndola hasta que la recibas.*

Traducción por Laura Asturias leasturias@intelnet.net.gt

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homelessness

St. Christopher House in Toronto has developed numerous useful materials, available online, including [Gimme Shelter! A Resource for Literacy and Homelessness Work](#) by Betsy Trumpner for The Literacy and Homelessness Project St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, 248 Ossington Avenue Toronto, Ontario Canada M6J 3A2 (416) 539-9000.
<http://www.nald.ca/lithome.htm>

Other resources for literacy work and homelessness are online at the Literacy and Homelessness project page at <http://www.nald.ca/schalp/homeless/lh.htm>. The materials are included here in order to give readers a sense of the issues confronting homeless learners, and implicitly, to link homelessness to the systemic violences of poverty and dislocation experienced by many survivors and victims of trauma.

from a Massachusetts shelter newsletter: **The Elizabeth Stone House Community Update**, JP MA Fall/Winter 1999 (p. 1 and 3)

“There has been some movement by local school administrators to deal with particular issues

faced by homeless families. These include recognizing that many battered mothers find it extremely difficult to obtain school transcripts for their children and providing easier access to students for schooling near the shelter in which they live. There is, however, less momentum in ensuring that the impact of homelessness on the quality of education is minimized. Access to education is an easier problem to solve than what happens once a student actually sits down at his or her desk.

In some of the children who come to live with us, we see significant delay in cognitive development. This can have an enormous impact on a child's ability to do well in school. Failure in school results in lower self-esteem – this, in the population most in need of affirmation of self worth. Everyday we see children who have missed school, changed schools several times within the year or who do not go to school adequately prepared in terms of rest and nutrition. These “at risk” children enter our competitive world not with less enthusiasm and certainly not with less intelligence. All they need is a literacy boost.

The issue at hand is the creation of a literacy environment for all of our children. Some students indicate that it is the home literacy environment rather than socioeconomic status that predicts future literacy (Purcell-Gates et al, 1995, Literacy at the harts' and the Larsons': Diversity among Poor Inner City Families: The Reading Teacher 48:7 , 572-78). The elements of a sound literacy environment are not that hard to achieve. They include having access [to] and ownership of books, training parents in the importance of talking and reading to children, assisting children in discovering the thrill of finding just the story that speaks to their experience or the poem they can use as a guidepost for the rest of their lives, and providing mentors to help them discover the joy in doing long division or the thrill that comes when a homework assignment is completed.”

The ES Stone House is undertaking a study mentor program, “through the use of a multi-cultural curriculum that focuses on conflict resolution and the building of self-esteem; and by building a library of good novels and reference material that can be used in the preparation of homework. These will not solve all the problems our children bring but they may be one small step in assisting our young people. The development of a sound literacy program is one way we can assist our children to beat the odds of homelessness.”

While the sentiment behind these words is one which appears to acknowledge the need for stability in order for children (and adults) to learn, the deficit inherent in the language is troubling. This statement was written as part of a community newsletter, the function of which is generally to inform and to raise awareness and funds. That a homeless shelter is taking on literacy provision with children gives hope to the notion that a battered women's shelter might

conceive of a similar move (and, has in fact done so, as an outcome of this fellowship). It is my hope that the program in which I'm working, and others that strive to engage mothers and children in intergenerational work can acknowledge the barriers to learning created through upheaval, but also work to validate learners' strengths and innate interests in hearing and sharing stories and using literacy as a means of engagement around compelling content – and not merely skills building. [Elizabeth Stone House, PO Box 59/Jamaica Plain MA 02130]

gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer and questioning youth

Another cause of young people leaving school is the discrimination some feel as gay or lesbian youth. While this report focuses on the effects of trauma on learners in adult education settings, it is not unreasonable to imagine that the experiences of many teens, who feared for their own well being while in high school, could well be a contributing factor to attendance in adult education programs. As the 'youthification' of adult education increases, literacy practitioners might wish to build relationships with organizations working with youth around issues of sexuality, seeing where and if there might be opportunities to provide access to educational opportunities to young people in settings that are safe for them.

