

## INNOVATIVE CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSES TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

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When called to the scene of a crime of intimate partner violence in the 1970s, aspiring police officers in the Michigan Police Training Academy were taught to “avoid arrest if possible. Appeal to [the victim’s] vanity” (Schechter, 1982, p. 157). Although every state had laws prohibiting assault and battery (the charges most often assessed in intimate partner violence cases), arrests for intimate partner violence were rare and prosecutions even rarer. Beginning in the late 1970s, however, a series of events led to profound changes in the criminal justice response to intimate partner violence. In 1976, women in Oakland and New York City brought suit against police departments, followed by women in Los Angeles in 1979. These suits alleged that police had failed to comply with the law by not arresting their husbands for their violence. Women in Chicago, Atlanta, and New Haven, Connecticut, threatened to bring suit unless police changed their practices. In 1984, researchers studying arrest policies in

Minneapolis published a study suggesting that arresting men for intimate partner violence lowered rates of recidivism. Also, in 1984, Tracy Thurman successfully sued the city of Torrington, Connecticut, for \$2.3 million in damages after police failed to respond to numerous requests for assistance, culminating in an incident where Thurman’s husband stabbed her multiple times and kicked her in the head while police watched. Finally, in 1984, the Attorney General’s Task Force on Family Violence issued its report declaring intimate partner violence a criminal justice matter and recommending that police departments adopt policies presuming that arrest is the appropriate response to situations involving intimate partner violence. These notable events, coupled with the persistent advocacy of the battered women’s movement in cities and states throughout the United States, led to the widespread adoption of new criminal laws and policies on the handling of cases involving intimate partner violence by the criminal justice

system. These efforts were further bolstered by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), first passed in 1994, which, since its inception, has provided hundreds of millions of dollars to police, prosecutors, and courts implementing the criminal justice response to intimate partner violence.

Since the late 1970s, every state has passed legislation specifically criminalizing intimate partner violence. In addition, some states have enhanced penalties for crimes committed against an intimate partner. Every state allows police to make a warrantless arrest if there is probable cause to believe that a crime involving intimate partner violence has been committed. Most states have amended their arrest laws or policies to either prefer or require that police make an arrest in intimate partner violence cases (a far cry from the days when arrest was to be avoided). Beginning in the mid-1990s, prosecutors' offices began to change their policies as well, both by preparing cases for prosecution so that they could be pursued without the assistance of the victim and by prosecuting cases regardless of whether the victim was willing to participate in prosecution. These intersecting policies are known as *victimless prosecution*, or *evidence-based prosecution*, and *no-drop prosecution*. Later innovations involved the court system, via the creation of specialized domestic violence courts, more intensive monitoring of perpetrators of intimate partner violence by probation officers, and collaborations between law enforcement and other service providers (Bouffard & Muftic, 2007; Dixon, 2008; Gover, Brank, & McDonald, 2007; Henning & Feder, 2005; Hovell, Seid, & Liles, 2006; Klein & Crowe, 2008; Labriola, Bradley, O'Sullivan, Rempel, & Moore, 2009; Petrucci, 2010; Rempel, Labriola, & Davis, 2008).

Each of these criminal justice responses to intimate partner violence was considered groundbreaking at the time it was enacted. Since their inception, though, there has been considerable debate about the effectiveness of some of these policies. This chapter will survey the criminal

justice response to intimate partner violence that has developed since the 1970s, attempting to answer the question of what works and what doesn't in that response. The chapter will then turn to the question of criminal justice system reform and highlight potential future innovations in the criminal justice system.

## THE CURRENT CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE

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### Arrest Policy

The early battered women's movement identified police inaction as the most significant obstacle to ensuring that victims of intimate partner violence were protected by criminal law. When given the discretion to determine whether to make an arrest in a case involving intimate partner violence, police, as a general rule, declined to make that arrest. Police treated intimate partner violence as a private matter, beyond the reach of the state, notwithstanding the obvious violations of criminal law that intimate partner violence often entailed. Historically, police were not permitted to make warrantless arrests in misdemeanor intimate partner violence cases unless they had witnessed the assaults themselves (Buzawa & Hirschel, 2009). Although the passage of statutes enabling officers to make warrantless arrests based on probable cause in cases involving intimate partner violence removed that barrier to arrest, arrest rates remained low, necessitating further action.

In many states, police are now not only permitted but also required to make arrests in intimate partner violence cases whenever they have probable cause to do so, a policy known as *mandatory arrest*. The Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment, which provided evidence that arrest deterred domestic violence, spurred the passage of such policies, despite the warnings of the studies' authors that jurisdictions should not enact mandatory-arrest laws until further research validating their findings had been conducted. Nonetheless, by 1991, 15 states had adopted

mandatory-arrest laws, and the original iteration of the Violence Against Women Act required jurisdictions receiving funds through the act to adopt such policies. By 2007, 22 states and the District of Columbia had enacted mandatory-arrest policies (Hirschel, Buzawa, Pattavina, Faggiani, & Reuland, 2007). Subsequent research validated the authors' concerns, however. A follow-up study conducted in six jurisdictions found that the effects of arrest on future violence varied among different groups and was modest at best (Felson, Ackerman, & Gallagher, 2005; Maxwell, Garner, & Fagan, 2001). Other interventions—in particular, reporting to police—have a stronger deterrent effect on future violence than arrest (Felson et al., 2005). One study found a relationship between arrest and future violence, but “this effect was entirely attributable to pre-arrest differences in risk” (Hilton, Harris, & Rice, 2007, p. 1340). A number of states have statutes that encourage, rather than require, arrest; these laws are known as *preferred-arrest laws*. VAWA has been amended to permit grants to states that have either mandatory- or preferred-arrest laws. The remaining states have *discretionary-arrest policies*, which allow police to make arrests but do not require action.

