

CASE HISTORY

WIFE BATTERING: SELECTED NOTES

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Contrary to the widely-held illusion, the family is not a haven of rest and tranquility, of loving, caring, and sharing. For in recent years, an apparent admission has surfaced that such a romantic notion should be dispelled. While admittedly disquieting, this painful realization is intended to confront a specter that stalks the conjugal abode.

This is notably evident in the Philippine Development Plan for Women 1989-1992, when a chapter was devoted to Violence Against Women, i.e., rape, sexual harassment, incest, prostitution, pornography, medical abuse, and included domestic violence as one form of assaultive infringement. It lists domestic violence as consisting of: 1) spouse assault or wife battering; 2) sibling abuse; 3) trafficking of babies; 4) domestic help abuse; and 5) child-parent abuse.¹

This paper was presented during the U.P. Women's Week Celebration Colloquia on Women and Gender Issues, January 25, 1990, held at the PCED Hostel as part of the activities to celebrate the University Center for Women's Studies launching.

My paper, however, will focus on wife-battering or spouse assault, although let me admit it is not exhaustive. For my examination of the subject matter, I am drawing on TITLE II Art. 55 on Repeated Physical Violence or Grossly Abusive Conduct of the Family Code of the Philippines. This cites that a petition for legal separation may be filed, if the above has been directed against the petitioner, a common child, or a child of the petitioner; or, if physical violence or moral pressure is used to compel the petitioner to change religious or political affiliation.²

¹ Philippine Development Plan for Women 1989-92, Philippines: NEDA, 1989

² Alicia V. Sempio-Diy, Handbook on the Family Code of the Philippines, Quezon City: Joer Printing Services, 1988, pp. 76-77.

In this regard, J.J. Gaylord's definition is also appropriate. He identifies a battered wife as a "woman who had received deliberate, severe and repeated beatings at the hands of her husband or lover and had suffered severe physical injuries as a result."³

Silent Numbers, Pressing Problem

An attempt on my part to secure statistical data to provide an initial estimate of the extent of battered wives, sadly, was a wild-goose chase for me. This was true of the National Census and Statistics Office and selected social agencies/organizations I contacted, or from available local literature. It appeared that its occurrence was further fudged by its recurrent inclusion under physical injuries, for those reported. These were confirmed by more popular materials that came to my attention,⁴ and an interview with a past Barangay Captain in my community.⁵

Attempting another approach, I made inquiries about statistical data on wife-beating/wife battering/spouse violence in three social agencies that, I thought, would meet with or handle such cases.

The first was the Medical Social Service of the University of the Philippines Philippine General Hospital (UP PGH) Medical Center, our own service, training, and research unit for professionals in the medical/health fields. The social service administrators and medical social workers I managed to interview⁶ were candid about their ignorance of the term wife-battering/battered wives. However, they were more conversant with the battered child syndrome. They were very appreciative, nevertheless, that this diagnostic term had come to their attention, subsequently identifying three cases the social workers had missed pursuing. They also began to recall meeting or observing such cases in the Emergency Room and the Outpatient Department, noting that these women, usually around their 20s and early 30s, chose to come in the evening. They wore large-sized sunglasses, were heavily made up, and tried to cover their faces with their hands and/or hair. The other behavioral features that stood out were their guarded response and/or lack of desire to be assisted. They would only respond to the attending physician from whom they would secure a medical statement. With further association, the medical social workers noted that the medical

³ In Grace T. Ramirez, "Wife Beating: the crime that never gets to court," Mr. & Mrs., March 28, 1989, p. 23.

⁴ Ibid. See also Ma. Ceres P. Doyo. "Battered Wives Shattered Lives," Sunday Inquirer Magazine, March 5, 1989, p. 15, and Note 7 of this paper.

⁵ Telephone Interview with Mr. Wilfredo L. Labayen, Past Barangay Captain Bgy. Sun Valley, Paranaque, Metro Manila, January 22, 1990.

⁶ Interviews with Miss Cecilia c. Ledesma, Mrs. Edna V. Cunanan, Mrs. Belinda J. Santos and Miss Virginia S. Papa, Medical social Service, Philippine General Hospital Medical Center, January 19, 1990.

diagnosis carried no corresponding relationship to or report of wife-beating, when patients were married or were under live-in arrangements.

