



Women's Transitional Care Services by Jessica Funk

Project Description

**Observations &
Results**

Connections

**Return to WS 381
Projects**



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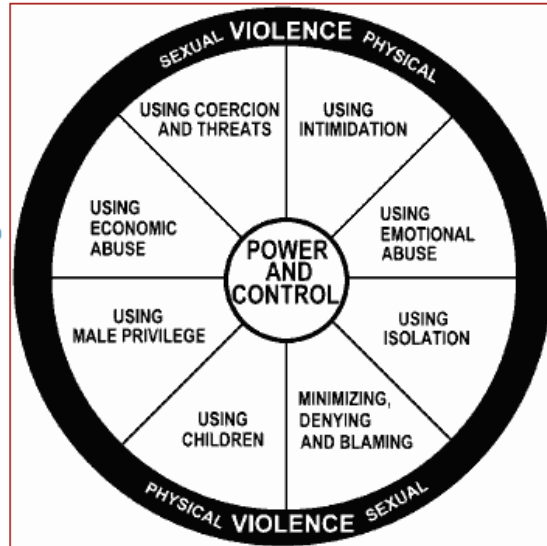
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I performed my service learning project as an advocate for Women's Transitional Care Services (WTCS). WTCS provides services and shelter to women survivors of domestic abuse and their children. Additionally, WTCS performs outreach work to raise awareness and knowledge about abuse in the community in an attempt to stop violence. My duties as an advocate include answering the crisis line, performing the intake process to admit new residents, working directly with the residents at the shelter to provide peer counseling, referrals, resources, information, and support, providing information about domestic violence to the residents and community, assisting staff members with various projects and duties, assisting with the training of new volunteers at the shelter, helping out with children, working with the Outreach program, and facilitating the women's in-house support group.



The power and control wheel was developed by gathering information from the testimonies of women survivors of domestic abuse. The section on using privilege includes acts that include defining the roles and responsibilities of the people the relationship. This type of behavior can be seen as a personal application of de Beauvoir's Absolute and Other distinction.



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When starting out my work as a volunteer almost one and a half years ago, I thought that the most important part of the experience would be providing information, resources, and services to help change the lives of the women and children at the shelter. However, I soon began to realize that the way volunteering at the shelter has changed my own life is just as important. Sometimes I feel like the women at the shelter have taught me a great deal more that I can ever hope to share with them. Their lessons may be directly from their lives and unique experiences instead of a textbook, but that makes them no less important than the knowledge I gain from my classes.

Through my work, I am learning to better understand the oppressive and often debilitating conditions these women are living in. Being an advocate at WTCS has broadened my perspective on more than just domestic violence issues. It has expanded my entire worldview through increasing my awareness of the interlocking nature of oppressions. It has made me realize that we cannot hope to stop domestic abuse until we have deconstructed the societal conditions and attitudes that foster oppression and violence.



The cycle of violence demonstrates how it can be very difficult for survivors to leave abusive relationships. The phase of excuses, amends, and apologies can lead survivors to believe that the abuser will change and that the violence will end. However, this phase of the cycle typically gets shorter and shorter as the abusive relationship continues, and it can often disappear altogether.



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Although I have been a volunteer at WTCS for a while, it has been while engaging in a service learning project this semester that I have become most acutely aware of how topics from the classroom are directly relevant to my work.

For instance, Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of the Other and One separation has caused me to look at domestic violence power and control issues in a different light. Although de Beauvoir examines this issue from a broad social level, at the shelter I have begun to recognize its effects on a personal level. Abusers exercise privilege and control over their victims. Through being able to define roles and realities in the relationship, abusers create a distinction where they consider themselves to be the Absolute and their partner to be the Other. Through repetitive conditioning and 'brainwashing', the abuser can often make the survivor begin to accept these determined positions as natural and unchangeable.

In addition, I found a significant connection between my service learning project and the issues detailed in Susan Brison's article, "Outliving Oneself". Brison addresses how our selves are interconnected and interdependent through looking at experiences of trauma survivors. I strongly agree with her standpoint that people who have experienced a crisis are aided in their healing and reconstruction process by having others to support them and listen to their narrative. As the facilitator for a women's support group at the shelter, I have seen many instances where women benefit from the control they gain through telling their story. Similarly, I have heard many women admit that they only fully began to understand and come to terms with their own experiences after they heard the experiences of others whom they were able to identify with.

Overall, this service learning experience has been very worthwhile. I feel that I have effectively been able to combine lessons from my classes with real world experiences.

Power and Control Wheel for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Relationships



(Click for larger image)
Same-sex domestic violence is estimated to occur at roughly the same rate as heterosexual domestic violence, but it often receives less publicity and acknowledgement. One of the important things to recognize is how multiple oppressions can intersect. This power and control wheel for LGBT relationships demonstrates how homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and heterosexism impact domestic violence.