Mandatory-arrest laws have a number of purposes: to prevent further violence, to send a strong message to perpetrators and victims of intimate partner violence and to the community that intimate partner violence will not be tolerated, and to relieve victims of violence of the responsibility of requesting that their partners be arrested. But these laws have faced significant criticism. Although victims may call the police to seek an end to an immediate incident, they may not want their partners arrested. Mandatory-arrest laws may be disempowering for individual victims, depriving them of the decision about whether and how to participate in the criminal justice system (Barata, 2007). Women who oppose mandatory-arrest laws may be less willing to contact police for assistance (Novisky & Peralta, 2015). Although the number of arrests in a jurisdiction generally increases after the passage of mandatory-arrest laws (Durfee, 2012),

there is no evidence that mandatory arrest leads to higher numbers of convictions. In fact, convictions are less likely in mandatory-arrest than in discretionary-arrest jurisdictions (Hirschel et al., 2007). Rates of arrest increase significantly among women in jurisdictions that adopt mandatory-arrest statutes; at least some of that increase “is directly attributable to the implementation of mandatory arrest policies and not simply an increased use of violence by women in intimate relationships” (Durfee, 2012, p. 75). Others have argued that mandatory arrest may increase the death rate among women whose partners are arrested (Sherman & Harris, 2014) and that mandatory-arrest states have higher domestic-homicide rates (Iyengar, 2009). There is some question as to whether the impact of mandatory arrest can be conclusively determined given the uneven implementation of the laws; in some mandatory-arrest jurisdictions, nonarrest is still a problem (Frye, Haviland, & Rajah, 2007). Mandatory arrest may be more effective as part of an overall law enforcement strategy that includes postconviction monitoring or involvement in a batterer intervention program (Petrucci, 2010).

### Dual Arrest

One particularly troubling unintended consequence of the passage of mandatory-arrest laws is the rise in the number of dual arrests—arrests of both the perpetrator and the victim of intimate partner violence. Dual-arrest rates are significantly higher in jurisdictions with mandatory-arrest laws than in jurisdictions with preferred-arrest policies (Hirschel et al., 2007). Dual arrests disproportionately impact women (Durfee, 2012; Henning & Feder, 2005) and same-sex couples (Hirschel et al., 2007). Women who are dually arrested are likely to be victims of intimate partner violence and to have been physically assaulted, injured, or threatened by their partners (Durfee, 2012; Feder & Henning, 2005).

Arrest of a victim of intimate partner violence has a number of problematic consequences. Victims who are arrested are less likely to call police in the future (Miller, 2005). Prosecutors are less

likely to file charges in cases involving dual arrest (Henning & Feder, 2005). Women who are charged with offenses related to intimate partner violence frequently plead guilty in order to resolve the matters quickly, without considering the host of negative consequences attendant to conviction, including being denied or losing public housing or welfare benefits, jeopardizing their immigration status, being barred from certain forms of employment, and losing children in custody or child abuse and neglect proceedings (Miller, 2005). Women who are convicted of intimate partner violence face penalties, including fines, jail time, and requirements that they complete batterer intervention programs (Durfee, 2012). Given that mandatory-arrest laws were passed with the stated goal of aiding victims of domestic violence, the growth in the rate of dual arrest—and the potential for exposure to consequences attendant to those arrests—is particularly troubling.

In a significant percentage of cases where dual arrests are made, information is available that would allow law enforcement to determine who the primary aggressor, or “real” offender, actually is, preventing dual arrest (Frye et al., 2007). A number of states have passed laws requiring that officers attempt to assess who the primary aggressor is at the scene and have provided officers with guidelines for making this determination. Factors that officers should consider include a prior history of intimate partner abuse, the relative extent of the parties’ injuries, whether a party acted in self-defense, and the future risk of injury to either party (Hirschel et al., 2007).

### Prosecution Policy

Although arrest rates in cases of intimate partner violence rose as a result of the inception of mandatory- and preferred-arrest laws, prosecution rates remained low in the early 1990s. Prosecutors complained that they could not successfully bring intimate partner violence cases without the cooperation of victims, and frequently, those victims were not willing to participate in prosecution. Victim reluctance to

participate in prosecution can stem from a number of sources: fear of perpetrator retaliation; love or the desire to continue the relationship; the need for economic, parenting, or other support from the perpetrator; the potential immigration consequences of conviction; and concern about the impact of prosecution on relationships within the family or ethnic or faith communities. Victimless or evidence-based prosecution was a response to that dilemma. In victimless prosecution, intimate partner violence cases are developed as though there is no victim available to testify. Police officers are trained to carefully study crime scenes, make detailed reports, and collect evidence at the scene that would allow for successful prosecution even if the victim chooses not to testify. Photographs, physical evidence, 911 tapes, medical records, and other witness statements make up for the absence of the victim. While the Supreme Court’s decision in *Crawford v. Washington* (2004) restricted prosecutors’ ability to use some forms of evidence (for example, statements made to the police at the scene of a crime), prosecutors are still able to build and bring cases using the other information collected by police. Despite the adoption of victimless-prosecution practices, however, prosecutors remained reluctant to bring cases without victims, and victims remained reluctant to testify. No-drop prosecution policies were enacted to address this problem.

No-drop prosecution policies commit prosecutors to proceeding with any otherwise viable case, regardless of whether the victim is willing to participate. No-drop policies are designed to achieve three goals. First, they ensure that intimate partner violence laws are enforced, regardless of the wishes of individual victims. Second, no-drop policies are said to keep victims safer, both by removing the immediate threat to the victim through prosecution and by removing the incentive for the perpetrator to pressure the victim to drop the charges. Third, no-drop policies claim to be empowering because victims are thought to derive benefits from participating in prosecution.

No-drop policies are generally divided into two groups: soft and hard. In soft no-drop

jurisdictions, women are not compelled to testify but are encouraged to testify and provided with services and supports that make assistance with prosecution both possible and more attractive. If victims are unwilling to testify despite these benefits, prosecutors do not force them to do so and may, as a result, dismiss cases that they otherwise would have brought. Hard no-drop policies, by contrast, commit prosecutors to pursuing every viable case using whatever means are necessary, including compelling victim participation through subpoenaing, arresting, and occasionally incarcerating victims.

No-drop prosecution raises important questions about how much power victims should have within the criminal justice system. Opponents of no-drop prosecution argue that the policies elevate the concerns of the state over the needs of the victim of violence and can endanger individual victims of violence if perpetrators deliver on threats to commit further violence if prosecuted. No-drop policies are also said to disempower victims by substituting the state's control over the victim's actions for the perpetrator's (Goodmark, 2012).

The research on the efficacy of pro-prosecution policies is mixed. Ford and Regoli (1992) found recidivism decreased when victims were permitted to decide whether to proceed with prosecution, although choosing to drop charges led to the greatest risk of reabuse. Smith and Davis (2004) found that dismissals and the use of diversion decreased and the number of trials and conviction rates increased significantly in two jurisdictions after the adoption of no-drop prosecution policies. But they also found that no-drop prosecution was largely unsuccessful in a third jurisdiction (roughly 80% of cases without victims present to testify were dismissed) and that no-drop prosecution was expensive and labor intensive to implement. In a study comparing prosecution policies in the Bronx and Brooklyn, New York, O'Sullivan, Davis, Farole, and Rempel (2007) found no difference in recidivism rates in the no-drop (Brooklyn) and permissive-filing (Bronx) jurisdictions. Victims generally preferred the mandatory-filing policy.