A brief overview of the issues confronting youth because of sexuality is found in a report in *The Nation* (January 31, 2000) which suggests yet another cause of trauma for adult learners in describing violence perpetrated against young gay and lesbian students.

<http://www.thenation.com/issue/000131/0131ireland.shtml>

The Province, a daily newspaper in British Columbia, Canada, [March 19, 2000] carried an account of young students being terrorized by classmates ("It's like entering the gates of hell,") as part of its extended reporting on gay bashing by high school students. Resources for young people and those who support them around issues of sexuality can be found at GLSEN – Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network <http://www.glsen.org/>

From the Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse electronic clearinghouse [<http://www.mincava.umn.edu/vaw.asp#Resources>] : A link to the **Annual Report on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Domestic Violence by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP)** at <http://www.vaw.umn.edu/FinalDocuments/glbtdv.htm>. The purpose of this report is to investigate the following research questions and to summarize findings: 1) How prevalent is domestic violence among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people? 2) Do state statutes permit victims of same-sex domestic violence to obtain domestic violence protective orders?

An Agenda For Change

Ending violence against women requires strategies coordinated among many sectors of society and at community and national levels. In some countries reproductive health programs have taken the lead in addressing violence against women...But efforts must go far beyond the health sector alone. An agenda for change must include: empowering women and girls; raising the costs to abusers; providing for the needs of victims; coordinating institutional and individual responses; involving youth; reaching out to men; and changing community norms. [from Ending Violence Against Women] <http://www.jhuccp.org/pr/111/111chap7.stm#top>

The Women's Center of Rhode Island RI was a primary partner in this project as it had initially been envisioned. The Women's Resource Center of South County, in the southern section of the state and the RI Coalition against Domestic Violence had also been sought as collaborators and contributed information and expertise to the project. However, due to staffing changes at the two shelters, as well as limitations of time and interest on the part of project participants, our original plan – of learning about issues affecting women in both urban and rural settings – the Women's Center became our prime collaborator, providing a day-long workshop for project participants and ongoing support with information gathering and dissemination. The Women's Center collaborated with me in submitting a proposal to the United Way of Southeastern New England for Critical Issues funding in developing a literacy drop in session for Center residents and their children. Those sessions began at the end of August and will continue through June 2001, at which time the Center will consider continuation or change of that program. In addition to the time that I contribute in kind, I have also been able to arrange for federal work study students at my university to assist me in developing intergenerational literacy activities for women and their children at the Center. This leveraging of available funds and collaboration with existing entities (the Women's Center and the Swearer Center for Public Service) has enabled the work of this fellowship to move beyond its funded year. With the training and development of work study students envisioned for the coming academic year, the literacy work may also become an institutionalized part of the Women's Center's offerings to its residents. The Women's Center is providing training for the work study students in the area of child development issues related to violence, including mandatory reporting; in turn, I have begun a series of workshops

with shelter staff to help them build their own capacity in addressing literacy needs of residents as part of their work. Work study students also meet weekly with me to learn more about literacy development in children and adults in order to design and deliver age-appropriate literacy activities for the children in residence at the shelter, and gradually, to share with me some of the facilitation of the adult literacy piece as well. Jenny Horsman's work with the Parkdale Project Read course has already provided me with invaluable assistance in working with the women I now see every week.

Over time, should the program be deemed to be meeting the needs of residents, I hope it will become an institutionalized component of support services offered by the Women's Center. Already, it is causing me to rethink assumptions I've held about who the women in shelters are. While we learn that active listening and assuring victims of violence that they are not alone is key in assisting them in unlearning years of blame they may have experienced, I don't quite know what to tell a woman who sees herself as different from the others in the shelter because she has an education and a regular job. Community living for women who are together only because of their common need to leave abusive situations creates layers of stress on top of the already existing trauma of leaving the home and finding safe space. Using the vehicles of conversation, reading and writing as a means towards assisting women in thinking through the difficult decisions ahead of them may be part of a larger process the shelter undertakes to assist women back to independence and safety beyond the shelter. Similar strands of this work occur within adult education settings – sometimes unbeknownst to practitioners themselves. Helping learners make connections between what they've known and what they could know and do remains an ongoing imperative of our work.

