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Perspectives of Women Victims of Wealthy Batterers: Is Justice Served?

By Diana Bruns

Southeast Missouri State University, United States

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Perspectives of Women Victims of Wealthy Batters: Is Justice Served?

Diana Bruns

As a child growing up in a violent home, I wished for no Christmas or presents, just to be safe. I also wished that my father would die in his sleep.

--Survivor of domestic violence

We need to shame abusers whoever they are and wherever they are in the world. We need to fight for justice. If we help each other through and make enough noise, the powers-that-be will have to listen.

--Survivor of three decades of domestic violence

After he hit me, he would buy me something like a really pretty watch. He would just rub my face and say, "Are you okay?" Then it would be good for awhile, but when he would come home after he had been drinking, it would happen again. Everytime he would hit me, it would be like, I am sorry and here is a really nice present.

--40 year-old survivor of domestic violence

It was always exciting to see the places and do the things that we did. Being there with the wrong person was frightening.

--45 year-old survivor of domestic violence

Abstract- While domestic violence occurs in all demographical realms (races, ethnicities, classes, educational levels), research has been limited regarding wealthy batterers. Although domestic abuse is more visible in lower-class communities, abuse in high socio-economic classes remains hidden. Qualitative data from 12 survivors of wealthy and/or affluent batterers defined as upper middle class or upper class examines perspectives of victims of wealthy batterers to investigate if and how such victims face injustices due to the batterer's wealth and prominence in the communities in which they live. As additional research is conducted on wealthy batterers, police, prosecutors, and judges may provide better treatment and protection, as they too, will become better prepared in dealing with wealthy and powerful batterers and minimize injustices or prejudice toward the victims.

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, physical force has been the ultimate resource to keep subordinate groups in their place. One of the most permeating forms of viciousness in all areas of the globe, in both rural and urban societies, is domestic violence. According to Berry (1994) and other prominent researchers in the field of domestic violence, both victims and abusers come from all walks of life and types of backgrounds (race, occupation, socio-economic class, ethnic group,

education level, and sexual orientation). Therefore, domestic violence is color-blind and is not limited to one social class; it does not discriminate and it affects people of all socio-economic statuses (Kouremetis, 2012; Bekaert, 2012).

Definitions and classifications of domestic violence are divergent as are its causes, motivations for the abuse and treatments for both abusers and their victims. For the purpose of this analysis, the definition of domestic violence provided by the Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women's (2012) is

a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.

Domestic violence goes beyond individual acts of aggression to encompass an overall pattern of behavior aimed at maintaining complete control. Individual acts do not constitute battering. (Groetsch, 1997). Emotional abuse is much more common than previously believed; it is more than just simple arguments and is displayed repeatedly over time (Martin, 2006).

Common disagreements abound regarding the definitions of domestic violence, as definitions vary within and out of different academic disciplines and fields. DeKeseredy (2011) adds that major debates over definitions seriously affect the quality and quantity of social support services for women who are beaten, sexually assaulted, and abused in other ways by intimates or acquaintances (p. 5).

It was not until the mid-1980's that domestic violence issues became forefront in the United States, causing more injuries to women than a combination of cancer deaths, strokes, heart attacks, accidents, and muggings (U.S. Surgeon General, 1988) and affects 25-30% of all families (National Institute of Justice, 2009). Furthermore it is estimated that 30% of all emergency room visits consist of women who have been abused (Gonzalez & Corbin, 2011). Smith (2010) reported that 39% of women experienced some kind of violence in a

*Author: Southeast Missouri State University.
e-mail: dbruns@semo.edu*



relationship. Bradley, Smith, Long and O'Dowd (2002) displayed similar results, as of the 1,692 women (in their study) who reported having a previous sexual relationship, 651 of the respondents (38.48%) experienced relationship violence. Studies have shown that only 50% of women who experience domestic violence will report such acts to authorities (National Crime Victimization Survey, 2007).

Upon comparing risk factors of the likelihood of violence, women living in disadvantaged areas have a two times greater chance of being victims of domestic violence than women living in advantaged areas (Benson and Fox, 2004; Johnson, 2012). Women with less education, those who are unemployed, young, and poor may be more likely to be victims, but not all women fit this profile. Even highly intelligent women (doctors, lawyers, judges) are victims of domestic violence. According to Groetch (1997), a woman's risk of being battered has little to do with her and everything to do with whom she marries or dates.

Batterers tend to have less education and live closer to poverty, but white-collar men including doctors, lawyers, judges have been known to abuse their domestic partners. Wealthy abusers typically hold prestigious jobs, which require them to maintain control at all times. This sense of control carries over into their home life, causing the abuser to feel entitled to control every situation. After the abuse, wealthy abusers manipulate the situation by using their money and kindness to win the victim back over (Bekaert, 2012).

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM, OBJECTIVES AND POTENTIAL IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

Few studies have addressed differences between socio-economic levels and domestic violence. The U.S. Department of Justice (2009) hypothesized that domestic violence in lower-class areas is considered to be the most frequent. However, due to the greater lack of reporting crimes to the police in higher-income families, its true incidence rates may be unknown, as the batterer's income and prominence in their respective community may lead to different outcomes than for a batterer with few resources. Research has been limited as pertaining to wealthy domestic violence batterers and the dispositions of their civil or criminal cases. The lack of pertinent and relevant scientific research and supporting literature justifies the need for an exploratory case study of this nature.

For the purposes of this analysis, the batterer will be referred to as a male, as in only five percent (5%) of domestic violence cases; the batterer/perpetrator is a female (Groetsch, 1997). This study examines case studies and perspectives of victims of wealthy batterers to investigate if and how such victims face injustice, bias, or neglect by authorities. While victims of domestic violence face many challenges in all socio-economic

backgrounds, it is the assumption of the researcher that victims of wealthy batterers may face additional challenges. Moreover little is known about income differences and domestic violence, which is potentially due to the batterer's wealth, connections, and the victim's reluctance and fear to expose the batterer.

In essence, if more research is available concerning victims of wealthy batterers, key players such as the criminal justice system, mental health professionals, victims' advocates, and shelters could be better informed and equipped to ensure appropriate consequences for wealthy batterers. The overall purpose of this qualitative project is to obtain information regarding the treatment of victims of wealthy batterers, as well as providing and exposing the relative dispositions of criminal cases of this nature. The objectives of this project include the analysis of 6 (six) major elements:

1. Discovering any injustices in cases of wealthy batterers;
2. Investigating victims who were involved in domestic violence incidents, where the batterer is wealthy and/or powerful;
3. Understanding any reluctance in seeking help, as well as exposing the abuser;
4. Determining if there are any additional challenges that victims encounter upon seeking help;
5. Uncovering any legal challenges that wealthy batterers bring upon their victims;
6. Providing education and implications of injustice to victims.

