DVIP: Unconditional Shelter?

Annotated Bibliography

Arnold, Gretchen. 1995. “Dilemmas of Feminist Coalitions: Collective Identity and Strategic Effectiveness in the Battered Women’s Movement,” in Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women’s Movement, edited by Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 276-290. [This case study shows how easily coalitions on domestic violence can unravel about important fundamental issues, such as the role of men, on seemingly small symbolic matters like the creation of a calendar with a man on it. Illustrates conflict within the battered women’s movement.]


Byrne, Carol. 1997. “It’s a love-hate relationship for Wellstone, women’s groups.” Star Tribune: February 27. [Article about Wellstone’s defense of letting police officers who batter keep their guns to keep their jobs.]


Defending Our Lives. PBS Video. [This video documentary tells the stories of four women in prison for killing their batterers as well as documents the high numbers of women killed by intimates each year in the United States. Very powerful.]


Faludi, Susan. Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women. New York: Crown. [Linda McGuire mentions this in her article defending DVIP. I think the analysis of the media is best, as are a few selected cases about the uses of research data.]


Ferree, Myra Marx and Patricia Yancey Martin. 1995. Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women’s Movement. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. [Set of thirty or so theoretically rich case studies of feminist organizations, including several on violence against women. I use it in my class and it is fabulous.]

Gagné, Patricia. 1998. *Battered Women's Justice: The Movement for Clemency and the Politics of Self-Defense.* New York: Twayne. [Compares and contrasts clemency movement in four states and offers a broad overview of the battered women’s movement. Expands the movement to include more than shelters.]


Klain, Eva J. 1995. *Parental Kidnapping, Domestic Violence, and Child Abuse: Changing Legal Responses to Related Violence.* American Prosecutors Research Institute. March. [This 56-page-long comprehensive monograph addresses law enforcement officers. The author summarizes the intricate relationships of parental kidnapping, domestic violence and child abuse, citing statistics from relevant studies, as well as court cases and state statues. She also reports the summary finding of the “Parental Kidnapping in the Context of Family Violence Survey” in 1994, conducted by American Prosecutors Research Institutes (APRI) (pp.23-26). They contacted 2,800 prosecutors nationwide regarding the parental kidnapping cases they have handled. Klain concludes that “[s]helters providing housing for women and their children depend on confidentiality for their safety and should not face criminal or tort liability as accessories to parental kidnapping simply for refusing to reveal whether a woman or child is resident” (27), but that the law enforcement should develop good working relationships with local shelters.]


Ptacek, James. 1999. *Battered Women in the Courtroom: The Power of Judicial Responses.* Boston: Northeastern University Press. [Study of how Massachusetts courts and judges have handled orders of protection after a woman was killed by her partner shortly after a judge chastised her for bringing such trivial matters to court.]

Reinelt, Claire. 1995. “Moving onto the Terrain of the State: The Battered Women’s Movement and the Politics of Engagement,” in *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women’s*
Movement, edited by Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 84-104. [Examines the arc of change as the Texas battered women’s movement begins to rely more heavily on state funding and, as a result, is subject to increasing state regulation and scrutiny.]

Renzetti, Claire, Jeffrey L. Edleson, Raquel Kennedy Bergen. 2001. Sourcebook on Violence against Women. Thousand Oaks: Sage. [Comprehensive set of chapters on large array of topics by the leaders in the field.]

Schechter, Susan. 1982. Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women’s Movement. Boston: South End Press. [Argued that the radical vision of the violence against women movement had already been coopted.]


Quinlan, Anna. 1998. Black and Blue. New York: Random House. [Harrowing novel of a woman on the run from her battering husband who is a police officer.]


Websites for more information


DVIP: http://www.jeonet.com/city/dvip.htm

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, http://www.mcbw.org/


Sheila Wellstone Institute, http://www.mcbw.org/

Watch, a court monitoring project in Hennepin County, Minnesota: http://www.watchmn.org/
Newspaper Articles on DVIP Case

Domestic Violence Project disputes accusations; shelter directors begin inquiry; make plea for continued support. 1992. *Iowa City Press Citizen*, February 19.
Eye on Iowa City/Coralville; area woman arrested on federal warrant. 1991. *Iowa City Press Citizen*, December 16.
Hickey, Maria. 1993. Cleared in criminal suit; George’s husband files civil suit against DVIP. *Daily Iowan*, October 27.
Winner, Christine A. 1992. Shelter won’t alter fund-raiser; annual auction will be conducted at scheduled time. *Iowa City Press Citizen*, February 20.