On the other hand, the Philippine Mental Health Association yielded no clues. Their 1989 annual report did not even carry the major psychiatric disorders served, but only identified the broad services provided, such as psychiatric consultation, psychological testing, etc.

I subsequently asked for the themes of their annual conferences. Similarly, these reflected preponderant attention to youth and development for the past immediate years in the '80s.⁷

The other agency I sought was the Bureau of Women's Welfare, Department of Social Welfare and Development. Having been set up as a bureau only in 1987 with the reorganization of the Department, the staff was starting to secure data in a more systematic manner, by categorizing "women in specially difficult circumstances." These included: 1) victims of involuntary prostitution; 2) abused "battered" women; 3) victims of illegal recruitment and other forms of exploitation; and 4) women in detention centers.⁸

Before proceeding, I would like to state that my intent is not to disparage these institutions, but simply to reflect one major lack one may expect in future tasks that may be undertaken.

The other drawback, as has been cited in both local/foreign literature, takes account of the victim's hesitancy to report the physical assault. This hesitance is based on: 1) the notion that it is a private affair; 2) the scandalous nature of the conjugal problem; and 3) the notion, whether perceived and/or real, that they would be blamed for having provoked the incident in many instances, by the police or other professionals/related staff attending to their cases; or, 4) the tendency to dismiss these incidents, since they would pass away after a "cooling off" period.⁹

While I did not have the time to follow up with still another group, we must also not forget Filipina women who have contracted marriage with foreign nationals. Out of those unions, wife abuse cases have been reported in dailies and magazines, generally among mail order brides of Japanese, Australian, German men. And, if I recall correctly, a modern Swiss Bluebeard murdered his foreign wives, mostly Asians, for large amounts of insurance he took out on their behalf.

⁷ Interview with Miss Romela M. Ramos, Psychologist, Philippine Mental health Association, January 23, 1990.

⁸ Interview with Miss Belinda C. Manahan, Director, Bureau of Women's Welfare, Department of Social Welfare and Development, January 19, 1989.

⁹ "Wife-Battering: An Invisible Philippine Reality", GABRIELA Women's Update, Vol. III, No. 7, August-September, 1987, pp. 1-3.

Cases: Illustrative Selections

Given the absence of totals and averages, which, to me, appear cold and unempathic, specially in the case of wife abuse, a few illustrative cases will be presented. The narratives will try to show tentative evidence that abusiveness toward wives may be a common complaint which cuts through all social classes.

JJ's Mother: Victimizer and Victim

The patient, a boy close to two years of age, was the focal point of attention of both the medical and social service staff upon his admission to the Emergency Room. A diagnosis of Fracture Closed Transverse Complete, Displaced, Femoral Shaft (L) R/O Battered Child Syndrome was recorded, requiring continued confinement at the UP PGH Medical Center, Psychiatric Ward. His 19-year old mother admitted responsibility for his condition, as she found him too demanding, clinging, whiny, and difficult to pacify. It was observed, however, that a certain positive bond was present when the mother was not preoccupied with other household and vending responsibilities.

The boy's parents had entered into a common-law marriage when Mrs. J was 16. A separation ensued after a year and a half, due to the husband's irresponsibility. She took to another consensual union shortly after, and brought J to live with them. Before then, she had entrusted him to her paternal aunt.

Mrs. J's own childhood was marred by her mother's infidelity, who subsequently deserted the family for another man. Since she had her own family, her surrogate mother, a paternal aunt, showed the burden of added responsibility, when Mrs. J. came to live with her.

The father, on the other hand, displaced his resentment and anger over his wife's infidelity, by constantly nagging Mrs. J, who would retort it was not her fault. (*"Hindi ko kasalanan ang pagiging ganun ng Nanay ko."*)

The father, a vendor, was an amputee, who depended on crutches for ambulation.¹⁰ The cause for the dismemberment was cancer, but whether both legs were affected was not specified. She further narrated her father had been physically abusive toward his wife, whenever she had engaged in extra-marital affairs. However, he would take her back because he loved her.