By listening to the voices of victims of domestic violence, real solutions can be achieved. The overall, end product of this analysis is to bring issues to life and urge governments to criminalize all acts of domestic violence against both the affluent and poor. As violence against women is an issue in all countries around the globe, excuses on grounds of custom, culture, honor or wealth are no longer acceptable. It is time to educate governments, expose myths and take the message to a global stage.

III. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

a) *Social Class Differences and Challenges of Victims and Perpetrators*

'Upscale violence,' a term coined by Weitzman (2008), encompasses four criteria including income, residence, class status, and education. In order to qualify as an upscale marriage, three of those criteria must be met; such as couples earning a combined income of at least \$100,000.00 per year, having a self-perception of being upper-middle class or upper class, and one of the partners must have at least a four-year college degree. In higher class relationships, such violence may be as prevalent as in the lower-classes, but upper classes will attract more media attention,

where it has been projected that one-fifth to one-third of upper-class women will be assaulted by their intimate partner (Weitzman, 2008).

Kouremetris (2009) describes class differences in reasoning behind why women stay in abusive relationships. Lower class victims tend to stay in relationships for financial reasons, while middle class victims tend to stay with their abusers for different reasons, being that women in middle classes are more likely to live in denial. This denial allows middle class women to create an appearance that being in the middle class purports a feeling of being too proud to think that they are unhappy. Berry (1996) describes the rationale behind victims of white-collar males are more likely to stay in abusive relationships.

Women who are themselves professionals or are married to men who are successful, respectful, and visible in the community are less likely to seek outside help for several reasons. Many fear that no one will believe them, or that those with ties to him will defend a powerful husband. This is a rational fear; police officers in some communities have complained that men with power or political ties do not get prosecuted after arrest. The images of the husband as all-powerful also feed the perceptions that the wife cannot leave, and if she does, he will track her down or use his connections to bring her back (p. 43)

Weitzman (2008) described stories and issues surrounding differing classes of victims of domestic violence as similar, but having different barriers to leaving relationships. Most women in upper class relationships and families do not work outside the home, while depending on their partners for financial support. If a victim leaves the abusive relationship, she will have nowhere to go and much to leave behind. The web becomes more complex if children are involved. In a lower class abusive situation, the victim can leave more easily because she has very little to leave behind. In all cases of domestic violence however, leaving can be the most dangerous time of the relationship and may trigger further abuse or murder. Dits (2007) adds that factors associated with the affluent are more complicated: women who live privileged lives express viewpoints and mindsets that shelters service only poor women and do not feel as though they fit in.

King (2010) articulates five challenges of the affluent, as it pertains to domestic violence awareness: wealthy women are in disbelief; no empathy from the public; false claims and re-victimization; empty legal war chest, and the heinous crimes committed against the victims. People are shocked upon hearing of women living affluent lifestyles being a victim of domestic violence. The dichotomy between the abuser being an attorney, doctor, clergyman or politician and their roles serving as caring/healing and protective positions

confuses the public. Unfortunately for wealthy women, the public has little empathy for women because they live a privileged life. King (2010) adds when victimized women turn to seeking help their abuser can pay off the system making the abusive situation even worse. Wealthy abusers tend to manipulate healthcare providers and law enforcement in an attempt to discredit their spouse. When victims and their abusers do go to court, they have to represent themselves because their spouse controls the money. Under-represented by attorneys, mothers/victims may lose custody of their children in the midst of the divorce. Not only are they childless, but penniless and homeless.

b) Public Perceptions/Misconceptions of Affluent Victims of Domestic Violence

Sutton (2007) suggests abuse as identical in opposing socio-economic neighborhoods. However, domestic violence in affluent communities is regarded as a private matter and is kept secret from the public while the victim maintains her public, professional and personal image. Unfortunately, a common fallacy is that upscale and/or educated women have multitudes of advantages---that they will be able to help themselves. Not only are these women victimized by their partners, but further victimized by the system that is supposed to help victims of domestic violence.

Weitzman (2008) purported less than a 10% difference in the rate of domestic violence between families of a low and high socio economic status--domestic violence is just as prevalent. However the only aspect that changes is how they get out of the relationship. A common misleading notion is that affluent women can arrange for a clean break from their abuser. One main reason as to why wealthy women do not come forward is because they are afraid of exposure, or blackmail that could ruin their reputation. This is especially true in cases where a professional woman earns more money than the male. The abuser will somehow manipulate the situation and blame the female for being so successful, causing the male to be less successful.

Wietzman (2008) further predicted that domestic violence can be demolishing to careers: twenty-five percent of abused working women lost their job as a result of their abusive partners; while 14% of victims admitted their abusers refused to let them work at all. Therefore, wealthy women also feel as if they have a lot more to lose than less fortunate victims. Giving up a privileged life is hard to do, especially when children are involved.

c) Police Response to Domestic Violence

Before the 1980s in the U.S., most police officers viewed domestic violence as a private family matter and were unaware of the control that abusers had over their victims, which led to a complete misunderstanding of victims of domestic violence (Stark,

2007). In the past, police officers held four different views of domestic violence including:

- a) Simplifications of acts—police officers view situations as less complex than they actually are and leaving battering relationships should be simple
- b) Victim blaming—victims were partially to blame and may deserve the abuse
- c) Patriarchal attitudes towards women—victims lack intelligence to leave batterers
- d) Presumption of victim cooperation—when females call for help, they often change their minds when police officers arrive to arrest the batterers and would return to batterer (DeJong, Burgess-Proctor & Ellis, 2008).

However, since domestic violence has evolved as a crime, police officers have been taking calls much more seriously, while recognizing the variety of reasons why battered women remain in abusive relationships. Today, domestic violence calls are one of the most dangerous situations for police officers. However, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2009), only 52% of abused women notify the police of the abuse at the hands of their intimate partner. Johnson (2007) established that victims hesitate making police contact for several reasons including fear of retaliation from abuser; thinking the abuse will eventually cease without intervention; the need to stay in the relationship for financial security and the desire to save the marriage. Felson (2007) added that National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) data show that men who abuse their spouses are less likely to be arrested than men who abuse or assault other women.

Many law enforcement agencies are very dedicated and cooperative, but sometimes there is a 'cry wolf' pattern in rural areas. An officer may say to a victim, "I have come all the way out to your house 10 times this year; you need to deal with this yourself now."

Often the officer gets frustrated, doesn't understand why the woman can't leave her abuser and may not know what else to do for her. (Johnson, 2012, p. 8.)

