

**Jenna Sheldon-Sherman**  
**Service Learning Journal**

**Date:** 02/21/05 01:41

1. Journal Entry #1 for Tuesday, February 15th

This past week, I began training to be a volunteer at the Women's Transitional Care Center. On Tuesday evening we began with a three hour training session that involved introductions and the "herstory" of the domestic violence movement. Although this session was a somewhat more depressing way to begin the training, I learned a lot about domestic violence in general, about the WTCS organization, and about the people with whom I will be working.

The mission statement of WTCS is "To work toward peace in the world by elimination of violence in our communities. Therefore, we are dedicated to the empowerment of women and children; the creation of peaceful, safe space; the promotion of equality and respect for all people; the appreciation of differences; and the social action necessary to achieve these goals." I am very enlightened by, excited with, and positive about this mission statement; not only do I realize that I will be helping individual women on a daily basis, but I also know that I am involved with an organization that is committed to stopping violence worldwide and to creating an atmosphere of acceptance and respect for all people. The goal of WTCS is not merely woman-oriented, community specific, or only violence based. Rather, the goal of WTCS is to create a safer, more diverse, accepting, and enlightened world for all people.

**Date:** 02/21/05 01:42

2. Journal Entry #1 (continued) Tuesday, February 15th

Although the domestic violence movement has come a long way since its formal inception in the 1970's, there are still many challenges that the movement faces today. These include the following issues. Battered women are still mainly blamed for the violence they suffer; instead of asking "why does a woman stay with an abuser and not leave the situation?," we should be asking, "why is someone abusing another person in the first place?" Batterer's intervention programs that focus on power and control as the source of domestic violence are so few in comparison to one's that stress anger management issues which are typically not the cause of violence against women; batterers frequently abuse only their wives or partners and can control their violence against others. Welfare reform has made leaving a violent relationship more economically challenging than ever; programs are now in place that teach women on welfare how to find a man to provide for them rather than how to gain the skills necessary to take care of themselves. Finally, petty crimes such as property theft, still carry harsher sentences than such violent crimes as rape. Overall, there is still much to be done.

Additionally, we looked at statistics such as the fact that every fifteen seconds in the United States a woman is beaten by an intimate partner, a woman is beaten by an intimate partner every 26 minutes in Kansas, a woman is killed by an intimate partner every 24 days in Kansas, and domestic violence is the #1 health risk to adult women in the U.S. Through these, I saw how domestic violence is a pervasive and almost institutionalized aspect of our culture. This reminded me of our conversation in class about which of Young's five faces of oppression was the most detrimental or harmful to its subjects. In light of this information, I would have to agree that domestic violence, including physical, emotional, financial, and psychological abuse is the most harmful form of oppression one can endure.

Finally, I listened to people's comments today and realized that just because others are volunteering for the same organization that I am and care about the same issues, not everyone agrees on the causes of such problems in the world and their solutions. I cannot assume that just because we are all dedicated to stopping violence against women that we will agree on other political ideals and values as well. It will be interesting to see how others' opinions and values influence me throughout the course of the training.

Overall, I am so excited to be doing this work and cannot believe how much I learned in only one day of training. I can already tell that this will be one of the most beneficial and enlightening experiences of my college education.

**Date:** 02/21/05 02:08

1. Journal Entry #2 for Saturday, February 19th

Saturday morning at 9:00 AM seemed much too early to be discussing such serious issues as domestic violence in the world. Therefore, I was somewhat leery about attending training. Saturday, however, was a day about empowerment.

We began by looking at the "empowerment through advocacy wheel" and talked about how the shelter is not a place to dispense advice to women or to tell them how to parent their children, fight their abusers, or live their lives. Rather, the goal of WTCS is to empower women to make their own choices in life. Overall, we must embrace the idea that people are experts in their own lives, know what is best for them, have the capabilities to choose courses of action necessary for their survival, and have the skills to succeed in their own way. Empowerment is not only about the big decisions that arise in life but also about the little choices that come about on a daily basis. It is about teaching women that they are autonomous beings that are worthy and capable of making their own choices.

The idea of choices is a very interesting one to me because I realized that although the concept of making choices, something that most of us do on a day-to-day basis, seems inherent to human nature, it is actually a novel idea for many people. This reminded me of our class discussion on oppression and bell hook's view that oppression resulted when one was left without choices. I also saw how the limiting of one's ability to make choices can cause more detrimental harm than what is seen at surface value. The type of oppression experienced through the limiting of choices, does not only limit one's ability to make choices in the present context but also hinders and restricts one's ability to ever believe that they are capable or should be allowed to make choices for themselves.

This is an important aspect when talking about how to work with children. Although many of us believe that we all come into the world knowing that we have value, can decide the course of our lives, and deserve not to be degraded, abused, or ridiculed, many of these children do not inherently know this. These are not innate ideas that all are born with but rather are cultural constructs that are society views as normal. If the only concept that a child has ever witnessed is one in which they themselves, their siblings, and their mother, have no worth, no autonomy, and no capacity for decision making, children will grow up believing these truths to be evident. Additionally, through repeated abuse and indoctrination, women who once knew or believed these ideas, can come to "unlearn" or forget them. Thus, our job of empowerment must be not only to encourage women and children to make choices for themselves, but also to teach them that they possess self-worth and should have the right to decide their own fate.