Victims expressed a preference for being relieved of the responsibility for prosecuting and endorsed an approach that would include at least limited prosecution of their partners based on an objective assessment of the potential benefits and costs to the victims of doing so. (pp. 79–80)

That preference might have been influenced by the fact that temporary orders of protection were automatically issued when cases were filed in the mandatory-filing jurisdiction, however. What many victims want is more time to decide whether to support prosecution—more time between arrest and release and more time to inform prosecutors of their decisions. O'Sullivan et al. (2007) conclude, "The study did not produce a clear-cut picture of which of the two prosecution policies is superior" (p. 80). All of this is complicated by the question of how strictly no-drop policies are applied. Even in hard no-drop prosecution jurisdictions, prosecutors continue to screen out cases that they do not believe can be successfully prosecuted. As with mandatory arrest, policies may exist more in name than in practice.

Does prosecution make a difference for victims of intimate partner violence? Again, the evidence is mixed. A number of studies have found no relationship between prosecution and recidivism; one study found higher rearrest rates where no charges were filed versus those where the system took some kind of action against the perpetrator (filing and dropping charges, prosecution, counseling, or conviction and a sentence) (Dixon, 2008). There is also reason to question whether decisions to prosecute are racially biased; although some studies have found no racial bias in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion, one study found that minority defendants were less likely to have their cases dismissed by prosecutors than white defendants (Henning & Feder, 2005).

### **Domestic Violence Courts**

A robust criminal justice response requires the active involvement of courts. Convictions and meaningful sentences in domestic violence



cases remained rare even after the changes in police and prosecution policies were implemented in the 1980s and 1990s. Facing judges who were skeptical of, at best, and actively hostile to, at worst, the claims of victims of intimate partner violence, victims of intimate partner violence may have wondered why they chose to turn to the legal system for assistance. Specialized courts were touted as one solution to the problem of indifferent or hostile courts.

Because states have adopted a variety of approaches and labeled them domestic violence courts, it is important to be clear about what constitutes a specialized court. A specialized domestic violence court is more than simply a docket where all domestic violence cases are heard at the same time. Specialized domestic violence courts generally involve targeted training for judges and other court staff; consolidation of all cases, civil and criminal, into one court unit; and ties to services and resources for victims of intimate partner violence. Moreover, some domestic violence courts have developed specialized probation units and batterer intervention programs linked to the court itself (Labriola et al., 2009).

Studies analyzing the impact of domestic violence courts have generated mixed results (Dixon, 2008). Some studies associate domestic violence courts with reduced recidivism (Petrucci, 2010), higher conviction rates (Henning & Feder, 2005), enhanced enforcement (Gover et al., 2007), and higher completion rates for batterer intervention programs (Petrucci, 2010). The Department of the Attorney-General of Western Australia recently reported, however, that offenders diverted to specialized domestic violence courts were 2.4 times more likely to reoffend than those whose cases were handled in the regular system (Banks, 2014). Studies suggest that judicial monitoring alone is insufficient to reduce recidivism; rather, supervision, defined as “repeatedly conveying information about behavioral expectations and the consequences of noncompliance; real, individualized interaction between offender and monitoring agent; and application of incentives and sanctions designed to reinforce the linkages between good and bad behavior and

resulting consequences” is necessary to decrease rates of intimate partner violence using court processes (Rempel et al., 2008).

Some courts are also engaging in increased monitoring of perpetrators of intimate partner violence through intensive postconviction supervision programs. Research on one such program in Rhode Island found that intensive supervision reduced the risk of reoffending for lower risk offenders but not for those deemed higher risk (probationers who had been supervised for domestic violence previously, who had been sentenced for multiple offenses, or who were sentenced to imprisonment for their offenses). Overall, there was no statistically significant difference in rearrest rates between the probationers subject to intensive supervision through the Domestic Violence Unit and those receiving regular monitoring. Victims reported greater satisfaction with probation officers in the intensive-supervision unit but were not confident that probation would deter further abuse. Although victims reported a decrease in physical abuse, they did not experience a decrease in emotional abuse (Klein & Crowe, 2008).

### Community-Based Responses

Communities have also experimented with bringing law enforcement and other service providers together to provide a more holistic response to victims of intimate partner violence. In San Diego, for example, police officers teamed with social-service providers to respond to domestic violence calls. Family Violence Response Team (FVRT) members were generally called to the scene within 15 minutes of law enforcement’s arrival and provided crisis intervention, emergency treatment, and referrals to adult and child victims. FVRT staff followed up within one week of the call to ensure that other services were put into place and referrals made. Although researchers hypothesized that interventions would reduce recidivism, they actually found higher rates of recidivism among the group receiving FVRT services (Hovell et al., 2006). While older studies have found that

coordinated community responses may be effective in lowering recidivism rates, a more recent study failed to support that hypothesis, particularly for offenders with a previous history of domestic violence (Bouffard & Muftic, 2007).

### Lethality Assessment

Law enforcement and antiviolence advocates have also partnered to develop lethality assessment programs. Lethality assessment grew out of the danger assessment tool developed by Jacquelyn Campbell for use in health care settings (Campbell, 2007). The danger assessment tool consists of two parts: (1) a calendar used to record the incidence and severity of physical violence experienced by victims of intimate partner violence over the past year and (2) a 20-question screen, including questions about whether the abuser owns a gun, is unemployed, abuses alcohol or uses illegal drugs, has threatened suicide, or has strangled the victim. The danger assessment is scored to provide victims with a concrete sense of the level of danger they face: variable, increased, severe, or extreme.

The lethality assessment screen is an 11-question tool that was adapted from the original danger assessment questionnaire. Questions on the lethality assessment tool include whether the abuser owns a weapon or has access to a gun, whether the parties have separated, whether the victim has a child who is not also the abuser's, and whether the abuser is unemployed. When they arrive at the scene, police ask victims of intimate partner violence a standard set of questions in a particular order. Based on the victim's responses, police "score" the potential for future danger to the victim. The lethality assessment screen enables law enforcement to estimate the level of danger that a victim of intimate partner violence may be experiencing. If the victim's score is high, police officers contact a victim service agency and strongly recommend that the victim talk with the service provider.

The research on the effectiveness of lethality assessment is mixed. While the danger assessment tool has been found to be a reliable

predictor of reassault, there is also concern that the tool produces false positives, indicating an elevated danger where such danger might not exist, and false negatives (Roehl, O'Sullivan, Webster, & Campbell, 2005), which could provide unwarranted assurance of safety to a victim. The 11-question lethality assessment tool has never been subjected to published validity testing (Johnson, 2010). Nonetheless, lethality assessment has been credited with saving the lives of countless victims of intimate partner violence, and police departments nationally have received significant federal funding to develop such programs.

