

Conceptualizing Separation/Divorce Violence against Women

[M]ale partners believe they, and not their wives or third parties such as judges and lawyers, are primarily responsible for deciding when they are truly separated or even divorced from the female partners who left them.

Ellis, Stuckless, and Smith 2015, 2

The argument above applies not only to patriarchal married men but also to many sexist males in cohabiting and more casual relationships. As we have repeatedly stated elsewhere (e.g., DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009), numerous men, regardless of the type of intimate union they want to maintain, have a “fanatical determination” to prevent their partners from exiting a relationship. They use a variety of means to try “to keep them in their place” (Russell 1990). Sometimes these methods turn out to be lethal, and the motivation may be mixed with some notion of “If I can’t have you then no one can.” Researchers have termed the killing of females by male partners *intimate femicide* (Adams 2007; Dobash and Dobash 2015).

Jody Lee Hunt has provided a recent example. On December 1, 2014, he murdered his former girlfriend Sharon Kay Berkshire, two of her lovers (Michael Frum and Jody Taylor), and Doug Brady, a business competitor, before killing himself. These were not Hunt’s first violent acts nor his first act of violence against women. He had committed a number of the acts that many researchers claim are risk factors associated with intimate femicide, and, in fact, Berkshire herself had filed restraining orders against him in late 2013 and October 2014. For example, in 1999, Hunt had abducted and held

his pregnant girlfriend at gunpoint for several hours in a Winchester, Virginia, auto-parts factory before surrendering to police. He was sentenced to three years in prison for this, though Virginia allowed him to serve his time concurrently with a five-year term in West Virginia for wanton endangerment (Licata, Fehrens, and Hoff 2014). With an earlier Pennsylvania conviction, this gave Hunt criminal convictions in three states. In 2006, he was court ordered to pay more than \$12,000 in back child support (Stroud and Mattise 2014).

Mass murderers tend to be greeted with outrage in the media. In Hunt's case, however, his prior hurtful conduct received short shrift from the local mainstream media when compared to the journalistic attention focused on suggestions from friends and family that he was not, in fact, a violent man. After he killed four people, the press reported such reactions as "I just think the man had a total breakdown. Overwhelmed from the grief of a love lost and money problems" (cited in Mayo 2014, 1). One of Hunt's friends was quoted in a local newspaper as saying, "Our Jody wasn't that man." Hunt's second cousin said that he "was the type of person that wanted to help everybody out" (cited in DPost.com 2014, 1). And Brian Nicholson, one of Hunt's employees, said, "But he wasn't (enraged). He held it in. But a body can only take so much, I guess" (cited in Goldstein 2014, 1). After being sure to portray Hunt as basically a good man who suddenly "lost it," a local newspaper, the *Dominion Post*, published a lead story two days after the killings about a candlelight vigil held for Hunt at J&J Towing and Repair.

What compels a man such as Jody Hunt to commit murder? Certainly it is easy to dismiss him as a man who is sick or "mentally disturbed," as Monongalia County Sheriff Al Kisner did. However, one aim of this book is to debunk the myth that men who kill intimate partners are all mentally disturbed. Of course, some killers do have serious mental health problems (just as there are such people in all walks of everyday life), but the truth is that most men who engage in lethal and nonlethal violence against women are "less pathological than expected" (Gondolf 1999, 1). Men with serious mental disorders account for only about 10 percent of all incidents of intimate violence (DeKeseredy 2011). Much more will be said about intimate femicide in relationships and why men kill the women who want to, are trying to, or who actually leave them, in Chapters 2 and 4. Our concern in this book is

with violence against these women (and the peripheral damage visited on people nearby, as seen in the Hunt case).

An important definitional problem faces us immediately, however. What is separation/divorce violence? Sometimes it is easy to define. Violence after a formal court ordered declaration of divorce can usually be simple to categorize. People who have court orders of formal separation can also be delineated. However, sometimes people are effectively separated without meeting the technical requirements for legal separation. Others, we argue, are effectively separated even without living apart. Thus, one of the objectives of this first chapter is to challenge the “common sense” notion that it is essential for a couple to be living apart to be considered separated or divorced. We will make the case for a broad, gender-specific definition of separation/divorce violence.

DEFINITION OF SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

New studies on the topics covered in this book are being conducted, and some new theories are being constructed, but one thing the social scientific community has not agreed on is a firm definition of separation/divorce (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2011).¹ Among those who study intimate relationships, the problem of defining violence against women² has led to scholarly debates that are “old, fierce, and unlikely to be resolved in the near future” (Kilpatrick 2004, 1218). This debate has been duplicated in this newer and more narrow field of conceptualizing separation/divorce violence. Although researchers here tend to admire each other’s work, they remain divided into two camps (DeKeseredy and Rennison, 2013b) over the question of whether there must be physical separation to be included in this category. This is hardly a trivial concern, because how relationships and behaviors are defined can have major effects on the lives of people. Definitions are used as tools in social struggles. For example, one powerful political tool has been the rate of unemployment in a society, but little attention is paid by the general public to how these figures are derived. Is a graduate research engineer who works twenty hours a week for minimum wage at an ice cream stand over the summer fully employed? Is someone who has spent years looking for a new job but has now given up and sits at home awaiting word of some new opportunity an unemployed person? Usually, the answer is that the first is fully employed, and the second is no longer unemployed

because she has stopped actively applying for jobs. Similarly, the definition of the poverty line is both a political tool and a practical one. Setting the line low, or not changing it with inflation, means that fewer people are “living in poverty,” although they are as poor as ever. If the poverty line determines things such as who qualifies for shelter or subsidized housing or food aid, it can have major health consequences also. Violence against women is another politicized topic, and the definitions we devise and the way we use concepts turn back on us and reflect a particular reality (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2011). Just as we can reduce the number of people living in “poverty” by changing the definition of poverty, we can devise definitions in the violence against women arena that ignore and abandon many women.

Thus, to define separation/divorce violence, we must first decide what constitutes “separation.” One way to do this is to look at the legal definition. Jody Hunt and Sharon Berkshire had lived together, but she had moved out. However, West Virginia law defines legal separation only in terms of a temporary status for married couples preparatory to divorce (HG.org 2015). In fact, Berkshire had completely severed the relationship with Hunt and had begun a new relationship with Michael Frum, and later moved in with him. Hunt had no legal ties to her of any sort. Does this mean that they were not “separated” and that his crime was not one of separation/divorce violence?