Finally, we received a quote that I think represents the idea of empowerment in our world and how important it is not only for individuals but also for society as a whole to be comprised of empowered people. "Promoting empowerment means believing that people are capable of making their own choices and decisions. It means not only that human beings possess the strengths and potential to resolve their own difficult life situations, but also that they increase their strength and contribute to society by doing so." Charles D. Cowger

**Date:** 02/26/05 02:28

1. Journal Entry #3 for Tuesday, February 22, 2005

xxx, the OARS employee for SRS, came to talk to our training group this evening about the services the program provides and the people the program supports. OARS stands for Orientation, Assessment, Referral, and Safety, and is an outreach program to the SRS office for those individuals who are receiving cash assistance from the government and are also facing issues of sexual assault or domestic violence in their lives. While receiving cash assistance, individuals must comply with a number of requirements, including seeking child support from the absent parent. When a person is fleeing from a violent or unsafe condition, however, it is often not in their best interest to seek assistance from the absent parent or guardian. Thus, the OARS program aids one in making exceptions and adjustments to these rules. The program also includes such services as support groups, court advocacy, medical advocacy, SRS advocacy, and transportation assistance for those in domestic violence situations who are not currently seeking help at the shelter.

Part of tonight's training involved deconstructing the stereotypes our society places on individuals in the welfare system. One of the most popular and prevalent stereotypes in our society today is that women have more children just so they can remain on welfare and sit at home, watch television, and not have to work. The numbers, however, prove that this kind of existence is virtually impossible. First of all, the average Kansas family receiving welfare is

single mother with 1.7 children. The maximum welfare benefit one is eligible to receive is a mere \$403 a month for one child and \$15 a week for each additional child. This would provide approximately \$5,500 for a family with one parent and two children. We all know that no family can live on this amount of money and I think we would all agree that it would be no one's first choice of life path.

After we refuted these stereotypes, we spoke of how detrimental they are not only to those in the welfare system but to our society as a whole. First of all, those on welfare oftentimes are not accessing other social services they are eligible to receive either because they do not know such opportunities exist or because they are too hesitant to ask for help. They know what stereotypes exist about them and, like the internalized psychological oppression we talked about in class, they and their children begin to internalize such conceptions of themselves. Therefore, they do not ask for help because they too begin to believe that they are not deserving of such aid. Additionally, social service agencies that are supposed to be aiding and supporting those in the welfare system, possess similar kinds of stereotypes and can oftentimes act as another set of abusers by denying access to those whom they deem unworthy. Because of these stereotypes, individuals in the welfare system are not accessing all the services available to them, agencies are not adequately providing all the services they have to offer, and our society is not achieving its goal of lifting people out of poverty. Whereas welfare programs in other countries such as the Netherlands, France, Germany, and Switzerland lift between 50% to 80% of their citizens out of poverty, the United States only succeeds with 5% of its individuals. Clearly the needs of our country are not being met.

**Date:** 02/26/05 02:29

1. Journal Entry #3 (Continued) for Tuesday, February 22, 2005

Another instance where reform could be beneficial is in regards to the regulations and stipulations placed upon the individuals within the welfare system. Our group found it very ironic that the government is paying individuals to monitor and, in essence, babysit those on welfare in order to regulate their behavior when they could be using the same money to help more people get back on their feet. Although it is necessary for specific welfare conditions to exist, more money is being poured into trying to catch those "cheating the welfare system" and awarding bonuses to those who turn in families that do not comply with welfare regulations than is going into helping families get back on their feet.

Although this session may not have appeared to be particularly relevant to domestic violence in general, it is was incredibly important. First of all, 50% of those receiving cash assistance have some history of violence in their lives. Additionally, the topic of welfare and domestic violence really show how there are many compounding factors that go into creating a person's existence. We discussed in class how many variables such as gender, race, socioeconomic status, religion, etc. can create specific and individual barriers for women; compounding social issues such as poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, and mental illness can have the same effect. People in the welfare system are not there simply because they are poor or they are lazy or they are homeless or they don't have marketable job skills. Generally, those receiving assistance have multiple variables that have gone into creating their current situation and instead of trying to pinpoint just one cause or origin, perhaps we should accept that many components are involved and, therefore, many sources of help are needed.

I am incredibly interested in this aspect of volunteering for WTCS because I would like to pursue some sort of advocacy career in the future and this would allow me an opportunity to be a firsthand witness to the injustice that those in positions of powerlessness face on an everyday basis. I know that at this point in my life I do not have the ideas, the capabilities, or the power to restructure our welfare system, our view toward women and violence, or any other deeply ingrained societal institution or set of values. I do know, however, that I can help in many ways. Amy told us that the best support we can give to these women and men in the OARS program is to spend time with them and see what it is like to walk a day in their shoes. I know I can do this.