Other impacts of the fellowship work, extending it beyond the project period include three scheduled workshops in the fall of 2000 for educators in New York (Literacy Assistance Center), Rhode Island (the national conference of the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education), and Western Massachusetts (SABES). Women in the working group have expressed interest in resuming open monthly discussion groups for educators in Rhode Island wishing to explore issues relevant to women's literacy education.

Policy , programmatic/systemic change

As I was writing this in early October, 2000, urgent email appeals regularly appear in my email inbox regarding the pending federal reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. The act, the umbrella under which much work is funded in the US for victims of domestic violence, has enabled numerous programs across the country to flourish. Not only need we

28 Online at
[http://www.nifl.gov/
Coalition/margins_to_
mainstream.pdf](http://www.nifl.gov/Coalition/margins_to_mainstream.pdf)

pay attention to legislation about violence generally, but we need to examine federal, state and local adult educational policies to find ways to grow space for learners who need extra time to stop in and stop out. This is not easily envisioned as federal policy grows ever more restrictive. However, the National Coalition for Literacy's recently published *From the Margins to the Mainstream: An Action Agenda for Literacy*²⁸ sets out goals for adult literacy that may only be realized if learners are given the flexibility they need in terms of scheduling, attendance and other program-based policy. In order to be prepared to learn and to remain present to the learning outlined as necessary in that agenda, learners and educators will need to consider new approaches to advocacy and policy change.

The Workforce Investment Act and welfare reform have affected adult education policy and instruction. Some adult education providers work in collaboration with, or are funded by departments of labor and training and/or human services. In some instances, learners are well served, (generally those learners who are prepared to take on job hunting and placement and for whom transportation, childcare and lack of education are not impediments). Along with shifts in welfare legislation and lifetime limits for receiving public assistance have come increased calls for accountability from those who fund programs and write legislation.

While initiatives such as Equipped for the Future consider adults' real roles and reasons for needing literacy, it is not yet clear that adults will be able to meet the expectations that they find and maintain employment with limited access to learning programs, or with time constraints placed upon them.

At a workshop focused on learning disabilities and employment held in Providence on October 3, 2000, Steve Brunero and his colleague Charlotte Sepe reported on The Rhode Island Learning Disabilities Project, a program they have run at the RI Office of Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with the state's Department of Human Services and Family Independence Program²⁹. They work with single parents, mostly mothers, who are learning disabled and in need of basic education and/or job training. They report that the women with whom they work are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse who have generally had negative experiences of schooling and whose prior schooling has either ignored their learning disabilities or done little, if anything, to address it. Indeed, a number of the people in

29 information about
the project is
available online at
[http://www.ors.state.ri.
us/vrld.htm](http://www.ors.state.ri.us/vrld.htm)

their program only learned as a result of the screening made available to them through the program that they were in fact learning disabled. For many adults, that recognition alone comes as a tremendous relief. They learn that they are not stupid, but that their brains are hard wired in such a way as to make learning, reading, or writing especially difficult. With proper accommodations, many of the people in the RI Learning Disabilities Project were able to move into GED preparation or job training and employment. The program is presently at risk. Its success has led to a large number of referrals and the staff may not be able to assist those in need of its services. Without a renewed commitment of support from the state and an increase in funding it is likely that this program will end, leaving adults with learning disabilities little real hope of finding the assistance they need in obtaining adequate support for their education and subsequent employment.

The following, written by Debby D'Amico, a former NIFL Literacy Leader Fellow succinctly captures the tensions practitioners feel in attempting to assist learners in meeting their stated goals while also responding to conditions and constraints set out by funders and policy makers:

Subject: NLA Info: Requested think piece on adult ed. and WIA (long)

From: DEBBYDAM@aol.com

Date: Thu, 21 Sep 2000 21:12:27 EDT

[This] is a piece that lays out some of the contradictions behind the requirements of WIA, and also some of the reasons we now find ourselves linked to an act which has **employment as its purpose**.