First responders to domestic violence accordingly, play a key role in its life cycle, as DeJong, Burgess-Proctor, & Ellis (2008) reveal that historically, police officers have had a hands-off approach in regards to intimate partner violence (IPV) because they felt as if it was a private matter. There are four reasons as to why police officers believe IPV calls are problematic: in some cases it is hard to tell who the victim is and who the offender is. Officers sometimes do not understand how complex the situation really is, leading them to be confused as to why the victim does not leave; officers who are patriarchal believe that women are at fault for the abuse; especially if they are intoxicated or if they have antagonized the abuser. Lastly, officers do not believe that the victim will help

prosecute the abuser. Not all officers, however, share the same opinion about domestic violence.

DeJong, Burgess-Proctor and Elis (2008) add some officers recognize how complex IPV could be, they were aware of the barriers that prohibited them from leaving and they agree that this is a crime that is worth investigating. When affluence is added into the equations, Standifer (2012) describes the notion that police often do not report domestic violence cases in wealthy neighborhoods. Her 25 years of experience leads her to believe that, "it is common sense, so no one questions it."

Another complication arises when it is the police officer that is a perpetrator of domestic violence. The National Center for Women and Policing (2001-2005) establishes that officers 'police themselves and their own,' when it comes to domestic violence and have an outcome that is not necessarily in accordance with the law. Findings assert that some colleagues of officers facing charges of domestic violence will attempt to protect their own by covering it up. Those officers, who are found guilty of domestic violence, are unlikely to be fired, arrested or referred for prosecution. Frequently domestic violence cases are not even prosecuted; the most common discipline for alleged domestic violence was counseling. Furthermore, the report indicated in only 19% of departments "officers would be terminated after a second sustained allegation of domestic violence." In an effort to combat this situation, a federal law was passed in 1996 prohibiting individuals, including police officers from owning or using a firearm, if convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence offense. However, many officers have found a way around this law and have maintained their position on the force as well as their ability to carry a weapon.

d) *Enactment of Mandatory Arrest Laws*

Felson (2007) described the enactment of mandatory arrest laws in the mid-1980s to 1990s was largely in part legitimized due to police officers' criticisms regarding domestic violence, and accordingly increases in arrests followed. The sudden increase can be attributed to two predominant events: the expansion of the definition of domestic violence to include more than just violence between married couples; and the increase in the arrest of females as well as 'dual arrest,' where both parties involved in the altercation are arrested (Hirschel, Buzawa, Pattavina and Faggiani, 2007).

This phenomenon was discovered via analysis of the National Incident Based Reporting System (2000) dataset that included information from 2819 police departments in nineteen different states. Hirschel et al., (2007) reports after mandatory arrest laws and preferred arrest statutes were enacted the overall arrest rate for assault and intimidation was over 30%; 49% for intimate partner violence cases; and 44% for other domestic

violence cases. As intended, the states with the mandatory arrest laws had a higher arrest rate for domestic violence compared to the states that do not have the mandatory arrest laws.

Felson (2007) found police officers do not view domestic violence as a pressing community safety issue that needs to be managed because they believe it is a private matter. The criminal justice system may further be more lenient on domestic violence offenders because they do not want to risk incarcerating an individual because of increased family hardship.

Police and the courts may assign less blame to domestic violence offenders if they view the offense as a 'crime of passion' or if offenders are more likely to be intoxicated and they treat alcohol as a mitigating factor (p.438).

Carder (2011) described police chiefs' responses to the wealthy batterer in efforts to contend with family violence among the affluent. A predominant issue at hand is that domestic violence is increasingly complex and challenging to bring to the attention of authorities, including police, as socio-economic status rises. Alternate concerns arise from innumerable victims unwilling to disclose domestic violence; as such revelations are a source of pronouncement or declaration that the marriage is in debacle or shambles.

e) *Court and Custody Issues Amongst Domestic Violence Victims*

Shapiro (2007) illustrates how some women have become displeased with how the legal system is dealing with domestic violence cases. It has become a common practice for no-contact orders to go into effect not only while a case is pending, but for a period of two to five years should there be a conviction with or without the victim's permission. Through expert interviews, Shapiro (2007) learned from an attorney for the Defender Association--

On the majority of my domestic violence cases, probably 90 percent of the time, the victim does not want a no-contact order. However, the victim 'is not listened to, she's not respected. Her opinions are not valued'. Another interviewee, a public defender who works for the Associated Counsel for the Accused suggests that the state's policy 'is just another way of overpowering a person who's supposedly already been overpowered by her partner. No-contact orders were meant for people who wanted them and not forcibly mandated by the state.

Sutherland (2004) demonstrated from a case of a wealthy domestic abuser in a high-conflict divorce, that some of such cases are actually the displays of stalking actions by the affluent batterer. Seckler (2003) called for family court reforms, as mothers who had lost custody to their asserted abusive husbands expressed

that the court system deserts and betrays abused women and children. Dits (2007) described the added difficulties for a wealthy victim in leaving an abusive relationship. Typically the abuser controls all finances and may threaten to quit his job, so that the victim will have to pay him alimony and child support while draining the victim of her financial resources. As the proceedings head into court, the affluent abuser continuously delays the court cases and hires a biased attorney to conduct the child custody evaluation, if children are involved.

According to Carner (2002) and the American Judges Foundation, 70% of the abusive men that ask for custody succeed in receiving full or joint custody. The occurrence happens all too often and has turned into a national scandal in part due to the secrecy within the Family Court system and their ignorance of the problem. Judges show their ignorance because they do not understand the dynamics of family abuse, child molestation, and they do not understand how the abuser can manipulate the system. Carner(2002) further finds that men who are surrounded by a legal team look better than distraught mothers with little or no legal team. Mothers are seen as hysterical, vindictive and paranoid by the judges, and it is these judges who are at fault for the lack of protection that the child and mother receive.

Domestic violence within a custody and access case demands a paradigm shift. By way of analogy, legal and mental health professionals can be considered akin to security guards at an airport. Ninety percent of the passengers pass quickly and unfettered through the screening process without sounding the alarm, much as the vast majority of divorcing parents need minimal legal resources to resolve their post-separation parenting plan. However, when the alarm indicates the presence of metal, or an X-ray highlights an unusual shape in a piece of luggage, extra time and care is required to conduct a more thorough search. Similarly, when parents express concerns about their safety and their children's safety, the dangers must be more closely examined (Jaffe, Lemon, and Poisson, 2003, p. 33).