**Date:** 02/26/05 11:39

1. Journal Entry #4 for Saturday, February 26, 2005

Today's training involved a type of role-playing game where we assumed the personalities of various women facing domestic violence issues. This lesson was developed by a group of domestic violence survivors in the Washington

state area and is commonly used to give volunteers a sense of the types of struggles and choices women in abusive relationships have to face on a daily basis. Shay, our volunteer coordinator, designated some of us as victims and others of us as children. The purpose was for the victims to read a scenario and then to make a choice as to what to do in each situation and for the children to have to silently accept and follow along with the mother's decisions. Each decision symbolically represented a woman's journey in life and was physically represented by a station around the building; these different stations or life phases involved the clergy, the emergency room, friends and family, the WTCS shelter, child protective services, welfare housing, support groups, the police, mental health services, and the mortuary. At each station, the victim was required to collect her colored card and read the scenario telling her what happened to her because of her prior choice at an earlier station. It then gave her another choice and she continued on her path. Based on the background information I was given and the decisions I made at each station, this was my story.

xxx is a young woman who loves to ride horses, live on the farm, and be outdoors. She is kind and has a generous personality and is very religious. Her faith is the most important aspect of her life and she makes all decisions with the help of her priest. When she turns 20, she meets the man of her dreams, they fall in love, and are married. Over the next 12 years, they have 6 children and live happily on their farm in the country. Then one day, xxx falls in a horse riding accident and is paralyzed. She is confined to a wheelchair and can no longer participate in the activities she loves. Although her children are a significant help and do all they can to support her, xxx is struggling. And lately, she feels her husband has been acting strangely. One day when she returns from the doctor's office, she finds her husband having sex with another woman on her couch. She becomes very upset and starts yelling and crying until her husband gets up and punches her and throws her out of the wheelchair. The other woman leaves and xxx is left with a decision:

Go to the domestic violence shelter or Go the priest

xxx goes to her priest and he tells her that her role as a follower of God is to obey her husband and to be a good wife and mother. He sends her home to her husband and says that he will pray for her. Things are fine for the next couple of months until xxx, her husband, comes home drunk one evening and starts throwing plates and dishes at her head.

As soon as he passes out, xxx must make a decision:

Go to the police or Go to stay with friends and family

xxx takes her six children and goes to stay with friends and family until her husband calls and apologizes for everything that he has ever done and begs them to come back. He says that he will never treat her like that again and she returns home. A year passes and xxx begins to feel that her life is looking up. Then one day, her husband gets in a fight with their oldest son, xxx. In the midst of the argument, xxx starts punching and kicking xxx until he begins to bleed all over the bedroom floor. Again, xxx must choose:

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1. Journal Entry #4 (Continued) for Saturday, February 26th 2005

Go to child protective services or Go to the Doctor

xxx takes the children to the doctor and they send her immediately to children's protective services. From there, she is automatically given a court date. Before her court date, however, she meets once again with her priest. He tells her that if she returns to her husband, she will find that he has changed and everything will be fine. He tells her that this is the right thing to do and God would approve of her decision. Once again she returns to her husband. In a rage one afternoon, however, xxx tells xxx that he is sick of her leaving him and he will no longer put up with her. He pulls out a shotgun and kills her and then himself. xxx's final station is the morgue.

At the end of the activity, I sat down and had a long period of reflection. I had no idea how significantly this scenario would affect me and I still cannot fully comprehend all aspects of what I have learned today. Even the realization that this scenario was based on the life and story of a real woman did not affect me as fully as did the realization that choices like this must be made by countless women everyday and, oftentimes, there is no right choice. My first obstacle of the day was that xxx was in a wheelchair. Thus, I began the scenario off trying to navigate the room and the building in the wheelchair. The hallways and rooms, however, were too crowded for me to use it for the activity and I finally abandoned it altogether. How fortunate I am that I am able to disregard such a disability when facilities and situations are not conducive to its use. The rest of the activity, however, I could not

forget the complications all my actions would have if I were paralyzed and transporting six children.

The next major step in the process was my first decision. After the first incident of domestic violence, I had the choice to go to the shelter or to my priest. When making this decision I thought to myself that if it were really me, I would automatically go to the shelter. When considering xxx's personality and background, however, I thought she would be more likely to seek help from her priest. Thus, I went to the priest. He sent me back to my abuser and I quickly realized I had made my first mistake. xxx, unfortunately did not have the hindsight to realize this. From there on, episodes spiraled out of my control and as I began to get deeper and deeper into the abuse, it became harder and harder to make decisions and to try to judge who would help me and who would send me back to the abuse. In the end, I believed I had made the wrong decisions. Ultimately, I felt responsible for my own death.

**Date:** 02/26/05 11:41

1. Journal Entry #4 (Still Continued...) for Saturday, February 26th 2005

Thus, the choices were the most frustrating and upsetting aspect of the entire activity for me. I spent the next ten minutes wishing that I had made better choices and blaming myself for the events which unfolded. While I was sitting there waiting for others to finish, I decided to try something that xxx was never able to do. I relived her life. I relived her choices. I tried a different path. This time, instead of going to the priest, I went straight to the domestic violence shelter. Although I had initially believed that I, xxx, would have immediately gone to the domestic violence shelter, I began to realize that very few people would consider themselves in a seriously abusive and dangerous situation after being hit once, and I myself might not even consider such a situation to be that dangerous. This time around, however, I took the approach that violence in any form is not acceptable and that I would go straight to someone that could help. Unfortunately on this path, no one could help either. The domestic violence shelter told me that their wheelchair accessible path was temporarily out of service and I would have to wait days before I could come in. During the time I was waiting, another incident occurred. I tried to go through the court system and to find a support group but could not transport myself and was not able to move out of my wheelchair accessible house because other adequate housing could not be found. I returned home to my abuser and I was again killed.

As sad as xxx's story is, it made me realize so many things. First of all, the events that occur to a victim of domestic violence are never the victim's fault. Regardless of the decisions one makes, no one deserves to be hit. Choices in life are difficult for everyone. We cannot predict the outcome of our actions. We do not know the future. The best we can do is try to survive in the present. Sometimes the system will not work in our favor. The most we can hope for is to keep fighting. Today was the most eye-opening day I have experienced during training. It makes me realize that the lessons I learned from xxx and that I will continue to learn from women at the shelter will not just serve me in my volunteer work or my class work but rather will be lessons I can carry with me my entire life.

