Limits and Risks of "Programs" for Wife Batterers

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Introduction

Whether it's called "therapy", "treatment", "counseling", "education", "intervention" or simply "programs", support for perpetrators of wife abuse presently benefits from a relentless lobbying effort, one that rekindles confidence and expectations with the general public, with government and judicial decision-makers and, eventually, with abused women themselves, in spite of their own perceptions and choices. In times of financial crisis and anguish over any demise of The Family, government officials are easily interested by the apparent savings of dejudiciarizing the crimes that seem most easily amenable to psychologizing "explanations" and measures. Yet, in the words of
R. Karl Hanson and Liz Hart, authors of The Evaluation of Treatment Programs for Male Batterers (1991):

If important decisions are going to be made based on whether a batterer attends treatment (e.g., partner stays or leaves, sentenced to jail or probation), then it becomes crucial to know the effectiveness of the treatment. (INTRODUCTION, p. i)

It is to this end that Hanson and Hart recently organized a conference, bringing together---with the help of Solicitor General Canada---most of the premier researchers in this field. The document quoted above offers this conference's proceedings. Montreal Men Against Sexism has undertaken to present in synthetic form significant quotes from these proceedings, in order to let conference participants attest in their own words to the limits and risks presented by such programs at this stage. [Emphasis is ours wherever sentences appear in bold.]

It will readily appear that most of the speakers concur that a strong and systemic judicial intervention and a victim-based mode of support prove to be more efficient means of achieving the prime objective of any intervention aimed at the perpetrator, e.g. getting him to stop battering and controlling that woman.

It is thus as much in the interest of men than in that of women that our society must show both realism and accountability in its response to the claims and experimental models put forward by the dejudiciarization lobby, under the guise of a psychologizing intervention. As newspaper headlines remind us daily, human lives are at stake.

Robert J. Brown, psychologist, Calgary General Hospital: ...private and government resources for dealing with family violence are extremely limited. As a result, it has become increasingly important to ensure that we use those resources in the very best places and in the most efficient ways possible. (73-4)

Finally, if we speak of a "psychologizing" approach, it is because a realistic psychological exploration of misogyny and of men's will to control remains generally absent from the "treatment" debate, because it is censored as a feminist analysis. What now presents itself as psychological theory and practice eludes the true dynamics of the situation and is much closer to masculinist politics than to a realistic and progressist analysis of the dynamics of sexist violence.

Martin Dufresne, for Mtl Men Vs Sexism

Executive Summary

Assessing the efficiency of "therapies"

1. Most program providers have neither the time nor the resources to correctly assess their program's efficiency

1Unless otherwise specified, all further quotes are taken from The Evaluation of Treatment Programs for Male Batterers, R. Karl Hanson and Liz Hart, Editors, Ottawa, 1991. Any emphasized sections of these quotes are ours.
2. They feel that a valid assessment would prove ponderous and costly
3. Comparative assessments of programs remain few and far-between
4. An efficient or sufficiently integrated approach has yet to be identified
5. Significant questions are being raised concerning the competency and training of session leaders

**Fundamental problems**

1. No universal approach
2. Dangerous, victim-blaming theoretical models
3. A social problem of epidemic proportion is being ignored
4. Intra-personal explanation factors are being grossly over-represented
5. "Therapies"? No pathology has ever been identified
6. The attempt to identify a characteristic "batterer profile" on which to base a clinical approach has proven mistaken
7. Even with over-represented variables, one doesn't know if these are causes or effects of the violence
8. For example, depression is not a causal factor
9. Neither is battering an anger problem
10. Stress is not the problem either
11. Nor is violence visited upon the perpetrator as a child
12. Wife batterers suffer no lack of skills
13. Predicting recidivism remains impossible as of yet within the psychological framework
14. One is even in the dark about how desired attitude changes might influence recidivism
15. Treatment models are still unable to take into account the effect of subjects' new relationships
16. In summary, one is still completely in the dark
17. But by merely speaking of "therapy", these key issues are obscured
18. And this even at the cost of a truly scientific protocol
19. And with obvious risks of unwanted side-effects

20. Unable to tell which perpetrators can change, one tries to identify which ones can't

21. And one washes one's hands of a growing number of assailers

22. But without hindering the growing practice of dejudiciarization, which benefits all batterers, regardless of prognosis

**Methodological problems: Questionable success figures**

1. Why so much emphasis on programs that reach so very few men?

2. Non-representative subject samples

3. Very few follow-up studies

4. Questionable self-assessments

5. The risk of false-positive reports

6. Too short follow-up periods

7. A misleading "honeymoon" period

8. Lack of opportunities to batter has been identified with success!

9. While such contacts appear to some essential to treatment

10. Non-recidivism cannot be traced to "therapy"'s effects

11. Lack of control groups

12. The influence of judicial intervention is not taken into account, despite proofs of its efficiency

13. Very little weight was given to the social desirability factor in assessing subjects' answers and self-reports

14. Self-assessments poorly predict real-life behaviours

15. Programs are hobbled by middle-upper-class values

16. Far from becoming more refined, programs are sacrificing efficiency in order to maintain attendance

17. Program providers doubt the success possibilities of the stripped-down, shortened programs they find themselves limited to
18. Recidivism data generally ignore psychological violence

19. Victims are sometimes used to boost success statistics...

20. Batterers who drop out generally suffer no consequence

**When "therapy" becomes counter-productive**

1. Results of the Urban Institute's Baltimore study (Harrell, 1991)

2. An increase of psychological manipulation and violence

3. A reductive notion of wife abuse can create false-positive results

4. Men can even use program content in order to refine their control strategies

5. Men are exploiting "therapy" to avoid sanctions that would have a truly dissuasive effect

6. Victim support and prosecution budgets are being openly challenged by therapy-for-batterers program providers

7. The clinical approach obscures the very real benefits of abuse for perpetrators

8. The multiplication of unverified theoretical "explanations" detracts from acknowledgement of batterers' responsibility

9. Structurally, batterers are much more supported than confronted by "therapy" programs

10. Program providers show a clear anti-sanctions bias

11. Men end up being pitied

12. A surprising and dangerous lack of empathy for victims

13. Therapies maintain partners in high-risk situations, as compared to safer options

14. An idealist "therapeutic" discourse ends up mimicking the batterer's rationale for his violence

15. So-called batterer's "profiles" trivialize wife abuse and ignore the diversity of victims' experience

16. "Couple counselling" approaches prove especially risky

**Putting women's safety first**

1. Re-centring intervention: two basic principles

2. Choosing efficiency
3. The best way of really helping men? Supporting women

**Appendixes**

1. List of women assassinated by men in Quebec alone since December 6, 1989

2. Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses' 1991 Statements on Accountability and Effectiveness of Abusers' Counselling Programs, Police Response, Housing and Education

3. Quebec Coalition of Abused Women's Shelters assessment of abusers' groups and of institutional reaction to women's demands, in Chap. 7 of Au Grand Jour

4. Various press releases and articles from MMAS
   1. Programs for wife batterers may actually be compounding the problem
   2. Ending Men's Violence Isn't
   3. Masculinism kills again in Montreal
   4. Why are we in "therapy"?

**Assessing the efficiency of "therapies"**

The issue of how efficient the various forms of psychological "treatment" offered to wife batterers actually are cannot be eluded or reduced to some standard give-it-a-further-try optimism. We hope that this will become self-evident as the readers ponders the various problems raised by program providers and analysts themselves.

1. Most program providers have neither the time nor the resources to correctly assess their program's efficiency.

   Such is the judgment of James Browning, who produced in 1984 the first overall assessment of the limits and contradictions of Canadian treatment programs for batterers: It should be noted that a proper evaluation is beyond the resources of most individual programs, which are struggling to simply provide a clinical service. It is therefore incumbent upon government to provide resources for an evaluation component... (94)

2. They feel that a valid assessment would prove ponderous and costly

   Daniel J. Saunders: ...testing treatment integrity is a major research investment: a coding scheme must be developed, coders need to be trained to reliability, and the coding itself is time-consuming. (6)

3. Comparative assessments of programs remain few and far-between
James Browning: In addition to the foregoing shortcomings in the evaluation literature, there have been few successful attempts to create an evaluation system for a series of programs. (94)

This lack of common ground renders empirically unjustifiable any appeal to "success statistics" in support of the general notion of "treatment" for batterers, especially in comparison to more efficient proven approaches.

4. An efficient or sufficiently integrated approach has yet to be identified

Jurgen Dankwort, a Montreal social worker, has looked closely at a vast sample of treatment programs for batterers, both in Quebec and throughout Canada. Here are a few of the conclusions of this study which he communicated to conference participants: Contrary to expectations, the research did not identify techniques that would transmit different messages about either the causes of violence, the reasons why men resist changing, or the remedies required to stop the abuse. (47-8)

Eisikovits and Edleson recently concluded, in their extensive review of existing studies, that to answer the pressing question of whether or no treatment for wife abusers "works", research must attempt to link outcome, theory and technique in a much more unified manner... (39)

The findings suggest that much needs to be done to improve group counselling to achieve the goals the program themselves identified. Furthermore, the findings clarified why the fundamental problems identified in this study are so important to developing intervention that is congruent with the goals of the criminal justice system and in harmony with the objectives of victim's advocates. The numerous inconsistencies offer significant support for the need to develop program standards or guidelines to ensure that the safety and freedom of women is the primary goal of intervention with male perpetrators. (50)

5. Significant questions are being raised concerning the competency and training of session leaders

In the present state of counselling, just about anyone can claim to offer "therapy" for wife beaters. Back in 1984, Browning already pointed to the multiplication of highly speculative and mutually contradictory streams of "explanations" offered for wife abuse by a growing variety of service providers.

The groups and services vying for government contracts to "deal with" perpetrators of wife abuse - or with "violent couples" - can be masculinist self-help organizations, local social service delivery centres, recycled family or conjugal counsellors, so-called "mediators", private sector clinicians, transition houses, family service associations, clergymen, etc. Each of these speak of "therapy" but generally bypass the professional requirements and accountability criteria touted by most participants during Hanson & Hart's conference. Indeed, would the psychologizing approach apply so generally and appear so effective in cutting back government expenses if one were to insist on such requirements and make this type of "therapy" a truly professional practice?
Daniel J. Saunders: ...we need to make sure that the leaders are competent. Competency involves both background knowledge and therapy skills. Background knowledge must include a high level of awareness of the causes of domestic violence and the impact that it has on the victim. Knowledge of the many ways that offenders minimize and rationalize their behaviour is crucial... The importance of training is exemplified in the research of others... Therapist training, however, can be a major investment. The National Institute of Mental Health depression study spent many thousand dollars per therapist in the training. (6)

Further, in a discussion of some counter-productive factors of the psychologizing approach, we will outline to what extent the 1991 Ottawa conference participants proved aware of how competency lacks and biases of current program leaders had the effect of impeding any improvement of perpetrators' behaviour, to the point of actually worsening wife abuse during and after "treatment" as the Urban Institute's extensive Baltimore survey pointed out in late 1991.

**Fundamental problems**

But first, let's review the fundamental problems discussed by conference participants. One of the requirements of any competency assessment has to be a consensus on the dynamics of wife abuse. The existence of any valid therapy requires a consensus on a pathology and a typology of affected subjects. Yet, after twenty years of research and ceaseless efforts to arrive at these, these pursuits are at a dead-end in the very words of these specialists. The hypothesis that wife battering is some kind of disease amenable to therapy simply doesn't hold water on the face of the available data.

1. No universal approach

   The organizations and individuals vying for research grants and service delivery contracts generally claim that their approach is inclusive of every dimension of wife abuse and will benefit the whole community. Yet, Hanson & Hart acknowledge at the onset that...

   ...none of the existing programs are successful for all batterers, and there is only limited information on who is likely to benefit from treatment. (p. i)

2. Dangerous, victim-blaming theoretical models

   Barbara Pressman, Adjunct Faculty at Wilfrid Laurier University's Faculty of Social Work, validates this assessment, while focusing on one of the risks created by the inconsistency in the field: ...Currently, there is not universal agreement on the causes [of wife assault]. Consequently, some treatment agencies are employing theoretical models that blame victims, trivialize the problem, and fail to appreciate the impact of violence on victims. (17)

3. A social problem of epidemic proportions is being ignored
One can even wonder whether the problem of wife abuse can be assimilated to a mental health issue for men. Pressman demonstrates that it isn’t: ...the rate of abuse of women in the home is so pervasive (encompassing all economic, cultural and religious groups) and so extensive (1 in 8) that one cannot explain behaviour of such epidemic proportions as intrapsychic phenomenon or relationships and interactional patterns gone awry. (...) It is the described societal context that must inform our treatment of abusing men. (17, 19)

4. Intra-personal explanation factors are being grossly over-represented

Jurgen Dankwort demonstrates this, offering a statistical assessment: ...as some researchers have noted, it is puzzling that most empirical investigation of wife battering has examined the intra-personal level of wife abuse even though it is doubtful that more than 2 or 3% of all wife-beating can be attributed to purely inter-personal characteristics. (38)

Oto Cadsky, of Edmonton's Forensic Assessment and Community Services, is adamant: Treating individual men in individual treatment programs is not going to make the slightest difference in the large scale. (117)

5. "Therapies"? No pathology has ever been identified

The failure of the psychologizing approach is especially obvious in the failure of attempts to identify any pathology specific to wife batterers, which would justify designing the intervention along a mental health approach and letting perpetrators avoid sanctions.

In a summation of program efficiency assessment studies written in 1990 and appended to the conference proceedings, the well-known specialists Richard M. Tolman and Larry W. Bennett write: The evidence presented thus far heavily suggests heterogeneity of characteristics of men who batter. Given the heterogeneity, the question remains whether there are identifiable clusters of attributes of relevance to practice... Typologies may be harmful if they cloud a societal role or overemphasize spurious differences... The heterogeneity of behavioral and psychological characteristics suggests that no one pathology can be linked to battering. (135, 137)

Psychologist Robert J. Brown confirms this assessment: Overall, the research field has not had much success in using psychological testing to provide either definitive data or answers about the psychological profile of the wife batterer. Even the performance of psychology's assessment flagship, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI; Hathaway & McKinley, 1983 ), has been very disappointing... (75)

...our large sample of batterers, on average, came right down the middle of the general population on personality traits and clinical factors. Even a much closer look at the suspiciousness and paranoia scales showed nothing that would set this sample apart from the general population. (76)

Given these data does it even make sense to go on speaking of treating "the" male batterer?
6. The attempt to identify a characteristic "batterer profile" on which to base a clinical approach has proven mistaken

This is the conclusion reached by James Browning: However, when we examine research that has attempted to demonstrate differences between abusive and non-abusive men, we find that many of the client characteristics we thought were associated with violence do not differentiate when demographic variables are controlled. (89-90)

This assessment is validated by conference organizers Hanson & Hart: Based on research such as Brown's, we now know that batterers are not characterized by high levels of psychiatric disorders - as traditionally defined. (p. iii)

7. Even with over-represented variables, one doesn't know if these are causes or effects of the violence

This emerges clearly from Tolman & Bennett's summation of the existing literature: Therefore, the overrepresentation of psychopathology in clinical battering populations does not clearly implicate psychopathology as a causal factor in battering. (127)

8. For example,

*depression*

is not a causal factor

The high depression level often noted in wife batterers held accountable for their assaults has often been presented as an explanatory factor of the violence. Tolman & Bennett make the following point: ...the Hamberger and Hastings (1988) finding that batterers in treatment were more depressed than a nonviolent comparison group, but nonidentified batterers in the community were not, supports the contention that it is the *consequences* of battering that cause depression. (131)

9. Neither is battering an

*anger*

problem

More often than depression, it is "poor anger control" that is most often targeted as a cause of wife battering by program providers. Whatever the specific theoretical line emphasized by program leaders in what a conference participant referred to as a "grab-bag of treatment approaches" (123), it remains a fact that "anger management" of perpetrators is almost universally the practice implemented by Canadian treatment providers.
Yet, this theory suffers diminishing credibility. As Tolman & Bennett write, among other considerations: Although some programs operate on the assumption that anger is central to battering and that anger control is sufficient to stop battering, others have suggested that anger is merely one rationalization for use of aggressive control (Gondolf & Russell, 1986). Studies utilizing the Novaco Anger Scale (Novaco, 1975) suggest no anger problems for men who batter (Hastings & Hamberger, 1988, Telch & Lindquist, 1984). The degree to which men may self-generate such anger to serve as a rationalization for coercive behavior is unresolved by current research. (129-30)