### IS THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE WORKING?

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Over the last 40 years, the criminal justice response to intimate partner violence has changed profoundly. The obvious question, of course, is whether those changes have been effective. The answer to that question, not surprisingly, is complicated and depends in large part on how one measures success. Rates of intimate partner violence have fallen significantly in the United States since 1994, the year that VAWA was enacted, spurring significant criminal justice reform. But that drop in the rate of intimate partner violence coincided with a decrease in the overall crime rate. Domestic violence fell at the same rate as the overall crime rate from 1994 to 2000 and less than the overall crime rate fell from 2000 to 2010 (Catalano, 2012). There is no research that ties the drop in the intimate partner violence rate to the passage of VAWA.

One potential measure of success is whether criminal justice intervention deters offenders from committing intimate partner violence or prevents future violence. Deterrence and prevention have traditionally been measured through recidivism—are perpetrators of intimate partner abuse reoffending after coming into contact with the criminal justice system? But recidivism is a problematic measure of deterrence or prevention.

In the research, recidivism is generally defined as conduct for which an offender has been rearrested, rather than a measure of whether there is any recurring intimate partner violence in the relationship. Because the definition of intimate partner violence in the criminal law is quite narrow, focused almost exclusively on physical violence and threats of physical violence, arrests for intimate partner violence capture only a fraction of the violence within a relationship, missing forms of violence, like emotional abuse, that may be as or more debilitating than physical violence. Moreover, if the criminal justice system's initial intervention was not helpful, victims of intimate partner violence may choose not to report new offenses to police or prosecutors. Recidivism can also be measured through victim reports, but intimate partner violence is routinely underreported, particularly when the victim does not want further involvement with formal systems.

Another way to measure the effectiveness of the criminal justice response is to ask whether that response is meeting the needs of victims and/or offenders. But there is no universal response to that question. A 2007 study that measured women's perspectives on the criminal justice response to intimate partner violence found that their views were complicated and nuanced. Researchers found varying levels of support for each of five different (and contradictory) perspectives: the criminal justice system can be trusted; the criminal justice system has potential but ultimately disappoints victims; victims should have input into the criminal justice system before they use it; the criminal justice system does not protect victims and can make the situation worse; and despite its problems, the criminal justice system should be used to guarantee safety, rehabilitation, and justice (Barata, 2007). Responses varied by ethnicity and by previous experience with the criminal justice system. Success can also mean that victims felt that their stories of abuse were heard and validated by the system or that they were treated fairly by the system.

The criminal justice system defines success in large part through its ability to separate victims

of intimate partner violence from their abusive partners through arrest, prosecution, and conditions of probation and parole. This focus on separation is problematic, however. First, separation-based policies assume that separation prevents further violence, despite research showing that former partners are as likely, if not more likely, to be reabused than current partners (Klein & Crowe, 2008). Second, these policies assume that victims of intimate partner violence want separation. But a recent study of the Vermont Integrated Domestic Violence Court found that 70% of the couples who had contact with the court either were currently in a relationship or planned to continue their relationship in the future (Suntag, 2014). Nonetheless, courts may bar contact between the partners, notwithstanding a victim's express desire to continue the relationship, as was the case in *Lambert v. State of Maryland* (2013). James Lambert Jr. pled guilty to second-degree assault and was sentenced to 3 years of imprisonment, all suspended, and 3 years of supervised probation, during which he was barred from having contact with his wife. At sentencing, Mrs. Lambert told the court that she did not fear Mr. Lambert and wanted to attend counseling with her husband in hopes of reconciliation. The court entered the 3-year no-contact order over Mrs. Lambert's objection, essentially forcing what law professor Jeannie Suk has called a state-imposed de facto divorce on the couple (Suk, 2006). The trial court's decision was upheld on appeal; the appellate court found that the no-contact provision advanced the state's interest in protecting Mrs. Lambert from further violence, and the state's interest trumped Mrs. Lambert's interest in continuing her marriage during those 3 years. For couples with no plan to separate, existing criminal justice interventions may be ineffective at best and deprive victims of autonomy at worst.

Another way to assess success is to ask for whom these policies are more or less successful. Criminalization has been problematic for marginalized communities. People of color, who are already overrepresented in the criminal justice system, may have concerns about approaching



the state for assistance, fearing that the state will intervene punitively against their partners or against them. Women of color have been especially poorly served by the criminal justice system; as Richie (2012) notes, “The victimization of some Black women seems to invoke a set of institutional reactions that lead to further vilification, rather than protection or support” (p. 7). Undocumented immigrant women fear arrest and deportation if they contact law enforcement, and women with undocumented partners may not access the criminal justice system if they believe their partners will be deported, causing them to lose economic, parenting, and other support. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender victims of intimate partner violence are regularly harassed and abused by police when they report intimate partner abuse. When transgender people call police for assistance, for example, their requests are often ignored, or worse, they are arrested by the same police officers they called for help. Transgender people have similarly fraught exchanges with courts and prosecutors. As a result, very few transgender victims of intimate partner violence willingly choose to interact with the criminal justice system (Goodmark, 2013). While the recorded message for most antiviolence advocacy organizations urges victims of intimate partner violence to call 911 if they are in immediate danger, some organizations serving lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender victims consciously omit this guidance because their experience has been that police are often more harmful than helpful (Kaminsky, Goodmark, Burk, & Park, 2015). The partners of police officers are understandably reluctant to seek law enforcement assistance, given officers’ unfettered access to resources and relationships within that system.

Victims of intimate partner violence may not define success by reference to their experiences in the criminal justice system at all. A study by the Full Frame Initiative found that while service providers used indicators like the number of successful prosecutions or the number of victims who left their relationships to define success, only 7% of victims of intimate partner violence

defined success as leaving or changing their relationships with their abusive partners. “For survivors, separation from the abusive relationship was almost never mentioned in moments of success, and services were rarely mentioned as part of getting to moments of success” (Melbin, Jordan, & Smyth, 2014, p. 19). Instead, successes were defined through relationships with others, accomplishments outside of the relationship, and/or facets of daily life. Those moments of success sometimes included the perpetrator of the abuse, “but he was not simply the abusive partner—he often was playing a different role in the survivor’s life, often neutral or even valuable” (p. 20).

The innovations of the 1980s and 1990s profoundly changed how the criminal justice system addressed domestic violence. Whether those innovations have been successful depends largely upon how one defines success. For those victims of intimate partner violence who want their partners arrested and prosecuted and who have positive interactions with police, prosecutors, and courts, the changes to the criminal justice system have undoubtedly been positive. For those who do not equate accountability with punishment, who want more control over the response to their abuse, or who are interested in continuing their relationships with their partners, those innovations have been less helpful. To address the needs of the latter group of victims requires a different sort of criminal justice response. What that response might look like is described below.