According to the National Violence Against Women Survey (2007), 22.1% of females reported being physically assaulted by their partner at least one point in time. Domestic violence is not limited to spousal abuse or partners, as estimates suggest that approximately 40-60% of men who abuse their wives/partners also abuse their children or stepchildren (American Psychological Association, 1994; Groetsch, 1997). Children learn the role of parenting by observing the behavior of their parents' actions as typical, in which they may come to learn that severe measures are a normal part of parenting: sometimes it is necessary to hit those we

love. The seriousness of this problem is exemplified, in that 63% of incarcerated males (ages 11-20) were sentenced for killing the men who battered their mothers (Buel, 1992; Roberts, 1996). Furthermore, one-quarter of all suicide attempts are directly related to domestic or family abuse (Dziegielewski, 1996). If another ingredient is added into the equation of a battering relationship, such as wealth, new issues emerge.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Twelve women (ages 31-53) were selected as participants for this qualitative study. The women, all Caucasian, were located and interviewed as part of a non-random, purposive sample of self-identified victims/survivors of wealthy batterers in four different states. Due to the sensitive nature of these respondents, in order to protect their identities, little information will be revealed about them. They all are currently living in the United States. Four of them have college degrees, with one who earned a Ph.D. after her struggle to leave her violent relationship. Three of the respondents are currently attending college. The other remaining respondents have a high school diploma. Two of them stated that they did not have enough confidence to enroll in college.

For the purposes of this research, the batterer will be referred to as a male, as in only five percent (5%) of cases, the batterer/perpetrator is a female (Groetsch, 1994). Batterers were defined as upper middle class or upper class, and were self-selected and defined by the victims.

Upper middle-class is defined according to (Schaefer, 2006) as earning annual incomes over \$100,000. Those in this class comprise roughly 10-15% of the population, including professionals, such as doctors and lawyers, and tend to engage in political activity and hold leadership roles in voluntary associations. Upper-class will be defined as earning annual incomes over \$250,000, which constitute approximately 1-2% of the population, and is limited to the very wealthy, those who associate in exclusive clubs and social circles (p.352).

In cooperation with directors of safe houses (shelters) for battered women, 12 women were selected for the qualitative interviews. Two-hour interviews with each respondent were coordinated to answer stated research questions in exploration for themes and further generalizations about victims of abuse. Upon interviewing respondents, the researcher's goal for additional victims/survivors would be identified through the process of snowball sampling.

a) Research Questions

While victims of battering face many challenges in all socio-economic backgrounds, do victims of

wealthy batterers face additional challenges? If so, what are those challenges? Do victims feel that they face additional injustices due to the batterer's wealth and prominence in the communities in which they live?

Assets and advantages of the interviews yielded information from the sharing of perspectives of women who are victims of wealthy batterers and shed light on how these women experienced injustices, while attempting to seek justice from the criminal justice system.

V. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

The range of ages of the 12 respondents was 31-54 years of age. Regarding the length of time spent in the relationship, all of but one of which were marital relationships, the range of years spent in the relationship was from two years to twenty-five years. Most of the respondents had been married previously and had children from a former marriage. Likewise, their abusive partners had all been previously married, except for the youngest victim. Interestingly, in this sample, three of the respondents (two ex-wives and one former live-in girlfriend) were the victims of one perpetrator, a financial planner.

All of the batterers met the criteria for upper class batterers, holding positions as medical doctors, attorneys, a stockbroker, a financial analyst, and others owning and running successful businesses. One common thread was that the batterers twisted things: he's the victim and she's the abuser. Only one of the respondents felt that her case was handled fairly by the criminal justice system; the others felt extreme forms of injustice or revictimization by the system that is in place to protect them. One of the batterers shot himself in the head, committing suicide after threatening to do so. The police were outside the residence in a squad car and did not take his threat seriously.

My husband was waiting for me to come into the house. He knew I was in that police car with a bulletproof vest on. I told the first officer that my husband had a lot of weapons and was a 30-year Marine suffering with PTSD. The officer said that he didn't have any reason to go back in. My husband then shot himself, and it could have been prevented.

--Respondent 2

Each described their lives and sense of fright as their affluent partners beat them.

Each of them had incredible and powerful stories to tell.

The mental part will always be with me, always. It did affect my kids, because they started treating me the way my husband did, because that's all they knew.

--Respondent 4

The worst physical abuse was when we were arguing about a church wedding that was promised to me. He told me that I did not deserve a church wedding because I was an older woman. He pushed me against the wall and started banging my head against it. When I got away from him, I ran to the other side of the bed and he grabbed the back of my neck and shoved a pillow over my face. I don't know how to explain it, because when you get to the point that you fear for your life--I knew he was going to kill me and I couldn't breathe. I turned my head to the side and said, don't do this and when I was trying to talk him out of it, he shook my head and said to me, Don't you ever talk down to me bitch. Then he let go.

--Respondent 6

He would tell me that I was pathetic and that people felt sorry for me all of the time. Then he would say he would treat me differently if I would only act right. He would tell me things like how unattractive I was and that no one would want me. I started to believe it. He even performed surgery on my chest that should have been done by a surgeon in a surgical facility. He did not do it right, so it got infected and I had to see another doctor to fix it.

--Respondent 1

Listen, really, and I will just tell you. The physical part, I just learned to deal with. I had three cracked ribs, a fractured knee and I have had my teeth knocked out. I had my chin busted and a lot of bruises. The bruises fade; the bones heal and the scars are still there. You are still going to see them, but they are not as vibrant. I just learned to keep my mouth shut, to a certain point. I would sit there and take a butt chewing and would tune him out and go to a happy place in my mind and pray. I would just keep on keeping on and it would always be my fault and if I said anything, I'd get knocked down. Then I'd just say, "I am stupid. You are right. I should have never done that. I should have asked you first." There was nothing I could do. I was too damn fat and ugly. I should be down on my knees thanking God that he married me. I wasn't good at anything. I could cook, but if I cooked something that he didn't like, the table would be tipped over and none of us got anything to eat.

--Respondent 2

Twelve predominant themes emerged from the interview data.

1. A Feeling a sense of having no voice and not being heard (by police, attorneys, judges). Wealthy victims feel written off by doctors, lawyers, police, etc. feel overlooked and voiceless. One even stated, "Can anyone hear me?"

2. Misperceptions from the public and friends about abuse among the affluent: the hard-working businessmen work hard/play hard, and stereotypes of 'traditional domestic violence' increases secrecy and shame
3. The abuse happened slowly, but quickly escalated after it was too late to get away
4. They felt extreme embarrassment due to the financial status of the batterer
5. Victims of wealthy batterers face more challenges when leaving the relationship
6. Justice was denied: the police did not take their situations seriously, and judges let them down. They felt that justice was not achieved for them. It was difficult to obtain attorneys, as few willing to take on cases and overall, they were let down by their attorney's services. The victims felt bullied by batterers attorney(s)
7. They suffered from many broken bones, bruises—collectively broken ribs, four broken noses, many knocked out teeth, multiple miscarriages due to being struck in abdomen, broken arms, concussions, cut with knives and the longest time one of the batterers spent in jail was 30 days.
8. The victims did not fit in at shelters, as they drove Mercedes to the shelter. They felt a disconnect, or feeling that they did not like belong
9. The batterer threatened lengthily drawn out child custody cases to drain the victim's resources
10. The batterer used status tools to keep them in the relationships: trips, cars, expensive gadgets, handbags and pregnancies
11. All of the finances were heavily scrutinized and the victims were put on allowances. Several of them had to live on their own child supports funds (if they had children outside of the relationship, or they were shut out altogether from finances)
12. The batterer valued things, social events and trips over her and his own children or step-children. All of the batterers with children or not, were characterized by selfishness, extreme narcissism and lack of responsibility towards their children. *Here he is a person with so much status and he won't even hold the door for me. He will hold a door for himself, but not for me.*

--Respondent 7

He doesn't even know his own kids' birthdays. He did learn them very quickly after we went to court though.