But that is not the major problem here. Most social scientific studies of separation/divorce assault are willing to assume that any couple formerly living together and now separated physically can be considered to be separated or divorced.³ For example, Brownridge (2009) restricts his analysis to “post-separation violence,” which he defines as “any type of violence perpetrated by a former married or cohabiting male partner or boyfriend subsequent to the moment of physical separation” (56). Although this definition would cover Hunt/Berkshire, we would disagree with both his conceptualization and with state laws as being too narrow. Separation and divorce are not functions only of proximity and physical space. We agree with Brownridge that a woman does not have to be legally related to a man to experience separation/divorce abuse. The problem is that many women remain in the same households as their male partners but are emotionally separated from them. One definition of emotional separation, a major predictor of a permanent end to a relationship, is a woman’s denial or restriction of sexual

relations and other intimate exchanges (Ellis and DeKeseredy 1997). Of course, it may involve a variety of activities to disentangle oneself emotionally from a partner, even if a strategic decision is made to continue to engage in sexual relations. This distancing, indeed, may not involve any outward behavior changes in the woman. However, recognizably emotionally exiting a relationship can be just as dangerous as physically or legally exiting one because it, too, increases the likelihood of male violence and other types of abuse, including stalking and sexual assault (Block and DeKeseredy 2007; DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009; McFarlane and Malecha 2005). Of course, many women emotionally exit a relationship before ending it with physical separation and are not subjected to violence, just as many women physically separate and divorce men without later physical violence. The issue here is that, by defining separation as requiring physical separation, one defines away the great many cases where women who are not yet ready economically or emotionally (or are too frightened to leave) are subjected to physical, psychological, or economic violence—or even lethal violence.

Female emotional exits are common, especially if women are in abusive relationships and have difficulties leaving. This may not be a linear process, where emotional separation builds until the day that she moves out or begins a discussion of why he needs to move out. All too often it is unplanned, precipitated or propelled forward by unexpected events or playing out in unplanned-for directions. A difficulty in moving forward might be financial, in that she may not be able to set up a new household, especially if she has children. Sometimes the difficulty is fear, when she believes his claims that he will kill her if she leaves. She may leave, only to have him track her down and force her to return. Often the problem is that she has no support from her family, her friends, the police, or the clergy, who all may tell her that her place is with her husband (R. Klein 2012). Of course, there are other reasons and stories. None of this is new or unknown to workers in the field. These are not the women who, according to a popular belief, are “unable to make decisions in their own interest” (Davies, Lyon, and Monti-Catania 1998, 14). Rather, Okun (1986) found that women left their abusers an average of five times before permanently successfully ending the relationship. Horton and Johnson (1993) reported in their study that it took women who were leaving abusive men an average of eight years to permanently exit.

What is often not discussed in the field is that large numbers of women emotionally exit their relationship but remain physically “based on whether they have the resources and social support necessary to leave an abusive relationship, the assailants’ expected responses, and the fact that the assailants’ behavior is not within their control unless society cooperates” (Goodkind et al. 2003, 350). Resources and social support are vital if a woman is to safely exit a dangerous relationship. This may involve neighbors providing a safe place to sleep, supportive relatives, community social service agencies willing to help her set up a new home, or finding the fairly large amount of money that it takes in many cities to get an apartment and make down payments on utilities, in addition to obtaining furniture and clothes. If she has children, the financial and emotional toll expands dramatically (R. Klein 2012), and many options may be legally closed off to her.

If a survivor’s neighbors, relatives, or community members adhere to “nonintervention norms” (Browning 2002), she may have no options but to stay and instead to engage in emotional exiting. A survivor of separation/divorce assault interviewed by DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009) provides a powerful example:

There was too many of them that stood out of their homes and it was really aggravating, really aggravating when, I mean, it took my son to beg for my life. But here is our neighbors out here, seeing this man beat this female off the swing set, beating her with his fist, kicking her with his feet, grabbing her by the hair of her head, smearing her face and what, . . . you’re gonna stand up there and aren’t gonna call the law? Or you are gonna stand up there and you aren’t gonna come down? . . . But they could clearly see us. And they was outside standing and he was just thumping me so hard, so hard. And nobody called the law. Nobody did. Nobody came down to yank him off me. Nobody did anything. (11)

Although social scientists have long studied events where witnesses fail to help someone being attacked, it is unclear whether nonintervention norms are more prominent in rural than in urban areas. Recently, online bulletin boards lit up across the country debating the wisdom of intervention after the July 4, 2015, stabbing up to forty times of a young man being robbed on a busy MetroRail (subway) train in Washington, D.C. (CBS News 2015). There is no guarantee that neighbors or the public will intervene in

any attack, and there are plenty of people and police to argue that it is always a bad idea for untrained members of the public to intervene, because they too can then get hurt (Dvorak 2015).

As will be made more explicit in Chapter 4, many women can only emotionally exit because they have a well-founded fear of physically leaving their partners due to these men's extremely jealous and possessive behaviors. We could provide readers with numerous examples of women terrified to "flee the house of horrors" because they have routinely heard their partners say "If I can't have you, nobody can," "You have no right to leave me," and "I own you" (Adams 2007, 166; Sev'er 2002). Such fear is not at all irrational. These threats are all too often real: the risk of lethal and nonlethal assaults peaks in the first two months following separation and when women attempt permanent separation through legal or other means (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009; Ellis, Stuckless, and Smith 2015). It is thus not surprising to hear that many of Stark's (2007) female clients told him that "they were never more frightened than in the days, weeks, or months after they moved out" (116).

The above relatively short time frame is referred to by Ellis, Stuckless, and Smith (2015) as the *proximal* phase of separation: the two- to "six-month period immediately following the female partner's move to a separate residence and the initiation of formal separation proceedings" (9-10). More specifically, Ellis and his colleagues identify two other phases, covering the period before the man finds out that she plans to leave (acute), and the period more than six months after separation (distal). They found that the risk of male-to-female violence varied in each phase, with the risk highest in the proximal phase. Although these categories are quite helpful and do underline the great danger in the period immediately following the physical separation, there is another phase that these researchers left out: the period between the time that the man realizes that the woman is going to separate, and the time that she actually does. This would include the time when she is actually in the process of moving out. Although this area has not been well studied, we would argue that this is, in fact, the most dangerous phase of all. One important piece of evidence came in DeKeseredy and Schwartz's (2009) qualitative study of separation/divorce sexual assault in rural southeast Ohio. There, thirty-two (74 percent) of the forty-three victimized women

interviewed were sexually assaulted when they expressed a desire to leave a relationship but before they actually took the physical step of separation. Twenty-one (49 percent) were sexually abused when they were trying to leave or while they were leaving, and fourteen (33 percent) were victimized after they left. Sexual assault may or may not have a slightly different dynamic than the physical assault that we are talking about in this chapter, but it does give us reason to believe that physical assault would follow the same pattern. Much more difficult to measure might be lethal assault (Dobash and Dobash 2015), which we also suggest would peak right after the woman announces a decision to leave.