Education and Employment: Contradictions and Correlations

The new outcome measures required of adult educators under WIA are a mix of education and employment indicators, some would say an uncomfortable mix. We are required to demonstrate progress in three education areas (completion of level of ABE or ESL, acquisition of a secondary credential or its equivalent, and entrance into postsecondary education or training) as well as two employment ones (getting a job and retaining a job). Why this mix, and why now?

The debate over the Workforce Investment Act and the role of adult education and family literacy within it continues an ongoing discussion about the relationship between education and employment that is central to ideas about social equality in the United States. Adult educators often invoke this relationship when writing proposals and advocating for funding. We point out how important the efforts of adult educators and learners are to economic productivity and success in the new information-based global economy. However, we stop short of saying that it is our job as educators to find people jobs and to make sure they stay in them, and most of us recognize and address our teaching to the multiple needs and goals of adult learners, rather than to their employment objectives alone. Indeed, the very notion that education's primary purpose is to prepare adults for jobs runs counter to the belief of many adult educators that the right to education for its own sake is a basic human right. Are we educators, or job trainers/developers, or both? Why does this new role feel so uncomfortable, and why do the rules for documenting employment cause panic?

Could it be because the basis for the rules is rooted in contradiction, the contradiction that education is both related to work and not the only or always the main influence on employment? We know from our own experiences and those of our students, as well as from research and data on employment, that many other factors complicate the relationship between education and employment:

Although statistics such as census data clearly show that the higher the education level, the greater the earning power of an individual, and the longer that person is likely to be employed, the correlation between education and employment is just that: an association that means an individual's chances of earning more money and having more job security tend to rise with his or her education. It does not prove that education, by itself, can predict stable income for every individual, or that education is the sole cause of success in the labor market.

For adult educators, the picture is complicated by the fact that there is no evidence that participation in literacy programs helps the employment prospects of individuals. This is likely because in an economy increasingly bifurcated into high and low wage jobs, it usually takes more than an increase in basic literacy to make a dent in earnings. In fact, research shows that postsecondary education may be necessary for most single heads of households to achieve job stability and an income that can support a family. This means that most of the students in our programs qualify for entry-level jobs, many with wages below poverty levels. Many educators feel uncomfortable with having a role in this kind of job placement, yet learners may want and need such a job given their current options or lack thereof.

The same individual with the same education credentials can have a very different experience depending on the state of the labor market. When there is a tight labor market and employers scramble for workers, there are opportunities for everyone and education requirements are relaxed. This is characteristic of the boom economy we are experiencing now. The reverse is also true, as we know from the late 80s and early 90s. Yet, in any economy, education positively affects the wages and job stability.

At every education level, earnings vary by race and gender. Job segregation by type, wage inequality, and glass ceilings are structured by race and gender. For single heads of households, labor market discrimination is compounded by the lack of affordable child and health care, putting enormous burdens on single mothers who must support households, find child care, and manage health problems with a minimum of social supports. However, women and people of color have fought for access to education of all kinds precisely because, in the absence of white and/or male privilege, it affords them greater access to better jobs and working conditions.

Government decisions, as well as the efforts of individuals, greatly determine wage levels, how education is rewarded in the workplace, and access to education and training. We live in a society where it is legal and possible for employers to pay full time workers wages below the poverty line. In countries where unions and workers have a strong political voice in decision-making, paychecks more adequately support a decent standard of living. In many of these countries, child care, health care and other social services support workers more fully as well, and education and training at no or low cost is more widely available. Paradoxically, education becomes more important as a means of advancement in the United States precisely because it is one of the few avenues available to workers and the poor.

Despite the hype about the greater skill requirements of work, researchers have found there is a mismatch between what individuals actually need to know to do a job and what employers look for in applicants. In other words, assumptions about the information economy and about the technical and literacy requirements of today's jobs may influence the skills or credentials required more than the actual demands of the work. For example, anyone seeking work in a New York City hospital now will find that a high school diploma or GED is required for any job. Yet, individuals without such credentials have been doing these jobs for many years, and doing them well. However, adult education students wanting to acquire or advance beyond entry-level jobs are going to need educational credentials, regardless of the daily relationship between what they study and what they do.