**Date:** 03/06/05 10:33

1. Journal Entry #5 for Tuesday, March 1, 2005

Today we covered issues dealing with domestic violence in the lives of those living in rural communities. Although we spoke about many of the specific issues rural survivors face, the problem that struck me as most harmful was isolation. We often speak about how a primary means of oppressing or battering is isolating one from friends, family, economic options, and support systems. When dealing with rural cases, however, this form of isolation can be extreme. With miles and miles between houses, those facing domestic violence in rural areas have no way to connect with anyone in an attempt to help save themselves. Thus, the isolation alone can serve as one of the main forms of abuse or oppression in their lives.

I thought this was interesting in terms of the psychological oppression we spoke about in class and how this is oftentimes just as detrimental to a person's well-being as any type of physical abuse. It made me think about the concept of stereotypes and how the perpetuation of stereotypes can often make a minority group internalize such beliefs within themselves. I see this as being present in almost all domestic violence cases. Too often, physical abuse is coupled with an abuser delivering messages of inferiority to the abused. After weeks, months, and oftentimes years of being reminded of their worthlessness and lack of value, women begin to internalize and believe these views within themselves. This effect is amplified in rural victims because they have little contact with any other human

interaction that could counter these messages of inadequacy and unimportance.

Additionally, we spoke about child sexual abuse today. I was startled by the statistics that 1 in 3 females and 1 in 6 males will be sexually assaulted by the time they are 18. The most upsetting aspect of this statistic is that more than 95% of these children will know and trust their attackers. This struck me so deeply because I began to realize how much emphasis we as a society place on crimes perpetrated by strangers and how little information is conveyed about crimes perpetrated by loved ones. Whereas the nightly news carries a huge story if a stranger breaks into a woman's home and rapes and kills her, little to absolutely no coverage is given to the story of a woman raped by her husband every single evening. Additionally, the statistic is that the number one leading cause in pregnant women is murder by their partner; aside from the Lacy Peterson case, we never hear any of these stories. Rape is another example. Although rape is just recently a topic beginning to be covered in self-defense classes around the United States, protective methods offered encourage carrying mace at night and walking in well-lit areas. When it is known that most women are raped by those whom they know, however, these forms of protection seem somewhat useless.

Overall, I feel that is far past time to begin giving attention to the true atrocities occurring to men, women, and children on a daily basis. Although the truth may be somewhat more difficult to hear and may be terrifying in reality, we will not be protecting ourselves or others until it is known.

**Date:** 03/06/05 10:58

1. Journal Entry #6 for Saturday, March 5th 2005

Today the topics of substance abuse, animal abuse, and survivors with disabilities were covered and I really began to see the integration of systems of oppression within the lives of the women seeking services from WTCS and other community organizations.

A representative from DCCCA came to speak with us about the services provided for those trying to recover from substance abuse issues. We first spoke about how substance abuse often goes hand in hand with domestic violence as a way to ease the pain of the situation. A study in Buffalo, NY found that 87% of alcoholic women had been sexually abused as children. Although this correlation cannot prove causation, it does seem to suggest that there is something going on between both types of abuse. We then covered reasons why leaving an abusive situation might be made more complex with the presence of drugs or alcohol. These included needing money to continue using the substance, worrying about getting help for domestic violence while also dealing with the stigma of substance abuse, and feeling like the violence is deserved because of the substance abuse. Finally, we spoke about how those trying to fight an addiction are likely to return to rehab services an average of 5 times. When compared to the 7 time average it takes a woman to leave a domestic violence situation, one can see that fighting such forms of abuse are not easy.

We next spoke briefly about animal abuse and how it too is correlated with domestic violence. The most interesting aspect of this section to me was that many women will stay in abusive relationships to protect their pets. Although this is highly common in rural cases, where animals can be a woman's only companions, it is also very common among other women. Stemming from the fear that pets will be abused, abandoned, or killed, many women refuse to leave their abusers. Fortunately, WTCS has partnered with the Humane Society so that when women come into shelter, their pets can also have a safe home.

Finally, we spoke with a woman who had a physical disability; she was paralyzed from the waist down and was in a wheelchair. First she shared her personal story with us and told us how because of her mother's abuse, not only did she become paralyzed but she also became psychologically oppressed. Each day her mother made her feel inferior, defective, and dependent on others and, eventually, convinced her that she was worthless and could do nothing for herself. Fortunately, because of her involvement with Independence, Inc. she soon learned to care for herself and take pride in her life. She also joked that she often considered herself a triple threat in society because she was black, a woman, and disabled. This really opened my eyes because I could see how all these aspects combined with one another to determine her situation in society.

Although all I have done in the previous paragraphs is described the issues of substance abuse, animal abuse, and the abuse of those with disabilities, I hope this proves how such forces are integrally interrelated in the lives of countless individuals. When reading the articles on types of oppression, especially the one by bell hooks, I remember hearing

about converging forms of oppression. Overall, I wanted to add to the articles that we read in class about the intersecting components of race, class, and gender in oppressing people in society. To this list, I would like to add substance abuse, mental illness, domestic violence, and disability. What I gained most from class today is that we need to not only recognize each of these types of abuse and injustice but also recognize how they interact and contribute to one another. Most importantly, service providers and agencies that deal with all these issues need to unite in order to best serve the needs of their clients who are oftentimes facing multiple forms of oppression.