At the time of JJ's confinement, there were contradictory claims about Mrs. J's second liaison. Her father and aunt claimed the man was irresponsible and had been hurting her physically, so that Mrs. J redirected and displaced her frustrations on JJ. She admitted suppressing her feelings, described herself as quiet (*"tahimik"*), preferring to be alone when confronted with problems. She

maintained that her second conjugal relationship was harmonious, and blamed her irritability on her pregnancy.

The plan for the disposition of the boy's case included a referral to the Department of Social Welfare and Development, recommending a temporary institutional placement of JJ for three to twelve months while allowing the mother, grandfather/other relatives visiting rights, to assist Mrs. J in getting over the hump of her pregnancy. This would provide Mrs. J time to plan and work out separate living arrangements for JJ. Follow-up consultations for the child and the mother, were also advanced - the boy with the Department of Psychiatry, and Mrs. J., with the Medical Social Service.

Mr. B: A Wife-Referred Assailant

Mr. B was referred to the Philippine Mental Health Clinic by his wife. The presenting problems included: a preoccupation with sex, noted in the frequency of his demand; crankiness ("*bugnutin*"); and physical assault. The couple, in their late 20s, had two children, ages four and three. The husband had finished the second year of college and was employed as a factory worker. The wife, a college graduate, was an employee in her sister's business establishment.

Prior to an ear surgery in 1987, the Bs had fights over money problems. There were rows thereafter, when the precipitate husband became sexually aggressive, turning violent if Mrs. B would not submit to his sexual craving. However, the consummation of the sexual act would transform him into a gentle person.

The wife had taken the initiative in referring Mr. B, based on the above symptoms. What hastened the consultation, to me, seemed to be Mrs. B's fear of her own aggression, after she had threatened him with a knife during a recent fight. The couple, however, did not return after the initial consultation, distance being a possible factor, as they resided in Paranaque.

Mr. F: The Roman Centurion

This 24-year old male with a third grade education, from Sta. Rosa, Laguna, had come for consultation at the UP PGH Medical Center Outpatient Department, for severe back pains. He first said a sack of flour had fallen on his back as a *cargador*, later attributing his pains to having been run over. Due to the contradictory versions of the causes of his complaint with accompanying peculiar behavior, a referral to the Department of Psychiatry was made.

After two months, Mr. F brought his common-law wife (age about 20) to the Emergency Room for a wound caused in her left foot by a nail. Further inquiries unveiled the non-accidental cause: for Mr. F had tied her to a banana plant, slapped, boxed, and later nailed her foot like the crucifixion of Jesus

Christ. Mrs. F was silent and quiet all throughout the consultation. After the administration of the anti-tetanus shot, Mrs. F was sent home. Added social data revealed a consensual liaison of three years. They had a year and a half old male offspring.

Mrs. P and Children: Wholesale Victims

Two siblings, a boy 13 and a girl 12, were admitted to one of the child-caring institutions of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, due to the mother's poor health ("weak lungs"). Social data gathered disclosed a marriage to a driver who drank heavily and was living with another woman.

Even early in their marriage, he was punitive and assaultive toward his wife and children, kicking and whipping the children, then ages three and two. His earnings were insufficient and this rampage was likely to occur when there was nothing to eat. Mrs. P resorted to laundry work to augment the family income.

At the height of his rage at one time, Mr. P took hold of his son, then age 3, kicked and threw him against the wall. The sketchy case record stated these were not the only trauma both wife and children experienced. Thus, when he died (no indication when), Mrs. P felt a great sense of relief.

AC: Compounded Adolescent Growing Pains?

The 17-year old female patient was referred by her imother for failing academic performance. The mother, age 42, was a college graduate who was employed as a job analyst in a government corporation. The father, age 44, also a college graduate, was a policeman. The patient was the oldest of four siblings, all girls, ages 15, 13, and 11.

In securing data about her poor class standing, AC's academic history revealed she had been an honor student previously (validictorian/salutatorian). But, with the escalation of her father's physical assault on AC's mother when intoxicated, she lost interest. She became preoccupied with the marital discord and violence occurring. She, too, could not bear the sight of her mother's submission to these intermittent beatings. The record did not specify how long spouse abuse had been happening.