**References on Yager**

———. 1992. Family dog becomes issue in Faye Yager’s kidnap trial; son, mom give conflicting testimony about trip to Georgia. *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, April 25, sec E.


———. 1992. Yager weeps as Cobb jury finds her innocent; panel deliberates less than 3 hours in cruelty case. *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, May 16, sec B.

———. 1992. Yager tells of child she lost to abuse; “she would just stand there with tears running down”. *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, May 9, sec B.

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Teaching Note

Teaching Objectives:

To provoke a discussion of a real life crisis within the battered woman’s movement about identity, purpose, and the difficult constraints resulting from funding choices. To focus discussion on the concrete choices and strategies of actual organizations rather than the more abstract questions of whether to organize as a collective or a hierarchy, who is more radical, and who has been co-opted.

To bring to life the difficult choices feminist organizations face and to reveal the personal toll such work takes on individuals. To show the complex working of a particular feminist organization in a specific political environment.

To lead readers to question how we know what we know. Do we always believe the woman rather than the man? Our friend rather than a stranger? Our ideological ally rather than a person of another class, race, or sexual orientation? How do we question what we know and how do we act in circumstances of uncertainty?

To learn about the history of the women’s movement. As someone who taught undergraduates women’s studies for seven years before I began exclusively teaching public policy students in 1995, I had become increasingly concerned that the teaching of feminist theory was divorced from any knowledge about the history of second wave feminism and feminist organizations. Women’s studies graduates, their prospective employers lament, know very little about women’s history from the Equal Rights Amendment, to the sex wars, to the movement’s organizational history more generally. This case study attempts to open up the world of the beginnings of the battered women’s shelter movement to tell a story about social change as well as service delivery.

To draw attention to Midwestern feminism. As a native Iowan, I seek to “stamp out bi-coastal arrogance” as the 1984 National Women’s Studies Association Meeting in Columbus,
Ohio took as its conference motto. Feminism existed outside of New York and California—in fact, many of its institutions were strongest in the heartland. More importantly as a political scientist, I seek to follow the work of Judith Hellman and Rakha Ray in exploring how the cultural and political context shapes the emergence and sustainability of feminist institutions.

To study “law in action” rather than merely “law on the books.” What should individuals and organizations do if they feel legal decision makers are biased against them? What justified taking the law into one’s own hands? Fear for your life? Fear of losing your children?

The Central Issue:

What to do in a crisis. Battered women’s shelters formed because the law failed to protect women. Now an organization faces a crisis for operating outside of the law—harboring a fugitive. How should the organization respond? How should it answer the media firestorm? How should it respond to an aggressive lawyer aiming to “clean up” the shelter? How should it protect its employees under legal investigation? How should it minimize its own legal liability? And how will it keep its doors open if the community loses confidence in it?

What students may learn:

Decision makers have to act without being certain what the truth is, by making judgments. Leaving a media vacuum is deadly for an organization under threat. Having a deep reservoir of community support and ownership enables organizations to weather storms. Ideological conflicts within feminism are real, have real consequences, and take a toll on individuals. Feminist organizations are constantly changing negotiating and renegotiating their relationships with mainstream institutions. Organizations need many different kinds of skills and talents to survive.

Relevant Courses:

I developed this case to use in my graduate seminar on Feminist Organizations, geared mainly toward public affairs master’s students concentrating in women and public policy and non-profit management. I now include it in a course on Case Studies on Women and Public Policy. I also developed it for use in a leadership program for heads of feminist organizations. I think it would work well in women’s studies courses for undergraduates. It assumes no prior knowledge of feminism or the battered women’s movement but is intended instead to inform and to pique students’ interest in learning more. It could also work in a social work course on social change, a sociology course on social movements, or a law course on violence against women. Few cases exist on women, gender, feminism, or feminist organizations. This case could be used in classes on management and organizations or leadership courses if the instructor wanted to include gender into the curriculum.
A note on method:

I was an undergraduate in political science at the University of Iowa from 1976-1979. I worked my way through school waitressing at the local Country Kitchen. I helped a friend, a fellow waitress who was married to a fellow political science major, flee the domestic violence of her marriage. We moved her furniture out of the basement of the Women’s Center where she had stored it. In 1989, I moved back to Iowa City and lived there as these events unfolded, employed as an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Women’s Studies. I was a part of the feminist community. I did not know Pat Meyer before the incidents described in this case, nor had I set foot in the shelter or been involved with DVIP. Loret Mast, Lois Cox, and Barbara Schwartz (a lawyer who represented one of the shelter workers), however, were my good friends. I attended the meeting at Wesley House and the open meeting of the DVIP board. I attended the protest rally on the courthouse lawn (although I did not weigh myself). My memorabilia includes a “DVIP unconditional shelter” button. I am now a Professor of Public Affairs and Law, teach graduate courses on feminist organizations and women, law, and public policy, and direct the Center on Women and Public Policy. During the summer of 2003, I drafted this case. I first read all of the newspaper articles on the topic. I interviewed Lois Cox, Loret Mast, Pat Meyer, Barbara Schwartz, J. Patrick White, and Carol Thompson. County Attorney J. Patrick White agreed to give me access to the file if I would agree not to use anything I had seen without his permission. I declined. As I worked to complete and revise the case in 2005, I interviewed Linda McGuire, Lori Klockau, Dan Bray (briefly), Barbara Xakellis, Gwennie Hayes-Stewart, Henrietta Logan, and Elizabeth Burns. J. Patrick White, Barbara Schwartz, Carol Thompson, Linda McGuire, Barbara Xakellis, Gwennie Hayes-Stewart, Henrietta Logan, Judith Cooper-Skorton, and Elizabeth Burns commented on written drafts. (Robin Paetzold declined to be interviewed after reading the draft.) The DVIP’s attorney, Margaret Poepsel (Winegarden), declined to be interviewed in order to protect attorney-client privilege. I was unable to interview Barbara Larpenter or Beth George and several letters to each were returned.

The case continues to intrigue me. Post-Monica Lewinsky, Kathleen Willey, and Gennifer Flowers, feminists like me have become more skeptical and less willing to take the pro-woman line that characterized early second-wave feminism, for me, at least through Anita Hill. How do we know what we know? Whom can we trust implicitly? I cannot help but be touched by the pain of this incident, as Beth lost custody of her children, Pat lost her job, Barb lost her DVIP community, Barbara Xakellis moved away, and an important community institution nearly collapsed. This incident has many casualties. I believe the strength of the Iowa City feminist community contributed to J. Patrick White’s decision to end the fifteen-month investigation
without charging anyone who worked at DVIP. (I must note, however, that he most vociferously
denies that external pressure influenced his decision in any way.) I believe the sustained feminist
mobilization kept the organization from going under, although it was greatly transformed and lost
some of its radical edge. For me, then, the case is very much about truth, working within or
outside of the system, conflicts within organizations and between women, building grassroots
support for community organizations, and the nature of feminist mobilization. I am astonished by
how much I continue to learn about what I lived through that I did not know. I am chastened by
how wrong what I thought I knew at the time was, and how much I have learned subsequently. I
have done my best as a positioned investigator to represent the story as accurately as I can with
the benefit of the evidence I collected. I leave the reader to decide whether I have succeeded.
Discussion Questions

1. Should shelters ask women who present themselves as victims of violence whether they are using an assumed name? Should they require identification? What should they do if they discover that their clients are fugitives?

2. What kind of a relationship did the DVIP have with the police, schools, mental health center, and county attorney? How did that matter? Can relationships of trust exist between institutions, such as DVIP and the police, or only individuals? Are institutions more than the people who work in them? What divisions exist in this community?

3. What is the feminist community like in Iowa City? How did DVIP’s relationship with feminists in the community affect the sequence of events? How would the story have been different had there not been such a strong feminist community?

4. What would you do if your husband or partner was beating you and you feared you would lose custody of your children? What would you do if your wife or partner ran with your children?

5. Does the law adequately protect victims of domestic violence?

6. How did members of the board, staff, and wider feminist community view the unfolding of events differently?

7. Are the qualities that makes one a good manager the same as those that makes one a good counselor? Are the qualities of a founder the same qualities as a sustainer? Or someone who can take the organization to the next stage? Can small organizations accommodate people who are good at some things but not at others?

8. Organizations need funds to operate. For battered women’s shelters, that money comes from government (federal, state, or local), foundations, wealthy individuals, by providing services, or by developing a large base of small donors or members. How does the need to secure resources shape the story of the DVIP?

9. Have shelters abandoned their original social change mission, as Susan Schechter argued as early as 1982 in Women and Male Violence?

10. What role did the media play in this story? Were board members right to maintain silence? What happens to volunteer board members when an organization is in crisis?

11. How did lawyers shape this story? What might have been Dan Bray’s motives? Did the lawyers’ advice to board members not to speak to the press strengthen the hand of their opponents and make the case drag out longer? Was mutual distrust within the organization exacerbated by the advice of the lawyers?

12. Should victims of domestic violence take the law into their own hands?

13. What are the pros and cons of employing the survivors of domestic violence as counselors?