## ENVISIONING AN ALTERNATIVE CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE

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### **Increasing Victim Participation Through Better Information**

Information and input could be the key to improving the criminal justice response to intimate partner violence for some victims. Currently, when police arrive at the scene of a domestic violence call, victims are interviewed

to determine whether probable cause to arrest exists but are given little information about the chain of events that the arrest would set into motion and, in many jurisdictions, no voice in whether the arrest is made. After talking with both parties and determining that probable cause exists, however, police could consult with the victim of intimate partner violence, advising her of what is likely to happen next and providing her with options about how to proceed. The police could explain, for example, the procedure for making an arrest, providing the victim with a sense of how long her partner is likely to be out of the house while the arrest is being processed, the services and resources that are available to her to address the violence, and the demands that will be placed on her if an arrest is made. That consultation would enable the victim to make an informed determination as to whether arrest is an appropriate response to this incident. Police would reassure the victim that the choice not to have her partner arrested on this occasion would not preclude her from having the option of contacting the police and asking for an arrest should the violence continue. Police might also give the victim the option of completing a lethality assessment, not to coerce her into compliance with officers' wishes about arrest or to force her into services but to provide her with information about factors predicting future violence and where she scores relative to other victims. Police could also explain that in lieu of criminal prosecution, the victim might choose to seek assistance through the civil justice system instead, petitioning for a civil protection order. These consultations would allow victims of intimate partner violence to make informed decisions about an arrest and would acknowledge that the ultimate decision maker in these cases should be the person with the most at stake and with the greatest knowledge as to her risk.

Similarly, when an arrest is made, a victim advocate or other representative of the prosecutor's office could contact victims of intimate partner violence to provide information about what prosecution will mean for the victim and to gauge the victim's willingness to participate in

prosecution. This conversation could include information about the testimony the victim will be required to give, what to expect during cross-examination, the prosecutor's assessment of the strength of the case and the likelihood of conviction, and the sentence if the victim's partner is convicted. The victim would be given an opportunity to discuss her concerns about prosecution and to determine whether her needs—whether those needs involve safety, accountability, or something else altogether—will be met through prosecution. Allowing for this sort of victim involvement in decision making enables victims of intimate partner violence to use prosecution as a power resource, deploying prosecution as a means of equalizing power imbalances within the relationship (Ford, 1991). Such collaboration can increase the victim's voice in the criminal justice process (Cattaneo, Goodman, Epstein, Kohn, & Zanville, 2009). Moreover, allowing victims of intimate partner violence input into decisions to prosecute may make them more likely to seek law enforcement intervention if they are reabused (Goodman & Epstein, 2008).

Critics of this type of approach contend that police cannot be trained to provide such counseling on the scene and that reinstating police discretion to make arrests would hasten a return to the days in which police took no action at all in cases of intimate partner violence. There may be merit to that argument; some would argue that despite the passage of almost 30 years since the first mandatory-arrest policies, police have yet to fully implement those laws. Moreover, proponents of no-drop policies argue that prosecutors represent the interests of the state, not individual victims; prosecutorial decision making should not be beholden to the whims and wishes of victims of crime and should send a strong message that intimate partner violence will not be tolerated by the state. But successful prosecution, particularly post-*Crawford*, continues to rely significantly on the testimony of the victim. Providing victims with information and support could lead to a greater number of victims opting into—rather than dropping out of—criminal justice interventions.

### **“You Have Options”**

The criminal justice system could provide victims of intimate partner violence with options that enable them to engage with the system but do not require immediate arrest and prosecution. In Ashland, Oregon, Detective Carrie Hull became frustrated by the number of rape victims who refused to take part in police investigations, largely because they did not feel that police believed their stories. In talking to rape victims, Hull learned that victims were not contacting police because they did not want to identify their abusers; because they were already traumatized and believed that contact with the criminal justice system would only exacerbate their harm; or because once they were able to acknowledge that they had been raped, they thought it was too late to go to the police. Police were frustrated with the stories that they heard from victims, failing to understand that many victims were giving incomplete or false information out of trauma and fear. To better serve these victims, Hull asked them what they needed. What she learned was victims needed more time to decide how to proceed and anonymity until they were ready to publicly share information about their rapes. Detective Hull explains, “We found we needed to get people to a place they didn’t feel like they were being pulled or pushed through this process. . . . instead they were leading the way” (Van Syckle, 2014).

In response, Hull developed You Have Options, a program designed to address the issues that victims raised about the way that rape cases were investigated. You Have Options is guided by 20 elements of a victim-centered response. These elements include a victim’s right to determine whether a rape will be reported anonymously, partially investigated, or fully investigated; a victim’s right to anonymity; a victim’s right to control the release of information about the rape; the victim’s right to be free of pressure to participate in a criminal investigation; the victim’s right to confidentiality; and the victim’s right to disengage from the investigation at any time. You Have Options generally refrains from making an arrest or referring a matter for prosecution without the

victim’s consent, unless doing so is required by public safety or otherwise mandated by law.

Detective Hull believes that the adversarial relationship that existed between police and victims of rape and sexual assault created many of the problems in investigation that led her to look for alternatives. Creating an environment where the victim can choose to be engaged and is not being forced to participate has changed the tenor of those relationships and improved the quality of the criminal justice response in those cases where the victim wants intervention. Rather than assuming that prosecution is every victim’s immediate goal, You Have Options asks victims how they want to proceed and honors those decisions. Detective Hull has seen victims take six- to eight-month breaks from pursuing investigations to address the other issues in their lives, then return to assist police in investigation. The key, Detective Hull says, is to stop assuming that an arrest must be made, and instead to use strategies that treat each case as unique and each victim as an individual (Hull, personal communication, 2014).

You Have Options has not been used in intimate partner violence cases; in fact, the You Have Options website is clear that the program cannot be used in cases where intervention is legally mandated—cases involving intimate partner violence, child abuse, a victim who is in continuing physical danger, or a perpetrator who poses a significant threat to public safety. Oregon’s mandatory-arrest law precludes detectives from offering You Have Options to victims who are raped by their intimate partners while permitting the use of the program in stranger rapes. But in jurisdictions without mandatory-arrest laws, the same guiding principles could govern work with victims of intimate partner violence, and the same options could be provided—creating the potential for greater victim involvement in the criminal justice system.