The case recorded a family session with both parents and AC present, at which meeting she bared her emotional pain and depression over her parents' growing estrangement. She, too, touched on her need for a confidant in a mother who could keep her secrets from leaking to her father; specifically, her growing heterosexual attractions.

A regular family day, with all children/parents in attendance, was proposed for togetherness and the improvement/development of intra-familial communication. This seemed to have resolved the problem for the

father, mother, and AC were seen in and/or came for one session only. No follow-up was made, although AC was invited to the peer counselling program of the agency.

The next two cases have been taken from a daily and a popular weekly magazine respectively. Both presentations have been lifted from their sources, as the authors' journalistic styles arouse concerned interest. The latter particularly depicts the writer's poignant empathy.

What adds further import to the first case is the fact that within a space of nine days, the columnist, also counsellor, devotes his attention to wife abuse.

Children as Pawns¹¹

Fred and Maritess had been married for a number of years. Things had not gone well from the very beginning. They had had plenty of ups and downs. The downs were very difficult to bear. They had had their violent battles during which they had come to blows. Actually, Fred and Maritess had many second thoughts about their marriage. Both of them felt it had been a big mistake.

The children had complicated matters even more. Three were already teenagers. Fred and Maritess deeply loved their kids. Surely more than they loved each other. This is why the chess game started.

Whenever the two fought, they would use their children to conduct their warfare. Both of them would do their very best to turn their kids against each other.

First, there would be attempts by Maritess to win the loyalty of her children. She would do this in many ways. She was extra kind to them. She would even spoil them, especially when she was in direct conflict with her husband. Oh, she never told her children to hate their father, but she had her ways to make known to them that she was not happy with him.

Fred could sense what was happening. More than that, he could feel how his children were in conflict. He had tried to talk to his wife about it and convince her to leave the children out of it. Maritess had promised to do so, but her feelings were stronger than her will power. So, whenever she got a chance, she would always involve the kids. I suppose that was why Fred felt he had no choice but to fight back. He could feel that his children were beginning to draw away from him, especially the teenagers. The influence of his wife was strong. So, he felt he had no choice but to do everything in his power to win them back.

Fred had his ways too. Very often he would avoid disciplining them. He was quick to give them spending money. It often happened that when the kids

¹¹ Bob Garon, "Children as pawns," *Manila Standard*, January 4, 1990, p. 7

could not get permission from their mother to go to parties, their dad would readily allow them.

Battered Jane A./Shattered Ego¹²

"EGO-SHATTERING!" Jane exclaims, describing what it was like to be regularly battered. Jane, 49, has survived those dark years but cum scars that crisscross her chest, the result of her ex-husband's adventure with a bladed weapon.

Jane a battered wife? End that question with five exclamation points. Jane is a picture of strength and daring. But she was like that even before she got married. Very much her father's daughter, Jane even then was not the ordinary girl on the block. Headstrong, adventurous and independent, her family didn't worry much when they sent her to the U.S. for schooling. She came back educated in the ways of the West, the type who would make a good career for herself instead of settling in domestic bliss. "I was known to be one of Manila's independent females."

But Jane did settle down with Pete ("bright and with a terrific sense of humor") who, before long, regularly beat Jane into pulp. "I was three months pregnant when he gave the first blow. He hit me on the stomach," recalls Jane, "and that was because I cut my long hair. I didn't know I had to ask his permission. Later I thought, maybe that was the Filipino way—that I should ask first. He must have felt very wronged, I thought, and I felt so sorry."

He had brought City Jane to the province where they settled in the family estate. It was fine with her — leaving her intellectual Indios Bravos crowd and all that. Soon Jane got the hand of it — serving her husband and his buddies during drinking sessions that lasted well into the night. Jane hardly complained.

"He was a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, sober the first hours of the day, then he'd drink." It was when Pete was inebriated that he got violent. "After that he'd be sorry, but then I'd already be black and blue. He pampered me when he was sober, but when he was drunk any little thing could trigger it off. Once every couple of months I'd really get it bad. Once he beat me with a fire hose. It was Valentine's Day. My dad said, 'leave him.' But I wanted to save the marriage for the kids' sake - even if I had become a punching bag. His family wouldn't believe he needed psychiatric help."