10. Stress is not the problem either

The theory referring to some stress experienced by the spouse as an explanation for his assaults on his wife is also invalidated by the available data. Tolman & Bennett write: On most of the measures [Straus, 1980; Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986; Barling & Rosenbaum, 1986], however, work stress was unrelated to battering. MacEwen and Barling (1988) studied working couples at 6 and 18 months. The researchers found that work and life stress was not predictive of abuse... These two studies, and those that preceded them, do not make a strong case for the role of external stress in battering. Although some men who batter may use the notion of a stress/battering link to excuse their aggressive behavior, stress is probably not directly linked to woman battering. (133-4)

11. Nor is violence visited upon the perpetrator as a child

Much pop psychology pundits would have us believe that batterers are merely redirecting outwards abuse they have suffered as children. Many self-help group leaders and traditional clinicians have latched on to this sweeping generalization to focus empathetically on their charges' unhappy childhood. But this deresponsabilizing hypothesis remains empirically unfounded and actually invalidated by available data, according to Tolman & Bennett: Kantor and Straus (1989), using data from the 1985 survey, found that observation of parental battering in husband's family of origin predicted minor marital violence but did not predict severe marital violence. (134)

The link between childhood experience and adult behaviour appears to be one of modelling rather than of one of psychopathology requiring treatment, for, as Tolman and Bennett point out: Observing violence in the family of origin has more consistently predicted violence by men toward their partners than has abuse as a child (Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986) (134)

12. Wife batterers suffer no lack of skills

The "anger management" approach, feeding on our society's reluctance to acknowledge family men's choice to repeatedly batter wives and children, has led to a vision of assaultive husbands as devoid of certain skills. This is not the experience of the women, and even of some program leaders, who deal with these men's lies and evasive behaviour.
In a book published in 1993, Next Time She'll Be Dead: Battering and How to Stop It, sociologist and criminologist Ann Jones writes: It's vital to understand that battering is not a series of isolated blow-ups. It is a process of deliberate intimidation intended to coerce the victim to do the will of the victimizer. The batterer is not just losing his temper, not just suffering from stress, not just manifesting "insecurity" or a spontaneous reaction "provoked" by something the victim did or (as psychologists put it) "a deficit of interpersonal skills" or an "inhibition in anger control mechanisms." These are excuses for violence, popular even among therapists who work with batterers; yet we all know aggrieved, insecure, stressed-out people with meagre interpersonal skills who lose their temper without becoming violent. We assume, then, that the grievances of the violent man must be worse, and that under extreme stress he has spun out of control. He looks it, and that's what he says: "I wasn't myself." "I was drunk." "I went bananas." "I lost it." "I went out of my mind." It's lines like these that provide a public excuse and deceive a battered woman into giving one more chance to the so-called real, non violent men underneath. But in fact that violence is himself, perfectly in control and exercising control. (Next Time, She'll Be Dead, Ann Jones, Beacon, Boston, 1989, pp. 88-89)

Nevertheless, behaviourist program providers go on presenting their services to the State as an opportunity to "solve" wife abuse by providing wife batterers with skills to offset the lacks they are said to suffer. A conference participant quotes Don Dutton on this issue: Don Dutton has told me repeatedly... that a lot of these men do not lack skills, they lack something else. They know how to say the right answers and they know what people are looking for, but they do not do it. It is as if they know what is right but they just do not do what is right. (121)

In the second part of this paper, we will look more closely at the repercussions of anger management ideology on the partners of batterers, and specifically at the effects of the new skills taught to these men to better exert control in the conjugal sphere.

13. Predicting recidivism remains impossible as of yet within the psychologizing framework

Objective observers of the field acknowledge that, for lack of theoretical coherence and appropriate methods, the psychologizing approach fails not only to prevent but even to predict recidivism in "treated" subjects.

This was apparent at the outset of a July 1991 synthetic review of Canadian treatment programs: the Abt Institute's Treatment Programs for Men who Batter: A Review of the Evidence of their Success. James Browning summarizes one of the report's conclusions, echoed by many conference participants in their own research reports: Burns, Meredith and Paquette (1991) point out that we know very little about which client characteristics predict recidivism. (90)

14. One is even in the dark about how desired attitude changes might influence recidivism

Although the psychologizing approach attempts to identify attitude changes that would somehow translate into an end to batterers' violence, or at least into a reduction of these or their transposition at a verbal, "managed" level, the following exchange between Don Dutton and a conference
participant demonstrates that researchers remain in the dark about just what mechanisms would allow such a transition: [Question:] ...more generally, when you take measures before, during and after treatment and you get some movement, what do we know about how that movement relates to [battering or to] future battering treatment? ...is there any systematic, empirical evidence that movement of a particular type, as a function of participation in therapy, is associated with reductions in battering?

[Dutton:] As far as I know, it has not been done. (108-9)

15. Treatment models are still unable to take into account the effect of subjects' new relationships

The following comments were exchanged after James Browning very realistic account of methodology problems in the design of treatment programs and in the accounting of so-called success rates.

[Comment:] One of the other concerns is that some of the men in these programs are or become involved in multiple relationships over the course of treatment. No one has really addressed this in terms of program development. Often, there are cases where men are abandoning their partners or their partners are leaving and they are immediately getting involved with another woman in an abusive kind of relationship...

[Comment:] The other side of that problem is when a man gets involved in a new relationship and the honeymoon period of the new relationship just enables him to blame his ex-partner all the more for what happened. You must try to work with him in that context.

[Comment:] We see a lot of that in our program: men who are just coming out of a relationship and are blaming what happened on their ex-partner completely. (95-6)

16. In summary, one is still completely in the dark

Behind closed doors, specialists acknowledge the extent to which this complete theoretical anomy keeps them from guaranteeing society even a modicum of program efficiency.

[Comment addressed to Oto Cadsky:] The bottom line is the issues related to the selection of individuals for treatment. The big question is what kinds of treatment are best for which kinds of individuals? If we go for a global approach that mixes up a whole range of offenders, when we do not have a good idea as to what program content or process is about, then we may not be that far ahead... We should also look at the issue of program integrity as an integral part of any evaluation. We need an evaluation which is going to provide us with some valuable information for bettering treatment programs so that they become more effective.

[Response (Cadsky)]: I think that is "pie in the sky". You are not going to get it... Those of us who have been working in the area can no longer predict, even on clinical grounds, who does well and who does badly. I do not think any of your psychological measures are going to be
able to find them. I think you are kidding yourself if you think you will find anything that will predict who does well and who does badly... I doubt that is achievable. (122-3)

17. But by merely speaking of "therapy", these key issues are obscured

Jurgen Dankwort and James Browning tried at the conference to bring to light the major deontology issues created by a discourse that attempts to create a pseudo-uniformity around the concept of "treatment" for batterers: Dankwort: Most researchers and policy makers, however, continue to behave as if programs for wife abusers are uniform. They seem to prefer avoiding discussions that risk shifting research focus towards such normative issues as practice philosophy. The meaning of that concept, and how we are going to operationalize "philosophy" in program evaluation, has been all but ignored. (37-8)

18. And this even at the cost of a truly scientific protocol

And yet this silence, combined with an opportunistic eclecticism end up undermining any possibility of achieving a truly efficient protocol, as another conference participant pointed out: [We cannot]...just open up every program and mix a variety of offenders with a grab-bag of treatment approaches. If we do that, we are not going to be able to find out that sort of thing. (123)

19. And with obvious risks of unwanted side-effects

There are very real risks in such an uncontrolled approach both for "treated" men and for their partners, as Browning, among others, reminded conference participants: Self-help groups may degenerate into hate sessions, individual therapy does not provide opportunities for breaking social isolation, and couples therapy risks a reinforcement of the blaming dynamic. (91)

We shall return shortly to these very real risks intrinsic to the various forms of the psychologizing approach.

20. Unable to tell which perpetrators can change, one tries to identify which ones can't

Tolman and Bennett: No evidence suggests that alcohol treatment in itself will be effective in changing abusive behavior, but alcohol and drug problems no doubt interfere with the process of such change... Alcohol-abusing batterers are more likely to have antisocial or sociopathic profiles, predicting a poorer treatment outcome compared to nonalcoholic batterers. (128)

21. And one washes one's hands of a growing number of assaulters

Why is this selection process being implemented? In order to identify the "poor subjects" to be avoided.
Daniel J. Saunders: We can also try to uncover the abuser types that consistently fail to benefit from treatment. Preliminary, cross-sectional studies give some evidence of those most likely to re-offend: the alcoholic batterer, the narcissist, those with longer histories of abuse, and those who witnessed parent abuse... (3)

This is quite a group! Nevertheless, under pressure to provide society with proofs of their programs' efficiency, program leaders make every effort to limit their intake to those assaultive husbands most likely to "succeed", based on current hunches. How can one justify this weeding out of "poor prospects" in order to upgrade program's outcomes with subjects carefully selected to best match the therapist's pet hypothesis, at the same time as therapy is presented as a universal method?

But without hindering the growing practice of dejudiciarization, which benefits all batterers, regardless of prognosis

Approximately half of candidates are thus summarily rejected despite the confidence and financial resources invested by decision makers in the psychologizing approach, at the expense of judicial sanctions and of resources for victims, solutions whose efficiency is not in question (when they are available).

Don Dutton: The biggest drop off point in the criminal justice system is police arrest rates, which are still probably too low. Based on the studies I reviewed, in cases where there is prima facie evidence for assault, arrests were only happening 21% of the time. There is tremendous variability based on the attitudes of police officers. Police officers need remedial attitudinal adjustment... In a study I did with Kirk Williams, Les Kennedy and Steve Hart, we found that one of the side effects of arrest is that both the man and the woman tell more people about the assault and, therefore, it is not quite as isolated an event... The woman tends to come out of the closet more and she may begin to stop blaming herself for the violence. (107)

So, just how available is an intervention whose efficiency is thus validated? Dutton reminded participants that "the studies that have taken police reports and wife reports (Sherman and Berk was one of them) show that, for every eight assaults that wives reported, one got picked up by the police." (108)

It is with regard to this context that one should question the ideology and practice of the continuing non-judiciarization of patriarchal crimes, which must be identified as an attempt to re-privatize this crucial problem. One should also question the unrealistic efficiency rates touted by treatment programs in order to justify their public funding.

Methodological problems: Questionable success figures

Daniel J. Saunders: We know that in working with men who batter we are only reaching a very small percentage. (2)

1. Why so much emphasis on programs that reach so very few men?
The main illusion surrounding alleged therapies for wife batterers is probably the importance they are given. One must know how very few batterers are ever influenced by them. Jurgen Dankwort spoke at the conference of...

"...the almost insignificant number of men who actually go through their 15 or 20 sessions. With at least one million Canadian women being beaten each year, the estimated 150 programs across Canada do not hold out much hope for change... In fact it begs the question of why one would want to either continue investing money in this project or continue studying what appears from the outset to be a useless endeavour. (40)

How can one explain this disproportion between, on one hand, the incoherence and marginality of the psychologizing approach and, on the other, the budgets and limelight it goes on appropriating?

Without daring to say that it may be because this approach comforts a traditional priority to men's interests and a just as traditional judicial immunity for intra-familial abuse, one can at the very least look to what Jurgen Dankwort calls the "optimistic and idealistic" discourse used and abused to promote batterers' treatment on every podium over the last fifteen years.

And yet, the closer one looks at the success figures presented to the media and to funding agencies, the less these seem representative of real-life "treatment", inasmuch as the studies offered in support of these claims suffer major methodological problems that render them most of them quite invalid.

Hanson and Hart's conference participants proved quite forthright about these major drawbacks invalidating the most wildly optimistic assessments of their works. (One hopes that they show just as much scepticism in their requests for further Satte funding of treatment programs...)

2. Non-representative subject samples

Hanson and Hart: ...all treatment programs have large drop-out rates from the point of initial contact, to the end of treatment, to follow-up. (p. iii)

Tolman and Bennett: Men who batter prematurely drop out of intervention at very high rates. Based on a national [U.S.] survey of batterers' programs, Pirog-Good and Stets (1986) placed the attrition rate at 40%. (137)

Efficiency assessments of programs are based on the men who complete them. But are these men truly representative of the assaultive spouses that are referred to such programs?

The following data, provided to participants by Cadsky (p. 118 bar graph), from his own Edmonton program, seem typical enough: Out of a hundred men referred to the program either by court order or by their wife, 80 survive the waiting period, 60 are accepted, 30 start the program, 20 are left after 12 weeks and a mere 5 complete the required 30 weeks.
This is to say that, even with the elimination of as many "bad prognosis" subjects as possible, programs fail at least 94% of men referred to them, those that do not attend or do not complete treatment. This factor can only bias the representativeness of the remaining sample, as Browning told participants: Attrition from treatment and follow-up can skew chronological comparisons in a positive direction (as presumably poorer prospects tend to drop out) and little is known about these dropouts. (93)

Jurgen Dankwort offers an obvious summation of this problem: We have mounted long-term studies that attempt to convince us that the effects of treatment endure, but we rarely discuss the fact that the declining sample size very likely means that we are interviewing those couples who would report the least amount of repeat violence because the unsuccessful cases have disappeared from our longitudinal study. (39)

In other words, and to quote Saunders as he questions the alleged success of this or that "approach": The treatment may have a higher success rate only because it finishes with the most self-motivated men or those who are least violent. If differential attrition occurs, the randomization of the experiment is jeopardized. (5)

Don Dutton argues that what we call treatment ends up not even reaching the most dangerous of perpetrators, although these still exploit the dejudicialization ethos to bypass any sanction for their assaults: There are different pockets of batterers who get into different streams. The worst ones are the men who drive their wives and girlfriends into transition houses. They seem to be the ones that are the most violent. They have substance abuse problems. They also seem to have personality disorders. A lot of the time, they dodge the law. The ones who seem to need it the most are the ones who get away with it. If, however, you go and sit in a treatment group, the men you see in there are not like that. (108)

3. Very few follow-up studies

Measuring any modicum of success would appear to require quality follow-up studies. Dankwort points out that program leaders responding to his survey had no empirical basis for their highly unrealistic efficiency assessments: Informants appeared idealistic and optimistic about the effectiveness of their programs. While about 80% of counsellors reported their programs were "effective" (as opposed to "ineffective" or "don't know"), the same respondents also reported that 50% of their clients fail to complete treatment. Only one program has conducted an empirical study that shows (with arguable validity) reduced violence for post-treatment subjects... Respondents did not qualify or explain their hopeful or idealistic inclinations. (49)

It should be noted that the results of this cross-Canada study proved similar to those of a 1989 Quebec survey conducted by Gilles Rondeau, Monique Gauvin and Dankwort among community batterer treatment programs active in Quebec at the time: Of the 15 programs, only 2 collected data on the results achieved. However, these were incomplete data, collected using available resources... We will therefore treat them as estimates. In 9 of the remaining 13 programs, the counsellor and/or program leader shared with us his guesstimate of the results achieved, based on his knowledge and experience of participating clients. In summary, we can offer no data
based on hard numbers. (Les programmes québécois d’aide aux conjoints violents, Planification-Evaluation Sante Services sociaux, 1989, p. 102)

Tolman and Bennett point out the same failing in the studies most often quoted to establish treatment efficiency: The percentage of program participants actually contacted for follow-up studies represents another critical evaluation issue. Some studies reach only a small percentage of participants; others fail to report at all how many participants were actually reached. Nonparticipants in follow up are probably more likely to be abusive (DeMaris & Jackson, 1987), and therefore success rates reported in the literature are probably inflated. ...the number of participants contacted usually decreases with longer follow up. (139)

4. Questionable self-assessments

For a program provider, the quickest and most expedient way to elicit information concerning a client or ex-client's recidivism is of course to ask him directly. As could be expected, such self-assessments have produced quite bombastic results. How can self-reports be treated as a credible source when it is well recognized that minimization is a major problem with perpetrators?

Don Dutton: When a man comes into the program, he is going to report one half as much violence as his partner does. This is a bench-mark of the average minimizing an assaultive husband does. (112)

Tolman and Bennett confirm this methodological problem: Several studies depend only on male self-report, which is problematic in that evidence suggests that men deny and minimize their own level of abuse (Edleson & Brygger, 1986). (139)

Under fire from shelter-based women's advocates, researchers have come to recognize partner reports as much more trustworthy indicators of recidivism.

Tolman and Bennett: Percentages of successful outcome ranged from 53% to 85%. Lower percentages of success tended to occur in programs with lengthier follow up and when success was based on women's reports rather than on arrests or self-reports. (140)

Jurgen Dankwort: ...the most reliable source for reports of recidivism is now held to be the man's partner. (39)

5. The risk of false-positive reports

At present, most program leaders look to partners for a confirmation of subject self-reports. But, as Richard Tolman pointed out in his presentation, even such partner reports can provide misleading data, especially when the partner feels responsible for her partner's (and his therapists's) success...