**Date:** 03/15/05 04:12

1. Journal Entry #7 for Tuesday, March 8, 2005

Today xxx and xxx from the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence came to speak with us about the dynamics of child maltreatment and domestic violence and about foreign born survivors. Although information on child domestic violence always saddens me, it has become such a pervasive aspect of this training that I feel that I am becoming desensitized to it in a way that I can now more adequately serve those victims affected by it. I still feel the anger and frustration that I initially experienced in talking about child abuse; however, with knowledge about the types of abuse children sustain and the effects domestic violence can have on them, I now feel more able to control my emotions in a way that allows me to productively help better the situation. One of my many goals of training to be able to separate myself from the situation in order to help is slowly being accomplished.

As I already had so much information concerning child abuse, I focused my attention this evening on abuse perpetrated against foreign born survivors. I have so little knowledge about immigration and citizenship laws in this country that tonight's presentation was incredibly enlightening. After we discussed assumptions we held about immigrants and tried to refute these stereotypes, xxx had us participate in a scenario to demonstrate how difficult it is for immigrants to receive help and services. In this scenario, xxx, a Mexican woman was being abused by her partner but was unable to receive help due to barriers such as language, societal ideas about her condition, and isolation due to lack of community.

Having traveled abroad on multiple occasions, I know the kind of isolation and segregation one can feel in another country. Not understanding the customs, traditions, laws, and rights of a country in which you are living can be a huge barrier to accessing services. Many native born citizens have trouble finding services that can benefit them. Now imagine adding a language and cultural barrier to the problem. Additionally, we discussed the idea of how society views those who do not speak English as less intelligent. xxx told us a story about a woman from Eastern Russia who held a Ph.D. in Russian literature and a law degree but came to the United States and was seen as ignorant and unintelligent merely because she could not speak the language. Although in her own country she would have known her own rights and privileges, here, she had no idea of such rights and had to rely on knowledge provided to her by her abuser. Since he ingrained in her that she had no rights to protection under the law, it took years for her to leave her domestic violence situation.

**Date:** 03/15/05 04:13

1. Journal Entry #7 for Tuesday, March 8, 2005 (continued)

The aspect of this evening that troubled me the most was our discussion about human trafficking, mainly in the form of the sex trafficking of women. When I visited Prague over Winter Break, we visited the United States Embassy and spoke with the officer in charge of investigating the trafficking of women from Eastern Russia to Prague to work as prostitutes. The stories told to us by this woman made me physically ill and shocked me because I had no idea that these kinds of atrocities happened in countries as advanced as the Czech Republic. My own preconceived notions led me to believe that this happened only in third world, primitive countries. I was even more surprised this evening to find out that this occurs in our own country. Trafficking is an attack on all aspects of an individual's freedom and liberty and typically involves all forms of abuse from sexual and physical to emotional, psychological, and economic. It breaks all notions of human rights and is one of the most disgusting displays of human nature that can occur. Overall, from my trip to Prague and my experience this evening, I would love to learn more about these practices and how we can all do something to stop them from occurring. Additionally, I believe that working in the foreign service to help protect women from inhumanities such as this would be an incredibly fulfilling career and I am interested in finding more information on the subject.

**Date:** 03/15/05 04:20

1. Journal Entry #8 for Saturday, March 12, 2005

Domestic Violence in the LGBTIQ Community was the topic of today's conversation. LGBTIQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Intersexed, Queer, and is a term used to describe those labeling themselves as part of the community and allies to it. As I learned today, WTCS is one of the only shelters that offers services to any woman who identifies herself as a woman, regardless of "biological status" or sexual orientation. This is fairly progressive for an agency on the whole because it accepts the idea of regarding sexuality as fluid and as a social construction while at the same time rendering sexual orientation meaningless.

Our first project was to discuss language and how terms can change over time and have different meanings and connotations for different individuals. xxx, our coordinator for the day, explained to us that the term, "homosexual," was coming to be seen as a derogatory label stemming from the time when the term was used in the DSM to denote a medical diagnosis of abnormality. At this time, most LGBTIQ people prefer to be called Queer, although this world too could be considered derogatory when used with malicious intent. We also spoke about the phrase sexual preference and how many preferred to use the phrase sexual orientation because it does not connote choice; in a society where heterosexual privilege is rampant, many non-heterosexuals feel that it would be difficult for anyone to believe that sexual orientation is a choice, however, many still do. In fact, a large predictor of like ability ratings for queer individuals rests on whether or not the perceiver believes their sexual orientation to be based on choice.

After we clarified the use of language, we spoke about the misconception that many in society have regarding the lack of violence in same-sex relationships. Despite the idea that domestic violence does not happen in same-sex relationships, statistics and data prove otherwise. Evidence shows that domestic violence occurs at the same rate in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships. There are differences, however. Although all aspects of queer domestic violence look somewhat different from non-queer domestic violence, the main difference between the two involves children. In a same-sex relationship, the non-biological parent of the child has no right to custody or visitation rights of the child. On the other hand, assuming one of the individuals is the biological parent, that person has no right to access child support from his or her estranged partner. Additionally, both parents face the fear of having the child removed from their custody by a non-parental family member who feels that a queer lifestyle is not appropriate to raise a family. Thus, fears of losing contact with a child, which often keep heterosexual people in abusive relationships are exacerbated for those in same-sex relationships.