Jane and Pete transferred to Manila. "We had become so poor then. We had this little apartment. The neighbors asked me to transfer the piano near the window so they could hear me play, but when I was beaten up none of them would come to pick up my bloody carcass. They thought we were rich, and so they looked away.

¹² Ma. Ceres P. Doyo, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13.

"Once Pete took out the cleaver and ran after me. My older son shouted, 'Run, Mommy, run!' I scooped the kids up and we ran to the police precinct. You ask, why couldn't I fight back, grab a chair? At that point it's happening you're deathly scared, you're catatonic, paralyzed and you hate yourself for it. I couldn't hurt him, he's the father of my children. You either take a passive role or an active one. I'm glad I didn't opt for the latter, otherwise I'd be in jail. The stupid judge who first handled our case fancied himself a good counselor and counselled us for three years, then he dropped the case against Pete."

After another of those violent episodes Jane decided she had enough. She quit her job with the World Bank and prepared her kids for a trip to the Visayas. "I was going to bring the piano, the two cats and sail for four days." Hell broke loose when Pete found out. "He dragged the children out of bed. He kidnapped them." It was one and half years before Jane would find her young sons again.

"I was like Sisa looking for Crispin and Basilio." Jane went on a nationwide search. "My lawyer was Senator Jovito Salonga. We even filed a habeas corpus petition, but the children and their father couldn't be found. I even asked for the help of the military intelligence. We were under martial law then. I told the military, if my children were subversives I'm sure you'd find them."

Unknown to Jane, her sons were shuttled from province to province by their jobless father who had the isupport of his family. "He told his folks that I was a bad woman." Jane had a job that allowed her to go out of town to follow leads. The Good Shepherd nuns helped her too. "Once I disguised myself as a nun and went to see my husband's relatives in the province. Another time I had to work in a boutique. I suffered abject humiliation just to find my sons. I went through dozens of grade schools in the provinces. I went through school lists, I pleaded with school principals."

After more than a year, the family of Jane's husband took pity on her and saw the rightness of her search. There was no point in having the kids constantly on the run. A reunion between mother and sons was arranged. Jane recalls that time: "The reunion was awful. I started running towards them but when I got close I saw that Tom and Timmy were both terrified. Timmy kept backing off. I just couldn't rush at them, kept inching at them and when I got this close I just jumped at them." The scene was straight out of a tearjerker in cinematic slow-mo. "I broke down. Tom said he thought I'd be mad at them. I cried, telling him, whyever on earth would I be? Tom would later say he had written a letter for me. All Timmy could remember now was fishing everyday. Oh, it was awful."

Jane's lawyer and Pete's lawyer made arrangements for the estranged couple to try living under one roof again. And so Jane, Pete and the children lived with Pete's family. It was during an altercation on the custody

over the kids that Jane almost lost her life. "He got a dagger and hit me here, here and here. He was lunging for his fourth hit but I was able to grab the knife. My hand was sliced. I was sinking but I was able to kick him. I was lying on the floor with everybody screaming. I saw this huge pool of blood around me. I thought, I have my children back and now I'm dying. My mind was working on two levels. I was losing consciousness but I was trying to keep my adrenalin up. I told myself, scream for help, for an ambulance. I was directing my own rescue operation.

"At the hospital I got 120 stitches without anaesthesia. I kept saying where are the cops, call the cops. But my in-laws prevented the cops. Later a good doctor looked me over and realized my life was in danger. I had a punctured lung. He had to operate again. I insisted that the cops be called so I could tell my story first before I died on the operating table. The doctor held my hand and said, "Trust me, I'll tell the cops your story." I was delirious. Worse, there was this big earthquake and everybody was terrified. I kept shouting. Don't be afraid. God is good, he gave me back my children.

"I was inside an oxygen tent when I regained consciousness. Next thing I knew I was surrounded by photographers. The press had been so helpful during my search, publishing stories and photos of my kids but this time I had to plead that, for the sake of the kids, the story should not land in the newspapers.