Partners' corroboration is critical, and any study that depends only on men's self-reports or on police data would grossly underestimate recidivism (Edleson & Brygger, 1986). However, there
are also times when the woman, too, may not report abuse that has occurred; for example, if she is fearful, if she does not know who is on the other end of the telephone, or if she feels dissonant about staying in an abusive situation. She may even deny the level of abuse she is experiencing as a way of coping with an abusive situation. ...the most effective solution is to combine self-reports, partner reports and police data. ...An index that combines reports of abuse from any source is the most conservative estimate of re-offence in terms of physical abuse. (Hamberger & Hastings, 1988). (59)

This is precisely the triple-source approach chosen by The Urban Institute's Adele J. Harrell for her ground-breaking December 1991 study of treatment efficiency for 81 subjects in 3 different programs over a two-year period in the Baltimore area. Her data point to a **counter-productivity** of treatment in terms of recidivism and many attitudinal factors. This study will be reviewed a bit further.

6. Too short follow-up periods

As Tolman pointed out above, one of the main reasons of what Don Dutton calls "false positives" lies with too short follow-up periods, if any follow-up is done.

Tolman and Bennett: Some portion of the success is probably attributable to periodicity of violence: the follow-up periods may not have been long enough to reveal the recidivism (Dutton, 1988) (146)

The same authors also point out: Most confidence can be placed in studies utilizing lengthier follow-up periods: men who batter may give up their abuse for a short time following intervention but later reoffend. (139)

7. A misleading "honeymoon" period

The problem of too short follow-ups is compounded by what James Browning identifies as a "honeymoon period" experienced by the subject as he renews a relationship. This specifically affects self-reports of improvement and tends to create much larger problems further on, problems **not amenable to present treatment approaches**.

[Two community-based demonstration projects run by Correctional Services of Canada in Edmonton and Ottawa] are finding that, very often, there is this "honeymoon period" when men are re-integrating back into the community. In some cases, there is an unwillingness to recognize that there are problems in relationships. This means that treatment is not kicking in until some time after release. Then problems get really wild and it is not something that can be dealt with within a 12 or 25-week program. Relapse prevention is also emerging as an issue to be dealt with for all of the reasons that the Jennings' (1990) article argues. (95)

8. Lack of opportunities to batter has been identified with success!
Yet, not all subjects take up again with their former victim. When this separation has not been taken into account, there has been an overvaluation of treatment success.

James Browning: Some studies have failed to factor in degree of contact with the victim and have not excluded separated men who have a reduced chance of re-offending even without treatment. (93)

Strange as it may seem, for lack of the right follow up questions and of even considering partner issues, program leaders have systematically presented as "cured" those men who had merely lost the opportunity to contact their former victim and assault her once again, or who had not yet formed new abusive relationships.

Daniel Saunders: There are also some important control variables to consider when interviewing the women. As a simple example, we need to find out how much of the time after treatment they are together. If they are separated, are they still having contact? We can adjust our rates of violence by the length of time for which there has been no contact... Often the [victim] reports are not relevant because the couple is divorced and having no contact. ...Considering the number of couples who do not have contact with each other after treatment or who cannot be located, we need better post-treatment measures... more valid than their self-report measures. (5, 7-8)

9. While such contacts appear to some essential to treatment

That is to say that similar successes would have been recorded in the absence of any treatment, the couple's separation being the real solution! To complicate matters, it appears that intervention is proving much more difficult with men who no longer live with a partner.

Oto Cadsky: You now have to control for variables like the following: Is the partner there at the time, while he is attending the group? Are they with somebody? Did they break up? This is important because it is very hard to get at the problems if they do not have a partner: if they are not with a partner, they do not have any problems. (120)

It is also hard not to wonder whether the partners that stay do not find themselves cast in the role of guinea pigs testing their abuser's success... At any rate, there have been instances of "therapists" pleading with partners to come back or take him back, vouching that he had "changed", the very same ones who, in the face of recidivism, see fit to publicly blame women for having "unreasonable expectations" towards treatment...

10. Non-recidivism cannot be traced to "therapy"'s effects

The pattern outlined above by Cadsky could be a clue to the fact that, rather than "treatment", the operative factor in whatever positive change occurs may well be the shift in power that occurs when the perpetrator's partner is socially supported by the very resources challenged by the treatment approach. Tolman subscribes to this opinion: One important reason to look at women's actions is that we may be misattributing gains made by men to men's treatment programs,
when these changes may have more to do with the kinds of services women have received. She may be involved in a shelter, she may have a legal advocate, or she may have received many kinds of services that trigger changes in her partner. If we look only at his actions, we may believe the changes occurred because of treatment. (63)

Whatever the cause, this factor points to the major problem of the lack of valid control groups in what purports to be a scientific methodology.

11. Lack of control groups

For a whole lot of ethical and structural reasons, it appears almost impossible to identify control groups to which to compare "treated" abusive spouses. This also impugns the validity of these studies' optimistic conclusions for who can tell whether it is "treatment" or some other factor or combination of factors involved (e.g., the partner's decisions, the support she is given, judicial intervention) that is to be commended for any positive change recorded?

Daniel J. Saunders hypothesizes what would be the ideal control set-up... to immediately conclude that this approach may also qualify as "treatment", and an inexpensive one at that... ...A form of minimal treatment control group is probably the best solution. This control group would be akin to very strict monitoring by a probation officer, i.e. weekly visits that would not involve treatment. The monitoring would help detect the escalation of violence in case a person has to be withdrawn from the control condition and placed in a "separate" crisis" condition. The monitoring might also be found to be an inexpensive form of treatment with a good rate of success for some types of abusers." (3)

12. The influence of judicial intervention is not taken into account, despite proofs of its efficiency

The strangest consequence of current methodology defects has to be the fact that researchers note almost as much improvement in untreated control groups (Harrell even found more improvement) than they do in treatment completers. Given that completers are generally associated with the best prognosis, this brings Tolman and Bennett to write: The relatively successful outcomes for men who do not complete intervention suggest that other factors contribute to cessation of abuse following intervention. (140)

Richard Tolman emphasized this point in his presentation: I am merely suggesting that criminal justice system involvement can be a path towards cessation of direct aggression in and of itself. Among the variables that did not significantly predict recidivism was the number of sessions attended. That leads me to think that criminal justice system involvement in and of itself was a very active ingredient of change for some men. (64-65)

This certainly validates the crucial role of judicializing sexist assaults. Still, the non-judiciarization ethos seemed central to the belief systems of most of program leaders interviewed by Dankwort in the research he presented at the Ottawa conference.
13. Very little weight was given to the social desirability factor in assessing subjects' answers and self-reports

Since the majority of survey data are based on subject self-reports and on their answers to questionnaires that try to assess their attitudes, these results are wide open to a manipulation of these instruments by abusive men, according to what they know they should report.

Jurgen Dankwort: Finally, seemingly improved post-treatment psychological portraits of offenders have rarely been considered from the perspective of how social desirability has skewed the results from the outset. Yet men "caught" having committed reproachable behaviour will certainly attempt to manage their responses to solicit compassion when they participate in psychological tests or present their personal histories. (39)

Don Dutton is of the same opinion: [As for] social desirability and how it relates to many of the typical measures we use... the men know why they are there; they know they are being tested because they have assaulted their wives. They get into a stance about what they want to present to the researcher or to the therapist. ...whenever someone is a subject in an experiment, they can tell what it is the experimenter wants them to do or they can tell how the person who gives them the questionnaire wants them to answer. The right answers are transparent. (102-3)

14. Self-assessments poorly predict real-life behaviours

It is not enough to try and solve this my merely factoring in extra caution in the assessment process. The issue is to what extent an attitudinal assessment process - controlled by the subject himself - can even predict recidivism. Don Dutton again on the limits of attitudinal assessment, whether the subject is consciously or not manipulative: Frequently, the men know that they are not supposed to be sexist and they know what the right answers are, but that will not tell you very much about how they might behave. ...With the so-called pencil and paper measures you cannot be sure they are actually going to tell you how the man would behave when he is enraged, when he is angry, when he is highly aroused, or when he is drunk. Men cannot always tell you how they are going to behave under these circumstances. We can ask them to project into a situation, but they do not always know. ...There is also the process called self-amplification, where they get angry and begin to feed back off their own arousal and their own behaviour and their anger spirals upwards. ...It is impossible to tap into that on self-reports, but it is still something you want to know about. (103-4)

15. Programs are hobbled by middle-upper-class values

These two latter problems outline an idealistic bias in the theory offered for wife abuse. Proposed "treatment" approaches suffer from this bias and many abusive spouses find themselves unable to relate to program design. Tolman and Bennett point out that, according to some studies: [Pirog-Good & Stets, 1986 ; Grusznski & Carrillo, 1988 ; Saunders & Parker, 1989 ; Hamberger & Hastings, 1986 ] ...these studies suggest that treatment may be less likely to reach younger, less educated, lower income, and minority men. (138)
This results in excessive and differential drop-out rates along class lines, which render even more suspect the glowing success rates advertised by treatment programs. Therapists who look at attendance figures for their program to survive find themselves forced to jettison significant content material, despite its relevance to their “theory”: Richard Tolman: I think that one of the reasons that we see high attrition rates and poorer results for lower educated and unemployed men is that we built these programs for a middle class, highly educated audience (see Saunders & Park, 1989). What I am finding more and more in my own work is that we keep stripping away layers and layers from the intervention. ...we can't put in as overtly as we'd like all the important ingredients, including material on male sexual socialization and patriarchy and the kinds of things we have included in the past.... The men who are illiterate or undereducated, however, are still the most likely to drop out. For these men, the idea of doing homework is really difficult because of their lack of skills. (65)

This suggests that the "treatment" approach is really only designed for a privileged category of males, those whom society refuses to sanction, as if their battering was less harmful.

Barbara Pressman: [These crimes] are no less serious when enacted by middle class professionals who are remorseful and would suffer financially, etc., if imprisoned. (19)

16. Far from becoming more refined, programs are sacrificing efficiency in order to maintain attendance

In order to maintain attendance by their underprivileged charges - those that are unable to afford the safe-conduct of having an individual clinician vouch for them in court (as did O.J. Simpson) - and to justify public funding through the social service delivery network, program providers strip down their program to the least disturbing of approaches, as we have seen above. But even then the message doesn't seem to get across. Few providers are as candid as Richard Tolman about how inefficient content communication proves to be and how irrelevant content itself may prove to be: ...we really only have six content sessions, about 45-50 minutes each, which are repeated about every six weeks. The men are required to come to 18 weeks of full sessions, in addition to a one-day workshop that starts the program off. With this structure, they receive the same material four times. Even on the fourth time, however, many men in the group are still not mastering the content. ...Many men, even men who have successful outcomes, are not retaining the material in the fashion that we would imagine they would need to if the key element in change was really the skill itself or the content itself that we were teaching. (67-8)

17. Program providers even doubt the success possibilities of the stripped-down, shortened programs they find themselves limited to

Daniel Saunders: ...For the severe abuser... we may need one to two years of treatment, rather than the five or six months that is typically given. (3)

James Browning: In my view, it is essential to cover [men's conditioning regarding sex roles and power] in the program as it relates directly to the men's reported anger. It makes sense
conceptually and to ignore it gives the message that the therapist does not consider it important, thereby reinforcing the status quo. However, the chances of changing such strongly conditioned values in a short time with a relatively concrete group of men are poor. Even Gondolf's program, which emphasizes sex role re-conditioning, showed no change on this dimension (Gondolf, 1988). (91-2)

18. Recidivism data generally ignore psychological violence

Advertised success figures usually refer to assault recidivism. But even when the incidence of physical violence appears to be reduced - and this is enough for most providers - psychological violence doesn't necessarily go down.

Barbara Pressman reminded conference participants of the central role of this more generalized type of violence: ...it is very important to note that abusing behaviour is not only physical abuse but also any behaviour which demeans, degrades, intimidates, frightens, or limits control and choices over another person's being. It is any attempt to control another person's life or choices for her own life. Although this would not constitute a legal definition of abuse, it is critical for the work of ending violence against women. Not all abusing physically abuse. However, all abusing men engage in many behaviours to control partners. Consequently, ending physical abuse will not ensure that the other forms will be addressed. Therefore, it is essential that any program treating abusing men address all the forms of abusing behaviour, including isolating partners, restricting mobility, threatening to hurt a partner or children, controlling finances so that a partner is financially dependent, destroying objects or property, abusing pets, using put-downs that erode self-esteem, using sexual coercion, treating a partner as a servant, or using intimidating gestures, looks or anger to frighten a partner. (20)

Jurgen Dankwort clearly identifies a central lack in the current process of program assessment: ...we have measured program success by concentrating on repeat physical violence. Yet, we have much anecdotal evidence from battered women that psychological abuse, or even the lingering threat of recurring violence in the home, can be just as devastating as an actual slap, kick or push. (39)

This "anecdotal" evidence is confirmed by Richard Tolman more experimental protocol: My own work on psychological maltreatment has given some very tentative support to the notion that even when physical abuse stops, levels of ongoing psychological maltreatment will contribute to negative outcomes for partners (Tolman & Bhosley, 1991). (62)

We will return shortly to this notion of a rise of psychological violence in the treatment context.

19. Victims are sometimes used to boost success statistics...

Not only is the slightest improvement treated as a success... [Question] "...they may go from a 100 % to an 80 % chance of recidivating?" Saunders: Exactly. So treatment may still have a good impact on them. (9)
... but some providers even count as non violent spouses having benefitted from "treatment" victims who have been brought into a new high-growth product, "couples therapy": Tolman and Bennett: ...some methodological concerns limit confidence in these reports. Because victims and perpetrators are seen in couples groups, it is critical to know how success is determined, i.e. whether victims are included in percentages of clients who are nonabusive after treatment. But several studies neglect to make this distinction. (145)

These couples groups are perhaps an indication of the continuing popularity of the violent or provoking partner in therapeutic circles, myths that can only comfort the perpetrator's denial of his responsibility.

20. Batterers who drop out generally suffer no consequence

Several conference participants acknowledged the impossibility of eliciting an adequate response from probation officers and courts in case of recidivism or program drop-out. The obvious consequence is that programs are much less efficient at getting perpetrators to face consequences of their violence, the stated objective.

Richard Tolman: ...the issues are much more complex: What is the nature of the [court] mandate? How is it enforced? What actions do the program or the criminal justice system take if the order is violated? ...The same program may not work in a context where there is no coordination between the program and the criminal justice system. ...we have to look at these meso-system issues: What is the relationship between the men's program and the probation department? When there is a re-offence, what happens? Dopes the probation officer take action? Does the program inform the court system? If action is taken, of what kind? What about linkages between the program and the man's partner? Is the woman reached out to? What happens if she's reached out to? What happens if she reports to the program that there's an offence? (64, 66)

Tolman actually answered some of these questions, with an obvious embarrassment shared by the questioner: [Question:] What happens to your court-mandated participants who do not complete the program? [Tolman:] Not very much. That is a real problem. [Question:] They do not have their probation breached or anything like that? [Tolman:] I find that, having come from Minnesota - the fertile data of violence services in the United States - Illinois is a little primitive in this regard... Right now the situation is very haphazard; whether any action is taken at all depends on which probation officer the men are assigned to. Even with those programs in Chicago that are run under the auspices of the court directly, if they go back to the judges and say, "This man has violated. He has re-offended. He has not come to session," the judges will send the man back to treatment, as opposed to finding some other penalty. The fact that there is not very good integration in this area makes our intervention less effective.(66-67)

In Canada, where "treatment" is mostly a health service issue, Don Dutton confirms this assessment: "...sometimes limits are imposed on [treatment groups] by the criminal justice system interface... If you do not have that leverage from the criminal justice system, it is hard to generate completion." (104)
Jurgen Dankwort has observed the same lack of probation follow-up in Quebec, but he lays the blame more squarely on the theoretical inconsistencies and the political choices of program providers themselves.

This raises the all-important issue of the counter-productive effects of so-called "therapies" for wife batterers. Justified and funded in a clear context of dejudiciarization, these therapies must be understood to be alternatives to justice and to more efficient victim support measures. Is this what we want?

**When "therapy" becomes counter-productive**

The notion that an approach that alleges to be therapeutic can be not only inefficient but actually counter-productive may seem excessive at first, especially in a "better than nothing" assessment climate.