### **Restorative Justice**

Restorative justice might provide another innovative alternative to the current criminal

justice response. The criminal justice response is retributive, focused on punishing crimes as a means of holding offenders accountable for their actions. Proponents of restorative justice reject the language of “crime,” believing that “the state and the law should not have a monopoly on defining injury” (Harris, 2011, p. 47). Restorative justice is concerned instead with repairing harm caused by offenders by giving victims the ability to name the harm and discuss the impact of the harm; asking offenders to acknowledge the harm; and bringing victims, offenders, and their supporters together to develop a plan for addressing that harm that will hold offenders accountable (often through reparations and rehabilitation) and fulfill victims’ needs. Restorative justice holds that social norms are better reinforced through social shaming than state-imposed sanctions and that “after appropriate rituals of guilt, responsibility, and penance,” offenders should be reintegrated into society (Harris, 2011, p. 41). Restorative justice centralizes the needs and goals of victims of crimes in its processes. Victims report high levels of satisfaction with restorative justice, and offenders perceive restorative-justice processes as fair in both process and outcome (Strang, Sherman, Mayo-Wilson, Woods, & Ariel, 2013). In the criminal justice system, restorative justice has most often been used with juvenile offenders, although restorative practitioners have also addressed adult crime, including violent crime.

Restorative justice is often defined through the processes it employs. Those processes include victim–offender mediation, which often occurs after prosecution; conferencing, which brings together a number of individuals, including the victim, the perpetrator, family and community members, and service providers; and circles, including peacemaking circles, used in some indigenous communities, and sentencing circles, designed to allow the victim, family, and community to have input on sentencing in criminal cases.

The use of restorative justice in cases of intimate partner violence is controversial. Concerns about restorative justice and intimate partner

violence fall into three general categories: safety, accountability, and political concerns. First, some question whether restorative-justice practitioners understand and respect the unique characteristics of and dangers posed by intimate partner violence and account for those factors in their programs. Restorative justice is seen as offender focused, providing insufficient support to victims of intimate partner violence, forcing forgiveness on victims who may not be ready to give it, and failing to make space for their understandable anger. Second, there are questions about whether restorative justice holds perpetrators sufficiently accountable and whether such programs undermine the expressive power of sanctioning intimate partner violence through the criminal justice system. Third, creating alternatives to the criminal justice system (like restorative-justice programs) may undermine the decades-long effort to have intimate partner violence treated as a crime and decrease victims’ ability to demand responses from the criminal justice system.

But some advocates believe that restorative justice could provide an alternative to the criminal justice response. Restorative-justice programs could offer alternatives to victims of intimate partner violence who either do not want to engage with the criminal justice system or did not achieve their justice-related goals through that system. By engaging supportive community members in restorative processes, restorative justice could help to change community norms around intimate partner violence—long a goal of the antiviolence movement. Restorative justice could also help to expand the community’s understanding of abuse by enabling victims to seek redress not only for those forms of violence that the law reaches (physical harm and threats of physical harm) but also for forms of violence that do as much, if not more, damage that the law does not prohibit (emotional, economic, spiritual, and reproductive abuse). By treating offenders with dignity and respect rather than labeling them as criminals, restorative processes may create an atmosphere in which offenders are more likely to change their behavior. Moreover,



offender accountability is enhanced when offenders are committed to helping victims recover, as restorative justice requires. Finally, restorative processes vest power in victims of intimate partner violence: the power to decide whether to use restorative processes, to confront their partners, to require their partners to accept responsibility for their actions, and to seek reparations. Restorative justice increases the opportunities for victim voice and participation in the justice process. Community accountability is enhanced when community members play an active role in condemning harms, providing support, and determining reparations. Although the criminal justice system is firmly entrenched, the bar for determining whether alternatives to that system, like restorative justice, are successful is fairly low. Sociologist Lawrence Sherman (2000) notes, “Since there is no evidence that standard justice is any more effective than doing nothing in response to an incident of domestic violence, the only challenge to restorative justice is to do better than doing nothing” (p. 281).

Although few programs have been evaluated, the existing data on the use of restorative processes in the context of intimate partner violence are encouraging. Joan Pennell and Gale Burford piloted family group decision making (FGDM), a form of conferencing with families experiencing intimate partner violence in the child welfare system. The goals of the FGDM process were to eliminate or reduce violence and to promote the well-being of the adults and children in the family. During conferences, participants created plans to stop the abuse in their families, with the support and input of community resources. Participants reported no violence either during or as a result of the conferences (Pennell, 2005). Both child maltreatment and adult abuse declined in families involved in the FGDM process. Two thirds of the families reported being better off following the conference, 20% were the same, and 7% said they were worse off after the conference (Pennell & Burford, 2000). While additional studies exist on restorative justice and intimate partner violence, questions have been raised about their methodologies (Ptacek, 2014).

Victim–offender mediation has shown promise as well. Victim–offender mediation involves direct, mediated, postconviction interactions between victims and perpetrators of violence. These programs are not diversionary and do not offer the offender any benefits in terms of sentence reduction or decreased punishment. In a qualitative evaluation of one woman’s experience with the Victims Voices Heard postconviction victim–offender mediation program, Miller and Iovanni (2013) found that timing of the postconviction process allowed the victim, Laurie, to establish safety and feel secure and confident advocating for herself, something that she did not feel at the time that her husband, Paul, was sentenced for abusing her. Miller and Iovanni (2013) stress the importance of timing:

The victim needs to be ready to reap the benefits of facing the offender and the offender must have had time to develop empathy and take responsibility. By the time a PCD [post-conviction dialogue] takes place, a victim has found her voice, is ready to use it and power imbalances are more likely to be resolved. (p. 262)

During the process, Laurie was able to confront Paul with his behavior. As a result, Laurie “achieved validation of her account of what happened and received acknowledgement that she was not to blame” (Miller & Iovanni, 2013, p. 259).

A restorative approach to sexual assault could be a useful model for developing programs to address intimate partner violence. Psychologist Mary Koss created RESTORE to provide victims of sexual assault with additional justice options. RESTORE is a diversion program. After a case has come into the criminal justice system, victims are offered three choices: continuing with the criminal prosecution, seeking civil justice options, or RESTORE. Only after victims opt in to RESTORE are perpetrators asked to participate. Perpetrators are then assessed to determine their suitability for a community-based response. Facilitators prepare all involved parties (which can include family members and friends of both parties and members of the



community) for the conference. Once victims are ready to confront their offenders, and offenders are prepared to “participate without traumatizing others through denial or blame,” the conference is held (Koss, 2014, p. 1631). If the victim does not want to meet the offender face to face, a surrogate victim attends the conference on the victim’s behalf. During the conference, offenders (now referred to as *responsible persons*) describe the harm that they have done, victims discuss the impact of that harm, family and friends of both the victim and the responsible person have a chance to speak, and a redress plan is created. That redress plan includes therapy, monthly meetings with a case manager, weekly phone calls, quarterly meetings with a Community Accountability and Reintegration Board, community service, stay-away orders, and other elements determined by the victim, which could include replacement of property, payment of expenses, and/or participation in community service. The plan is monitored regularly for 12 months, after which the responsible person provides the Community Accountability and Reintegration Board with a “statement of accountability and reintegration that summarizes lessons learned and constitutes their formal apology,” and the case is closed (Koss, 2014, p. 1632). If the responsible person is terminated from the program, the case is referred back to the criminal justice system.