"The children were not around when this happened. They were horrified when they saw me all stitched up. I made up this awful story about having had a drink too many and falling into a ditch. But later they got to know what really happened and they said to me, 'Mom, why did you lie to us?'

"I comforted my in-laws saying, it's good this happened, now Pete can get professional help." Pete was brought to a hospital for psychiatric treatment. Much later, it was decided that the frustrated parricide case against him would remain suspended if he stayed out of the country. (Jane was afraid that if he was sent to prison he'd be out in no time to make life miserable for everybody again.) Pete is still in the U.S. but his sons, now teenagers, have visited him a couple of times, to take care of him "even just for a while." He has not been cured of his alcoholism. "I don't ever try to destroy the image of their father," says Jane. "When the kids were younger I explained to them Dad isn't too friendly with himself, that's why he has a hard time being friendly with the rest of the world."

Jane is very much her own person again, heading her own Makati-based firm while continuing to pursue her interests in theater and writing.

IMPLICATIONS

In effect, what may we glean/infer from this sample?

Would case finding of battered wives take separate routes? For the lower socio-economic group, the way of the barangay system, the police, the

health center, public hospital, and governmental/private social welfare agencies?

For the middle class, agencies offering counselling/psychiatric/ psychological consultations with a graduated fee scale, hinting at some knowledge of and sophistication about community services, as well as acceptance of psychological help?

For the upper class, private psychotherapeutic services and legal support/assistance?

Given the extent of poverty in the country, would the social model hold in these cases, seeking explanation as a relationship between stress and abuse, whether wife or child? This model asserts that abuse is largely a function of the stresses of poverty, given that members of lower socio-economic groups are more exposed to more stressful events. They have little information of community resources, which may also not be accessible. They are further burdened with failure to cope materially and emotionally.

Is wife battering/abuse a syndrome? A syndrome, because it appears to be a complex phenomenon with many interacting features - social, psychological, physical, cultural, economic?

Would wife abuse and child abuse be concurrent occurrences; and for that matter, inter-generational?

Should service approaches, therefore, be family-oriented; hence, necessitate a knowledge of community resources, referral and coordinating skills?

Is the lack of awareness of the wife abuse problem among law enforcement, judicial agencies and helping professions due to biased perceptions arising from the influence of a patriarchal society, limiting institutional functions in one's place of work, a heavy workload, etc.?

Do consultation and admission procedures, particularly in government institutions, create a double burden for the poor client because of their inaccessibility, requiring transportation expenses and time out from work, further relieving the individual of one's daily earnings? May we refer to this state of affairs as non-intentional institutional battering? For that matter, societal battering, for its lack of sense of priorities?

Research Interest/Output

A tentative conclusion may be allowed on the state of research interest/output, based on two studies the writer found. Sobritchea has advanced that "physical violence committed against women especially in the household, is one subject matter that has practically never been touched in researches on Filipino females.¹³ Although there has been a significant increase lately

¹³ Carolyn I. Sobritchea, *Gender Inequality and Its Supporting Ideologies: A Community Study of cultural Rationalizations of Women's Low Status*, Ph. D. dissertation, Department of

in concern for female-related social problems like prostitution, child abuse, rape, very little effort has been directed towards a more systematic investigation of the extent and nature of wife beating and other forms of female physical abuse in the household. In fact, it is only in some news dailies or tabloids that we find some effort to document various incidences of physical abuse of women."¹⁴

In this regard, Sobritchea's Ph.D. dissertation on "Gender Inequality and Its Supporting Ideologies: A Community Study of Cultural Rationalizations of Women's Low Status" has a portion on physical violence. From her rural sample-respondents, it appeared that physical violence in marriage seemed widely accepted, with sexes favoring the use of physical violence on the other. The results showed, however, that there are more women who favor being beaten, rather than beating their husbands; suggesting that Philippine rural society, particularly the community studied, breeds women who are willing victims of physical abuse.

When asked about the conditions that justify the use of physical force against a spouse, the common answer of the male respondents cited infidelity. Women referred to "serious" crimes, as robbery, murder, and also infidelity.

The majority of both respondents regarded the "negative" qualities of husband (fondness for gambling/infidelity) husband's drinking, financial problems as among the most frequent causes of marital quarrels.