**Date:** 03/15/05 04:33

1. Journal Entry #8 for Saturday, March 12, 2005 (continued)

Aside from same-sex relationships, we also spoke about those individuals who do not fit into our society's conception of gender. Although the idea of same-sex couples has become very prevalent in our society today, the place of transgendered and intersexed individuals is still fairly nonexistent. Violence against these individuals, unfortunately, is not. A number of group members spoke about police violence and brutality experienced by themselves or their transgendered friends including harassment, embarrassment, abuse, and rape. The lack of acceptance our culture has for people who differ in any way from societal norms is incredibly disheartening and makes me know that with education and exposure to a diverse array of individuals, acceptance could be gained. This idea brings to mind Anne Fausto-Sterling's article on the five sexes where she discusses changing our society's idea of the two sex system and replacing it with one that encompasses five sexes. The basic idea is that the idea of gender is a social construction and that we could just as easily have five genders, and perhaps accommodate more people, as we could have two genders. If people could educate themselves and begin to see how social constructions favor some groups and oppress others, perhaps we all could contribute to a more tolerating culture.

The final point that I took from today's discussion is that it is not just the role of those in the queer community to fight for their rights and privileges. Although many may theoretically support equal rights for all people, few outside the queer community actually fight and advocate for such rights. Stacey made a valid point about how African Americans were not the only ones advocating for change in the civil rights movement. Although they were a large component of the movement itself, it took the help of Whites and other majority members to influence policy.



Typically, those in marginalized positions do not have the power and status to enact change. It is, therefore, the role of those who do have control and who ideologically support equality for all people to fight for such rights. Equal rights should be a concern for us all. Whether we belong to certain group categories or not, we should all unite together in order to ensure that this equality is achieved.

**Date:** 03/28/05 04:11

1. Journal Entry #9 for Tuesday, March 15, 2005

Our three guest speakers today were people affiliated with Kansas Mental Health Services, Headquarters, and Douglas County AIDS Project. Although all spoke about their own specific issues, the entire evening reiterated how important it is to recognize the interrelated forces and systems of oppression that are working in women's lives. It is incredibly important that these agencies recognize that they all are providing similar services for people in the community and that they should remain in good communication in order to most successfully serve people in need.

In terms of mental illness, many women refuse or are scared to seek help because of a fear that their mental illness will be used as discrimination against them. Oftentimes, an abuser has used a woman's mental illness as an excuse to demean and devalue the woman or even has created an illusion of mental illness or "craziness" in the woman's mind. If the woman herself internalizes these feelings of being crazy or overreacting, she will often be less likely to seek help for herself and her children.

Headquarters is an important agency not only because of the direct services such as suicide prevention that it provides, but also because of its plethora of informational services. Headquarters has the largest database of services for people in the state of Kansas and can easily make referrals to people who need specific needs met. We have recently been talking about an ethic of care in class and how there will be times in all our lives where we can be independent and autonomous and times where we will be dependent on others and will need help. Headquarters is incredibly beneficial for these times because it provides people who would otherwise consider themselves self-reliant and sufficient, a source of anonymous information for when they do need care. I also found it interesting that Headquarters and WTCS began within two years of one another and have partnered since the very beginning in helping to place women in safe spaces. The initial partnership of WTCS and Headquarters involved women calling into Headquarters with problems involving domestic violence and Headquarters referring the woman to a specific house of a WTCS volunteer who would agree to keep her safe for the time being.

**Date:** 03/28/05 04:12

1. Journal Entry #9 for Tuesday, March 15, 2005 (continued)

xxx, from DCAP, also spoke with us today about HIV/AIDS and how the disease itself plays a role in abusive relationships. xxx told us stories about how she encountered many women who had contracted the disease from a partner who had not been faithful in the relationship and had also forced sexual intercourse upon them. Not only were these women forced to engage in sexual acts against their will, but they were also put in an incredibly dangerous situation for doing so. In Kansas, it is not considered rape for a man to force sex upon his wife, and therefore, many of these women have no protection against this type of rape or sexually transmitted diseases. xxx also spoke with us about how it is so much more difficult for women with HIV/AIDS to seek help for domestic violence simply because of the stigma that is associated with the disease along with the medical treatment required for it. Most agencies do not have the means to support a woman or children with HIV/AIDS and in order to merely get medication to help prevent its progression, women are forced to return home to their abusers.

Overall, today's session was highly informative but also somewhat discouraging. It is incredible that these agencies work so closely together and are supportive of one another's missions, however, it is disheartening to realize that even if we can finally accomplish our goal of making women realize that they are worth being treated with justice and respect, there are still many other factors that contribute to whether or not they will seek out our services. Hopefully, these agencies can continue to educate communities about the importance of accepting these issues, not discriminating against people because of them, and trying to help make a difference.

**Date:** 04/04/05 04:25

1. Journal Entry #10 for Tuesday, March 30, 2005

Today we had the first day of our ISMS training which was designed to make us comfortable with dealing with the different types of stereotypes, discrimination, and oppression that we would encounter during our volunteer work at the agency. Such types of oppression we covered included racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ageism, ethnocentrism, anthropocentrism, ableism, elitism, xenophobia and many others. Again, we spoke about how all these different systems of oppression interact in the lives of individuals on an everyday basis and how some "isms" act as more significant markers of stigma than others.