1. Results of the Urban Institute's Baltimore study (Harrell, 1991)

And yet the best empirical data available so far - in terms of sample dimensions, length of follow-up, number of sources and variety of treatment approach -, published shortly after Hanson & Hart's conference, reveal a higher rate of recidivism among treated men than in the control group of batterers arrested but not mandated into therapy. Although the arrest produced a marked reduction of physical abuse from both groups, this study found that only 57% of treated perpetrators had ceased all violence, while 88% of untreated men had shown the same improvement after a two-year period (Harrell, 1991)

Beyond such controlled data, a growing number of battered women have come forward and shared with shelter workers their experience of life with a batterer "in treatment". A few echoes of these testimonies transpired at the Hanson & Hart conference.

2. An increase of psychological manipulation and violence

This problem is particularly acute given the control skills taught to wife batterers in so-called "anger management therapy"; [Comment from a participant:] "anger control, as Gondolf and Harris have pointed out, can also be used to improve the man's ability to control and manipulate his wife. ...[EMERGE] do not use anger control at all... They explained that they do not use [time-outs] because men can say "time out" whenever they want to walk out on an argument with their partners. Psychologically, this lets the victim know, "You better not push me any further. I'm doing a time-out, so if you don't want to get smacked again you're going to respect where I'm at." In other words, it involves her in his change process and, in doing that, re-victimizes her.
...The problem is not his anger - anger is a universal feeling - the problem is his manipulation and his use of anger to control. (69)

And this is not only a theoretical possibility: Jurgen Dankwort: All the anecdotal evidence - from Battered but not beaten, Linda MacLeod's (1987) study of shelters in Canada, to the anecdotal evidence I am getting from women who work in the shelters - indicates that, while women using shelters may not necessarily be physically abused to the same extent that they used to be, they are now experiencing much more psychological abuse, which is just as devastating. (52)

Robert J. Brown: We were noticing that when the batterer stopped physically assaulting his wife, his verbal assaults went way up for probably close to six months before he came back down to a normal level (whatever normal is). (86)

A revealing lapse: these "therapists" interpret as "normal" batterers' psychological violence. And of course, women pay the price.

3. A reductive notion of wife abuse can create false-positive results

False-positive results, i.e. overly optimistic efficiency assessments, have the effect of sidetracking society from the quest for real and lasting solutions to women's lack of safety.

Tolman and Bennett note the following: ...some studies consider reduction of violent behaviour a success while others set complete cessation of violence as the criterion for success. Viewing reduction as success is questionable; reduction of violence may not end the terror that battered women feel as a result of abuse (Hart, Safety for Women: Monitoring Batterers' Programs, 1988), and even so-called minor violence like slapping, pushing, and shoving may result in physical injury (Rosenbaum, 1988)... [We] believe that the most inclusive definitions of violence (i.e., focus beyond physical abuse) provide the highest level of program accountability as well as the greatest validity in determining whether men have changed their abusive behaviour. (139)

4. Men can even use program content in order to refine their control strategies

Jurgen Dankwort, a long-time practitioner and researcher of Canadian programs, warned conference participants: We have to look at the extent to which we are facilitating a re-formulation of men's violence. Women are saying, "Are you part of the problem, or part of the solution? If you are part of the solution, then you're going to address this issue. You are going to do something so that physical abuse doesn't turn into psychological abuse, which then is beyond the reach of the law. (52)

Similarly, Trudy Don, speaking for the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, expressed concern that teaching men to control their anger may actually assist the abuser to refine or re-adjust his abuse so that he may more effectively control his spouse psychologically, with equally harmful effects. (40)
This concern was validated by Richard Tolman in reply to a participant's comment: Men often misuse the pro-feminist aspects of the program as well. They adopt a very sensitive stance, but then they take the language of equality and turn that back on their partners, saying "Now you are no treating me equally; you are psychologically maltreating me." Our sensitivity to psychological maltreatment can backfire. They can say "Well, my partner sometimes doesn't let me leave the house. Sometimes she accuses me of having affairs. Sometimes she berates me in front of my friends. She's just as abusive as I am." That is the pro-feminist sensitivity - the idea of psychological maltreatment, in part, comes out of a pro-feminist framework - but yet it can be misused by men. (70)

5. Men are exploiting "therapy" to avoid sanctions that would have a truly dissuasive effect

Dankwort quotes more of the women who work day to day with victims of wife abuse and try to obtain accountability from perpetrators and the police/justice system: Le Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale au Quebec complained that these programs are being regarded as a "panacea" and, as such, they are an unrealistic solution to the violence. They stressed that these programs must not be allowed to offer offenders refuge from culpability and from criminal sanction. (40)

Yet, every one in the field knows full well that this is exactly what is happening. "Therapy" is used daily as an alternative to judicial sanctions throughout the land.

Moreover, as Dutton points out, it may even come to impede the possible intervention of the penal system: Treatment groups came in to make judges feel better and to give them some kind of viable sentencing option for wife assault. (...) we need to look at the impact of treatment groups on actual criminal justice system functioning. For example, if a treatment group is installed, does it have a ripple effect? Does it make judges more likely to convict? Does it make crown prosecutors more likely to take the charge seriously? To proceed with the charge? Does it make the police more likely to arrest? (100-101)

The answer to all these questions may well be: NO. This is especially true in Quebec and other provinces where "therapies" are openly linked to a policy of dejudiciarization and where police officers are already being instructed to refer abusers to a support group, rather than arrest him.

In the conclusion of a literature review which "attempted to provide an overview of existing outcome evaluations on programs for abusive men", Burns, Meredith and Paquette wrote in July 1991, a few months before the conference: ... the existing data on the effectiveness of these programs do not appear to justify their use to the exclusion of other types of intervention. Perhaps the most worrisome example of this is the use of treatment as a diversion from prosecution. Given the poor completion rates for the treatments themselves, and the limited success of these treatments among those men who do complete them, it seems ill-advised to place so much reliance on these interventions. (Treatment Programs for Men Who Batter: A Review of the Evidence of their Success, p.56)
In Adele Harrell's definitive Baltimore study, it was noted that, even after having completed their program, perpetrators demonstrated a very high level of confidence that they would suffer no real sanction for repeat offenses which they themselves felt to be relatively probable.

6. Victim support and prosecution budgets are being openly challenged by therapy-for-batterers program providers

Some therapy providers go as far as to petition the State to fund their programs by pointing out just how much money will thus be saved in reduced benefits to victims and prosecutions... The therapy ideology adds to traditional male priority the seduction of what appears to be a "scientific" solution, one that promises to make the problem "disappear": Robert J. Brown, Calgary General Hospital: The Calgary Region Domestic Violence Committee is also proposing a study to look at the savings achieved by providing effective treatment. The Committee will compare a group of batterers and their victims with a group of non-violent cohabiters. They will examine the billings to Alberta Health Care, the costs of police car and ambulance responses, court and probation costs, days lost at work, and so on. We expect to find that the savings in these areas will more than compensate for the costs of treatment. This may be the information provincial governments need in order to reallocate some of their resources. (84)

Who can guarantee that the funding of women's vital front-line resources such as shelters and transition houses isn't threatened by this ominous "and so on"? In Quebec and elsewhere, one of their main conditions voiced by women's programs for any cooperation with batterers' programs was that these never compute for the budgets obtained through tears of tireless activism and consciousness-raising by women. This condition has never been respected and today, we find "therapy" providers trying to achieve an ever-growing portion of the State's global budget envelope, using premises as extraordinary as (battering) men's "right" to an equal share of State support...

7. The clinical approach obscures the very real benefits of abuse for perpetrators

Even in the absence of such pathogenic effects, the therapeutic model is itself a travesty of the very nature of a form of violence wilfully chosen by batterers, for purely self-interested reasons. To deny this dynamic is to deny and silence women's experience.

Dankwort: (...) programs for men who batter may, in some circumstances, actually be counter-productive to the interests of women. There is real concern that, in stressing the clinical etiology of wife abuse and ignoring the utility of using force or threats to maintain privileges and entitlements in a patriarchal society, we are producing and reinforcing attitudes and messages pejorative to women. (40)

8. The multiplication of unverified theoretical "explanations" detracts from acknowledgement of batterers' responsibility
Barbara Pressman, the only woman invited to address the Conference, pointed out the victim-blaming nature of many of the theoretical hypotheses being bandied about. She is also wary of the theories that merely dilute the perpetrator's responsibility for his choice to batter, such as references to family "antecedents", especially when the perpetrator remains free to further assault his victim.

When I do healing work, it is always related back to the violence and it is in the service of ending abuse. As clinicians working with trauma survivors of child sexual abuse, we have a key rule regarding unravelling the history: we will not do it unless the person has stabilized or is working from strength. (...) Stabilization includes the fact that one is not abusing someone else or abusing substances... (32)

Similarly, the literature review offered by Tolman and Bennett points out the counter-productive nature of the attention given to perpetrators' feelings of depression: (...) empathically supporting batterers for their depression is counterproductive if it deflects interventive focus away from their abusive behavior (Adams, 1988 ). (131)

9. Structurally, batterers are much more supported than confronted by "therapy" programs

The actual day-to-day practices used in either of the many approaches described as "therapy" generally remain vague or secret. Referring to self-help groups, someone put the following comment to Daniel Saunders: It is also extremely interesting to learn about the attempts you are making to find out exactly what is going on in these groups, i.e. the specific content of the therapy. Most studies do not provide this information. One sometimes wonders if anything was ever implemented at all or whether or not the program was one night out a week for the men to talk to friends. I really applaud your efforts. I think this is a lesson that we will have to keep hold of. (12)

This silence and the "empathy" that has Tolman and Bennett concerned may be more than a mere grey area. In a pan-Canadian study replicating one that he conducted in Quebec with Rondeau and Gauvin in 1989, Dankwort recently probed the attitudes and methods of therapy program providers, specifically exploring certain contradictions between their discourse, their current "theory", and their practices. Allow us to quote him at length: Whereas all programs indicated a preference for sex-segregated format in their counselling work, the reasons for this choice often reinforced specific images of men, including those of men living in isolation, being emotionally handicapped, and, in general, being victims of their circumstances. These are images that require groups to offer men support and a secure place to "heal". (47)

(...) the findings did show inconsistencies between the ideas professed by counsellors and the programs' published philosophies. Lastly, and perhaps more importantly, there are apparent inconsistencies between the professed assumptions and the stated practices within programs. (...) the study's findings suggest that the strategy of attributing responsibility is often derailed by many factors that are proposed as contributing to or causing the violence. (...)Generally, respondents explain the etiology of wife abuse in terms of intrapersonal, interpersonal and social-structural factors, while overlooking the utility of using force. (...) This has the effect of minim-
izing the assertion that men who use violence are freely choosing this course of behaviour. (...) In many instances, this effectively removed agency from men's violent behaviour. Men's violence against women was portrayed, not as an instrumental act, but as an expressive act arising out of men's presumed deficiencies and their learned behaviours. Respondents portrayed men's violence as a situation allegedly aggravated by the harsh or stressful environment in which many men live and work. Consequently, intervention practice appeared to miss the target, addressing, for the most part, the probable sources of violence and neglecting the more likely source of the problem. (47)

Whether these problems are due to an "anything-goes" level of theoretical improvisation or, more likely, to a visceral hostility to the feminist analysis of male power, they translate into the demonstrated ineffectiveness of programs and counsellors, at a time where these should be rejecting society's "explanations" for batterers' violence and keeping them from male bonding and from using therapy as a reinforcement for their misogynist attitudes and controlling strategies. Dankwort notes an actual solidarity of many counsellors with perpetrators: In a number of examples given during interviews however, respondents appeared to overlook strategic opportunities for confronting men on their manipulative tactics. Only two of the three programs in the pro-feminist cluster expressed concern that anger-management techniques may be counterproductive or contra-indicated. There were, however, many occasions where counsellors acknowledged that wife abusers are manipulative and will collude against women if given a chance to do so. Most programs reported that their clients are much more likely to collusively bond with one another than to be aggressive and intimidating in mutual confrontation over their past or present behaviours and attitudes towards women. In some instances, characterizations by counsellors about the origin of the violence and about what has to be done to end it appeared collusive with offenders. This presents a possible risk of affording therapeutic legitimacy to men's disavowal of the moral component in such behaviour. (48)

10. Program providers show a clear anti-sanctions bias

It seems logical to associate this collusion to the overt opposition of "therapists" to any substantive treatment of wife battering as a crime. At best, the judicial process is treated as a necessary-evil entry procedure to bring batterers - and, increasingly, their partners - to "therapists" offices. But any actual sanctions (e.g., losses of privilege) are not only frowned upon but actively opposed, for instance by a policy of secrecy concerning further assaults revealed in counselling. Far from working hand in hand with judiciary, program providers show, according to Dankwort's interviews, a clear and profound bias against any form or notion of retribution for the crimes committed. Their axiom seems to be that batterers are to be supported, not sanctioned, regardless of this method's effectiveness in ensuring women's safety.

(...) counsellors related difficulties in conceptualizing how criminal sanctions for assault might be congruous with counselling treatment. This led them to define legal and social intervention as distinct and, explicitly or implicitly, incompatible. (...) To most respondents, it seemed either unconscionable and/or counterproductive to punish the perpetrator even though they candidly admitted he had committed an act of assault. In many cases, respondents at-
tempted to reconcile the antithetical nature of the social control demanded by victims' advocates, on the one hand, and the compassion counsellors were eager to provide on the other. (...) Other counsellors embarked on an equally problematic course of creating dichotomies that separate a "good" person from his "bad" behaviours. (48)

Given these circumstances, is it reasonable to expect from such mentors that they foster a taking of responsibility by wife batterers and to go on funding their male collusive experiments on this basis?

11. Men end up being pitied

Most counsellors also appeared to ignore or disagree with the idea that men can use their power to exploit women to gain selfish personal advantages. They seem to perceive the dynamics of "conjugal violence" as mutually destructive. This view discounts the unequal power balance between the sexes and/or the destructive potential of using force in intimate relationships. (49)

Like many women's advocates before him, Dankwort expresses concern about the silence and minimization that surround the survival of such antiquated notions. He is equally worried about the counter-productive methods used by many therapists, especially in so-called "family therapy": I think we have a tendency to play down our differences and there is a great risk in minimizing controversy. To illustrate how serious the differences are, we can go back to (...) issue number three, "How is power seen?" There are many therapists who do not recognize that power can be exploited in a system by, for example, one member of a family against another member of a family. This does not even enter into their definition. Can we say that, for example, in Quebec, there are no more family therapists with the Batesonian perspective? On the contrary, the tendency is still as strong in Quebec as it is in the rest of Canada and in North America. For example, the Family Violence Bulletin recently mentioned a study of psychotherapists and family therapists in the United States (Harway & Hansen, 1990). It showed that most family therapists either did not address the violence, minimized the effect of the violence, or intervened in ways that were inconsistent with current minimal standards of practice. These are very real concerns. When our particular philosophical orientation does not allow us to recognize that power can be exploited, it is a serious issue. (55)

12. A surprising and dangerous lack of empathy for victims

The corollary of the aforementioned collusive support for perpetrators is a surprising lack of empathy for their partners, one that compromises both their safety and their entitlements. Jurgen Dankwort offers the following conclusion to his research: Limited comprehension of the principles of justice, including the established idea of punishment or retribution, also suggested that counsellors still lack empathy for the situation of victims and their demands for justice. In their responses, counsellors generally failed to recognize how retribution might be justified or how it might be integrated into the process of attaining full offender accountability. They appeared to pay little attention to the fact that the criminal justice system has, in the past,
often treated wife abusers sympathetically or even exonerated them altogether. Nor did they give any attention to the effect this approach has had on the problem of woman abuse generally. (...) only a few respondents listed the safety and the well-being of the man's partner as a program objective. (48-9)

These results are disconcerting because of the implications for victims who often hold high expectations about how their partners will change once enrolled. As a number of respected authors have pointed out, there is no conclusive evidence to support such expectations, and to encourage them may be counterproductive to the goal of improving victims' safety and women's well-being. (49)

I3. Therapies maintain partners in high-risk situations, as compared to safer options

Tolman and Bennett note: As Gondolf pointed out ["Who are those guys? Toward a behavioral typology of batterers", Violence and Victims, 3(3), 1988, 187-203], referring men whose violence may be relatively intractable to counseling may increase the likelihood of their partners' remaining with them, raising their hopes with little real possibility of change occurring. (...) Criminal justice system involvement might be more effective for less-severe batterers who don't have outside criminal involvement. (137)

A recent Canadian study by Meredith and Burns validates these concerns about the role of therapy in women's decision to remain in high-risk situations, a situation long-decried by shelter workers and by authors such as Ann Jones and Susan Schechter (When Love Goes Wrong, Harper-Collins: New York, 1992).