The other study undertaken by the GABRIELA National Office in 1987 is more definitive.¹⁵ It states that very little has been written about domestic violence against women, more simply called wife-battering. Likewise, no known comprehensive and systematic research has been done about it.

For another, any attempt to study the issue will encounter difficulty because for one, very few battered wives would be willing to confide what is believed a "private matter."

A review of the records in the General Assignment Section of the four main police headquarters in Metro Manila showed that out of a thousand entries from January to June in 1987, only 43 women reported having been manhandled by their husbands. The complaints were mostly categorized under "physical injuries" although some of the recorded details of the complaint revealed that battered wives report only when the situation has become severe, compounded with death threats, malicious mischief, child abduction, verbal defamation and concubinage. Three parricide cases in the Northern Police District have wives as victims. In the Western Police

¹⁴ See note 7

¹⁵ "Wife-Battering An Invisible Philippine Reality," *op. cit.*

District, a wife whose husband attempted to "burn" her, reported the incident. Police records show that the husband's violence comes in the following forms: beatings, mauling, throwing of objects against the wife (physical injuries with malicious mischief), kicking, dragging, hair pulling. These are common forms in the physical injuries category, but the repetitiveness and pattern of violence particularize the wife's case. These two distinguishing characteristics of wife-battering were also mentioned during the case studies conducted by the GABRIELA National Office in four urban poor communities in Metro Manila, namely, Apelo Cruz, Pasay City; Matangtubig, Quezon City; Magdalena, Tondo; and Leongson, Navotas. The twenty wife-respondents mentioned exactly the same forms of assaults against them by their husbands and claimed the violence is done from once to thrice a week. Four women said there is physical abuse "almost everyday." At least three respondents admitted to having been "forced" by their husband to have sexual intercourse with them in a way or at a time they do not want. It was like being "raped," confided a respondent.

Marital rape is often an extension of wife-battering. In a battering situation, the wives' interest in sex with their husband, the batterer, diminishes.

The development of a generalized fear is also characteristic of a battered wife, in the GABRIELA study.

Respondents mentioned economic difficulties and unfounded jealousy as the main causes of violence. The women-respondents from Leongson, Navotas, all of whom are involved in the community women's organization, apparently earned their husbands' ire when they became "politically active." One pointed at her nagging over her husband's extra-marital affairs as the reason. In all of the responses, the GABRIELA study advanced that the apparent causes "are further hinged on the deep-set values and beliefs of men, women themselves and society at large. Men see their wives as properties or vassal subjects on whom they may use force and violence to assert their superiority. They can do this without being penalized."

In the police records earlier mentioned, the causes of wife-battering were mostly placed as "misunderstanding," but the case descriptions further cited the following causes: unfounded jealousy, which has the most number of entries; husband's resistance to wife's decision for separation; husband's excessive alcoholism and drug addiction; financial matters; husband's womanizing; wife's unapproved activities, like a wife's insistence to join a religious group which the husband earlier prevented her from joining; and even as petty a matter as sharing pillows (the husband in this case got irked when he found out that the wife had the bigger share of their pillow).

It is significant to note from the causes enumerated above that the battered wife did not "ask for" or provoke that violence as it is commonly believed. The apparent causes are usually external to the women and more

in the sphere of the husband's weaknesses. Socio-cultural conditioning or sex-role socialization is more central to the issue than any of the causes attributed above. Moreover, the socio-cultural conditioning, brought about by externally- imposed sanctions on values or attitudes regarding sexuality, marriage, virginity and ownership of a woman's body are accepted by women themselves.

During the GABRIELA case study this attitude among battered wives is revealed. When asked how they feel about their husband's violence, only one did not say she felt "guilty" for having made her husband angry. The one who said so however added that because the man is her husband, she still tries to understand and forgive him. Except for the three battered wives who left home but returned "for the children's sake," all of the respondents claimed they opted to merely keep quiet and bear with their husband. A woman from Matangtubig, Quezon City succinctly justified her choice: "*asawa ko kaya dapat pagtiisan ko.*" Another respondent said, "*wala namang magagawa ang babae kapag namwersa na ang lalaki.*"

Moreover, the battered wives who indeed decide to report their husbands to the police may find their cases equally hopeless. Of the 43 wifebattering complaints in the four main police districts of Metro Manila earlier mentioned, only five cases were filed in court. Four were held in abeyance while the rest are either for "barangay disposition" or for investigation, in which case the couple will still be referred to the barangay.