RESTORE is already being used successfully in cases of intimate partner violence; all of the felony sexual assaults handled by RESTORE involved acquaintances or romantic partners. An evaluation of RESTORE found that of the 20 cases that went to conference, only “one isolated incident of survivor victim re-abuse” occurred, and that incident “was stopped in mid-stream by the facilitator” (Koss, 2014, p. 1651). Survivors reported selecting RESTORE over other options in order to take back their power and to have input into the consequences that offenders faced. Victim satisfaction with the program was high. Survivors reported feeling safe and listened to and believed that they were treated with respect. Survivors were slightly skeptical about the behavior and motivations of the

responsible person. Sixty-six percent of survivors agreed or strongly agreed that the responsible person accepted responsibility, but only 49% believed that the responsible person seemed genuinely remorseful. All of the survivors agreed or strongly agreed that the conference was a success, however. Responsible persons in two thirds of the felony and 91% of the misdemeanor cases fulfilled all of the requirements of their redress plans.

RESTORE provides a vision of the type of community conferencing that could be used as an alternative to traditional criminal justice system intervention, but it also highlights the limitations of restorative justice as an alternative to criminal justice. Restorative processes can only be used when offenders are ready to accept responsibility for their actions, which means a significant percentage of cases would not qualify. Cases have to be carefully screened not only for acceptance of responsibility but for safety as well. Moreover, restorative processes should not be used in cases involving intimate partner violence unless the victim initiates the process—again, screening out a proportion of the cases. Restorative justice is labor intensive, requiring facilitators to engage in significant preparation not only with victims and offenders but with supportive people and community representatives as well. The criminal justice system processes thousands of cases each year; it is hard to imagine a restorative-justice system that could handle that volume, given the work each conference or victim-offender mediation requires.

Another crucial consideration is when in the life of a case restorative justice is appropriate. Restorative processes could be available as an alternative to prosecution, at sentencing, or post-conviction. There is some disagreement, however, about using restorative justice as a true alternative to criminal justice intervention. Although RESTORE is a successful diversion program, Miller and Iovanni argue that engaging in restorative justice before prosecution is problematic; “a diversionary proceeding risks taking place far too early in the process for offenders to have developed enough empathy for their victim and to genuinely take responsibility for their

behavior” (Miller & Iovanni, 2013, p. 260). Restorative justice may be particularly useful for those who are not interested in engaging with the criminal justice system, those who want to maintain their intimate partnerships, and those who are coparenting and need assistance in reordering their family relationships. Given that the majority of the victims of intimate partner violence still do not voluntarily turn to the legal system, providing assistance to that population could be a tremendous service. Restorative justice is unlikely to replace the criminal justice system altogether, but restorative processes could provide a parallel system of non-state-based justice options to those seeking such options.

Forty years ago, the robust criminal justice response to intimate partner violence was unimaginable. Today, it is equally hard to imagine a response to intimate partner violence in which law enforcement is not central. But the criminal justice system could be vastly improved through the provision of options that allow victims of intimate partner violence to exercise more autonomy and informed choice. Forty years from now, such a system might be a reality.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do the benefits of mandatory-intervention policies like mandatory arrest and no-drop prosecution outweigh the criticisms of those policies?
2. How should the success of a criminal justice intervention be measured?
3. Are innovative programs like You Have Options and restorative justice realistic alternatives to the current criminal justice system?
4. What other alternatives to the criminal justice system would benefit victims of intimate partner violence?

### FOR FURTHER STUDY

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The You Have Options Program: [www.reportingoptions.org](http://www.reportingoptions.org)

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## Economic-Empowerment Programs for Women Who Have Experienced Abuse

Claire M. Renzetti

The negative consequences of intimate partner violence (IPV) for victims are now well known. Numerous studies have shown that in addition to physical injuries, women who have been abused may experience various mental-health problems, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, lowered self-esteem, and a diminished sense of self-efficacy (Perez, Johnson, & Wright, 2012; Sutherland, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2002). Domestic violence shelters were established to provide emergency housing, psychological counseling, and legal assistance to women fleeing abusive partners. Over the past three decades, shelter staff have developed a variety of programs to expand the services they offer to battered women. Many shelters now offer, for example, transitional housing and relocation services, various educational programs, and drug and alcohol treatment (Macy, Giattina, Sangster, Crosby, & Montijo, 2009; Sullivan, 2012). But in recent years, domestic violence advocates and researchers have recognized the importance of economically empowering women who have experienced abuse. Research and front-line experience indicate that financial instability, the threat or actual experience of poverty, and economic dependence on an intimate partner, in addition to the negative mental-health impacts of IPV, are among the factors that motivate women to return to abusive partners, thus increasing their risk of revictimization (Brush, 2011; Farber & Miller-Cribbs, 2014; Goodman & Epstein, 2009; Hamby & Bible, 2009; Moe & Bell, 2004; Pruitt, 2008; Thomas, Joski, Wittenberg, & McCloskey, 2008).

*Economic empowerment* has three dimensions: (1) financial literacy, which is defined as having the knowledge and skills necessary to make sound financial decisions and acquire resources; (2) economic self-efficacy, which is a person's beliefs about and confidence in their ability to achieve financial security and economic success (however they define *success*); and (3) economic self-sufficiency, which is one's ability to independently meet one's needs of daily life (Postmus, 2010). As Postmus (2010) explains, "Economic empowerment programs and economic advocacy strategies represent efforts to help survivors gain or regain their financial footing during and after abuse" (p. 1). This is particularly important for women who have experienced a type of IPV known as economic abuse, which includes both economic control (e.g., keeping the woman from going to work, harassing her at work, and hiding financial information and resources from her) and economic exploitation (e.g., stealing the woman's or joint money or property and running up credit card debt for which the woman may be at least partially responsible) (Adams, Sullivan, Bybee, & Greeson, 2008; Postmus, Plummer, & Stylianou, 2016; Sanders, 2014).