What does it mean to move forward in such contradictory circumstances? It means acknowledging any differences between the objectives of funding, our own, and those of adult learners, and doing our best to fulfill all of the above. It means recognizing the dissonance between believing that education is a socially acknowledged human right and operating programs within a political arena that sees employment as a matter of personal responsibility. For some, it means working to change the latter, by building a movement that supports a political climate more congenial to their views. For all of us, it means living with the contradictions that our students face when they try to combine education and work, when they try to achieve their educational and personal goals while supporting their families. Finally, it means strengthening the common ground we have with funders, and supporting our own claims for the power and achievements of adult education with data. Such data may provide the best argument that adult education is doing its job, that learners are struggling to do theirs, and that all of us deserve to have other factors that impact on employment addressed by policy makers.

For a fuller discussion of the tension between education and employment for adult educators, see NCSALL Report #10: The Impact of Welfare Reform on Adult Literacy Education.

It takes time to work with people who have been convinced that they are incapable of learning or for whom 'common' knowledge about jobs, schedules, organization has not been explicitly taught. The very goal of welfare reform – to assist adults in becoming independent – is at odds with the constraints placed on programs to move people off welfare, out of adult education and into employment. The RI Learning Disabilities Project recognizes that the adults with whom they work are capable individuals, but are in need of supports not easily available through mainstream employment or educational services. In the same ways that Horsman and others speak eloquently to the need to make time and space for adult learners to find the confidence to take on schooling, policy makers need to recognize the realities of many adults to whom opportunities for learning support have regularly been denied.

Joyce Campbell, Education Program Specialist ESL and National English Literacy spoke to me in January, in response to my request to learn from her perspective as someone who both understands the fundamentals of adult ESOL education as well as those of funders, policy makers and administrators.

Joyce asserted that educators are discovering many things related to impacts on learning; children who have witnessed violence, for example, are in need of both learning and

psychiatric support. Acknowledging this as a “new and emergent” area of study, Joyce recognized that the research base to date is limited vis a vis violence and learning. She expressed a hope that the fellowship work would help us to understand why learners are not achieving as they should, adding, “sometimes we tend to look at this trauma with ESOL more, because we know they’ve seen a lot of hardships, but [we don’t realize] that it doesn’t stop, it can continue [past entry to the new country] and that Native Americans are affected by trauma as well. We also touched on the topic of gay teens. Joyce indicated that we probably see more in people in high schools bashing gays and lesbians, however she hasn’t heard much in the adult ed arena. (Little has been written or reported to hear; however, an entire edition of Bright Ideas, an adult education quarterly edited by Lenore Balliro, does begin to ask questions publicly about adult learning and sexual identity).³⁰

She said, “[there are] a lot of people battered, women and children – until people are willing to talk about those experiences they carry them with them, the experiences will continue to be in them.”

Joyce spoke of ways to coach practitioners in areas of program improvement, employability, lifelong – suggesting, perhaps, that while the federal focus on accountability forces constraints on program activities and outcomes, there may be ways to determine to what extent violence impacts learning gains in adult learners, and to make the data about that violence and its impact consistent across states. This is clearly a large task; finding appropriate and accurate means of assessing learners’ prior experiences of violence is a complex and potentially invasive process. Andres Muro and his team in El Paso have attempted to accomplish just this, in a laudable, perhaps, but not unproblematic survey system; asking women to self-report around issues of abuse – even with promises of anonymity and confidentiality – is thorny, at best. It’s possible that existing means of surveying adult victims of violence may be expanded to include questions about learning (as Sandy Kelleher attempted to do in drafting a survey for residents of battered women’s shelters to complete³¹). In the latter case, Sandy did not pursue the survey because of the difficulty in being able to follow up – if participants were willing/able to be interviewed – and also because the questions themselves, about learning, about violence are too complex to capture in survey form. Members of the RI team considered the El Paso survey but declined to implement it; those results may enable educators to extrapolate a sense of women’s experiences with violence, but for the RI team, the process felt too

30 Bright Ideas Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Issues in Adult Education [Volume 9, Number 3 Winter 2000]

<http://www.sabes.org/bi93.htm>

or as a PDF document
<http://www.sabes.org/bi93.pdf>

31 see page 19 of the practitioners section of this document.

uncertain and too invasive. I am interested in learning about the survey's outcomes; for now, the work of accommodating learners' experiences and ways of learning – regardless of the 'evidence' of past or ongoing trauma in their lives, is priority enough.