--Respondent 12

13. Life in the aftermath of abuse is complicated.
14. They all offer words of wisdom--how future/current victims can be better served
I have been the safest I have ever been at the Safe House. These people took my child and me in, no questions. I mean for the first time, we felt safe. Even better than that, we felt like we were wanted.

We were important—all of that came from strangers. But judges, who didn't know us either, didn't help us.

--Respondent 10

Sub-themes

1. The perpetrators tend to call the police themselves to blame the abuse on the victim
2. The victims would take the worst of it for their kids
3. Vacations and holidays times of hell, much anticipated, but always frightening
4. The perpetrators had drastic personality changes from public life to private life—different faces and demeanors—'the Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome.'
5. The perpetrators were not kind to their stepchildren
6. The victims went without while the batterer enjoyed the wealth, but, 'oh, the gifts were really good after the violence'

a) *Feeling a sense of having no voice and not being heard*

One victim, the youngest described her life as being stuck in a place where no one can hear her—including the judges, prosecutors, attorneys and politicians that she was in contact with. She drew an invisible box in the air with her fingers and stated,

Here is a box. Do you see this box? Do you see the person inside this box? Do you hear what the person inside this box is saying? The person in this box represents people that have no voice; they have been silenced by a system. This system has been designed to not listen to this person. This person's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, basic constitutional rights, are not being heard. The person in this box may be poor, female or male, Caucasian, African American, Native American, Hispanic, Asian American, or any other racial or ethnic mixture. This person may be a single parent. What is she saying? Don't you hear her? She is saying many things and begging others to listen, but she cannot be heard. Look closer and listen. Do you hear? Doesn't anybody hear me? Why I am being wronged? Doesn't anybody care? Why can't you hear me? Why won't anybody help me? I am a productive mother and I am not on welfare. I work and make money and support my children and myself. We are being abused, my children and I. Don't you care? I am screaming now, can you hear me? I guess not; you don't want to get involved do you? There may be some replies, such as these: "That's the way it is and the way it always will be; yes, we hear you, but you are not important; I cannot understand what you are talking about; this is a free country, fight for your rights; I understand what you are going through, or that's too bad. Why won't people listen to you? I am sorry, but my hands

are tied". This is a systemic problem. Where does the solution lie?

--Respondent 7

There were a lot of people in the community that knew, even my friends knew and did not want to see what I saw and how I lived.

--Respondent 6

You would think who would do something of this kind of nature? I knew going through the divorce would be pure Hell because my ex would pull out all of the stops. There would be no stopping him. I am not so certain, that he knows a lot of people in law enforcement and some of the probation officers and I sometimes question, whether not him directly, but if someone else didn't have some influence on my case.

--Respondent 3

My police reports filed against him were kept out of court.

--Respondent 5

Who do I call when the police won't intervene?

--Respondent 8

His attorney bullied me. My attorney and the judge just let him go on. On one instance in the custody hearing, I was portrayed as neglectful. I was reprimanded by his attorney that my boys were not playing sports for two years. How am I supposed to take them to play baseball in the summer when my husband has them every other weekend? When they played soccer, he would not let them come back for their games. On the two occasions I asked him to pick up the kids after school, because I was in class (working on a Ph.D). I didn't have anyone else to do it, but he never showed up to get the boys. It didn't matter that my kids had no one to pick them up at school? Why didn't the judge stand up for me?

--Respondent 7

b) *The abuse happened slowly, but quickly picked up speed after it was too late to get out*

The abuse started right after we were married when I questioned about having a church wedding, that he had promised me after we eloped. He stated that unlike his two other wives, I did not deserve to be married in a church. It was a cycle. Every time I wanted to leave, he would get down on his knees and promise not to do it again. When we were dating, he told me that he was a Christian man and was very kind to a gentleman and me. He often brought me roses. We only dated three months before running off to get married. After the marriage, he was a completely different person.

--Respondent 1

We were married for 22 years. The first couple of years were kind of fun. I really thought it was kind of

sweet how he would say, "Okay, you don't want to go there by yourself, or if you go out, make sure that you go that way." I thought, oh...that's very sweet and concerned. I thought it was kind of cute when he would call and I wouldn't be home, and he's always ask where I'd been and what I did. As time passed, I would go to the grocery store and he would always ask for the receipt. I used to pray all of the time (please, please, please) put a date and time on everything. He would check the mileage on the car. Whenever he would leave (for days at a time) on business trips, he would leave me with five dollars as emergency money for my two kids and me.

It started about two years into our marriage. At first, it just started out as hair pulling, or he would slap me in the back of the head and asked me where was my brain? But the very first time he did it, he slapped me very hard and I was really red. I was stunned and went into the bathroom, and I started crying and I locked the door. I thought it was my fault. I came to the door and said he was sorry; that he had a bad day and it wouldn't happen again. Let me in. I said I didn't really want to talk to him right then, but I did because if I didn't, he told me he would bust the door down. I thought, maybe I just don't know about older men, because I was much younger than him. It wasn't a constant thing. But near the end, it was. I mean, I couldn't even get out of bed right. I couldn't do anything right. I couldn't make coffee right. I couldn't cook right. I couldn't dress right. I wore no makeup or had no hairstyle whatsoever. I was not worthy of a beauty shop.

--Respondent 6

The very first time that I remember him hitting me was in his parent's home. My youngest, was like two months old. We were visiting my husband's parents. Our child that has autism woke up in the middle of the night and I asked my husband to go make him some juice. There was only one kind of juice that he would drink and it was still in frozen concentrate. They were having some remodeling done upstairs and I said, could you please just get up and he very upset...I'm tired! I said, I am too, but I have the baby, please would you make it? He threw the covers back, picked up one of my sons (age 5), who was sitting up crying off the floor and jerked him by his one arm and spanked him twice. He picked another son, (age 4) up, who was sound asleep and spanked him. He picked up him up out of a sound sleep and spanked him twice, then proceeded to come around to the side of the bed at me with his arms and fists, one over the other. He just started wailing at me. I had the baby in my arms. I started screaming as loud as I could. His parent's bedroom was directly above us. Not one

person, not one person said anything about it. He didn't hurt me as much as he scared me.