For another, wife-battering may not even be used as a ground for legal separation unless it constitutes an attempt by one spouse against the life of the other. Under article 97 of the Civil Code, a petition for legal separation may only be filed for "concubinage on the part of the husband" and attempted homicide.

Survey of Foreign Literature/Studies

In view of the slim research output I could find, I ventured into a survey of literature found in U.S. journals, starting in the '70s, on the ground that the feminist movement had accelerated by then, and the United Nations had declared 1975 as the International Women's Year and 1976-1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women.

While the manner I went about it may not have been as systematic, having concentrated more on social work periodicals and the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, the search was productive in providing me with other sources from their references, nevertheless.

It also provided me initial ideas of research areas, starting with descriptions/characteristics of abused wives, husband assailants; the dynamic interacting patterns of the violent-laden conjugal dyad; violent-prone fami-

lies; beliefs/perceptions of service providers; work with men who batter (either individually/in a conjoint arrangement/group); training models for service staff, law enforcement personnel; the limits/hindrances of prosecutory/judicial processes; community services for battered women, to cite a few.

Seizing Time, Taking Initiative

Given the lack of public/professional awareness obtaining in the country today and the iceberg characteristic of the wife battering problem, I found the study of Kathleen J. Tierney on "The Battered Women Movement and the Creation of the Wife Beating Problem" not only instructive,¹⁷ but a piece of work suggestive of a possible extension cum research project to be undertaken by the UP Women's Studies Center, which, concurrently, could promote the intent of the overarching aim of the U.P. Assessment of the National Situation Project.

It is instructive, since it provides glimpses of the history of the movement in England and the United States, noting early variations in emphasis. The headway, more specifically in the United States, was achieved in the increased recognition of wife beating as a social problem and the involvement of professionals in the provision of services. It likewise examines the gains in legislation, government policy and programs, research and information. The movements in these countries started with an emphasis on a protective/emergency tenor through the provision of shelter and crisis services, 1971 in England and 1973 in the U.S. Wife beating, however, was "transformed from a subject of private shame and misery to an object of public concern" in less than ten years.

Tierney likewise analyzes how the U.S. movement, which was instrumental in this transformation, can be illustrative of how social movements can construct social problems and successfully mobilize resources, by considering three factors: 1) the pre-existing organizations/base for the movement; 2) the movement's flexibility; and 3) the incentives for sponsors to provide resources. She also touches on the role of media.

In this regard, we may likewise discover possibilities of involvement, as a project, in the further examination/passage of the bill filed by Sen. Ernesto Maceda, i.e., Senate Bill 284 which specifically focuses on wife abuse. For it seeks, through its title "A Penalty of One Degree Higher Than the Penalty Provided For the Crimes of Physical Injuries In Cases of Habitual Wife Beating," with the intent of protecting the wife in the grievance/adjudication procedures, which could act at the same time, as a deterrent to abusive husbands. Essentially, it facilitates/expedites the process entitling the wife to the following, upon presentation of evidence of domestic violence: 1) to live separately from the husband; 2) demand that the husband leave the conjugal

¹⁷ Kathleen J. Tierney, "The Battered Women Movement and the Creation of the Wife Beating Problem," *Social Problems*, Vol. 29, No. 3, February 1982, pp. 207-217.

abode; 3) immediately receive part of the husband's salary; and 4) receive three-fourths of the conjugal property as her share in case of legal separation.

Along further lines of initiatives/increasing public awareness, could a modest project be designed thus, by the UCWS, in consultation with appropriate University units, feminist and other women's organizations, professional/disciplinary associations, existing social/medical/law enforcement agencies, to cite a few, since the plight of battered wives can no longer brook postponement, nor is it postponable for the silent victims. For, if we would have "created" wife abuse/spouse assault as a social problem, in effect, we would have advanced the woman's right to human dignity and protection, ultimately discovering with their participation and assertion, the meaning of self-respect.