There are other problems with legal definitions of separation/divorce and the one offered by Brownridge (2009). Overall, outside of the violence literature, there has been extensive discussion of the fact that separation and divorce is a process, and one that might go forward and backward in fits and starts. It may begin long before anyone moves out or initiates legal proceedings, and it may continue long after the divorce is final. However, researchers actively gathering data find that they must develop a working definition of concepts like separation, such as defining its beginning to be when someone moves out. A major point here is that researchers must be careful to provide and follow definitions of what they are studying, as it can affect the findings. Noting the limitations of any particular definition or research decision would also be helpful. As mentioned earlier, defining separation as beginning at physical parting would have the effect of ignoring the large number of beatings, rapes, and other attacks that occur when a woman emotionally exits a relationship but remains in the home, when she decides to leave her partner, or when she makes an unsuccessful escape from a “dangerous domain” (DeKeseredy 2014; Johnson 1996; Ptacek 1999). With various studies using different definitions of separation/divorce, there is an obvious concern for accuracy and the ability to generalize. Our preference is to include all victimized women into such surveys, rather than to define many of them out of the sample. Again, these are not esoteric academic disputes but can have real consequences in many arenas. Activists have long known that there are many calls for limiting the amount of money for social services, and that the struggle for effective social support services can be hindered by definitions that exclude many victimized women. Restrictive

definitions result in lower estimates of abuse, which can ultimately decrease the probability of scarce resources being mobilized to curb separation/divorce assault and other variants of female victimization in intimate contexts (DeKeseredy 1995; DeKeseredy and Rennison 2013b; Smith 1994).

For many years, researchers of violence against women have known that the decision to permanently leave a relationship may be long and complex, taking difficult and challenging turns (Kirkwood 1993; Goetting 1999). It is, as mentioned above, a process rather than a decision. A woman may simultaneously feel oppressed and trapped by an inability to leave a relationship. This incapacity may stem from a fear of being killed, financial or economic reasons, a lack of adequate arrangements to care for her children, or a variety of other reasons (Davies 2011; Renzetti 2011). Generally, exiting a relationship takes place over time (DeKeseredy and Rennison 2013b; Mahoney 1991). Definitions that arbitrarily require the woman to have physically left the home can only result in underreporting the extent of violence against separating women.

Many definitions also fail to mention cohabitation. This is problematic because, though “a marriage license is a hitting license” (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz 1981), “a marriage license probably does not change the dynamic of . . . abuse within an ongoing intimate relationship” (Campbell 1989, 336). As a matter of fact, a metastudy of various studies that compared married to cohabiting men found that cohabiting men are at least twice as likely to beat female intimates as are married men, with some studies suggesting that the cohabiting rate is four times the married rate (Brownridge and Halli 2001).

Looking at sexual abuse, Canadian national survey data show that many women are sexually abused by their common-law partners, and male cohabitators are more likely to sexually abuse their partners than are men in casual or serious dating relationships (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 1998). More relevant to this book is Finkelhor and Yllo’s (1985) finding that 20 percent of the women in their sample who had separated from cohabitators experienced forced sex, along with 23 percent of currently cohabiting women, compared to 3 percent of married women. Fully 25 percent of all of the women who were legally separated or divorced reported experiencing forced sex. This was a study of what many call marital rape, so physical, economic, or emotional violence was not included. The difficulty is that this survey did not

specify when the violence occurred—whether it was before the separation, during, or after. However, one study that underscored the danger of terminating a cohabiting relationship was DeKeseredy and Schwartz’s (2009). There, of the eighteen cohabiting women in this qualitative series of interviews about sexual assault, twelve (67 percent) stated that they were sexually assaulted when they expressed their desire to leave their relationship. More research on the violent outcomes of ending a common-law union is much needed, but the limited work done so far strongly suggests that definitions of separation and divorce should include people who fall under this intimate relationship status category.

Based on an in-depth review of the extant literature, “separation and divorce” here means physically, legally, or emotionally exiting a marital or cohabiting relationship (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009). Consistent with our previous work on this topic, we focus on women-initiated exits because “they are the decisions that challenge male hegemony the most” (Se’ver 1997, 567). Our definition is broad, since legal and other complexities complicate the picture when trying for a narrow definition. A woman might emotionally initiate the separation, but the man may be the one who files for a divorce or moves out. Even in these situations, she might continue to consider herself the one who left (Hopper 1993).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE EFFORTS TO CONCEPTUALIZE SEPARATION/DIVORCE

Our definition does not cover all possible situations of separation and divorce violence.⁴ Brownridge’s (2009) definition, which is more narrow than ours, has an element missing from other feminist conceptualizations. His definition was “any type of violence perpetrated by a former married or cohabiting male partner or boyfriend subsequent to the moment of physical separation” (56). This recognizes that dating breakups may also be dangerous. Most separation/divorce assault studies have overlooked this possibility (Brogan 2013). However, some researchers have gathered data on the stalking of ex-girlfriends and male “minor aggression,” such as making threats (Edwards and Gidycz 2014; Fisher, Daigle, and Cullen 2010; Williams and Frieze 2005), but not in the broader context of examining separation assault. It is logical to assume that researchers would uncover a high rate of victimization during

and after the process of leaving a dating relationship given the alarmingly high rates of various types of male-to-female abuse in teen and adult dating relationships.⁵

There are also other important relationships and victimized people who have been left out of a literature heavily marked by heteronormativity. As Ball (2013) puts it, “The existence of intimate partner violence within non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgendered relationships is gaining greater recognition” (186). Of course, similar omissions mark the bulk of the empirical, theoretical, and policy work on any type of intimate partner violence. There is, to be sure, much violence in same-sex relationships. Roughly one-third of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people experience physical violence of this type in their lifetime, and it is estimated that intimate sexual violence is experienced by 5 percent of LGB people during the same time frame (Messinger 2014). Nonetheless, we know little about the abuse that occurs during and after exiting same-sex unions. Block and DeKeseredy (2007) seem to be the only researchers thus far to conduct a separation/divorce assault study that reports data on harms done both to heterosexual women and to women trying to leave or who have left same-sex relationships. Messinger’s (2014) comprehensive review of thirty-five years of research on what he refers to as “same-sex intimate partner violence” makes no mention of abuse that occurs during and after the process of relationship dissolution. Violence that occurs as part of exiting a relationship is certainly not purely a heterosexual phenomenon, and new conceptualizations should broaden to account for this reality.