--Respondent 3

c) *I'd take the worst of it for my kids*

He did all the spanking for no reason. I thought you know the punishment should fit the crime. I mean, don't spill anything in my house. Usually, when he would start to spank; he did not know when to quit. And if I thought he was going for more than he should, I would usually step in and take the worst of it for my kids.

--Respondent 2

d) *Felt extreme embarrassment due to his financial status*

I felt like I didn't fit in at shelters- like I didn't belong there. I am very educated, with a Ph.D. and felt very different from the rest. Yet I was homeless too, just like them and fearful for my life. Sleeping with a knife under my bed, in case I needed to use it against him, got very old. He didn't abide by the orders of protection. I had nowhere else to go. Sitting in the group counseling session was very awkward, as I was with all these women who were penniless and had no education. I felt like I could not relate to them, but I guess we had more in common that I originally thought. I feel their access to justice was easier for them though... because my husband and his family were socialites; I had a very tough road ahead of me. In my case, I couldn't buy justice; but his family could for themselves, but that was very skewed and distorted.

--Respondent 7

Although many of the of the respondents eventually sought assistance at a domestic violence shelter, they admitted they were forever indebted to those who helped them, they felt a disconnect; a strong feeling that they did not fit it.

I felt both strange and awkward driving my Mercedes to the shelter. It did not feel right.

--Respondent 4

I wouldn't go to a shelter because I was too ashamed, so I would check into hotels for a few weeks after the most violent episodes. Then he would find me and I would go home.

--Respondent 2

I felt really embarrassed because people put doctor's on pedestals like rock stars and because I took the abuse for so long. When we were in counseling, he just lied about everything and because he was a physician; he was the educated one and would turn it around in counseling and the sad part is that they (counselors) would believe him and that I was just a stupid woman. He diagnosed me in front of the counselor that I had all of these...I

was a drug addict and that I had OCD. They took his word for it and if I said, you are not telling me the truth the therapist would tell me that I really should work on the negative things in my life. He manipulated the counselor into thinking it was my fault and I was OCD.

--Respondent 1

I was so embarrassed. In the beginning, I didn't want to publicize my situation by filing a police report. After it got so bad, it really didn't matter any longer.

--Respondent 6

My friends backed away from the situation. They didn't want to deal with it and distanced themselves. I am no longer invited to my friends' kid's birthday parties.

--Respondent 3

e) *Misperceptions from the uninformed public and friends about abuse amongst the affluent*

He doesn't do anything for me at all. He's never done anything for me without expecting something in return.

--Respondent 2

I don't think people realize that I didn't have any access to any money when I left. Everything was his and is in his name.

--Respondent 3

Because it's more public, more people like to hear about it and because many people have contact with someone who is successful and affluent. Some people would say things like, "what do you have to complain about, you have everything; just suck it up." Some people even made excuses for him. Even some older church members though that it was just married life.

--Respondent 6

I may have purchased nice clothes and he made sure that I had all the nicest handbags. But I wasn't taking care of myself. I wasn't doing anything but. I would question my own judgment.

--Respondent 3

I had a family member tell me, you are 52 years old and have everything; just ignore it. A couple of people that I eventually confided in would say things like, you have everything you want. Stop complaining.

--Respondent 6

He was a small-town business owner. A lot of people don't want to know that he was also a perpetrator. To me, it felt like it was easier to side with the one that makes the money.

--Respondent 4

People have asked or have made a joke—"you stayed there for 22 years, you must have liked it"

--Respondent 11

There are people who I would run into that say; "I just don't understand why you would put up with it for so long." Well, when they control everything that you have.... Yes, he would leave me the car, but I had no money to buy gas. I had no credit cards. I now tell women, never be financially dependent on one person. Make your own money.

--Respondent 9

He virtually cut me off from everything, so with current credit cards went left unpaid. All of the sudden, I had to buy the food and I had to buy the supplies that he was buying for the house. There were a couple of bills, like my phone, like he had taken care of, which I had never done. He had mine cancelled after he left. So with that I had to allocate some of the funds that I had done with my credit cards and other bills to buying food and necessities. I became communicating with four or five credit cards at the time and had begun to use and was told by the attorney to use whatever I could to live on, which I did, and keep records and that would all be taken care of in the end. No, no.. It got to a point that I said, the cars needs tires, and maintenance and I said, can I get some money from him to do these things? And he said, no because you are not going to be able to do that. I wasn't awarded any money. I do get child support and maintenance, but no lump sums of any of that type to take care of those. They still remain outstanding.

--Respondent 2

f) *Victims of wealthy batterers face more challenges when leaving the relationship*

I worry after our trial, I worried if some of the tendencies that the judge saw in my husband, that maybe he didn't possess some of those himself. Just because he made a lot of money and took care of the business, well that justifies his behaviors. I don't know how one man could sit and make that judgment. Where as if it had been a selected, like a jury selection? A judge selection, such as this judge has this background...I didn't have the ability to know that, shouldn't I have known that. What his biases were? Had something happened to him? I mean, did somebody? I know nothing about him. I do know that my husband did. He did his homework, I learned after the trial. He did research on him. He knew where he was from and what his wife was doing? He even found out how many children the judge had.

--Respondent 4

Yes, they control all the money. And if they know this person and that person, it's hard for you to get an attorney. Actually it's hard to get anyone to help. It was even hard for me to convince the police that I wasn't making this up. With me, it's like the more money they have; they are more powerful; they are more domineering over you, and the more they control you. It's like they use that as well. "You can't leave me, because you will have nowhere to go." I had a hard time finding an attorney. I had one that told me, well it is his house. I said, I know, but I want my stuff. Well, it will cost you \$2500.00, but you have to have it all up front. I don't have that kind of money.

--Respondent 3

He fired three and was on his fourth attorney at the divorce trial. He finally hired a female and she was a bulldog. She was vicious and mean, as ugly as she could be to me. The things that she picked out were all of the things that she knew and he knew that would bother me. She called me a gold-digger. She chose every possible form of cutting me down that she possibly could personally. My anxiety was extremely high. I know that I was very nervous, which when you look at the real world it's something you're taught that was perceived as you are lying. So I felt really bad that day. The judge had to take 8 hours of seeing me that day and made a judgment, one of which was not in my favor.

--Respondent 9

g) The majority, but not all, felt as if the police did not take their situations seriously: they felt the situations are different for the affluent.

One respondent, the wife of a prominent attorney in the southwestern U.S spent years of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. She finally decided to leave after he threw her outside in the rain and slammed her head into the concrete. She tried to flee in her car as he smashed his hand through her car window. She then took to her feet and tried to run down the street of her affluent subdivision. He then chased her (in the rain) with his car and attempted to run her over. She dialed 911 her cellphone as she ran away from him. The police arrived and cuffed his bloody hands, cut from the glass of the car window. However, talked himself out of it being arrested and walked back inside their home and went to bed.