Richard Tolman: Is [the partner] more or less willing to call the police as the result of her partner's involvement in a program? That's something that was raised by Meredith and Burns (1990) in their study. That study found that some women reported a decrease in their willingness to use various kinds of sanctions toward their partners' violent behaviour, sanctions that they otherwise might have used if their partners were not in programs. (...) We must explore what might happen to her as a result of her partner's involvement in a program that decreases or increases her empowerment in the situation. (63)

A year later, Burns, Meredith and Paquette amplified that concern: It is discouraging that, as a result of treatment programs, women are staying in these relationships which seem only marginally improved in many cases. (Treatment Programs for Men Who Batter, p.56)

It is easy, of course, for program providers to describe such outcomes as misguided in women, excessive expectations, self-induced illusions, etc. When confronted, they reject the notion that what they are offering is a universal remedy to wife battering. And yet their tireless promotion of alleged "therapies" and of speculative "explanations" - that reassure inasmuch as they deny batterers' self-interested agency - gives precisely that impression and seem to target specifically women, the new growth segment of programs' clientele.
As for Tolman and Bennett's suggestion of judiciarizing the cases of men who only assault their wife - and would be most receptive to sanctions -, recent justice statistics indicate that these perpetrators are the ones that are almost never sanctioned, but merely invited to attend "therapy".

I4. An idealist "therapeutic" discourse ends up mimicking the batterer's rationale for his violence

Ironically, our "optimistic and idealist" discourse on the prognosis for changing batterers' behaviour closely resembles and unmistakably reinforces that which perpetrators themselves use on their victims. As Richard Tolman remarks: The man's treatment may have a negative impact on his partner. For example, a man's initial involvement in a program may encourage her to return to him rather than leave him. She may be less willing to call the police because she wants "to cut him a break" while he is in treatment. She may be overly hopeful, as Dr. Saunders talked about. She may have "learned hopefulness" in the situation because of his promises to change repeatedly. (63)

Batterers and therapists both promise change. And who would pass up the opportunity to blame a woman for daring to doubt such fascinating men and male experiments?

I5. So-called batterer's "profiles" trivialize wife abuse and ignore the diversity of victims' experience

For after all, her assaulter rarely matches the dramatic "batterer profiles" which therapists speculate publicly about to justify the psychologizing approach. This disinformation process is another of the high-risk repercussions of programs' total lack of accountability, and of the theoretical confusion created by the psychologizing approach and by the treatment of any observed data as causal factors: Tolman and Bennett point out (...) a few potential pitfalls of the attempt to delineate batterer "profiles" (...) One such pitfall, especially important because intervention and prevention efforts may be affected, is to mistake causes for effects or vice-versa (Stark & Flitcraft, 1988 ). For example, one commonly noted trait of abusive men is depression; but does depression help cause battering, as some assume, or does battering in fact contribute to depression in the batterer? Related pitfalls are to give a causal element more weight than it deserves ( Gelles, 1980 ; Stark & Flitcraft, 1988 ) or to mistake a benign element for a causal one (Margolin, John & Gleberman, 1988 ;Stark & Flitcraft, 1988 ). A final reservation: looking for characteristics that differentiate men who batter from other men may obscure more important similarities or societal conditions that make battering commonplace and tolerated. (125)

One can also note that, for lack of suitable control groups, it is completely impossible to ascertain whether the "depression" observed in some batterers isn't linked to the program-perpetrator power differential, to the pressure of a recent or impeding separation or court procedure, to wanting to pass as the "real victim", or simply to having been "caught" and ever so slightly challenged.

I6. "Couple counselling" approaches prove especially risky
Whether they do so in order to facilitate a partner's corroboration that has become essential to the credibility of their "success" figures, or because they believe in any of the theories that make wife abuse a systemic problem where both partners are seen as "co-responsible" for male assaults, or because government money is much easier to obtain using what Brown calls "marital preservation" program goals, or because their background is in marriage counselling, or simply in order to buttress flagging attendance figures, many so-called therapists continue to - or are beginning to - make victims part of their aggressor's "treatment". Indeed, this formula has become the major growth strategy of self-help groups such as Quebec's PRO-GAM, by far the largest operator in the field, who rush to open up "partners' programs", oblivious to the well-documented hazards of such "couples intervention".

Tolman et Bennett: An issue generating great controversy is the practice of treating men who batter conjointly with their partners. The interventions utilized are similar to men-only groups (...) However, a number of additional criticisms have been levelled at conjoint work, including safety concerns and implicit or explicit victim-blaming. (...) the research on couples to date is limited to studies without comparison groups. Lindquist, Telch and Taylor (1984) reported that (...) at six-week follow up, half of the couples reported violent incidents, and at six months, all couples contacted reported further violence. (...) some methodological concerns limit confidence in [success] reports. Because victims and perpetrators are seen in couples groups, it is critical to know how success is determined (...) (145)

Robert J. Brown confirms this assessment: (...) history has shown us that marriage counselling is not typically an effective treatment for wife battering. In fact, it can be a very dangerous approach if the batterer is still battering. (74)

But a social system that uses therapy to actually diminish men's responsibility and to keep women in marriages and the home has everything to gain by associating men and women as closely as possible in such schemes.

Putting women's safety first

[Comment from a participant] There is a lot we can do. For example, an interesting reference for the assessment of education or counselling programs for batterers has been published by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence [ Safety for Women: Monitoring batterers' programs, Barbara Hart, 1988 ] Ms. Hart lists 34 items of criteria, questions that should be used as a yardstick to measure programs (...) evaluating what and for whom? That is the bottom line. (123)

1. Re-centring intervention: two basic principles

In her detailed agenda of the changes necessary to really end wife battering, Barbara Pressman offers two ground rules that can help us re-centre social intervention regarding wife battering, in a way not antithetic to really putting women's safety first.
Accountability to women and the women's movement through close affiliation and cooperation with shelters and other programs for battered woman is a critical component of responsible programming. (30)

An improved system of probation, including increasing and improving training programs for probation officers regarding wife abuse, maintaining contact with battered women, and returning men to court when failure to attend group or unsatisfactory participation is a breach of probationary orders. (20)

2. Choosing efficiency

The efficiency of penal versus psychologizing intervention is probably the best-grounded argument holding back the ideology of non-judiciarization for anyone truly concerned with women's safety and rights. Here is how Tolman and Bennett conclude their literature review: Sherman and Berk (1984) studied police response to domestic violence calls and found that, based on both police and victim reports, arrest was a more effective deterrent of further violence than was separation or mediation. Although the Sherman and Berk (1984) study included domestic calls that were not between cohabiting men and women, a reanalysis by Tauchen, Tauchen, and Witte (1986) examined only those cases that involved men and women who were in a relationship. Their results confirmed the Sherman and Berk (1984) finding that arrest provided the most effective deterrent. Sherman and Berk's (1984) results were also replicated by Berk and Newton (1985), who conducted a nonexperimental replication of the Sherman and Berk (1984) study. Jaffe, Wolfe, Telford and Austin (1986) evaluated the effectiveness of a probable cause arrest that police implemented in Ontario, Canada. The arrest policy dramatically increased charges - from 3% of all wife abuse occurrences to 67% of all wife abuse occurrences. Proportion of charges withdrawn or dismissed prior to trial also decreased. Based on prepolicy and postpolicy reports of victims, there was a significant decrease in all forms of violence. (145-6)

3. The best way of helping men? Supporting women

Contrary to the idea that perpetrators' hypothetical difficulties are the real reason for those which they inflict upon their victims and, therefore, the real problem deserving priority and requiring support for men, Tolman and Bennett point out the empirical evidence establishing that support for battered women is most often the key to real change in men's assaulitive behaviour. This would make the psychologizing approach actually counterproductive: The pattern of outcome results does not clearly support psychological intervention as the primary active ingredient in changing men's abusive behavior. The relative success of drop-outs for treatment is problematic for those advocating treatment of men who batter. In all likelihood, positive results purported to be due to a particular intervention are the result of multiple systems of factors (...) Victim-initiated actions such as separation or the threat of it, police and criminal justice system involvement, disapproval from relatives and friends, as well as other "naturally" occurring processes contribute to deterrence of battering, with or without additional psychological intervention. The success of efforts to effectively change institutional response (see, for example, Gamache, Edleson & Shock, 1988) support continued efforts in that area. Programs
for victims are obviously the highest priority, and to the extent that they empower women to take court action, to separate, or otherwise to take action in their relationships, they may help stop men's violent behavior. (146)

Conclusion

We concur with these specialists - and with the hundreds of woman's advocates whose expertise they validate. After all, it should be a matter of common sense that the persons deserving support are the ones in peril and not their assaulter, that the meagre resources available ought to be directed to the women and children under lethal threat rather than to those who use such threats, and, most importantly, that the methods prioritized and funded should be the most efficient and most coherent ones. It makes sense to acknowledge that such an effectiveness-driven policy is also that which will be most helpful to everyone, including men, in the end.

It will always prove impossible to get sexist assaulters to own their behaviour if we go on shunting them towards a system where speculative and contradictory "theories" foster the myth of their irresponsibility and guarantee its reality through a de facto decriminalization of men's intra-family assaults.

On the other hand, to clearly side with these men's victims and to give these women (and children) the means and the right to reclaim control of their lives, over and above any "marital preservation" agenda, appear as the most efficient manner to disarm the batterer by making his strategy ineffective.

Martin Dufresne for Montreal Men Against Sexism

Appendix A: 326 Women and Young Girls Have been Assassinated by Men in Quebec Since December 6, 1989

Limits and Risks of "Programs" for Wife Batterers


And this list doesn't account for all the women that have "disappeared", been driven to suicide or who have died from the long-term effects of battering or of male-controlled sex.

Many of these women's killers had been deemed "not a danger to society" by the police and justice system. We can and must end this massacre now by taking on controlling husbands and sex partners; criminally negligent policemen, district attorneys, "expert" witnesses and judges; exploitative journalists, film-makers and critics; and all agents of institutionalized sexism, including pimps, pornocrats, artists and advertisers who profit from making women fair game for more male violence and exploitation.

Assembled and updated by Montreal Men Against Sexism and Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses

**Statement on Accountability and Effectiveness of Abusers' Counseling Programs**

"Time for Change" Lobby Day, 1991

Concern about the effectiveness and accountability of abusers' programs is an issue we are highlighting for the first time this year. Our concern has been sparked by a number of things, for example:

- Several disturbing events during the past year or so involving abusers' groups currently operating in Ontario.
- Results of the Federal and Provincial studies examining evaluations of abusers' programs, and
- Information sharing within our network about the operation of programs in Ontario communities, to name a few.

These events, and our own information gathering, have raised many questions for abused women and women's advocates as to the direction that abusers' programming is taking -- and about the role of public policy and funding in this area.

Both the Federal and Provincial Government Studies have identified a number of problems with abusers' programs. These include:

- Lack of evidence that the programs stop violence against women, particularly controlling tactics, such as threats and other forms of psychological control.
- Questionable research and evaluation in abusers' programs which is, nevertheless, used to support further expansion of abusers' programs, and,
• Lack of accountability of abusers' programs to women, among others...

In order to be accountable, an abusers' program must ensure that both abused women and their advocates are involved in the design, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of the program, and that the program providers are prepared to take criticism and direction from advocates and abused women. Studies show, and our own experiences tell us, that in most abusers' programs in Ontario, this does not happen.

Ineffective and unaccountable abusers' programs sap funding resources that could be used for women's services - services which demonstrate effectiveness in keeping women safe and supporting women's choices.

Moreover, when women stay in violent relationships because their partner has entered an inappropriate abusers' program, they risk continued, and sometimes increased, danger.

We ask that the government make a firm commitment today to take action, in consultation with abused women and front-line women's advocates, to ensure that:

1. Abusers' programs are required to be accountable to women's leadership within the context of ending all oppression of all women.

2. Ineffective and unaccountable men's groups are dangerous to abused women. No funds should be allocated or distributed to abusers' programs unless these programs can demonstrate both effectiveness in stopping violence and accountability to women.

3. This government begin immediate, paid, consultation with abused women and front-line advocates to develop a model of intervention in which abusers' programs would be required to operate.

We ask you........ when?

We think it would be a grievous mistake to let an exclusive focus on abusers' programs displace women's demands for resources for abused women and children. We therefore include the other Statements prepared by OAITH for its 1991 Lobby Day.

**Housing Statement**

One of the most difficult issues faced by women and children who leave abusive homes today is housing. Over the last 10 years, assaulted women and their advocates have continued to approach government to provide funding for safe, affordable, accessible, subsidized housing. In 1982, the Ministry of Community and Social Services expressed a commitment to encourage municipalities to establish subsidized housing for abused women. These services were to meet the needs of all women.

In 1986, the Ontario Housing Commission developed a priority list which allowed abused women special access to a housing market which previously was based on a general housing point system,
thus giving priority to women surviving abuse. However, in communities where there are insufficient numbers of housing units, this Policy becomes irrelevant.

Although some assaulted women and their children have benefitted from the implementation of this service, there are still many serious gaps in its provision -- specifically in terms of safe housing for immigrant women, women with disabilities and lesbians who are survivors of abuse by partner.

For many abused women and their children housing has become a luxury item. This is a crime and must stop! Housing should be a right for everyone. It must not be used as a tool to keep women in abusive situations which at the moment it is. When women choose to leave abusive partners they also leave abusive homes. For many women after leaving an abusive partner, seeking affordable housing becomes the next nightmare. Specifically: women of colour and immigrant women face racism in the housing market by discrimination in obtaining or being offered housing. This racism is indicative of the racism in our society at large. Therefore when women of colour and immigrant women seek to obtain affordable housing, they are discriminated against either overtly by being refused housing or covertly by being ghettoized in specific communities or specific subsidized housing units. Furthermore, non-status Immigrant women do not have access to subsidized housing and find it very difficult to obtain suitable housing in the private market.

Women with children also face discrimination in locating safe secure housing. Depending on the number and ages of the children, her chances of obtaining and affording housing are limited. Private market costs do not allow for enough rooms for the numbers of people, and subsidized units with more than 3 bedrooms are very hard to come by. This situation is often exacerbated by her being an immigrant woman or visible minority.

Women with disabilities also face discrimination in the housing market. Private and subsidized housing does not meet their individual needs of accessibility and makes it more difficult for women living on a fixed limited income.

Discriminatory practices against poor women, women of colour and culturally diverse women, disabled women and lesbians, and all assaulted women must be stopped. Housing is a basic right. Security is a basic right. The lack of accessible/safe housing is the primary deterrent to women's liberation from violence.

We want to see housing provided expediently for all women. We want the elimination of discriminatory practices in the private and subsidized housing markets. We want more funding given to disabled women to make housing more accessible. We want support services available to women who are survivors of abuse, near or in their housing communities. We want alternatives to the general OHC subsidized housing options. We want more co-op spaces, and feminist-run co-ops need to be established for the primary purpose of providing safe supportive housing for women who are survivors of women abuse. We want all Housing Agencies to adopt "Violence-Free Zone" Policies for abused women which removes the abuser from the home. We do not have any more time to wait. Women are dying while policies are made. Time is running out. When will the needs of women and children suffering from women assault be put first on the government agenda? We ask you......... when?
Statement on Police Response

The police must respond consistently, effectively, and in a non-blaming way to abused women. To do this as a part of a community response committed to the safety and protection of abused women and their children, the police are telling the abuser that they refuse to collude with them.

Over the last ten years Ontario governments have passed directives ordering police to lay charges. At the community level women experience only a marginal degree of cooperation on behalf of police when they call for protection. Women continue to be discouraged.

Police response remains inconsistent and inadequate. More than half of abused women report that when they called the police, no charges were laid for assault or related offenses. Women still report that police either acted inappropriately or offered partial or incorrect information about the law. Furthermore, police offered inaccurate information about the women's rights, options or services available.

In the majority of cases, where police are called, women are still being asked if they want charges laid. This leads women to believe the onus is on themselves when, in fact, it is on the police. Evidence that this is occurring shows up even in police statistics.

According to a study conducted by the Metro Toronto Committee Against Wife Assault, although some women said they felt they had received appropriate protection and assistance from the police, an overwhelming number of abused women felt they had not.

This is very dangerous for abused women.

The result is that women and their children continue to be unprotected. Women continue to be beaten, harassed, threatened and killed while their abusers' behaviour is largely condoned.

IN LIGHT OF THIS INFORMATION WE DEMAND:

1. The Solicitor General's directive to police forces must be made to carry more weight by making it an administrative procedure as opposed to a standing order. The directive to lay charges in all cases, including related charges such as harassment, threatening, destruction of property and break and enter, must be enforced.

2. Enforcement of all protection and custody orders.

3. The development of an accountable protocol concerning police to woman abuse. This must be designed, implemented and evaluated in consultation with and at the direction of abused women and front-line abused women's advocates.