The separation/divorce assault research community has responded faster to critiques of narrow definitions of violence or abuse than it has to narrow definitions of exiting. Perhaps it is because debates about defining abuse have a longer history, are more intense, and involve more researchers (DeKeseredy and Rennison 2013b) that the published materials on definitions are more numerous. Because this question is very important, we turn to a discussion of this issue next.

DEFINING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Male separation/divorce assaults on women are social problems that challenge all of us to look at how we understand relationships, gender

differences, power, and how to define male-to-female violence in intimate contexts.⁶ But what, exactly, is violence against women, and why do we not offer the now commonly used term *intimate partner violence*? Before answering these questions, it is necessary to state that our conceptualization of violence against women is heavily informed by definitions provided by women who have been abused by men or are still being abused, as well as by people working on the front line (e.g., staff in battered women shelters) to help women and children who are living with abuse. Our definition is also informed by qualitative and quantitative research conducted by us and our colleagues in Canada, the United States, and Australia, but it is essential to prioritize experiential knowledge because it

- Challenges the usual tendency of social scientists to theorize *about* other people, rather than *with* them;
- Gives voice to at least some women who have been abused;
- Opens the doors to self-help and peer support programs in which women can share their experiences; and
- Helps those responding to violence against women to identify the need for change as different women with different experiences challenge what is accepted as “fact” or “truth” about woman abuse. (DeKeseredy and MacLeod 1997, 46)

When most people think of violence, they think of physical brutality. Many people also automatically think of cases of forced sexual penetration they may have heard about. But people who have experienced any type of physical violence often say that it is the psychological, verbal, and spiritual violence that hurts the most and longest (Walker 1979). NiCarthy (1986) developed some of the first descriptions of emotional abuse, but Kirkwood (1993) carefully worked out that there are different types of emotional violence. Some come from a reaction to the physical abuse, but another major component is the nonphysical acts aimed directly at causing an emotional reaction. Unlike conceptions such as the battered woman syndrome, which leaves one thinking of these women as pathologically damaged, this began the process of thinking of battered women, and particularly those who remain in a relationship for a time, as normal people caught in an abnormal and horrible set of circumstances, doing the best that they can.

For instance, all of the forty-three survivors of separation/divorce sexual assault interviewed by DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009) developed adverse post-assault psychological conditions, such as depression, sexual aversion, and fear. This is not surprising, because, in addition to being sexually abused in a variety of ways, 88 percent were psychologically abused, 70 percent were economically abused, 12 percent had pets who were harmed by their abusers, 37 percent were stalked, and 51 percent experienced the destruction of prized possessions.

Rita, one of DeKeseredy and Schwartz's interviewees, is a prime example of a woman who has experienced considerable trauma related to nonphysical forms of separation/divorce assault:

I could care less if I ever have sex again in my life. I could care less if I ever had another relationship with a man again in my life. Oh, it's scarred me for life. I think it's physically, mentally—well, maybe not so much physically—but emotionally has scarred me for life. You know, and that's the reason why I don't socialize myself with people. I isolate myself from people because if I don't, I get panic attacks. And the dreams, they, they're never gone. They're never gone. I mean, I don't care how much you try to put it out of your head, the dreams always bring it back, always. I've been in a sleep clinic where they would videotape me sleeping, being in and out of bed, crawling into a corner screaming. "Please don't hurt me, don't hurt me, don't shoot me, don't" whatever. (83)

Lauren is another interviewee who shared her traumatic psychological abuse experiences:

And years ago, years ago, when I still only had one child, he told me he knew that I wanted out of the relationship and he said, "If I can't have you, I'm gonna make it so nobody can have you." And I didn't understand what he was talking about. And it was many, many years later that I realized he meant psychologically. He was going to destroy me psychologically so I wouldn't be fit to enter into another relationship. And it's basically true; I have not had another relationship. I'm afraid to go into a relationship. I don't trust men in general. So basically I live a solitary life, not by choice, but because I am afraid I'm going to end up in a relationship like that again. (84)

It is not unusual for police, courts, psychologists, and the general public to ignore psychological abuse. In many jurisdictions, the criminal justice

system followed (and still follows today) what was informally called the “stitch rule”: that the amount of harm done to you could be determined by how many stitches it took to sew you back up. Of course, if you did not have stitches, it was difficult to get any concern for your well-being. We have often described this to groups of men by asking them to recall the almost universal experience of a fight or bullying session in middle school, where they lost the fight and were humiliated. Many men can recall that humiliation twenty, thirty, or fifty years later, but they cannot recall just what their injuries were from that fight. Similarly, many battered women surprise the rest of us by claiming that a broken bone or a stitched-up cut really is not that big a deal: broken bones heal; psychological scars can last a lifetime.

This can also apply to the destruction of prized possessions. Once again, although this is something that has been long known, it has also been long ignored. For example, in the famed play *Trifles*,⁷ first performed in 1916, Susan Glaspell provides the most important clue to the murder as the killing of Minnie’s highly prized canary, no doubt by her husband. Glaspell recognized a century ago what eludes many of us today: that it can be worse to have your possessions ruined than to be beaten. Another example of both general destruction and specific harm to a pet was cited by Sev’er (1997):

Laurette and Sue talked about the shattering of their treasured heirlooms in front of their eyes. Laurette’s husband burned her books when she decided to take a few university courses. Daisy’s husband slashed her favorite dress into ribbons so that she would not look pretty and “run away” with men. Ann’s partner’s violence extended to the cat she loved (and still keeps). He would raise the cat closer and closer to the revolving blades of the ceiling fan, and demand things that Ann did not want to do (such as swallowing large doses of sleeping pills). The partner kept her drowsy and docile and always told her that “she needed him.” (580–81)