Other replies included similarities, in general.

I believe the police never took it seriously, especially when he was there, they told me I had to come down and file a complaint, and follow all the steps. Usually when they were called, and came to the house, they never took it seriously.

--Respondent 8

The police got involved a total of 4 times over a course of 22 years. To me, they were not very effective with my situation. They would come to the house and he would say that I was making it all up. He could be very persuasive. It was the way my husband talked and the way he stood. I would just stand there and when I would see his jaw move, the hair would stand up on the back of my neck. He did get arrested and actually spent two days in jail when he told me he was going to kill me.

--Respondent 11

When the police would come out to the house, he would scream at the officers. But that never made it into court. The cops knew he was abusing me.

--Respondent 9

We live in a pretty moderate neighborhood for one. I felt like the police were decent and were trying to keep the peace. The first time I remember having them at the house, it was spelled out very quickly— If I have to come back out here, one of you is going to jail, but it didn't seem like they really wanted to resolve the issue.

--Respondent 11

I think there's a bias with police toward domestic violence. It is a thing that poverty-stricken people only do in poor locations. Oh here this is, he owns a business, how is that he abuses his wife. Why aren't they able to figure that out? The reluctance...I do remember one time my husband threw a tantrum on the floor (then husband). The officers then talked to him and told me that they thought the situation was a childish thing. However, I never saw anything in writing about it. They told me nothing would be done about the statements about what he'd said, or how irrational his behavior was.

--Respondent 3

The police don't realize that their permitting of the abuse actually enables the batterers. They feed off of it; it makes them feel even more powerful.

--Respondent 5

*The police were involved three times. The first occasion was when he called the police and told them that I was abusing him, and I was doing drugs. The police came out and told him that him that he needed to leave for the night because they saw that his speech was slurred. The second time, after we got the divorce, he had the police and an appraiser come and walked through the house, appraising everything. The third time, I went to the police station because he was sending me all kinds of things like, "I don't care who you f****, you are stupid, etc." The police told me that they couldn't do anything because no threats were made towards my life, and it was basically his words against mine.*

I felt like they weren't doing anything, because who do I turn to if the police won't help?

--Respondent 4

- h) *There were many broken bones, bruises—collectively broken ribs, four broken noses, many knocked out teeth, multiple miscarriages due to being struck in abdomen, broken arms, concussions, cut with knives and the longest time one of the batterers spent in jail was for only two nights.*

I think over the course of seven years with him, I had at least four concussions, a broken cheekbone—most of the time I took blows to the head or face. I had injured my knee when I was 28, while running and tripped off a curb, and had a brace on it. My doctor had a horrified look on his face when he noticed the bruises at my four-week check-up, as the bruising was intense on the back of my leg and knee. My husband knocked me down and repeatedly kicked me in back of my knee and lower back. The doctor didn't even question it though. My husband, a runner and patient of his, were good friends.

--Respondent 7

The worst with me and to me was the choking. I had to wear scarves and turtleneck sweaters to hide the marks. One time I played dead when he was choking me in my closet. He thought I was dead, dropped me and kicked me in the stomach and left me lie there.

--Respondent 6

- i) *Judges toss around cases to each other, recusing themselves and ultimately letting down the victims Especially when you've got someone who has money and influence. They don't want to touch them. The judge did not want to touch him. I think the judge was so used to seeing people that were deadbeat dads, who didn't have anything to do with their children; those who weren't paying the bills. Because the judge could overlook all of my issues, that to me was unforgivable.*

--Respondent 4

We got into this really big confrontation and after it; I picked myself up and just took off walking because I didn't have a car. I hitched a ride into town and went to my eight-year-old daughter's school and got her. I then called the police and went to a safe house. We were at the safe house for about a week and my daughter couldn't go to school, because he would find and take her. The advisor at the safe house took me into another county to get a temporary restraining order. I went in front of the judge and told him that we are survivors of domestic violence and are living at the safe house. My daughter is not

able to go to school. I'd like a temporary PTO, so she can go to school and so I don't have to be afraid that he will come and get her, because if he gets his hands on her; that's it. He (judge) leaned back, and got a book and said, "You are asking me to take a child away from his father? And I said, "he is a bad man. I am telling you, in the past..." He interrupted me and said that he didn't care about the past. "Did he hit you today?" I said, no, he hit me two days ago; but I said today is when I am here for you to help me. So I got down on my hands and knees and I said, "Please just give it to me for three days. You have got to help me. He told me, "Get up woman! Get off your knees. You are wasting my time." Three days later, my husband called my cellphone saying that he wanted me to come back to the house because he was going to kill myself. I called him back and said; you always say you are going to do that. He called again and left another message and I let the police listen to it. I told him I would come. I said, after 25 years, I have a lot of stuff that I would like to say to you. My advisor and the police said I was not going in because he was going to kill me. He left a note on the counter for me. He used a shotgun on himself. A few months later, I ran into that same judge at a little party on the town square. He looked at me and said, "You look a little familiar; do I know you?" And I said, "You were in a position to help and you told me that I was wasting your time. Before I leave this town, everyone is going to know there are people in positions that can help, and need to be made aware that people like me do exist. I hate you."

--Respondent 2

It seems that everytime I would try to come to court, another judge was thrown out or recused himself. I got really tired of all of this, as I have been through five judges now. I want to be free and live in a stable, happy environment free of worry that my children are being abused. This has been going on for 10 years. Ten years? Currently the judge presiding over my case was formerly an attorney my (ex) in-laws hired when they attempted to take custody away from me, after making very false allegations about me to the Department of Family Services. The now judge was very unpleasant to me when I was on the stand. How can this be? No one listened to me. I eventually spent over \$40,000 with a new attorney and was able to leave the state, after getting a better job and more education.

--Respondent 7

When Judge #1 was placed on the case, and then my ex hired his son and his attorney asked for him (Judge #1) to be replaced. He was methodical in what he did. Judge #2 recused himself because his kids went to school with my children and although

we don't know each other very well, we were acquaintances, he felt the personal interest there might persuade the other. Then came Judge #3. I had placed so much hope into having someone finally look at this, plus because I had been told that I was so crazy by him for so long. I remember I read the divorce decree on my phone via email and I took the cross hanging around my neck and I ripped it off of my neck. I was so angry. I got nothing in the divorce, but joint custody of the children.