32 Ross-Epp, J and
Watkinson, A.M. (1997).
Systemic violence in
education: Promise broken,
New York: SUNY press, p. xi

Systemic violence: Any institutionalized practice or procedure that adversely impacts on disadvantaged individuals or groups by burdening them psychologically, mentally, culturally, spiritually, economically or physically. It includes practices and procedures that prevent students from learning, thus harming them. This may take the form of conventional policies and practices that foster a climate of violence, or policies and practices that appear to be neutral but result in discriminatory effects.³²

33 <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/181867.pdf>,
page 61,
retrieved October 7, 2000

Policy has to include provisions not only those who are likely to avail themselves of traditional job training and basic education services, but also those for whom support is needed to make the transition into such programs; further funding and infrastructure must acknowledge the types and degree of support adults need to stay in and succeed in those programs. Over time, the investment made in each adult is far greater than the learned failure and potential for increased helplessness engendered by the all or nothing nature of the funding designed to do the very opposite of what it accomplishes, i.e. increasing anxiety for adults without providing viable solutions for those in need of assistance with learning.

Adult educators are not the only ones needing a clearer understanding of the impacts of violence.

A report from the National Institute of Justice (July 2000)³³ indicates that the America's medical and judicial systems should receive comprehensive training about the safety needs of victims of intimate partner violence. Across-the-board awareness of the consequences of violence – from the controlling behavior of one man whose partner can not leave the home without a beeper and a cellphone so that her partner can locate her anytime, anywhere – to the heightened risks incurred by women seeking education or job training in ways that abusive partners perceive to be threatening. “All too often, education, training, or work exacerbates domestic violence as the women's partners become threatened by their efforts at self-sufficiency. (Raphael and Haennicke, 1999, page 1).

Many view poverty itself as a form of systemic violence; a larger number of adult learners are economically disadvantaged, are poor, are struggling against a number of systemic constraints. The limitations that poverty places on an individual or family include access to affordable and available housing, transportation, food and clothing. Grappling with elements

as basic as daily survival take energy away from being present to learning. Policies placing additional strains upon adults to 'show up and produce' without providing adequate support create inflict their own kind of abuse. "Systemic violence in education may not be immediately noticeable but can be found woven into the educational fabric."³⁴ Remaining oblivious to the challenges that poverty and other forms of violence inflict upon learners because of its relative lack of visibility does not excuse educators and policy makers from their responsibility to provide access to learning for those who seek it. Indeed, Rhode Island's Adult Education Bill of Rights³⁵ may be one way in which adult educators and learners might work to ensure that adults at every stage of ability have access to the educational services to which they are, by law, entitled. As well, Rhode Island, at present, does have a Family Violence Option available to women receiving cash assistance, thereby enabling them to avoid making their whereabouts known to abusive former partners; however, one wonders what the impact of an un-reauthorized VAWA might have on this and other legislation.

34 *ibid*, page xv

35 see http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/Literacy_Resources/advocate.html

Another form of systemic violence occurs when language itself is unavailable to those whom systems govern. This message, posted to a new NIFL list serv (poverty/race/literacy) in September is reprinted with the author's permission and is emblematic of the kinds of misunderstandings that arise for those unaware of the law in the settlement country, or for those born there to whom the law was never made clear:

My name is Kathy Poulos. I taught ESL and Adult Ed. for a few years and listened to countless horror stories of discriminatory practices against my students primarily because of race or national origin. In 1996, I took a part-time job as a family worker working with refugee families involved in the child protective system.