The entire relationship between physical violence and the emotional violence caused by the destruction of prized possessions was explained by a student of DeKeseredy’s some years ago. This student was a photographer with aspirations to work for a high-profile magazine:

Well, when my boyfriend broke my arm, I could go to the doctor and get a cast. When he punched me in the mouth and broke some of my teeth, I could go to the dentist and get them fixed. But, when he tore up my pictures, where

could I go for help? And, they were among the most important things in my life and I can't repair them.⁸

Another, admittedly extreme example has been given by historian Peterson del Mar (1996), quoting from a divorce petition from an impoverished California woman many years ago. She had “gotten a few things together” for the children on Christmas Eve, including gifts and a small tree. In this case, her husband never touched his wife or his kids, and certainly was not a traditional batterer. He came home late, drunk and angry:

Upon entering the house and seeing the little tree, all fixed up, he became so angry that he took the tree and tore it to pieces, took all the little gifts and presents off of the tree and mutilated and destroyed them. . . . Not being satisfied with this, and while cursing and defaming the plaintiff, he took all of the table linen and mattress and sheets and quilts off the bed, took them to the kitchen and dumped them on the floor, gathered up all the food there was in the house and spilled these on the floor, put the cooking utensils on the floor and then took the stove pipe and dumped soot over the bed linen and food and everything he had put on the floor and then turned water all over this mess, then broke and tore up all the furniture. (124)

In this way, many women find that they have, over time, become controlled by a form of psychological abuse that creates “invisible chains” (Fontes 2015). Referred to as *coercive control*, this involves nonphysical behaviors that are often subtle, are hard to detect and prove, and seem more forgivable to people unfamiliar with the dynamics of violence against women. The primary objective of coercive control is to restrict a woman's liberties (Tanha et al. 2010). Common examples are stalking, threatening looks, criticism, and “microregulating a partner's behavior” (Kernsmith 2008; Stark 2007, 229).

Lisa Fontes has a Ph.D. in counseling psychology and has worked in the fields of child abuse, violence against women, and other family issues for over twenty-five years. She is also a survivor of coercive control as well as stalking, both during a relationship and after it ended. In her 2015 book written for the general public, she argues that exiting a relationship with a patriarchal, controlling man does not necessarily end the process of coercive control (Crossman, Hardesty, and Raffaelli 2016). In Box 1, Fontes describes what it feels like to be coercively controlled.

BOX 1. THE CONSEQUENCES OF COERCIVE CONTROL

From Fontes 2015, 5

Victims of coercive control often feel like hostages. Over time, being grilled, criticized, and shamed may come to seem routine. Victims often blame themselves as they feel despairing and disoriented. It can be hard for them to figure out exactly what's wrong. Isolated and humiliated, some women lose confidence and accept their partner's view of reality. They may have trouble deciding whether their partners are doing and saying hurtful things out of love and concern—as claimed—or out of cruelty. They may feel confused as they are told again and again that they themselves have triggered their partner's behaviors by doing something wrong. At the same time, to keep the peace in their relationship, victims may detach from family and friends, contacting them less and less often until they lose touch with many of the people they care about most. Unfortunately, the victims typically do not see the connection between their partner's control and their own isolation until time has passed. Losing self-confidence and close relationships at the same time can be paralyzing.

Women who get caught in the web of a controlling man are no different from other women. They just had the bad luck to become involved romantically with a controlling person at a time when they were especially vulnerable. Once a controlling man has caught a woman in his web, he will do everything he can to prolong the relationship.

Kirkwood (1993) describes this as “the web of emotional abuse,” where, like a spider's web, a number of factors (fear, degradation, objectification, deprivation, overburden of responsibility, and distortion of subjective reality) are all intertwined so that the whole is more powerful than the sum of the parts. She reports that “the insidious nature of emotional abuse [is] that it is experienced as a subtle, nearly invisible process through which the fun-

damental components of its impact are ingrained in women, and as a result their escapes are complex and powerful” (60–61).

However, not all forms of coercive control are the same; some are more extreme than others. This is why Fontes (2015) states that coercive control exists on a continuum, and she defines the most extreme cases as examples of *coercive entrapment*. These means of denying women liberty are, according to her, “strategies . . . intensified by structural inequalities that further deprive victims of resources. The victim feels trapped, isolated, fearful, and threatened almost constantly. She may lose a sense of herself as an independent human being” (9).

Nickie was interviewed by DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009), and her experiences exemplify what it is like to be hurt by coercive entrapment:

I was his property that he wanted to own me. And I was his. That’s how he looked at it. I was his property, and that’s all that I felt I was to him, was just a lay, you know. But that’s all he wanted me for was to satisfy himself. . . . He would deprive me. It was more of a mental torture, emotionally, mental torture than physical except in the sex it was physical. “You’re mine and I’m gonna have you whether you want it or not. I want you.” He was in control. And that’s what it’s all about with men like that. They have to be in control. (72)

All told, coercive control is an integral component of separation/divorce assault. As Stark (2007) puts it, its “cumulative effect . . . can be a hostage-like state of physical paralysis, subjugation, and chronic fear that has no counterpart in any other crime in private or public life” (244). This, then, is another one of the major reasons for using a broad conceptualization of separation/divorce violence against women, one that includes the physical, sexual, and emotional attacks on women while they work to try to remove themselves from the relationship, in addition to attacks after physical separation. For the purposes of this book, it is defined as the misuse of power by a partner or ex-partner against a woman, commonly resulting in a loss of dignity, control, and safety as well as a feeling of powerlessness and entrapment, and experienced by the woman as the direct target of physical, psychological, economic, sexual, verbal, and/or spiritual abuse. Separation/divorce violence also includes persistent threats or forcing women to witness

violence against their children, other relatives, friends, pets, and/or cherished possessions (DeKeseredy and MacLeod 1997).

There are sound, empirically driven reasons for including harms done to children, other relatives, friends, pets, and/or cherished possessions in our definition. For instance, during the course of women's dangerous exits, "children can become unfortunate pawns in the violent games" played by male ex-partners (Polk 1994, 143), often being used to control the mothers (Beeble, Bybee, and Sullivan 2007). The son of one rural woman interviewed by DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009) is just one example of a child who had a legitimate fear of being killed due to the abuse he and his mother endured during the process of leaving her husband. Agnes said, "My son automatically locks the doors when he gets into the house. He only sleeps with the dog. He has to have the dog in his room at night because that's his warning signal" (90).