The most common economic-empowerment programs for women who have experienced abuse are financial-literacy programs. Financial-literacy programs typically cover such topics as financial goal setting; saving and investment strategies; paying bills; and credit cards, interest rates, and predatory-lending practices. But as Postmus (2010) points out, financial-literacy programs for IPV survivors also include information on economic abuse and the complex

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## **Economic-Empowerment Programs for Women Who Have Experienced Abuse** (Continued)

financial and safety issues these women face, such as “how to disentangle joint financial relationships with an abusive partner, how to repair credit damaged by an abuser, or how to identify resources to assist with financial and safety challenges” (p. 5). Few of these programs have been empirically evaluated; however, those that have been evaluated show promising results. For instance, Postmus and Plummer (2010) evaluated the Moving Ahead Through Financial Management program, which was developed by the Allstate Foundation and implemented in partnership with the National Network to End Domestic Violence, Inc. Their findings show that IPV survivors who participated in the program made significant improvements in their financial literacy, economic self-efficacy, and economic self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, the findings are based on a fairly small, nonrandom sample.

Postmus (2010) also reports that an increasing number of shelters and victim advocacy organizations are combining financial-literacy programs with asset-building programs (e.g., matched-savings programs and small loans), which are particularly helpful in promoting economic self-sufficiency among women who have experienced abuse (see also Christy-McMullin, 2000; Sullivan, 2012). Employment assistance (e.g., résumé writing and practice interviewing) is also offered at many shelters, although some shelter residents face difficulties in their job search because of an inconsistent work history and a lack of references. One innovative program that is attempting to address some of these problems while economically empowering women is the “farm program” at GreenHouse17, the battered women’s shelter that serves Lexington (Fayette County), Kentucky, and 16 surrounding rural counties. GreenHouse17 serves approximately 230 women and their children each year, offering standard shelter services (e.g., a 24-hour crisis line, safe emergency housing, legal assistance, counseling, and referrals) for both residential and nonresidential program participants. But one program that makes GreenHouse17 unique relative to other victim services agencies is that it operates a working farm.

Domestic violence shelters are often located in physical environments that are separated from nature (Stuart, 2005). But GreenHouse17 is situated on 40 acres of rich farmland, surrounded by other working farms, including horse farms. In 2010, shelter administrators and staff, faced with budget constraints, began to consider potential revenue-generating activities, as well as ways to raise awareness of the shelter’s work in the community. Although various “cottage industries” were discussed, shelter administrators and staff felt that cultivating the land could address several issues simultaneously; specifically, farming could (1) reduce the shelter’s food budget while improving nutrition for residents and staff; (2) raise revenue through the sale of produce at local farmers markets; (3) provide residents with opportunities for physical exercise, socializing, and quiet reflection and meditation, thus facilitating healing; and (4) connect the shelter with the larger community through the shared value of land preservation and the buy-local movement.

A brief history of the development of the GreenHouse17 farm program is provided by Renzetti and Follingstad (2015). The program draws on principles of therapeutic horticulture (see Sempik, Aldridge, & Becker, 2005, for a general discussion of therapeutic horticulture) to provide shelter residents with a variety of potentially beneficial activities. Under the

supervision of a paid professional farmer and a farm manager (whose responsibilities include farm-to-table utilization of the harvest), residents are offered voluntary opportunities to participate in farming activities, and those who wish to actively work the land (e.g., prepare beds, mulch, plant, water, weed, and harvest) may commit to 9 hours of labor per week in exchange for a small stipend as compensation. Residents who do not wish to participate directly in farming may engage in farm-related activities (e.g., cooking farm to table, flower arranging, and making crafts and body products from harvested products). As envisioned, harvested produce and flowers are sold at local farmers markets. Community members also order flower arrangements for special events, such as weddings, or purchase body products (e.g., lip balm and soap). In addition to being able to earn some money, shelter residents gain financial literacy and entrepreneurial and marketing skills, and they have an employer who can provide them with a reference for other jobs. The farm is also an adjunct to the therapeutic services offered at the shelter, in that its mission is to create an agriculture-based therapeutic environment with the potential to improve residents' physical, psychological, and emotional well-being. The farm program provides physical activity, companionable social interaction, and serenity for IPV victims; a source of nutritional and seasonal field-to-table food for shelter residents; and opportunities for self-sufficiency and microenterprise. All of these program elements may reduce the negative effects of IPV victimization while promoting financial stability, self-efficacy, self-sufficiency, and improved physical and mental health.

An evaluation of the GreenHouse17 farm program is currently underway. Findings from the first phase of this evaluation, which measured the perceptions of shelter staff regarding the impact of the farm program, indicate positive outcomes. Staff report observing significant physical, psychological, and social benefits for shelter residents, including economic empowerment, exercise and better nutrition, reduction in stress, increased self-esteem, sustained sobriety, and reduced social isolation. In addition, staff identified several benefits to themselves, such as expanded opportunities to deliver services, and to the shelter, in the forms of positive media attention and increased community awareness of shelter services (Renzetti & Follingstad, 2015). The second phase of this evaluation involves collecting data from shelter residents. Of course, few shelters are located on farmland, but therapeutic horticulture programs like the one at GreenHouse17 can be implemented in a variety of environments, including urban areas, by using such techniques as container gardening and rooftop gardening.

Economic empowerment of women who have experienced abuse is important not only for helping the women attain financial stability but also for sustaining other gains and achievements, including independence, improved self-esteem, and long-term safety.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How is economic *disempowerment* related to intimate partner violence, both as a cause of IPV and as a consequence of IPV?
2. How would you design an economic-empowerment program for women who have left abusive relationships? What components do you think such a program would need to be successful? How would you measure "success"?

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## **Economic-Empowerment Programs for Women Who Have Experienced Abuse** (Continued)

### **Resources for Further Study**

1. A complete description of the Moving Ahead Through Financial Management program of the Allstate Foundation may be found at [www.clicktoempower.org](http://www.clicktoempower.org). The site also provides various financial tools and curriculum materials that may be downloaded.
2. Information about the therapeutic horticulture program at GreenHouse17 may be found at [greenhouse17.org/our-farm](http://greenhouse17.org/our-farm).

### **Biographical Statement**



Claire M. Renzetti, PhD, is the Judi Conway Patton Endowed Chair in the Center for Research on Violence Against Women and professor and chair of the Sociology Department at the University of Kentucky. She is editor of the international, interdisciplinary journal, *Violence Against Women*; coeditor, with Jeffrey Edleson, of the Interpersonal Violence book series for Oxford University Press; and editor of the Gender and Justice book series for the University of California Press. She has authored or edited 21 books, as well as numerous book chapters and articles in professional journals. Much of her research has focused on the violent-victimization experiences of socially and economically marginalized women.