After our discussion, many of us wanted to speak about current events or issues involving violence against women and other societal issues that we have noticed in our lives recently. Many shared their personal experiences and we were given time to quietly think and reflect about how our training has impacted our lives thus far. The two main things that I focused on during this period were how the gay marriage amendment affects domestic violence issues and how my training in violence against women affected my recent spring break trip to Taos, NM.

Although I am not in support of the constitutional amendment banning gay marriage for multiple reasons, one of the most important reasons is that it removes any rights to domestic violence safety that couples living together but who are not married have. We have talked about this issue many times in class and are actually having a police officer come speak with us about the proper rules and procedures used in violence situations; from what we know, however, domestic violence is often overlooked in situations with same-sex couples. Even if the violence is stopped momentarily by the police, women and men who are victims of domestic violence in the long term have no legal rights or protections under the new amendment. This is incredibly upsetting for me. I have often spoken about how women's studies is not a chance for me to learn only about the lives and rights of women but to learn about those facing discrimination and oppression in any form. Thus, from this domestic violence training, I am not trying to help stop violence against only women, but rather I am trying to help slowly eradicate violence in all forms against all people. This amendment, besides taking away the personal rights of countless individuals, will not help the cause of peace either.

**Date:** 04/04/05 04:26

1. Journal Entry #10 for Tuesday, March 30, 2005 (Continued)

The other significance my training has had on my life recently, is that it has opened my eyes to the signs of domestic violence around me. On a recent alternative spring break to Taos, NM, I noticed hints of domestic violence all around me. As we entered the Taos area, signs on the bathroom stalls with numbers for domestic violence shelters and ways to seek help increased innumerable. I saw women with bruises on their faces and bodies in the grocery store. I listened to the news on the radio to hear talk about more domestic violence disputes. I spoke with children in the high schools about violence as if it was a completely okay and natural form of aggression. And, I was very upset.

Eventually, I started asking questions to the directors of the agency where we volunteered. I found out that not only is domestic violence a huge issue facing the residents of Taos, but so is child abuse, and gang violence. Although I was very upset by this conversation, I was somewhat optimistic that steps were being taken in the right direction. The people of Taos at least recognize the situation that exists and do not hide it under the table as is the case in many communities. The local agencies, news stations, and even students recognize that violence exists and, I believe, this is the first step to stopping it. Additionally, many of the men at the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps were involved in a campaign called "Men Against Violence." This campaign involved them signing an agreement to remain violence-free in all areas of their lives. They were then photographed and their pictures put in the newspaper to show others the numerous men who choose to live their lives free of violence.

Overall, I was shocked by the signs of violence I witnessed in Taos. Although it was disheartening, I did appreciate the concerted effort individual citizens and group agencies were making to put an end to it. Perhaps, even in Lawrence, we can do a better job of spreading the word that such violence does exist and that it is important to stop it.

**Date:** 04/04/05 04:35

1. Journal Entry #11 for Saturday, April 2, 2005

Today we concluded our ISMS training by watching a video about the struggles minority members face in our society everyday. At the end of this particular unit, xxx, our volunteer coordinator, felt it was important for us to spend some time looking in more optimistic directions. After a concentration on so much that is wrong with society and our world today, it is important to remember what is good or to look positively toward a bright future. The following are some of the ideals we compiled for our future world...

~Someday we would like to see a world where everyone has at least one friend or place where they can go when facing hard times.

~Someday we would like to see a world where no one is turned away from services for any reason.

~Someday we would like to see a world where those who hold societal positions as care givers are not held to a lower status and are appropriately compensated for the services they provide.

~Someday we would like to see a world where fear no longer exists.

~Someday we would like to see a world where equal rights truly exist and are honored on a daily basis.

~Someday we would like to see a world where service-learning is implemented in all levels of the educational system from elementary school all the way through the university level.

~Someday we would like to see a world where a differential educational program can be situated to meet the differing needs of all children and youth.

~Someday we would like to see a world free from discrimination, prejudice, and oppression.

~Someday we would like to see a world where diversity is an actuality and not merely an ideal.

~Someday we would like to see a violence-free world.

What uplifting ideals...

**Date:** 04/10/05 07:47

1. Journal Entry #12 for Tuesday, April 5, 2005

Today we had legal training for WTCS. One of the volunteer opportunities entails volunteering at the Court House to help obtain protection from abuse and protection from stalking orders for victims of domestic violence. Fortunately, WTCS has a lawyer, xxx, on their board of directors who specializes in domestic violence cases and is an incredible resource in terms of legal support and advice.

An enormous amount of time this evening involved learning how to fill out the forms correctly. As with most legal matters, the amount of red tape surrounding the issue is overwhelming. Despite the fact that obtaining a restraining order is traumatic enough, there are such specific specifications for everything including when you can get the restraining order, what conditions must exist in order to do so, how much the order prevents the other party from doing, etc..

Again, issues such as literacy, education levels, proficiency in English, and knowledge of the law came to play in today's discussion. For women who either are illiterate, do not have a high reading comprehension level, do not speak English, or do not have proficiency with legal jargon, the process itself can seem more daunting than allowing the abuse or stalking to continue. Additionally, victims of stalking or abuse of any kind often have a difficult time relieving the events of their situation. Within the course of a day, however, some may have to do so numerous times both in the form of writing (for the paperwork) and retelling (for the Judge). Thus, our job as volunteers is to make sure that we understand the legal forms to the best of our ability and are also able to act as a support system for women going through this difficult time.