Agnes's son is alive. Luke Schillings, however, is among a group of children who have died as a result of male ex-partners' attempts to regain control over the women who leave them. In over three-quarters of murder-suicides in Canada involving a child victim like him, the offender experienced intimate partner relationship problems (Jaffe et al. 2014). Luke lived in Ontario, Canada, and despite pleas from his mother, the Ontario family court process allowed his father, Paul, to have unsupervised access visits. The first visit was also the last. Paul strangled and burned 3-year-old Luke to death and then committed suicide at the crime scene (Kingston Frontenac Anti-Violence Coordinating Committee 2015).

What Paul Schillings did is referred to by social scientists as *retaliating filicide* or, in layperson's terms, the "deliberate murder of a child to cause harm and suffering to the other parent" (Jaffe et al. 2014, 12). Not enough attention is paid to the intersections of violence and abuse after separation with a family court system that is increasingly likely to force abused mothers into ongoing contact with their abuser (Dragiewicz and DeKeseredy 2008; Fields 2008). The limited research on outcomes for children following separation/divorce that considers the quality of the relationship prior to and following divorce indicates that continued exposure to "high conflict" is harmful for children (Jaffe, Lemon, and Poisson 2003; Jaffe et al. 2014). The courts have all but ignored these findings on harm to children from contin-

ued exposure to violence against women and the sizeable body of research on how exposure to woman abuse harms children. For example, children exposed to their mothers' being beaten by their fathers are significantly more likely to engage later in delinquent acts. One way to sharply reduce the number of children in juvenile court would be to end the violence against their mothers (Schwartz 1989). Interestingly, much of the academic literature has focused on how battering changes the mother's behavior, such that the child's problems are the fault of the mother's child-rearing deficiencies. Greeson and colleagues (2014) recently turned their attention to this issue, and they discovered that it was the battering behavior of the father that affected the children negatively, not the mother's changed parenting.

Similarly, courts are influenced by the extensive family studies research cited in support of "friendly parent" and other family preservation initiatives that simply ignore the existence of violence and abuse—and its effects—in the home. In an ideal world, it always sounds nice to proclaim goals in favor of family preservation, and courts and legislatures commonly proclaim these goals, but the end result of ignoring the research on abused women and the outcomes for children, or ignoring men's violence to focus on deficiencies in parenting skills by the mother, is to make it easier for more innocent children like Luke Schillings to be killed.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE?

One thing that sets this book apart from many other contemporary materials in the field is that we do not use the term *intimate partner violence*. We understand why the term is popular and that it is used by many people who are concerned about doing the right thing. For example, numerous academics, practitioners, and activists are concerned that terms such as "woman abuse" or "violence against women" are not inclusive, since they do not include abuse against men.⁹ We understand this, but we still feel that gender-neutral terms are problematic for two reasons. First, regardless of why people use this or other gender-neutral terms (e.g., "domestic violence"), such language suggests that violence results from ordinary, everyday social interactions in the family or other intimate relationships that have gone wrong and that women are just as responsible for the problem as men (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013; Meloy and Miller 2011). This is not a minor linguistic

technicality. Modern society is rife with various efforts to blame women for men's violence. For example, during the fall of 2014, it was not uncommon to hear people (including many sports broadcasters) across North America publicly state that National Football League player Ray Rice was not entirely to blame for delivering an extremely brutal punch to his fiancée's face in an elevator that was caught on video. To many, this claim was buttressed by her public defense of his violent behavior. The Baltimore Ravens used their Twitter account on May 23, 2014, to send out a message they claimed was from her, saying that "she deeply regrets the role that she played that night in the incident." Evidently the story was that she had talked back to him, which of course fully justified (to many people) an exceptionally strong professional athlete hitting her hard enough to knock her unconscious, so that she had to be dragged out of the elevator. The message that women are responsible for men's behavior is of course internalized by many women and men in society, and it is used to justify (to many) a great deal of brutal violence.

It is also common for many of the people who use gender-neutral definitions to assert that women are as violent as men. For decades, some antifeminist researchers have made this claim and continue to do so today (e.g., Dutton 2012; Straus 2014). There is ample scientific evidence that disproves this assertion, but it is beyond the scope of this book to review the large body of relevant research that demonstrates, without a doubt, that women are the primary targets of intimate violence in adult and adolescent heterosexual relationships.¹⁰ This is not to argue that men are not the primary targets of non-intimate violence, or that women never harm men. It is to argue that the primary offenders are men and the primary targets are women, except perhaps when the very political and highly flawed Conflict Tactics Scale is used to show that women are violent.

For these reasons, we feel that it is essential to clearly name what it is that we are talking about. Although it may be perfectly legitimate in certain contexts to be talking about both male-on-female and female-on-male violence, this is not one of those contexts. The violence we are talking about is primarily perpetrated by men, and the persons who are the objects of that violence are primarily women. Thus, we use the terms "violence against women" or "woman abuse" throughout this book. Of course, there are times we will use other terms, such as in direct quotes or when describing a

situation. Certainly one can say that someone was killed by an intimate partner, or that the violence took place in a domestic setting. The problem comes when naming an entire class of behavior “intimate partner violence” or “domestic violence,” when the topic under discussion is in fact male violence against women.

THE ANTIFEMINIST BACKLASH

We would be remiss not to point out that an enormous audience exists today for those whom Schwartz and DeKeseredy (1994) refer to as “people without data,” whose declarations that women are as violent as men are disseminated by the mainstream mass media and via the Internet. As the term implies, this refers to the large group of columnists, politicians, bloggers, and media trolls who find it simple to dismiss mountains of careful and expensive research in favor of ideological belief, personal opinion, or a few examples plucked out of the universe. One of the latest groups of people to fall under this category is a cohort that masculinities theorist Kimmel (2013) identifies as a “new breed of angry white men” who are experiencing *aggrieved entitlement*: “It is that sense that those benefits to which you believed yourself entitled have been snatched away from you by unseen forces larger and more powerful. You feel yourself to be the heir to a great promise, the American Dream, which has turned into an impossible fantasy for the very people who were *supposed* to inherit it” (18, emphasis in original). The “American Dream” Kimmel refers to is one in which white men are superior to and receive more privileges than women and ethnic minorities. Their rage is expressed in many contexts and ways. In one of the most extreme, in 2015 one of these men, Dylann Roof, killed nine people of color inside the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. In addition to a history of racism, he also had a sense of aggrieved entitlement. Just before shooting, “He just said, ‘I have to do it.’ He said, ‘You rape our women, and you’re taking over our country. And you have to go’” (cited in RT 2015, 1).

