

**SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT**  
**Student Research Brief**

*Domestic Violence Rates and Reporting Improved With Introduction of New Laws*

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**Introduction**

The problem of domestic violence is global. The Convention to Eliminate Discrimination against Women added a recommendation in 1992 stating that gender-based violence is discriminatory. In 1993 the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was developed at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. Although this declaration is not binding, it has been viewed as significant step in the attempt to universalize concern about violence against women (Morgaine 2006). In the United States, The Violence against Women Act of 1994 was designed to improve interstate criminal justice enforcement and provide adequate funding for criminal justice interventions and social services for victims. This act allowed for the consolidation of almost all of states' legal reforms responding to domestic violence and was expected to facilitate and strengthen existing state policies to reduce and intervene in domestic violence. The act accomplishes this through grants, education and training programs, and pro-arrest policies (Cho and Wilke 2005). While the enactment had a positive impact on the domestic violence rates, other efforts have contributed to the decrease such as changes in state legislation and criminal justice interventions.

**Summary of Primary Findings**

Recent research indicates a variety of approaches to dealing with victims of domestic violence is necessary in order to be effective. It is further found that different approaches were required for women according to whether they were experiencing domestic violence but not necessarily seeking help and those women who were subject to repeat victimization and were actively seeking help. (Parmar and Sampson 2006). The practice model (figure 1)

developed through research by Alpa Parmar of Cambridge University and Alice Sampson of University of East London shows how the transfer of practice principles provides an appropriate response to the problem of domestic violence through advocacy work.

**Implications for Social Work Practice**

Social workers in the US have not embraced the human rights framework in dealing with domestic violence as social workers in the same way as social workers in other countries. The NASW Code of Ethics does not specifically mention human rights. Social workers play a significant role in the framing of social problems and developing interventions to address the social problems they help define. It is important that social workers to engage in critical thinking about the implications of this framing in order to recognize the benefits and challenges this framework of human rights offers. (Morgaine 2006).

**DATA AT A GLANCE**

DURING THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1993 AND 2002 IN THE UNITED STATES THERE WAS:

A DECREASE IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FROM 7.7 VICTIMS PER 1000 WOMEN TO 3.7 VICTIMS PER 1000 WOMEN

AN INCREASE OF REPORTS TO POLICE FROM 54% TO 61%

AN INCREASE IN THE ARREST RATE FROM 23% TO 51%

**10 Recommendations for Practice with Systems of All Sizes**

Domestic violence interventions should be tailored to the victims needs. Social workers and other service providers need to be aware of the framework of human rights as a possible way of defining domestic violence issues. Global response to domestic violence offers a collaborative possible resolution. The process of transferring programs that concentrate on other areas of need is not always feasible because some of these are not always the best fit for domestic violence. Continued public awareness of violence against women is essential in the further development of

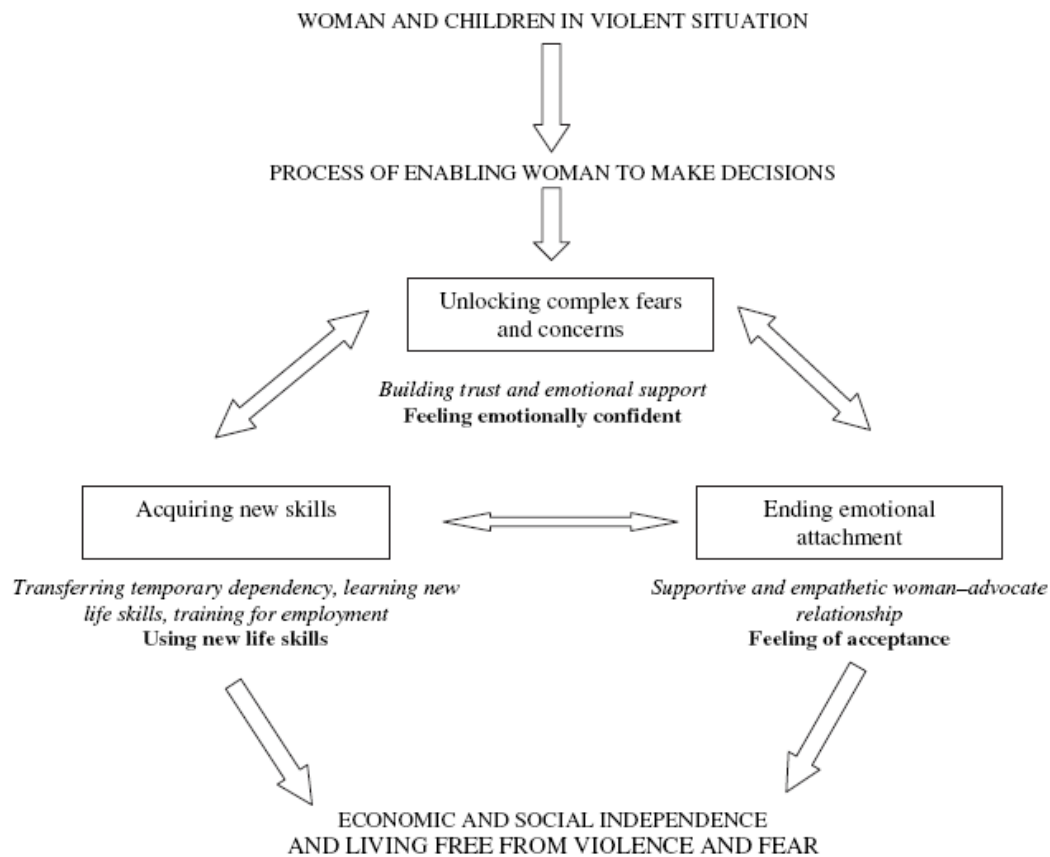


FIG. 1 A practice model

solutions. Victim empowerment is important in that victims may actively participate in the criminal justice system on their own behalf (Cho and Wilke 2005). Social workers are encouraged to increase their engagement on a global level and gain greater understanding of international issues (Morgaine 2006). Knowledge gained from evaluation framework informs policy makers and practitioners how interventions work (Parmer and Sampson 2006). Care should be taken in framing domestic violence as a criminal justice issue due to the negative impact on some domestic violence survivors. Identifying the limitations of certain frameworks has implications for defining social problems and their interventions (Morgaine 2006).

### Conclusion

Although there has been great progress in the reporting rates of domestic violence and arrest rates, the presence of domestic violence has not been eliminated in US or globally. The improvements made through the introduction of new policies and governmental acts is encouraging but there is still the need for

improvements by evaluating the framework in which we view domestic violence.

### References

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### About the Author

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