The scariest aspect of the discussion today involved the realization that if someone really wants to hurt another person, an order from the court mandating them to stay away will not dissuade them xxx spoke of numerous instances where such orders were not upheld and where the abuser showed a complete disregard for any rules or laws. I thought that this was an interesting aspect of the conversation. By definition, it is illegal to batter another

person. If someone is engaging in such behavior, it seems somewhat contradictory to believe that obtaining a court order or another "law" will stop such actions. I realize that oftentimes this can be an effective form of protection, however, xxx did note that protection from stalking orders can actually exacerbate the situation by allowing the stalker to know the location of the individual.

Overall, I was very uplifted by today's conversation. Despite the stories we were told about those who did not fair well because of protection from stalking or abuse orders, I realize that many are helped by such procedures. Additionally, I think the act of going to obtain the order is, in itself, a positive thing. I think of this as a phase in a woman's life where she is empowering herself. The amount of fortitude, strength, and initiative it takes to even bring oneself to the court to obtain a protection from abuse order is amazing to me and I believe that it is the first of many steps a woman can take to enact change within her own life. I would love to be a volunteer in this aspect of WTCS.

**Date:** 04/10/05 07:48

1. Journal Entry #13 for Saturday, April 9, 2005

I did not attend WTCS training this morning because I led a group of students on an Alternative Weekend Break. We traveled to Salina, KS to volunteer at Ashby House, a homeless rehabilitation shelter in the town

**Date:** 04/17/05 05:46

1. Journal Entry #14 for Tuesday, April 12, 2005

Today was marked a monumental occasion for WTCS. For the first time, a Lawrence Police Officer agreed to come speak with our organization about how the police force deals with domestic violence issues. I have already spoken about the somewhat rocky and tumultuous relationship between the WTCS and the Lawrence police. For years, WTCS has been trying to develop a relationship with the police department, however, no one has responded to the requests. Today, for the very first time, xxx (a detective who has been on the police force for ten years) agreed to come speak with our class.

Although we had developed a list of questions for xxx to answer, she mainly focused on showing us what type of training police officers receive to deal with domestic violence issues. Basically, they go through a mandatory 4 hours of training, specifically on the topic of domestic violence and then participate in role-playing scenarios set up to resemble actual violent situations. The main premise of the training is a list of 30 things one needs to know about domestic violence. This list does not contain any statistics about how prevalent domestic violence is or the causal motivations behind this kind of violence. One of the most concerning aspects of the training involved item #12 which was a section about the four types of women who abuse. This item listed the four types of women who abuse and the reasons they abuse their partners—the list included those women who nag their partners because they are jealous, those who use violence as self-defense, those women who use violence to get their way, and those women who use violence but really do not harm anyone. This list seemed totally incoherent and incomplete to me and did nothing to help train officers in dealing with the main issue of men abusing women. It was not until item 29, out of 30, that the issue of what types of men abuse was covered. And even then, reasons behind the abuse were absent. Overall, the training seemed very limited and did not cover the most pressing issues surrounding domestic violence. Although WTCS has lobbied to be able to perform this portion of the training, the police department continues to refuse.

After xxx covered training, there was little time for our other questions to be answered. One main question we had was why Douglas County has the largest rate of double arrests for domestic violence calls. This has been a troubling statistic for us throughout training because arresting women who call the police for help only serves to discourage someone from ever calling for help again. This contributes to the power and control a batterer has over his victim because he realizes that there is no where else she can go for help. xxx did not answer this question, acted surprised by the statistic, and encouraged us to speak with the director of internal affairs if this was an issue truly concerning us.

Overall, the discussion surrounding the police department and their treatment of domestic violence issues, highlights how social institutions can be structured to perpetuate the patriarchy of society by protecting the batterers and their behavior. Although many were upset and angered by Amy's discussion, I tried to focus on the positive nature of

beginning to build a relationship with the police force. I think too often people become so angered with others who are not open-minded, that they themselves forget to accept other points of view. We must attempt to take small steps in building our relationship with xxx and other police officers so that they begin to trust us and eventually to listen to what we have to say.

**Date:** 04/17/05 05:54

1. Journal Entry #15 for Saturday, April 16, 2005

Today was our final WTCS training session. After we signed our confidentiality agreements, we were taken to the shelter for the very first time.

My initial reaction to the shelter was completely different from what I expected. Located in a residential neighborhood, the shelter looked like any other single-family dwelling. Although it did not look large from the outside, once we entered, we realized it was all an illusion. With 10 bedrooms, two living rooms, a kitchen, office, and playroom, the space was more than adequate to house 20 women and children. I was so excited to finally be at the shelter that it was difficult for me to absorb everything that I was seeing. All of the long hours of training came flooding back to me as I tried to remember every single rule and procedure.

Although I was ecstatic to see the shelter for the first time, my favorite part of the experience was actually being able to be with some of the women and children. 14 women are staying in the shelter at this point in time and to be able to meet and speak with some of them made me so excited to begin my work here. The woman who made the biggest impact on me had five children and was trying to deal with getting back on her feet while also taking care of her children. We often spoke about women like this in our training and discussed in great length the challenges they face. To actually meet such amazing women, however, was truly inspiring to me and motivated me even more to want to volunteer for such an incredible organization.

I start my supervised volunteer hours in May and will begin volunteering after that. Although I am looking forward to being in the shelter with the women and children, I will never forget this training and everything I learned from it. Even without volunteering, this class would have been worth it because of the knowledge, strength, and conviction I gained from it and I will always be glad that I participated in it.