Roof’s actions are at the extreme end of the Angry White Men behavioral continuum, but even the most cursory look at the Internet will turn up many examples. Kimmel (2013) reminds us: “The Internet provides . . . a man cave, a politically incorrect locker room, . . . where no one knows that you’re

the jerk you secretly think you might be. That's a recipe for rage (115). Many Internet sites, such as National Public Radio, are beginning to close down reader comment sections to stop the enormous flow of vitriol. Such comments show up in virtually every possible site. Sometimes they are organized. For example, when Raphael published *Rape Is Rape* (2013) it was to rave reviews, including five-star reviews from every Amazon reviewer who was verified as a purchaser of the book. However, another forty one-star reviews were posted by people who had not purchased the book, mostly repeating the same accusation that a minor fact on one page was an error, which invalidated the entire point of the book (that there are rape deniers who are actively involved in a backlash against women). Generally, there is no sexual assault story too horrific not to attract to any newspaper or media source large numbers of people who attack the victim and claim that the offender was innocent. This can easily be checked by any reader, but perhaps one significant example would be the story about an 11-year-old girl in Cleveland, Texas, who was gang-raped by at least twenty-one men as old as 27. *The New York Times* published a story that blamed the girl for such things as occasionally wearing makeup, and it cited community concerns for the fate of the rapists or for the town's reputation (McKinley 2011). As the story made news around the world, discussion boards turned up people everywhere who were concerned about what clothes the child wore, why her mother did not protect her, whether she acted older than 11, and more. Of course, there were more people defending her, but, if hordes of people will defend men in their twenties who raped a fifth-grade child by claiming that she wanted it or deserved it, imagine the numbers defending men in more typical rapes. In one of the criminal cases resulting from the child rape, the defense lawyer based his entire argument on a claim that the child was a seductress spider who enticed and entranced a man in his twenties into her web, which was an abandoned trailer ten miles from her home, crowded with other men who were taking part and filming the acts (Marcotte 2012).

The point of this discussion is that, though there may be more people than ever before who are sensitized to issues of sexual assault, there is an incredibly strong backlash against victims. If large numbers of people can insist that an 11-year-old girl deserved her fate (twenty-one men have thus

far been sentenced for this crime), then how hard is it to imagine a lack of support for adult women beaten by their husbands or cohabitants?

The antifeminist recipe now has a new ingredient—Women Against Feminism (WAF). There have always been females opposed to feminism, but many of the recent WAF Internet postings mirror or echo the words of angry white men, supporting rape myths and the claim that women are as violent as men in intimate relationships (DeKeseredy, Fabricius, and Hall-Sanchez 2015). WAF's birth was generated by feminist responses to yet another angry white man's killing spree. On May 23, 2014, in Isla Vista, California, Elliot Rodger, after uploading a YouTube video entitled "Elliot Rodger's Retribution,"¹¹ murdered six people and injured fourteen before killing himself. His misogynistic diatribe explained that he was still a virgin at age 22 despite being "the perfect gentleman," and he announced his campaign to punish females for not having sex with him, and men for being sexually active.

Some of Rodger's words resemble those used by many men who commit intimate femicide during or after the process of separation and divorce: "If I can't have you, no one will." The concept of entitlement is widespread among men, showing up in a variety of venues related to their dealings with women. Rodger's words, actions, and video were the catalyst for the creation of #YesAllWomen on May 24, 2014 (Dvorak 2014). This is a feminist viral social media campaign on Twitter and Facebook that brings attention to gendered violence, sexual harassment, and sexism. It was created partly in reaction to the Twitter hashtag NotAllMen, which challenges feminist arguments and garnered much attention shortly after Rodger's rampage. Like some other feminist antiviolence social media campaigns, #YesAllWomen targets the cultural practices that perpetuate and legitimate violence against women, helping young women to share their experiences through what Rentschler (2014) terms "feminist response-ability," which "signifies the capacity to collectively respond to sexual violence and its cultures of racial, gendered and sexuality harassment" (68).

However, there are many women who sharply oppose the efforts of feminists and claim that they greatly exaggerate male patriarchal practices and discourses, censor "reasonable behavior," and demand "'special rights' beyond those of men" (Marwick 2013). Those affiliated with WAF are highly visible examples of antifeminist women. They created a Tumblr page, a

Twitter hashtag, and campaigns on Facebook, YouTube, and other social media in response to #YesAllWomen and to the Who Needs Feminism campaign. It primarily involves white, college-aged women posting pictures of themselves holding up handmade placards stating why they oppose feminism. Most posts begin with “I don’t need feminism because” followed by reasons centering on personal responsibility or a lack of oppression. In a spectacular show of a lack of empathy, many argue that they personally are not victims, so they do not need feminism.

DeKeseredy, Fabricius, and Hall-Sanchez (2015) contend that these and similar narratives provide three key services to angry white men. First, they give many women a false sense of safety. Second, they make thousands of women who are abused on a daily basis invisible. And third, they buttress attempts to deny the existence of a dominant rape culture and “the cultural normalcy” of male-to-female violence in private places (Meloy and Miller 2011).

Today, there is extensive support for groups like WAF that mock, taunt, and disregard female survivors of male violence. Such a response is ironic at a time when crime discussions generally in the United States are still dominated by a “crime control” model that calls for more support for crime victims, strong support for massive imprisonment, and extensive support in many quarters for more executions, felon disfranchisement, and even corporal punishment of minor offenders (Alexander 2012; Holloway 2014; Wakefield and Wildeman 2014). Thus, at the same time that the public generally is against criminals and in favor of harsh punishment, many of the same people have very different views when men take violent actions against women, which they view as being in their sphere of entitlement. According to Estrich (1987), this is done by claiming that only certain “facts” constitute “real rape” or sexual assault. It is possible to maintain a view that “real rape” (typified by an attack by a total stranger on a chaste or modest woman) is truly a crime and deserves harsh punishment. If there are any grounds to blame the woman, however (such as an 11-year-old girl who wears makeup and acts older), or acquaintance rape in general, it can easily be dismissed as “boys will be boys,” or some sort of exaggeration by the woman, or something for which she was asking.