4. The design, implementation and evaluation of training programs on woman abuse by partner for police officers must be done in consultation with and at the direction of abused women and their advocates.
5. Training of officers must include education on issues such as racism, cultural and language discrimination. This education must be in consultation with advocates from these groups.

6. Accountability and monitoring mechanisms must be put in place for the following:

   • Appropriate laying of charges;
   • Appropriate conduct and sufficient information given;
   • Appropriate follow-up to ensure the safety and protection of women and their children;
   • Reprimanding of police officers who do not follow the above procedures;
   • The mechanisms must be designed, implemented and evaluated in consultation with abused women and their advocates.

We ask you............. when?

Statement Concerning Education

The formal and community based educational systems can either reinforce or challenge the present gender power imbalance which encourages woman abuse. It has been widely accepted that violence against women is a behaviour that is fostered during childhood in the home and by the pervading social environment. This environment places women in an inferior position and is controlled by and perpetuated through our media, educational materials and long-held traditional values. In order to eradicate these socializing influences it is essential that effective education is put into place.

Public education on the issue of violence against women must focus more clearly on gender imbalances, in conjunction with other imbalances such as race, class, sexual orientation and ability, that perpetuate the oppression of women. Similarly, the education of all those whose daily work brings them into contact with women who are the victims of violence must be focussed on these imbalances. Sexism and misogyny in systems such as the courts, the police, social services and educational systems must be stopped.

This is not enough. Prevention is critical to eliminate violence in the future. Our children grow up surrounded with messages that women are not equal, that men are in control of our daily lives, and that in order to be in control it is permissible to use any form of violence.

Policies on sexual stereotyping for educators need to be reviewed, enhanced and implemented. Throughout the school curriculum the issues of male to female, female to female and male to male relationships, non-violent problem solving, and the unacceptance of the use of violence to control, need to be present. It is not enough to designate these issues to an optional Family Studies course, while they are ignored throughout the remainder of the child's schooldays.

Education is one of the prerequisites for prevention!
We want the Government to make a commitment today to ensure the following:

- That training programs be designed and implemented on issues of woman abuse, racism, sexism and discrimination for all those whose daily work brings them into contact with women as victims of violence;

- That the total school environment is safe and non-violent;

- That an additional qualification course for teachers be designed and implemented within the next five years. This course would thoroughly examine sexual stereotyping, gender relationships, the abuse of power and control and child-adolescent development.

- That an advisory committee be set up immediately to develop the curriculum for this course with representation of abused women and their advocates;

- That school-based services be expanded to include preventative services and opportunity for early identification of the child who is abused or has witnessed abuse in her/his family;

- That throughout the curriculum in our educational institutions the issues of gender relationships, violence against women, sexual stereotyping, and the abuse of power and control be included.

We ask you................................when?

**Institutional and government response**


The changes we are calling for are deep-seated and very-long-term transformations. The temptation is there, for everyone, to seek panaceas. It is even quite politically advantageous to offer such miracle solutions to the population, for doing so allows one to suggest that everything is under control and to avoid fundamental reassessments. Furthermore, it is always somewhat convenient for us to believe that everything will change without each of us having to pay a price. But such panaceas are double-edged swords. If at first they seem to solve problems, they are in fact mirages that will dissolve in time, leaving us with the bitter taste of defeat. Let us then examine the type of responses which the government and its institutions are presently offering to deal with wife battering. We shall bring to them the critical gaze which they deserve...

**Feminist intervention and the global approach in the institutional environment** The institutional network's "takeover" of the wife battering issue dates only back to 1985 in Quebec. Even though a few persons had managed to raise the issue and to attempt a few related projects, it is only in 1985 that the Quebec government finally commits to offer battered women specific services through its institutional network. At that time, the government announces for the first time and very explicitly its intention of only funding the accommodation function of shelters, while allowing its own general-purpose community services centres ("CLSCs") to take over and coopt every other service...
provided up to then by the shelter movement (support, follow-up programs, services to children and to women not housed in shelters, public education, consciousness-raising, prevention).

To achieve this end, the government organizes, that same year, a training program in feminist intervention for all of its network's social workers. This training will give rise to a series of "projects" or "special programs" for battered women and for batterers. Feminist intervention and the global approach so advocated by the shelter movement and by some workers within the social service delivery network become "the latest thing" in all of the network. This is done regardless of the "Federation des CLSC" (Quebec's Federation of community service centres) explicit support for the shelters, when it asserted that the shelters had proved successful in achieving their mandate, as indicates the following quote from a letter to the minister for Health and Social affairs: "(...) As for middle-term follow-up and for the takeover itself, the CLSCs favour intervention by and the support of community organizations. The CLSCs complement these resources and should not substitute themselves to them or duplicate their work. On the other hand, the CLSCs may develop or initiate alternative intervention strategies. Such is the true meaning of the community approach. It is in this perspective that we view the role of CLSCs with regard to battered women: a place for action and for reference prioritizing community resources in order to answer stated needs."

Still, the government will send to the population a message of "Mission accomplished!". While in reality...

In our view, feminist intervention and the global approach are irreconcilable with the functioning and the overall objectives of the institutional health and social services network. We all know that this institutional environment is characterized by rules, schedules and a well-established hierarchy. Work is compartmentalized in the name of efficiency and it is for women to adapt to the institution's schedules and constraints, not the reverse. In an institution, the woman is and will always remain a "client", which creates a very specific relationship: that of "helper" to "helped", of "specialist" to "client".

These shortcomings are especially severe for persons faced with immediate crises. Women are not only battered between nine and five p.m.! Some institutions are able to provide a crisis line outside of working hours, but rarely is a women enabled by this system to immediately contact the person who can help her. She will usually be directed to a hospital or to the police and will be advised to call back during working hours. In a shelter, on the other hand, this woman will immediately get to meet a worker who, rather than referring her, will herself provide information and support, will accompany her if need be throughout the various procedures she must undergo, all of this on top of providing her with a safe shelter.

Moreover, anyone who has even begun to deal with an institution knows what a multitude of phone calls and referrals one is subjected to before one may speak to "the right person". And once this person is found, there remain a whole series of endless administrative corridors. We know from experience that this procedural gauntlet often brings women to give up somewhere along that route. Or, as it often happens, by the time the institution comes around to addressing an expressed need, women have already moved beyond it and reached a new phase.
Finally, given the hierarchical nature of the institutions and the fragmentation of caseloads, the institutional worker will not be allowed to accompany the woman to the police station, the courtroom, the hospital, etc. Yet, this is precisely what the victim of wife abuse needs. To effectively apply the global approach, one must be aware of all these needs and have a framework which allows workers to respond to them.

Although we believe that the social service delivery network has an important role to play in this issue, we know for a fact that it will never be able to provide the same services and the same approach as shelters do. It is this pretense that we are criticizing in the government’s stance. Some of the women working in the institutional network are feminists and they subscribe to the views of the women’s movement, but the institutions for whom they are working will always bear on their approach and interventions. More importantly, the fact that one or many women within the institution are basing their approach on the feminist intervention model can never in itself change the nature of the institution. The latter does not have any mandate to question the bases of society; on the contrary, it is there to adapt individuals to exterior situations. The mandate of institutions is especially not to facilitate processes of consciousness-raising and questioning that would incite women to arise and to join other women in struggle. Yet, in our mind, the solution to wife battering can also take this route. We note in passing that the familialist (pro-Family) approach advocated by the current administration is much more popular in the institutional environment than is feminist intervention.

The familialist approach The familialist approach which the institutional network has adopted on the issue of violence is another way of negating the specific oppression of women. We certainly do not want to deny the seriousness of the violence levelled within families at children, the elderly or even male spouses. What we are deploiring is the fact that these specific problems are being used to deny the more general issue of the violence exerted by men against women, a violence condoned by society in general. Wife battering is but one of the manifestations of this violence, the tip of the iceberg.

The most distressing fact is that the familialist discourse emerged in opposition to feminist analysis, by suggesting that the latter was passe, that we were now in the era of "post-feminism", and that if we now witnessed a general rise in interpersonal violence, it was impacting indiscriminately on any individual. Violence is deliberately decontextualized from gender through this negation of the specific violence that is still being exerted against women. We acknowledge that there is a trend toward more violence in society at large, but we detect a red herring in the notion that, in our society, men are being victimized in the same manner than women are. Indeed, recent studies show the opposite: a majority of the very poor are women, the abused elderly are also generally women and the population of abused children always shows a majority of girls. When will society stop pretending that all family members suffer equally from this violence and that they are all responsible for it at some degree or another?

This type of analysis, this approach are dangerous and give rise to therapeutic notions such as the so-called "Giaretto model", inspired by the systemic approach, that, in cases of incest, treats everyone on an equal footing, be they assailants or victims. Indeed, in this light, no one is guilty any more, it is the family itself that is said to have an "incestuous dynamic"! Thus, the father, the
mother and the abused daughter are forced to "work together" in order to "overcome" the problem. The little girl learns forgiveness, the mother learns tolerance. All the while, the father is allowed to go on walking around, "his penis free", for he has shed a few tears and moved everyone with his alleged repent.

With such approaches, it is suggested and repeated over and over that we are dealing with an individual problem rooted within individual families. Once again, we see the organized denial of the reality that the family, the smallest building block in our society, is only reproducing a model rooted in social structures, along with behaviours acquired by education and transmitted by social models. Any approach that avoids this political dimension of the problem and that doesn't challenge its social foundations can only force individuals to "adapt" to their socially assigned role, and create renewed acceptance of perpetrating behaviours.

Given that all persons deserve attention to their problems, it remains that one must avoid equalizing all social issues and disappearing wife beating in an alleged general pattern of rising violence in North-American society. This denies the specific oppression of women and diverts our attention by making the problem so general that it becomes impossible to handle. Violence against women is not worse than it used to be. It is based on an ideology which justifies the oppression of women by men, and not on the fact that we are all undergoing a notably violent era. To speak of "family" violence as people are now doing is another way of coopting the issue and of silencing women.

**The magic of cooptation**

In plain words, institutions are designed to preserve the system and their main objective is to make sure that individuals adapt to it and "rock the boat" as little as possible. The rare persons to protest a bit too loud within the social service delivery network soon get sharply rapped on the knuckles. The ongoing chastisement of Judge Andree Ruffo is a good example. Because she has dared to denounce the aberrations of the Children's Aid system and the blatant lack of resources for abused children, she was rapidly called to order and told that her role was not to denounce social injustices.

If a few workers are presently allowed to practice on the basis of feminist intervention, the institution will quickly move to bring them into step as soon as these persons become too "challenging" or they seek to question too many procedures in the day-to-day practice of their working environment!

Still, there is always room for improvements within institutions. We find it most commendable that some workers use feminist ideology to try and raise their colleagues' consciousness and the way these look upon victims of wife battering. What is less commendable is, as we have pointed out, the fact that these persons find themselves tokenized by the government in its strategy of slashing the budgets of shelter services, on the pretence that CLSCs, social service centres, community health departments, etc, can now achieve the shelters' mandates. The primary functions of these organizations are diametrically opposite to those of shelters and both will never share political ground. It there is to be cooperation, it can only happen on a limited basis, that of the needs of specific individuals, while the struggle against wife battering must be led at the level of social policies and structures.

There is a dangerous phenomenon that must also be discussed for it can create confusion in women and in the general population. Over the last few years, various stakeholders, politicians and specialists
have started using our discourse, feminist discourse. To be more precise, the words are the same but we find that they have been completely stripped of their content; this is the true meaning of cooptation. Imagine being show two dozens of eggs, twelve of which have been carefully emptied. From the outside, all of them are still eggs but the second dozen is merely appearance and deceit. This is how a social movement gets coopted: words and concepts are taken over, manipulated and robbed of their content.

The ability to coopt opposition is one of the great strengths of the patriarchal system; it is what has allowed it to perpetuate itself throughout history. Institutions are its main tools of control. We can improve the functioning of institutions, but we cannot change their primary function unless society itself is transformed. For the time being, institutions exist to serve and to promote the interests of the State. These interests were clearly identified by the Quebec government in its 1989-91 Action Plan, which called for preserving the Family "at all costs". Preserving the Family at all costs is necessarily done at the expense of women, since they are always the ones who are required to forgive, adapt and forget...

**Criminalizing wife abuse** The "Politique d'intervention en matière de violence conjugale" (Intervention Policy...), implemented in 1986 by then Provincial Justice Minister Herbert Marx, brought a shred of hope for women with its indication of a firm political will to improve the judicial treatment of wife battering by fully acknowledging the criminal nature of this behaviour. Indeed, it can be said that women truly had high expectations from these reforms. Finally, women were going to be heard and listened to; "justice would be done" in their case. A few years later, the disillusion is total.

The Justice Minister's political show of commitment never translated into reality. If some police officers and Crown Attorneys have had their consciousness raised to a certain degree, it must be said that these remain a minority; as for judges, the enlightened are more often the exception. But the difficulties encountered by women within the judicial system do not merely lie with the individuals who implement the law. Although it is important to point out that these persons are not free of the myths that circulate in the general population, it must be said in their defence that the current discourse cloaking wife battering can hardly be of help.

While the Minister of Justice acknowledged wife battering to be a crime in 1985, a 1988 advertising campaign organized by his department reverted to calling it "unacceptable", thus refusing to acknowledge the criminal aspect of wife-beating, as it did in a highly effective campaign against drunk driving, for instance. Even when there seems to be some acknowledgement of the criminal nature of wife battering, at another deeper level society refuses to treat assailters themselves as criminals. As soon as a man murders his wife, there is a rush to explain and rationalize his behaviour by appealing to his past: as a child, he must have been beaten, mistreated, assaulted, and so on. Yet, many acknowledged criminals also have this type of past. Is this presented as equally relevant? Why does it always seem less serious for a man to have battered or killed his wife than to have attacked someone else or, worse, someone else's property?

Generally, it can be said that, to this day, women are not taken seriously by the judicial system. They are disbelieved or thought to exaggerate or to have provoked the assaults. The justice system
has not taken all necessary means to ensure the protection of those women who attempt to have a complaint laid against their husband: the assassinations of women and children testify to this, along with all the threats and pressures levelled at women by ex-spouses. One must also mention the deliberate slowness of judicial procedures. Women often have to wait a full year before a case is heard. During this time, the assailter will have the opportunity to return, to break an arm or a leg of his ex-spouse and again, this new case will only be heard six or eight months later. In such conditions, how can assailters take seriously the judicial system and fear its severity? How can women trust this system to protect them?

Sentences, when they are not suspended, are ridiculously light and far from dissuasive for the assailter, except for the occasional exemplary sentence. A husband can receive a suspended sentence and a fifty-dollar fine for having battered his wife; on the other hand, a poacher caught hunting at night is punishable by a fine of between $1 500 to $4 500 and a repeat offender can be fined up to $13 500 and spend a year in jail. Just where are our values as a society? There are good chances that the poacher will not be tempted to re-offend. This is much less obvious in the case of the batterer. Yet, according to a U.S. study of assault crimes handled by the Minneapolis police department between May 1981 and August 1982 "(...) the arrest of suspects in cases of wife battery has cut in half the rate of recidivism for these acts of violence". Which brought Mr. Ed Stubbing (of the American Victims' Aid Agency) to assert, at an international convention of police chiefs in New York City, that "(...) acts of family violence are less likely to be repeated whenever police officers make more arrests".

Let there be no misunderstanding: we do not advocate jail terms as the only solution to the problem of wife battering. In any case, it never represents THE solution, whatever the offense. Yet, it is the mean which society has given itself to draw certain lines, to mark off certain thresholds beyond which such and such behaviours become criminal and liable to sentences or jail terms. We are not saying either that all assailters must go to jail. Each one must be judged according to the severity of his actions. But we find the current fines and sentences ridiculously lenient; they cannot have the dissuasive effect which should be their function. We believe that, as long as the justice system does not treat seriously the problem of wife battering, men will go on believing that women remain their property and that they may abuse them as they see fit. We can educate the offender, help him evolve, but none of these efforts must serve to decriminalize his actions. When will our society demonstrate that it truly considers wife battering to be a crime?

Of course, we are often told that many women do not wish to lodge a complaint. But we also know many women who have lodged such complaints and who have gone every step of the way, only to achieve next to nothing in the end, to the detriment of their mental and physical health. In some cases, prosecutors and policemen themselves pressure women to drop their complaint. Moreover, as long as the judicial system will not treat seriously wife battering, as long as women and children will go on being freely assassinated despite, in some cases, having called for help, it is obvious that women will continue to distrust a system that is not designed in their interest anyway and that seems either unwilling or unable to truly protect them.

