



# FUTURE INTERVENTIONS WITH BATTERED WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

*Jeffrey L. Edleson*  
*Zvi C. Eisikovits*  
*editors*



*Series on Violence Against Women*



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*Sage Series on ... Against Women*



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This book is dedicated to our sons,  
Nir, Daniel, and Eli,  
in the hope that they may grow older in a more peaceful world.

# Acknowledgments

A number of years ago, we envisioned a group of activists, practitioners, and researchers coming together for an intensive discussion of what future interventions may be possible for battered women and their families. Our vision became reality when the International Study Group on the Future of Intervention with Battered Women and Their Families was convened in Haifa, Israel, in March 1995. The Study Group was made possible by the strong support of a number of organizations and individuals.

This book—and the study group from which it grew—was made possible by generous support from the Women's League for Israel (WLI) and its supporters in the United States and Israel. In particular, Rina Lazar, Director of the Haifa Branch of the Women's League for Israel, and both Dr. Nili Porath, the former Director General, and Ahuva Talmon, the present Director General of the WLI, provided much of the support that made the study group meetings possible. The School of Social Work at the University of Haifa also provided a great deal of support to this project, especially Professor Gabriel Warburg, Professor and Head of the School of Social Work. Yael Koresh, a Research Associate in the Center for Youth Policy at the University of Haifa, played a major role in successfully organizing these meetings. Reli Robinson provided administrative support and coordinated the entire study group.

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# Visions of Continued Change

Jeffrey L. Edleson  
Zvi C. Eisikovits

**I**t has been more than 20 years since the first formal battered women's shelters were established in both Great Britain and the United States. The intervening years have witnessed a tremendous growth in the number of shelters around the world and in the types of other social interventions and public policies created to address the issue of woman battering. The United Nation's Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, revealed the diversity of approaches that governmental and nongovernmental organizations are taking to address a wide range of issues related to violence against women, woman battering being but one form of such violence. The innovative character of the international battered women's movement is evident in countries around the world and is a tribute to the results of 20 years of often difficult and life-threatening work.

This volume addresses the diverse aspects of the battered women's movement. Chapters reflect a progression of activities that include a

search for cross-national linkages and collaboration in designing global responses to violence against women, efforts to enlist legal and social control systems on behalf of groups of abused women, and grassroots movements aimed at directly helping individual battered women.

Progress has often appeared slow, but a great deal has actually been accomplished. Shelters have been established in many parts of the world and have dramatically expanded their numbers in many Western countries. Advocacy services, job training, and transitional housing have been added to the basic services of shelters. Governments, such as Israel, have devoted significant resources to support the expansion of grassroots efforts. Programs for violent offenders have been established, have been tested, and have expanded their reach. Services for children who witness violence at home have also been developed, tested, and expanded. Social systems previously uninterested in the plight of battered women have begun to intervene and policymakers appear concerned.

During this period of innovation and growth, we have become aware of how difficult lasting change is to achieve and how much more work is still required, even in those countries that began addressing this issue more than 20 years ago. Battered women's programs in the United States and other countries provide assistance to larger numbers of women and their children each year, yet—as Susan Schechter points out later in this book—these women and children represent only a small portion of those in need of assistance.

As new efforts toward ending violence against women take shape around the globe, it is important to stop and reflect on our progress. It is also an important moment to suspend our current assumptions and reach beyond to envision ways of creating even greater social change in the future. It is a moment to treasure successes but also to revise some of our current approaches, seek new arenas for change, and test new interventions.

At the same time, we must be vigilant about continuing the changes now begun. Violence against women has become *the* issue of the moment in a number of countries. It has become both the focus of media attention and the work of many policymakers. Many professions that had never expressed concern for the topic now define violence against women as an important focus of time and resources. Yet there is a danger that this issue will become a fad and will soon pass and disappear from the public agenda. The history of social problems is filled with examples of such past fads.

Concern for the future of interventions, how to take advantage of current interest in violence against women, and how to extend this interest beyond a particular period of intense social activity is what brought 15 activists, practitioners, and researchers to Haifa, Israel, in March 1995, to the International Study Group on the Future of Intervention with Battered Women and Their Families. The Study Group's 3 days of meetings were supported by several organizations that enabled us to come together and subsequently produce this book. The Women's League for Israel supplied major funding for the study group and helped bring 10 American and British participants to the meeting. The League also acted as our gracious host for two public events, one of which drew more than 150 people from across Israel for a day of consultations and exchanges with study group participants. The University of Haifa's School of Social Work provided meeting space and the substantial logistical support required to organize and conduct the meetings. And finally, Sage Publications provided support for producing this book that also allowed us to structure and support our work for the study group.

Those gathered in Haifa represented a diverse group of Americans, British, and Israelis who have long worked in domestic violence programs and studied their effects. Each participant prepared a written document, in advance of the meeting, which was then circulated among all participants. As we gathered in a conference room at the top of the University of Haifa's main tower, our time was spent in honest and open discussions about the strategies for future global, national, and programmatic changes we described in our papers. Many of the original conference papers were substantially revised after our discussions. The final set of chapters appearing in this book are the result of this collective effort by the authors.

Participants in this study group shared a common vision that multiple forms of change are required to address the social problem of violence against women. The chapters in this book reflect this view and cover a range of perspectives. The ideas expressed here range from the pragmatic to the idealistic. They offer individual and collective prescriptions for change that are dynamic and therefore are constantly changing.

The book begins with Part I, focused on "Changing Societies." In the first chapter of this section, Lori Heise provides a comprehensive vision of global change regarding the broad arena of violence against women. Valli Kanuha follows with a chapter on how race has been

removed from much of the U.S. debate on domestic violence and why that needs to change.