There is an interesting symmetry between WAF postings and the men’s rights activists’ claims. Burleigh (2014), in fact, seriously suggests that most

of the posts on WAF are sock-puppets, or postings by antifeminist and misogynist men under assumed online identities. DeKeseredy and colleagues (2015) found the claim that men are raped and victimized as often as women to be a major theme in WAF postings. Most of the posts they examined highlight this subject, which can be compared to posts reported in antifeminist, backlash research (Dragiewicz 2008, 2011, 2012). Similar to claims commonly stated by angry white men's rights organizations are WAF posts like these:

It ignores the plight of men. They get raped just as much as women, and usually never win in custody battles. It twists tragedies to suit its own agenda (i.e., Elliot Rodger killings—he killed more men than women). So the male victims don't matter, huh? But when feminists find this out, they use their equality definition so they don't look like complete idiots.

Men have problems too.

The feminist community has shown fabricated statistics on rape of women, and has neglected statistics of men raped, as well.

Equality is not something that will be gained by erasing victims of crimes women commit.

Men experience physical abuse, sexual abuse, rape, domestic violence, body image pressures, etc. Keep on ignoring that in your rage-fuelled hate spiels.

Though women are far more likely than men to be physically and sexually abused in intimate, heterosexual relationships, it is the voices of the WAF community—people without data or research—that get heard more by the general public. One reason for this is that conservative women who publicly attack feminist and other progressive women are often featured in mainstream newspapers and television shows, especially on Fox News, which is the most-watched news station in the United States (Gedeon 2013). To some degree, this is due to the nature of news: stories attacking experts are more newsworthy than the reports of experts themselves. Of course, news media traditionally also feature viewpoints with which they personally agree.

There has been a steady growth of backlash politics against research that shows the extent of physical and sexual assault against women. We were first introduced to this backlash in 1993, soon after the release of the Canadian

National Survey, a nationwide scientific survey of violence in dating relationships (DeKeseredy and Kelly 1993), when the project was subjected to strong antifeminist attacks in the Canadian media (Currie and MacLean 1993). Although these people were, at the time, on the margins of political discourse, these angry white men were becoming mobilized and gained strength to the point where they had considerable influence over the federal Canadian government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Dragiewicz and DeKeseredy 2012). In the United States, comparable groups of angry white men had many more sympathetic political ears and garnered much support during the presidency of George W. Bush.

Angry white men's attempts to reassert patriarchy and white superiority are getting stronger. One group concerned about this is the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which monitors racist hate organizations and now features men's rights groups in its annual survey of hate (Kimmel 2013). It reports:

Misogynists in the men's and fathers' rights movements have developed a set of claims about women to support their depictions of them as violent liars and manipulators of men. Some suggest that women attack men, even sexually, just as much as men attack women. Others claim that vast numbers of reported rapes of women, as much as half or even more, are fabrications designed to destroy men they don't like or to gain the upper hand in contested custody cases. (Potok and Schlatter 2012, 1)

The overlap in arguments between the fathers' rights and men's groups, and the kinds of concerns as expressed by the SPLC, makes it essential to take the WAF online community seriously. Youth today spend more time on their computers than they do in face-to-face relationships (J. Klein 2012), and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr enable people to reach larger audiences. In this way, antifeminist men and women can become aware of a large "support group" and become motivated to join the "Angry White Men's choir." With social networking sites now key arenas of political struggle and resistance, addressing WAF and the rage of angry white men should be deemed by progressive scholars and activists to be a "national political issue, not a therapeutic one" (Kimmel 2013, 284).

The relevance of all this to our book is that many of the attacks have focused on separation proceedings, alimony and child support payments,

child custody cases, and family law in general. As described in later chapters, angry white men are also negatively affecting the family court system and increasing the risk of homicide, rape, and child abuse. What, then, is to be done? Answers to this important question are provided in the final chapter, which is designed to provide some hope for the thousands of women struggling to find peace for themselves and their children.

SUMMARY

What is separation/divorce and what is violence against women? One objective of this chapter was to answer these two important questions. Our offerings, however, are subject to much debate and “these disagreements are not mere academic exercises” (Renzetti, Edleson, and Kennedy Bergen 2011, 1). Our intended outcomes are to get society in general to broaden its understanding of separation/divorce and to view nonphysical harms as equally—if not more—injurious as physical ones. As described in the previous section, the consequences sought by those who fundamentally oppose our understanding of gendered violence and gender equality is the reassertion of patriarchy and the maintenance of all its injurious symptoms.

We have another important goal. This chapter, along with those that follow it, accentuate Stark’s (2007) focus on the need for the media, professionals, policy-makers, and the general public to understand the ever-present dangers that mothers and their children face during and after separation or divorce from an abuser. Most battered women eventually manage to leave (Campbell et al. 1994), but many of their partners attempt to “renew the relationship” with violence against them and/or their children (Block 2000). Often, too, these men are relentless, as described by a southern Ontario, Canada, woman interviewed by Dragiewicz and DeKeseredy (2008):

That’s what they do and they bully and they bully and they bully until you will break. He’s controlling in every other sense, and he uses that in the meantime. . . . There was yelling and screaming and cursing. You know, you are this and you’re that and you will never get anywhere without me. I’m going to bury you and you have no lawyer. It’s ridiculous, and there are times that he’s been at my home, that he’s kicked in my door because he doesn’t get his own way, and he kicks the side of my house. And I can’t do anything about it because he didn’t actually hurt me. And the police say they don’t

want to get involved with family situations. So you're dealing with all of that and emotionally I see where women go in and I had enough. Let him do whatever he wants, because I can't take it anymore. . . . It's enough. (27)

A significant amount of suffering is described throughout this book, and much of it is punctuated with the stories and voices of perpetrators and survivors of abuse, as told to us over many years of work in the field. This includes not only academic research but also decades of work in the shelter movement, with activist organizations, and doing government research. Many lessons were learned doing this work, and one of them needs to be made explicit as we end this chapter. Despite experiencing harms that very few of us could possibly imagine, the women you will read about here are not simply passive victims or weak people who are unable to take steps on their own behalf. They may have been battered, but they are not beaten (MacLeod 1987), and most of the survivors of separation/divorce assault use a variety of techniques to resist patriarchal dominance and control (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009), some of which are invisible to those unfamiliar with the complex process of "getting out" (Goetting 1999). These women may have been caught in a trap, but the vast majority find means to "triumph against all odds" (Sev'er 2001).