In 1986, the Quebec government tried to create new rules (with its new Intervention Policy) designed to help women obtain a more equitable treatment in the judicial system. After a few years, it has
become obvious that this mechanism is running less than smoothly. Decision-makers, authorities and the judicial personnel are already concluding that the system is not working and that one must therefore look elsewhere for solutions, to "therapy" for instance. In our mind, the problem lies with a judicial system that is not adapted to the needs of victims in general and of women in particular; it is the functioning of this system that must be profoundly transformed if we are to obtain significant results! We are demanding real substantive changes so that women finally obtain justice and so that assaulters finally become convinced that to "beat one's wife" is truly criminal.

Programs for batterers Even though some of these groups existed before 1985 (four existed in Quebec), their growth began with the 1985 Intervention Policy. Twelve new groups started up in 1986 and 1987. Examining the practice of these groups is especially important since the provincial administration considers them -- or at least presents them -- as the solution to the problem of wife abuse. "We must go to the root of the problem", say the authorities, coopting once more our discourse. But contrary to our analysis, it finds this root in the violent husband's individual behaviour, rather than in our society's value system. It then purports to "treat" the violent husband, thus avoiding a general challenge to the system we live in and any change to its structures and values. The effort will be to "adapt" males to current needs: "It is now unacceptable, Sir, to batter one's wife or to abuse her in too visible ways. Could you please do it in a way that is more discreet and acceptable to our contemporary society?" This is of course a caricature, but with very little exaggeration. For most of the programs offered for batterers (most of whom issue from CLSCs or from the initiative of professional therapists), it is not the very foundations of society that must be challenged, and especially not the privilege which all men possess at various degrees, but merely a behaviour perceived as inadequate.

It seems urgent to gauge the relevance of such groups, since State is about to invest enormous resources in them during the coming years. Quebec's shelters and the Quebec Coalition of Battered Women's Shelters have been approached by these groups to elicit our public support; meetings have been held. In the field, some shelters have collaborated in the setting up of these groups in order to try and bring to their practice our analysis and our approach concerning wife battering. Informal meetings are ongoing to try and achieve a form of intervention best adapted to the men and which would guarantee the most safety to the women and their children. But, before accepting to publicly endorse these groups and to collaborate with them, the Coalition and the shelters have had to consider the following questions: In whose interest are these groups functioning? Do they constitute a real solution to the problem of wife battering? Is it in the interest of shelters and of the Coalition to support them and on what basis would we do it?

We have analyzed what was happening in the field, we have read a study of batterers' programs conducted for Quebec's Department of Health and Social Services, we have had discussions with men who have a pro-feminist approach and who are also quite critical of these groups in their current form. The conclusion of this reflection process and of all our exchanges is that batterers' groups are, in a most obvious fashion, serving the interests of the patriarchal system. The majority of them are offshoots of the institutional network, and they satisfy quite well the government's objective which is, as we mentioned, to preserve at all costs the family unit by allowing as few "disruptions" as possible. We find it significant that people from various instances are praising to us the efficiency of these groups on the basis that a majority of group attenders return to their spouse, while only
50% of women return to a batterer after their stay in a shelter. All of the public interventions of A.R.H.I.V. (the association representing most of these groups) bear essentially on these groups' funding. They never or almost never offer a consistent critique of a society which benefits men in general, whatever their social position.

To sum it up, their approach is mostly based in traditional psychology. Indeed, many of these groups borrow from behaviourism, which is mainly interested in behaviour modification. But to modify his behaviour, the "client" must at least acknowledge that he has a problem and then he needs to want to achieve a profound change in his attitude, and this for his own sake. But group leaders themselves have to admit that the batterers only come to their groups after their wife has left them or because of a court order; they come with the primary goal of recovering "their wife". No wonder in such conditions that most of these men return to their spouse. As we have already mentioned, these groups are increasingly institution-based or supported and it must be noted that even the groups who claim to be community-based do not take advantage of their autonomy to favour a change in social attitudes or to question men's privileges.

Thus, it is our opinion that, in their present form, programs for batterers are hindering the evolution process of women, for they instil false hopes in victims of wife battering by giving them the impression that their husband will be "taken charge of" and eventually returned to them somehow "fixed". The focus given to "treatment" for the assaulter also minimizes the need for women to undergo their own process, to meet with other women, to see their situation from a distance and to reassess certain elements of their lives, for their own sake.

Now, we are even hearing certain people propose the creation of "shelters" for assailters in order to temporarily pull them from the home where women and children could finally remain. But this type of solution runs the risk of isolating women even more, each one in her little home. It is another way to deny the social, collective and cultural dimension of violence against women, and to refuse women the support they need to recover from a battering violence situation and the tools they must have to regain control of their life. Finally, the very notion of "treatment" is just another way of deresponsibilizing men.

At another level, we are concerned about the prevalence of an approach that acknowledges, in principle, wife battering to be a crime but refuses to identify the assaulter as a criminal. This may lead batterers' programs to create dangers for women and their lives inasmuch as a potential criminal would be sent to "therapy" rather than to jail. Over the last few years, we have seen the outcome of not applying to these men as much caution as to other criminals: the murders of Ginette Desjardins, of Helene Lizotte, of Mrs. Joly and Mrs. Fiero and of so many other assassinated women, cases which the media no longer present as murders, reverting instead the more romantic notions of "tragedies" or "crimes of passion".

Of course, one can hardly criticize good intentions and one cannot argue a priori against the existence of groups for batterers. Yet, we sincerely believe that, in their present form, these groups encourage the idea that the violent husband can be "cured". They often foster false hopes in women and they prolong, often dangerously, the breaking-up period. These groups do not serve the interests of women and to let them multiply and function in these conditions is to lack social conscience.
Finally, this new approach well illustrates how little attention is given by the State to women's predicament and to their place in the social structure. It also indicates, at the governmental level, a will to avoid any major change of its structures, notably the whole judicial system, and to forestall any adaptation of it to women's needs. Once again, the government has opted for superficial glitter and it is attempting to pull the wool over women's eyes by telling them and the population that the miracle solution to the problem of wife battering resides in the individual "treatment" of all violent men. As if the solution to acid rain laid in treating each tree individually! Isn't this ridiculous? Meanwhile, it is victims of wife battering that are bearing the brunt of this trendy new approach!

**Foster families** This alternative, which is generally less known in the population, has been advanced much more to remedy the lack of resources than on the basis of a specific theory. It essentially means the "placement" of a wife battering victim, along with her children, in a family that can accommodate them. Foster families are already being used successfully for other social problems, such as child abuse and severe disability. Certain institutions and groups have simply tried to adapt this resource to the victims of wife battering and their children. We want to forewarn people who may be tempted to apply this solution to battered women who do not have access to a shelter -- e.g. those living in isolated regions -- or to situations where shelters are overflowing. Of course, it is better to find oneself in a "foster family" than to remain at home at the mercy of a violent husband. Nonetheless, we must point out that this alternative does not address adequately the needs of the victims of wife abuse.

For one thing, the foster family, however aware it may be, runs the risk of marginalizing the woman by depriving her of daily contacts with women who have shared her experience and with whom she can speak and develop affinities and solidarity. Many women are still discovering to their great surprise that women can have solidarity. This runs contrary to everything they have learned since their earliest days. Furthermore, by sharing living space with other women who have different personalities, lifestyles and pasts, but who share with them an experience of being abused, women recognize that they are not insane, that they are not alone, that they are "normal", and this is conducive to faster recovery. It is a dimension that they cannot find in a foster home.

Besides, finding oneself in a foster family with a father, a mother and young children can only mire the woman in what she considers to be her personal failure: the dissolution of her own marital relationship. She will then be tempted to look at this couple and try to find what "mistakes" she has made, what more she could have done, all the while comparing herself to the other woman who seems to be coping better. And this will happen regardless of all efforts to avoid it and despite any level of attention or good will. If foster families can be looked to as a stopgap measure, they remain far from being an adequate solution to the needs of women and to the problem of wife battering. If a region can only provide women with foster families, it is most probable that women will only seek these resources as a very last resort. What women also need is a place where they can think, reassess their situation, receive information and support, be accompanied in their process and speak with other women. The foster family is unable to provide all of these services.

It does not provide either for the very real necessity for women to regroup and struggle for their rights, for justice or simply for a measure of respect. The foster family remains an isolated unit whose goal isn't to achieve changes at the social level. It can eventually be seen as a temporary
Limits and Risks of "Programs" for Wife Batterers

stopgap measure. But we must be careful that the government does not find a way to champion this lesser of two evils and present it as a long-term solution or as a remedy to the lack of resources such as women's shelters.

"Programs" for wife batterers may actually be compounding the problem

Press release (Dec. 5, 1994)

Far from reducing the incidence of wife battering, so-called "programs" for batterers are translating into an higher incidence of wife abuse, while contributing to maintain many women and children in high-risk situations.

This is the picture emerging from an 18-month research conducted in the Baltimore area on 193 wife batterers, in order to study the effects of their arrest and of sending 81 of them to various types of counselling programs. This research project, conducted for the State of Maryland by Adele Harrell of Washington's Urban Institute, found in Dec. 1991 that, far from becoming less violent than the men of the (untreated) control group, the men provided with "treatment" assaulted their partners MORE often.

While arrest proved significant in bringing about a marked reduction of assaults from the men of both groups, it was acertained that only 57% of "treated" batterers stopped all violence, while 88% of the men not sent to treatment desisted from battering their wife again over the study period.

The Urban Institute study was limited to men having completed a program. In Canada as in the U.S., many reports have shown that approximately half of the abusers that join a program only remain in it long enough to regain control over their partner and escape any legal sanction.

Adele Harrell concludes that treatment didn't work as "offenders in treatment were no more likely to abstain from severe violence or threats of violence while in treatment than offenders not ordered to treatment" (p. 65).

Indeed, twice as many "victims of treated offenders than victims of offenders not sent to treatment sought medical care for an injury inflicted by their partner, stayed in bed or missed work due to injury" (Summary, page 7).

Effectiveness results and forecasts quoted by program providers have often been criticized as methodologically unsound (Burns, Meredith, Paquette, 1991). Harrell's study offers the advantage of a randomized control group, a large sample, a lengthy follow-up period and of having borne on programs of three different types. No significant difference in efficiency was noted between each of these.

The main quality of Harrell's study is the fact that its data on recidivism came from three separate sources. Instead of relying on abusers' self-reports or that of program providers, it also integrated police reports and confidential interviews with the abusers' partners.
Harrell's results also challenge our serendipitous optimism about the consciousness-raising function hypothesized of such classes for batterers. Her study's results indicate that offenders provided with this "reeducation" proved 25% more supportive, after having completed the program, of sentences such as "Occasional violence can help maintain the marriage" and "Most wives secretly desire to be beaten"!

As for the dissuasive function of such programs, Harrell noted that offenders of both the treated and control group showed the same very high confidence in the low likelihood of any legal sanctions or negative consequence of future domestic violence. Also, offenders' rating of the likelihood of such violence was twice as high as the partners' estimate.

This raises the possibility that such "therapy programs" may themselves play a part in maintaining women in lethal risk situations. Drawing on his interviews of battered women, U.S. psychologist Edward Gondolf wrote in 1988 that offenders registering with a program was the main factor holding women back from trusting their perceptions and seeking safe housing.

Adele Harrell's study, Evaluation of Court-Ordered Treatment for Domestic Violence Offenders, is available from The Urban Institute, 2100 M Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037. Phone: (202) 857-8605.

Ending Men's Violence Isn't

by Martin DUFRESNE for Montreal Men Against Sexism

Some facts are like a 20-foot kite. If you insist on holding on, they will drag you through thorns and brambles, out of wherever you would have rather stayed. But you may emerge some place a lot more interesting.

Case in point: the fact that batterers' programs do not work. (I assume that you expect batterers' programs to end men's wife-beating and other controlling tactics. They don't.)

1. In 1991, Harrell found in Baltimore that 81 batterers having undergone various programs showed, over 18 months, a rate of recidivism identical to that of a control group of 112 batterers who had attended no classes. Furthermore, the partners of the men who completed classes needed twice as many medical services and lost twice as many working days because of injuries as did the partners of the control-group batterers. (Harrell, Evaluation of Court-Ordered Treatment of Domestic Violence Offenders: Final Report. The Urban Institute Press, P.O. Box 7273, Dept. C, Washington, D.C. 20004, 103 p. $13.)

2. Similar results are turning up in Canada. Burns, Meredith and Paquette's 1991 "Treatment Programs for Men Who Batter: A Review of the Evidence of their Success", a comprehensive study of the existing research assessing the efficiency of Canadian batterers' programs, prepared internally for our Dept. of Justice, found very little follow-up, very few control groups and, when these conditions were present and allowed for an efficiency assessment, it found major flaws in these highly self-serving self-evaluations. In fact, behaviour improvements in the "treated" groups were only marginally superior to those noted in control groups. Not surprisingly, this
study remains quasi-confidential to this day in comparison to the self-serving pronouncements of program providers. And the money keeps pouring out to men's groups, while women's shelters are closing down and vital follow-up and support programs for survivors are denied any funding or coopted.

3. Deprived of access to effectiveness research that is not funded, not publicized and not taken into account other than to bury it, front-line workers find themselves isolated, each with her or his growing collection of horror stories of the way programs DO impact on battered women: program "graduates" whom Father-Rightists have helped regain access to the wife and children escalate their tactics to the coolest, most knowledgeable of terrorisms. And what could be more natural? They got the weekly support group; they received the media hoopla. The system bent over backwards to describe the classes they sometimes attended as both "therapy" and the equivalent of a sanction. How could they fail?

Among men's movement-based counsellors, such anecdotal accounts of counselling's contribution to the war against women are relayed privately, with much hand-wringing, perhaps as a ritual token gesture of principled goodwill but impotence, acknowledging each other as worthy, stolid bearers of this Good Man's burden: "how hard it is", "how the system fails us", "how far there remains to go."

Of course, such identification rituals have become a necessity with men of every political stripe using our reversal discourse on every available therapeutic, academic, community and public service platform. Still we leave each other plenty of elbow room: each is encouraged to his own "varying interpretation" of accountability to the women's movement: you can hardly hear feminists any more in the current din of pro-feminist statement-making. And with women and facts out of the way, can Ending Men's Violence be anything but an ongoing, never-ending project cum cash crop for new sensitive professionals?

When Women Get Heard Luckily, sometimes our delicately-poised perfect stall breaks. Women's voices somehow pipe through the smoke-screen of our Mission-ary position, saying commonsensical stuff such as: If batterers' programs are ineffective at freeing women of men's control and sexist violence, if they're not accountable to battered women (they still aren't, you know), if indeed so many women are re-victimized by men in "treatment", such programs should not be funded and prioritized over interventions and programs that ARE efficient and accountable to battered women, even if not designed in terms of men's priority, choices or interests. A few male counsellors agreed. This happened in Ontario, Canada, in the Fall of 1991.

The shit hit the fan with the heart-rending sound of a shattered gentle men's agreement. Hell hath no fury like a liberal scorned... With careers and mortgages slowly turning in the chilling prospect of for-real-accountability, the politics of divide-and-conquer slammed into high gear. Sexual orientation became an issue as heterosexual feminists in the Ontario shelter movement found themselves served with the "grief" of counsellor colleagues and bed-mates and invited to do something, NOW, about those "other" women rocking the boat. Knives flew fast and low. Lesbians' jobs were lost as kangaroo trials were quickly organized, often in the absence of the accused. All in all, it was made quite clear that accountability was best appreciated as an individual male "commitment", out of
the kindness of their hearts so to speak, rather than as a female demand or as any corporate objective.

(Cynicism is, of course, another cheap shot, a predictable attitude we are invited to settle for as we go on Working Within The System and male-bond with Better Men - colleagues and clients.)

**Debunking the Therapy myth** It may be the old journalist in me -- or the absence of a mortgage to honour -- but I am curious as to where that 20-foot kite would lead us if enough of us stopped covering up in this way. If we had been less coy about the ineffectiveness, unaccountability and lethality of batterers' programs, it would have been less easy to isolate and lynch the feminists calling for accountability in Ontario. There is no dearth of dirt to air. In Quebec, the very first strategic consideration tabled at the founding convention of ARHIV, our Coalition of Abusers' Programs, was: "What will be our official statement be the first time one of our clients murders his wife?". This and "How do we get more government money?"... So maybe there is a point to airing the horror stories. Especially as program leaders have long started covering up their dismal track record by publicly blaming abused women's "unrealistic expectations" (this after ten years of non-stop misleading advertising from these same providers!).

Those of us who would really like to see classes for batterers NOT replace sanctions, NOT compete with the funding of shelters and women's support programs and NOT entice women back to batterers, would benefit from the airing of these facts, although it may force our hand to live by such words.