Part II of the book focuses on “Changing Community Responses” and begins with a chapter by Susan Schechter on new directions in institutional reform, particularly in health and child welfare. Next, Liz Kelly explores the expanded use of informal community-based networks to end violence against women. And finally, Muhammad Haj-Yahia provides a vision for change within the Israeli Arab community, one that may also be applicable to other countries and communities.

The final section of the book, Part III, focuses on a variety of approaches to “Intervention With Survivors, Perpetrators, and Their Children.” Mary Ann Dutton leads this section with a focus on expanding our current thinking about battered women’s situations and the fabric of their lives. Einat Peled offers a multifaceted approach to expanding intervention with children who survive violence in their homes. Jeffrey Edleson and Richard Tolman examine a range of issues regarding intervention with perpetrators, from underlying assumptions about treatment to alternative sanctions for perpetrators. Finally, Zvi Eisikovits and Eli Buchbinder suggest a phenomenological approach to intervention with individual cases of wife assault, and Michal Shamai argues that couple counseling can coexist with other approaches as a safe and useful intervention.

Where do all these ideas take us? In the concluding chapter, we are joined by Guy Enosh in examining the commonalities and differences that characterize the great diversity of ideas reflected in this book and draw some conclusions. We leave it to you, the reader, to take these ideas, combine them with your own, and help make the many changes that the next 20 years require.

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P A R T I

CHANGING SOCIETIES

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## Violence Against Women

### *Global Organizing for Change*

Lori L. Heise

In recent years, violence against women has gained a fragile foothold on the global policy agenda, especially as a health and human rights issue. The Organization of American States (OAS) recently negotiated an Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (OAS, 1994); The United Nation's General Assembly passed a Declaration calling on member states to "pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating violence against women" (U.N. resolution 48/104); and the World Bank issued a major report titled *Violence Against Women: The Hidden Health Burden* (Heise, 1994).

This international recognition comes on the heels of more than two decades of activism by grassroots women to draw attention to gender-based abuse. Around the world, women have joined forces to provide shelter, lobby for law reform, and challenge the attitudes and beliefs that undergird men's violence. In the past 5 years, these individual efforts have coalesced into a truly global movement dedicated to ending gender-based abuse.

But the international movement now stands at a crossroads. Having captured the world's attention, antiviolence activists must begin the difficult task of designing viable and sustainable interventions that go beyond saving individual women one at a time. The movement must begin to ask itself some deeply searching questions: How can we overcome the infighting and competition that divide us? How can we secure a funding base that will sustain ourselves and our work in an environment of reduced social spending? And how do we find the proper balance between dealing with women in crisis today versus working on prevention?

In a spirit of mutual learning and exploration, this chapter will explore these and other issues that face the antiviolence movement as we prepare to enter the next century. Based on my involvement in the battered women's movement in the United States and 9 years of networking and joint action with women's groups overseas, I will also offer some reflections on possible future strategies that deserve our considered attention, especially in resource-poor settings.

A look to the future, however, requires knowledge of the past. Given that few activists have had the luxury to study violence prevention strategies across cultures, I will begin with a brief history of how violence emerged as an issue in various regions of the world. Then I will describe the confluence of forces that helped propel violence onto the international scene, focusing especially on women's strategic organizing to frame violence as an abuse of human rights and as a health and development issue. Finally, I will use this historical backdrop to offer some thoughts on the challenges ahead for national movements as well possible strategies that may hold promise for the future.

### **The Emergence of Violence Against Women as a Global Issue**

A variety of forces have converged to propel gender-based abuse onto the world stage. Undoubtedly, the most important has been the emergence of well-organized women's movements at the grass roots that have identified gender-based abuse as a priority concern. Indeed, violence against women has emerged as a global issue despite the official indifference of world leaders, not through international leadership.

Another crucial factor has been the emergence of regional and international women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and



foundations that have facilitated linkages among antiviolence activists. In the past 5 years, there has been a flood of conferences, meetings, and exchange programs that have allowed women to share strategies and build coordinated campaigns for reform. This cross-fertilization of ideas has been critical to the growing sense of global solidarity around issues of gender-based abuse.

Finally, a number of world events have served to validate women's concern by focusing attention on the reality of sexual and physical violence against women. The AIDS epidemic, for example, has highlighted the lack of power many women have to control the terms of sexual encounters. For the first time, researchers have been asking women deeply searching questions about their sexual lives, and violence and coercion have emerged as important themes. Likewise, the recent mass rape of women in Bosnia and Haiti has served to focus popular attention on the prevalence and brutality of gender-based persecution.

### **Violence Against Women as a National Issue**

In industrial countries—Australia, Canada, Europe, and the United States—violence against women emerged as an issue during the 1970s, largely as an outgrowth of renewed interest in women's rights. In the United States, for example, women began organizing separately when it became clear that their needs and concerns were consistently marginalized in the other progressive movements of the day, including the Civil Rights Movement and the Left. Through weekly consciousness raising groups, women began to discover the myriad ways in which society oppressed them and to develop a new analysis of how gender operated as a key variable in defining women's options in life (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Schechter, 1982).

Early feminist analysis often focused on sexual exploitation and male control of female sexuality. It is little wonder, then, that rape emerged as the primary focus of early Western feminist debate and action. Women's groups organized rape crisis centers, lobbied for law reform, and developed their unique approach to lay advocacy that still forms the backbone of many antiviolence movements. The battered women's movement emerged several years later as rape crisis hot lines became overwhelmed with calls from abused women seeking escape from violent relationships. Building upon the skills honed during the