The first week on the job I watched as a newly arrived Somali family have their child taken from them because of allegations of child abuse. There was no interpreter...they had no idea why their baby was taken, where the baby was going, or how to be reunited. All of the so-called "parenting" training I was supposed to be working with them on was incomprehensible linguistically and culturally.

The baby was placed in a white Christian family where she was kept for three years. During that time she ate pork, celebrated Christian Holidays, never spoke Somali, and had no exposure to Somali culture or Islam. When she had visits with her family as the

years went by, she could not communicate with her mother .. had nothing in common with the Somali community.....the bond was broken (big surprise) and the State terminated custody.

This incident changed the course of my life. I will never forget for as long as I live the mother crying for her baby as this intrusive bureaucracy essentially destroyed the family's life. I spoke out and insisted on cultural training and the use of an interpreter. All of my requests were flatly denied by the state and other agencies. I persisted - and in my then role as legislative chair of the Maine Refugee Advisory Council I was fired from my job and removed from the Council.

*To make a long story short, I have and will continue to dedicate my life to working towards assuring providers are bridging the language and cultural barriers to prevent such tragedies. I am involved in numerous federal investigations and recent litigation that resulted in an excellent OCR Compliance Agreement. Take a look at the OCR website-
Maine Medical Center.*

I now devote all of my time to this cause and am the founder of the National LEP Advocacy Task Force. Most of us are very involved in taking action against violators of civil rights We need more strong advocates around the country to join us if anyone is interested. [Contact Kathy at crossingcultures@prodigy.net]

Many Americans shake their heads and can't imagine how someone could not know. In the same way that the question is not why does she stay when thinking about women in abusive relationships, the questions here can not focus on how people don't know and need to shift to ways in which adult education systems can assist those they serve in making systems transparent as part of a much larger process of assisting adults in reaching the goals they name in their own educational processes.

Perhaps the most important thing I've learned at the end of it all is that all that I've learned has taught me that I don't need to know what experience my colleagues, or the learners with whom I work have had. What I need to do is make the spaces in which I work and teach and learn as safe as possible for everyone there. What safety looks or feels like could well differ from person to person; what educators can not do is assume that everyone in the room – at a meeting, at a workshop, in a conference – feels safe and secure, or confident in voicing

a dissenting opinion, or raising a challenge. If we believe that learning has to do with dissonance, with accommodating information that might challenge beliefs we've previously held, then we must work very hard to ensure that all learners have the opportunities they need and deserve to sense that dissonance, to take it apart, examine it and understand it as we all continue our own trajectories of life long learning.

This means that classrooms have to accommodate learners who may be living in abusive relationships, who may have experienced political trauma, who may have had previous failures in school because of undiagnosed or unaddressed learning disabilities. Classroom teachers do not necessarily need to take up the topic of violence per se in order to understand that those who have had experiences of trauma are always at different points in their own healing processes, just as learners generally are at differing points of readiness to take on new or more difficult learning challenges. This report is not calling for a lowering of expectations of learners, nor is it crying out for educators to simply 'understand.' This report and the voices and facts that inform it demand that we examine what adult learning really is about – enabling adults to make choices about how they interact in their communities and in the world – and find ways to ensure that each adult entering our learning programs has full access to the support she or he needs in order to be as fully present to learning as possible. We need, too, to focus our energies on understanding that effects of violence are not deficits that appear within 'weak' people, but are symptomatic of the difficulties all of us face in living daily in a violent society. Violence and its effects are a public issue; to pathologize those most deeply affected by it is to ignore the possibility that at some time or another this problem can become deeply and personally ours through no fault of our own.

John McKnight³⁶ speaks of society's loss of the ability to look after its own. By integrating understandings of trauma and its effects on learning we do not become therapists or healers in any traditional sense of the word. We come close to the roots of education itself, though, in working with learners, with one another and leading towards greater knowledge. We listen, we facilitate. We share real knowledge, too – it isn't smoke and mirrors – we work with learners and practitioners knowing that they each bring unique and shared understandings of and abilities within the world.

36 see, for example, The Careless Society : Community and Its Counterfeits by John McKnight, Basic Books, reprint edition, 1996