Not only would debunking the Therapy myth save women's lives, it would strip the system of its most effective line of defence against the feminist demands we are so committed to supporting that we hardly bother knowing about them. Should we look to the men's movement imperative that we must always be "male-positive" as the reason why support for batterers appear to be the one and only thing pro-feminist men ordain themselves to do on this issue?... Some pro-feminists (a few, alas) ARE agreeing to work in more accountable ways, collaborating with front-line feminists on many other initiatives such as political organizing, supporting shelters, monitoring police reports, court watch and probation follow-up. Some even research and expose the organized batterers' movement that lobbies courts, legislatures and the media as advocates of "discriminated battered men", in attempts to hobble and eventually shut down women's shelters and the movement that sprang from it.

What WOULD happen if enough of us took such simple, effective steps to stop batterers and their system from using us therapists to protect and further men's violence? (I mean, beside some mortgages going down the drain...)

Spring is here. Go fly a kite and see.

First published in 1989 in The Activist Men's Journal

**Masculinism Kills in Montreal**

One week ago, a 36-year old psychology student strangled his 7-year old son in a Montreal suburb. The murderer then carefully placed on the boy's body an open copy of Jungian masculinist
Guy Corneau's Missing Fathers, Lost Sons, the current ideological bible of men's movement Father-Rightists. He then waited all afternoon for the boy's mother to return home and proceeded to rape and viciously batter her for 6 hours beside her son's body, also assaulting her 17-year old niece. The man, Daniel Riendeau, had just been released from custody and awarded liberal access privileges for X-Mas, on the word of an "expert witness", after raping and battering this woman four weeks earlier and uttering repeated death threats against her and her son. Riendeau later told police that he had killed his son "in order to spare him the anguish of divorce". Analyst Corneau decrees that for a child to grow up without the presence and control of his father is to be psychologically destroyed. Riendeau's lawyer now describes his client, who attempted suicide on the murder scene but the ceiling fan gave, as "disconcerted".

The extent to which masculinism - the political advocacy of male identity and privilege, aka "male-positiveness" - is a major factor in the everyday assassination of women and children has yet to surface as an issue, even within pro-feminist writings and activism. Men who "work with" batterers could provide much help in that regard instead of covering up for their clients and protecting their pay cheque. Adele Harrell's ground-breaking research on the repercussions of batterers' therapy programs showed MORE misogynist attitudes (and recidivism) in treated abusers than in the control group.

For instance, few people are aware that the 25-year old man who gunned down 14 women in Montreal on December 6, 1989, was also an articulate masculinist. Marc Lepine (ne Gamil Gharbi) left a 3-page suicide note which was eventually leaked by police one year after the gynocide. In it, Lepine justified his attack on women and his hatred of feminism by protesting what he called unfair privileges for women: he railed against the recognition of female victims of war - war, he said, was a man's game - and against the existence of female-only events at Olympic games. Lepine, who had been denied admission at U of Montreal's school of engineering (Ecole Polytechnique), had prepared a hit list of media-acclaimed female achievers in Quebec society (journalists, newscasters, police agents, a top-marks student chartered accountant, a bank vice-president, etc.). He eventually attacked Polytechnique's students and female workers for convenience and lack of time.

A third example which I chanced upon - looking over the shoulder of a friend transcribing court proceedings, back in 1985 - is that of Aldo Zurlo, a 21-year old man who starved a baby boy to death by ordering his mother to stop breast-feeding. He had her squeeze milk into a bottle and cut it with tap water as lactation slowly subsided. The child died of malnutrition (and head injuries as Zurlo beat the boy for crying). In court, the murderer argued that he had read somewhere that breast-feeding created a bond between mother and child that had the effect of excluding the father - typical masculinist psychobabble. He managed to expel the child's mother by forcing her to go work as a bar dancer. (Breasts are for adults.)

Whether one acknowledges the responsibility of these erudite male egotists, young men all, or still prefers to see them as somewhat mentally-unbalanced "traditional" folks that "misunderstand" men's movement writings, it is clear that there is a class politic at work here. Let's call if for what it is and for whom it destroys, women and children targeted by masculinist policy.
"Therapy" programs? When freed, Riendeau had been court-ordered to "get therapy within three weeks". He was let loose on the basis of an assessment by psychiatrist Marc-Andre Laliberte that he "presented no danger to society" (the public-private split). His lawyer, Richard Perras, not only obtained this assessment ("expert witnesses" have become the vanguard of the abusers' lobby - witness the FMS Foundation's success), but he petitioned the court on three successive occasions to obtain his client's freedom. He finally did so on the basis of a "gentleman's agreement" with the assigned Crown prosecutor, Michel Saint-Aubin, so that freedom on bail would not be opposed and that the local police department - who had repeatedly opposed freeing Riendeau - would not be brought in to testify to that effect. Claude Lamoureux, the judge who freed Riendeau, already had blood on his hands: a man he freed a year ago, despite explicit death threats, went home to assassinate his wife.

We have been demonstrating in front of the local courthouse with hand-painted signs identifying these men as Riendeau's de facto accomplices, passing out to journalists lists of the children and women killed by Quebec "estranged" lovers/fathers over the last five years, and advocating in interviews the reforms to the justice system articulated by feminist shelter organizations here in Quebec and Canada. I am also re-reading Corneau very carefully and intend to hold him accountable for his writings' repercussions. And I believe that this analysis must eventually include all current avenues used by sexist abusers to escape social controls and go on affirming the unaccountability that still defines manhood.

Please copy and circulate this article, and consider monitoring such events yourself, in order to help reveal the extent of masculinism-inspired violence against women and children.

Martin Dufresne, First published in Men's Network News

Therapy as Vietnam: Why are we in "therapy"?

by Martin Dufresne, Montreal Men Against Sexism

The question was asked about Vietnam and, although it didn't end our war against that country, it showed that a few people were reconsidering what they were doing or made to do there.

We are, of course, not made to help batterers with "therapy": it seems to come naturally. We are there, a fact, not negotiable or even visible. And yet, we may be there for the same reason than we still name interchangeably, for some reason, the pro-feminist men's community and the "Men's Movement", although the latter clearly includes the most rabid antifeminists around. The core assumptions putting us there seem to be first, the normative: As men, we must support men (the unstated alternatives having been, of course, supporting non-men, or countering men and their current choices) and second, the tactical: Support is what will most stop batterers.

The first of these assumptions is indeed the basis of the Men's Movement unmodified; they call it masculinism, being "male-positive". On the other hand, why are pro-feminists, whom one could expect to make a difference between biology and politics and recognize that to counter (social) men is not to self-destruct or to fly in the face of any nature of ours, why are we still not opposing
the gender dominants but indeed supporting them? In my opinion, we have successively justified what we do, where we are, by the SOCIAL context in which we operate. This variously played out a) me-tooing feminist dynamics (feminists choosing to work in non-mixed groups, let's form men's groups); b) supporting that movement (refusing to be men, blowing their/our covers, building accountability to front-line feminists); c) the growth hypothesis (men oppress because they have not more but LESS resources, options, privileges, so let's give them some more and watch); d) opportunism (the system still resists sanctioning these men but it will recommend/fund/refer to "therapy"); e) survival imperative (I/we can only get salaries or funds for what suits the system's priorities).

We now appear to dissolve this social context and bring everything back home with self-justifying moral obfuscation (I am no better than my brethren, just slightly to the left on the violence continuum).

So here we find ourselves in "therapy", supporting men, for a price, and possibly quite far from acting out against injustice and its purveyors or protectors in what would, in a verified way, be the most efficient manner. Could it be that U.S. servicemen doing the job in Vietnam have ever felt this way?

Testing the growth hypothesis

Why "therapy"? We say that it is to make the violence stop. Why through "therapy"? Do we really think, have we cared enough to establish that any of "therapy"'s various forms-- ours being the least prevalent and therefore the least likely to reach batterers-- is the most efficient way to get the men to stop hitting? Or do we in fact feel that the treatment approach is the most respectful of men's "free will" or--opposite pic, same conclusion-- of men's "condition" (conditioned, irresponsible of whatever bad stuff they are exposed as doing, while the good stuff accrues to their better nature)? Do we see it, perhaps, as the most "humane" approach? Humane to whom? How much do we take into account these men's targets: women ("partners"), children? And just how much do we want men to stop? This we can verify. Do we want it enough to search for and work at implementing the most efficient dissuading factors available, the ones used, for instance, in other, real crimes, or do we want it merely enough to give our best at ONE method, ours, "therapy"? (Yes, I know, we are not to call it therapy but counselling but we have yet to let THAT cat out of the bag... If it's "therapy" to the justice system, to "progressives", to academia, to our funding bodies, to the media, to partners thus convinced he was sick and to the general population, that's what I am accountable for and that's what I'll call it until we own up.)

Try this test. If an empirical, double-checked, double-blinded independent comparative study (research which we still are not even attempting to do) proved that a jail term, OK a short jail term, OK the certainty of some jail term if they do it just ONE more time, OK financial compensation, a fine, losing a job, the house, parental rights, consequences of any kind..., if any of these were shown to be more dissuasive than your, my, their, any current take on "therapy"; are you ready to pledge that you, yes you, would overnight shift your priorities to work fulltime at making such consequences compulsory for batterers (OK second offenders) and, once this is done and shelters/second-step women's programs are decently funded, THEN and only then go back to "therapy" at the verified condition that it NEVER be again substituted for such consequences and vital resources for the batterer's victims? How much would such a commitment cost you?
If you do stand behind such a principle, isn't setting up this kind of verification Priority One, especially given what we now know about "therapy"'s influence on battered women and its usefulness for all the men in power who actively resist giving civil rights to battered women and children? If not, isn't it then a fact that your other agenda (what you have been taught, believe in, do best, feel like about men, feel like exploring, or on the contrary what you feel uncomfortable about) is presently keeping you and society from (really) Ending Men's Violence? Could it be that we are rather, more simply, merely siding with men, in true Men's Movement fashion, though honestly hoping that this will make, no, help them stop, but not to the extent of making ourselves actually accountable to batterers' blows and strategies, to efficient dissuasion or to the requests of battered women's advocates? Yes, I think that's what we are doing.

Thinking about Vietnam

We didn't know what we were really doing in Vietnam either, until we took the question seriously. There had been this crisis on the home front. Blacks had been, in real life, putting on Caucasian Amerika the kind of pressure women have been putting, on the symbolic level, on Male Amerika for the last twenty years. Some students rebelled too, later, more gently. Amerika defused the crisis and whipped up patriotism by involving both groups in a "war effort" that turned out to be strangely inefficient. Don't we admit, among ourselves, that "therapy" also shows dismal results, given all the funding, judicial support and media attention it's getting? What is effectively does is prioritize male self-interest and bonding, while diverting attention from women's demands for ungendered justice and help for victims/survivors as an alternative to male control. What do women want anyway beside a better man? What did the Vietnamese want? Did we ever bother to ask? When the first American "counsellors" moved into Vietnam, the government's civil rights abuses had become so bad that even Buddhist monks (traditionally apolitical) were suiciding in the streets to protest the Thieu regime. Yet, who did we choose to help? The oppressors. On whose side are most counsellors now?

Putting Men First

The coverage of Vietnam and of its aftermath focused on Our Boys' positive or negative experience, never on those of the civilians we murdered, sexually abused and poisoned by the hundreds of thousands. Can you tell, to this day, just how many Vietnamese died or were maimed? Similarly, "therapy" seems to have become the keyword for Putting The Men First, pulling society's attention away from their victims' terror, deaths, conditions of survival, right to be helped and escape. Didn't the secret bombings of Cambodia happen just as we all felt we were Stopping The War? How much do you know about your local shelter's actual funding and public image problems, or about your Male Lobby chapter's current legislative drive? Getting her to come back or stay subservient. Familiar pattern?

The reasons why the "lessons of Vietnam" remain hazy to this day may have much to do with how useful the war against this country in fact was to the Amerikan economy. Beside destroying the Black Liberation Movement, it opened for a whole new class of "experts" tremendous opportunities, just as feminists are now being ousted from the "field" they created by a battalion of self-anointed "experts on masculinity". Could it be that the silence we keep about our doubts, disenchantment
or hostility to "therapeutic intervention" have similar grounds? Or is it simply that only Win-Win success stories make it into print, male success stories. As it is, we contradict each other only so far, still forming a common front against actually implementing sanctions for "oppressive behaviour", against factual acknowledgement of male responsibility. (We pro-feminists speak of "making" men responsible. Neat trick to suggest that they still aren't.)

**Hearts and Minds**

In Vietnam too, we claimed to reform "hearts and minds". Yet, in this case, massive overkill made sure they really were on the receiving end: men aren't, still aren't, not by a long shot. "Therapy" only makes it seem that way. During our "war effort" in Vietnam, ideology ruled the day too: the media accounts never remotely analyzed or even reflected what this war was really like or about. Now read the media's Men's Movement-inspired features on The New Wounded Male and compare that with what any battered woman will tell you of her life, his will, that war, the one which pro-male rethoric is also waging against her. Where does the notion of "taking therapy" place men? Remember the Watergaters "taking religion" to cut jail terms and save their image?

Academia and the Churches were part of the cover-up and of the support network for our war on Vietnam. A growing number of male academics, whether they identify as Men's Studies or not, and of unaccountable "therapy" programs absolutely thrive on the ideology of Male/Female Roles, although both are not only knowledgeable about male dominance, but base their power on it and play constantly to it in their practice.

**Giving the People What They Want**

It was often claimed that the Vietnamese themselves called for the "American intervention". How often have you heard partners publicly described by your institutional patrons as the ones wanting to stay, wanting him to "get therapy", calling for professional "intervention", refusing to press charges? (What do partners know, at first, about therapy, if not what we ourselves tell the media and the State.)

We, the alleged champions of liberalism, could never have attacked Vietnam if John F. Kennedy hadn't been so popular, charismatic. Would the notion of helping men instead have gone this far without pro-feminist men's choppy yet ever so seductive relationship with feminists, women and then with the system, without our fabled, self-alleged "alternative" to confronting batterers and to women's rights as full-fledged citizens?

In fact, our war on Vietnam followed the model of mercenary warfare: helping, for a price (economic growth/world control), rulers against people who threaten their privilege, the status quo. What do we dare acknowledge about the "science" underlying "therapy" and even, yes, counselling: psychology? Has it ever been accountable to the realities of women's oppression and males' strategy of dominance? Hasn't it actively contributed to both? Just what do we have in our bomb bays? It is easy enough to dismiss one's colleagues as unenlightened: every psychologist or "therapist" does it, within class solidarity (emulation). But to answer the question: should I even be here?...
We never did "save" Vietnam: we made the situation a lot worse. How do you handle the new data showing that the very few men who choose to "move forward" in "therapy" do so by becoming craftier, psychologically abusive instead of physically? And what about the recent study showing that the mere suggestion that he's getting "therapy" is the major factor influencing women to go back to a batterer? Will you side with those who applaud or with those who'll blame her?...

Honest Hopes and Alib-I-s

At one point, when reality became to intrude, the shell-shocked, human, compassionate private replaced the macho Green Beret in the War's media image. Are we not now seeing the sensitive pro-feminist "therapist" somewhat over-represented in the therapeutic establishment's and the Men's Movement's P.R. barrage and, in fact, covering up for all the misogynous psychologists, counsellors, church programs and what not which batterers use --or claim to use-- to get off the hook? Is attitude displacing missing results?... Isn't also true that our ultra-visible correct statements draw a curtain on the misogynous Men's Movement support groups and lawyers men do flock to in order to maximize their power play and force Baby or the baby back home? Back then too, it took two soldiers to work on a prisoner.

Inefficient as it seemed to be, our war on Vietnam achieved its stabilizing purpose. Could it be that "therapy", lame as we know it to be, is indeed achieving its own hidden agenda? To masculinists, it's a yellow-brick road to men's (and their) self-interest. To the justice and police system, it is a convenient, inexpensive, inconspicuous dumping ground where to politely assign men they refuse to treat as dangerous, much less criminal. To the batterer, it's an alibi, the proof that he wasn't responsible, that he is changing his ways and that he is the one whose pain and self-interest count. It's even a place to say he was at Thursday night... To pro-feminists, although we know all this, it's still something else, our honest hope that a yet unverified, untested hypothesis is more valid than the facts we have observed and the solution they suggest: ending male immunity to implement gender justice. Most of the men who went to Vietnam also had honest beliefs at first. The difference between our consciousness and theirs may simply be that our life will never be one of those on the line.

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Limits and Risks of "Programs" for Wife Batterers


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Limits and Risks of "Programs" for Wife Batterers

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Limits and Risks of "Programs" for Wife Batterers

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