--Respondent 3

It's a cyclical pattern where you don't know where the violence will start and stop, but it always repeats itself, so I will always be concerned about the safety of my children. I went to court again and again to ensure my kids are being treated properly when they are with their father's. I remember his attorney asking me on the stand, "And what if this court or any other court said to you, "Ma'am, I'm going to enter an order saying the following visitation will take place, and it will be unsupervised. What are you going to do then?" I replied that wouldn't believe much in justice. I would worry, but I would abide by the court's order. It ended up that the judge gave him unsupervised visitations—all summers, school breaks and every other weekend. My children witnessed their father snorting cocaine and breaking his new wife's nose. My kids reported constant fighting between their father and new wife; I begged the judge, once again for supervised visitation to no avail. He never listened to me.

--Respondent 7

My attorney stopped working for me sometime before the divorce. Technically, he was still there, but I felt like he abandoned me. It would like five, six, seven days to get a returned phone call. When we went to trial, having the judge look at four hours of testimony and to say that my actions and claims were unwarranted and exaggerations! It just feels like you are struggling, and am I really experiencing this? I learned in my State, that it is necessary to show a history of physical abuse for the court system to acknowledge it. In my mind, I did. Over a course of 11 years, and I showed the way it started, as something very minor and how it grew to be more and more intense. And then there was the physical aspect; the verbal and emotional (always in there), but it was picking up with repeated heat. Still nothing. It is unbelievable and I know this has to happen to other people too and I have no idea what to do about it.

--Respondent 4

He had five DUI's. His behaviors were strongly ignored by the court. He was arrested for DUI's but not for beating me.

--Respondent 12

When my ex-husband took my children on vacations with him to Jamaica, he goes off and runs and goes to nightclubs. God only knows who will watch my children while he is off running around? I do not know what he will be doing, but I have been with him on many trips. He goes off and will neglect them and/or abandon them, and I don't feel like they would be safe. I begged the judge to assure me that they'll be safe and there will be no violence. I needed to know where they will be and when they're going, and who is going to watch them when he's running or partying or smoking his pot, or snorting his cocaine. God only knows what else he does on his trips, because I have been with him. I am fine with him visiting my children if I know they are safe—that is my only concern; that has been my concern and will always be my concern. I believe he should interact with them as any father should interact with their child, but again, I had to leave that to the judge (except I cannot trust the Judge) or the 5 others that have heard my case. All I can do is hope my kids will be safe. The latest judge gave him unrestricted access to the children and they may leave the country any time they are on a break from school. No restrictions! No restrictions?

--Respondent 7

Our days were set by the way that he would wake up. And you could really tell by the way he'd stir his coffee, if he'd stir it kind of gently; it's going to be a half-ass day. I think he would get mad at me because of some of the dreams he had. On morning, on Christmas, he ended up throwing his coffee at me, cup and all. Coffee went everywhere and I dropped the turkey. The turkey was all over the floor and everyone was up now because there was glass breaking and stuff breaking and they wanted to know what was going on. My daughter, who was four, at the time, actually was the one who called 9-1-1 after he tipped the table up and food went everywhere and he was screaming at me and coming at me. Then he took off when he knew the police were on their way. I did go and get a temporary protective order, which was given to me only because I had witnesses. He spent two nights in jail and we had to go in front of a judge, who ordered that my husband take an anger-management class. He was supposed to go for 12 weeks, but got a letter after 6 weeks that he had completed it in half the time.

--Respondent 8

j) *It is difficult to obtain good attorneys, with few willing to take on cases. He threatens lengthy drawn out divorces and child custody cases to drain her resources*

My attorney told me witnesses (to the abuse) wouldn't be necessary at the custody hearing.

--Respondent 11

Technically, he was still there, but I felt like he had abandoned me. I would take five, six, seven days to get a returned phone call.

--Respondent 3

I went through 4 different attorneys in seven years, which drained what little money I had stashed away to escape. No one wanted my case during the final blow. I had to go out of the county to get an attorney, who represented me horribly and left me financially in shambles. I paid my retainer to the most experienced partner in the practice who was known to be a 'bulldog' in divorce cases, but he refused to take the case, saying it would take too much time for him. He said he was handing me over to a younger, female attorney. He said she was excellent and would take care of me. I paid her \$10,000, which I had to borrow, because I did not have it. That divorce ended up costing \$16,000.00 in legal fees and she was absolutely terrible. My ex-husband did not have to pay any alimony or for the divorce. I ended up on food stamps, living in sub-standard housing and he was awarded our family home. We got joint custody and I was awarded the primary caregiver. However, my children and I were cold and hungry and only received \$75.00 a month in child support, which I had to beg for. He the bought a new Mercedes; one for him and one for his girlfriend on the very day after the divorce was finalized.

--Respondent 7

I couldn't find an attorney in town to take a case against my husband, as he was a very prominent attorney in town. We lived in a small town, with a population under 100,000 people, but he was well known. He told me that when I did get an attorney, he'd drain me and take away my kids, because I was unfit and his attorney would prove it. I lost custody of my children and moved away, as I couldn't take living near them, but not with them. I see them for two-weeks a year. He bought his divorce and custody.

--Respondent 4

When I tried to leave, he said he would take everything from me including my son, so I stayed because of my child.

--Respondent 8

We have spent tens of thousands of dollars on legal fees. He was fighting so strongly, that in the end I was not sure what he was fighting for.

--Respondent 12

k) *Trips, cars, expensive gadgets, handbags and unplanned pregnancies kept the victims in the relationship*

We went to Jamaica or Cancun every few months, or Florida. Although I looked very forward to going on the trips, he was a monster. He threw me out of the car in the middle of the street in downtown Orlando, Florida with no money and made me walk back to the hotel. with no money when I and made me walk home. That was a thing of his; kicking me out of his BMW and making me walk. (Sometimes I would have to walk miles in the freezing cold and had to go to the emergency room once because I had hypothermia). There was always, always abuse on the trips. I am really stupid for ever going, but it was my only opportunity to ever go to any of those fabulous places. Seeing the world was a great price for me. I don't know how many times that he would lock me out of our suite. One night in Jamaica, I had to sleep on a hammock on the resort because he refused to let me in. The reason: I was reading the National Inquirer on the airplane and that embarrassed him.

--Respondent 7

We had turkey, we had fish, we had steaks, and we had things that most kids would go back to school and talk about and would be like, my gosh. We made the whole beef tenderloin. We made the entire rack of prime rib. I do miss those things.

--Respondent 12

He thought everything had to be big. He knew where I came from, he did. He thought that everything had to be big and expensive and we had new cars every two years. We had a really nice house. But for the kids, and me it didn't necessarily have to be the best for us, but it had to be for him. Really, we were more like a burden and a responsibility than we were a family. He told me, if it wasn't for me and my damn kids, then he could have tons of money. I said, "We could get an uncontested divorce, that would be cheap." That was out of the question. He would admit that even though he didn't want me; he didn't want anyone else to have me either.

--Respondent 2

We got to travel to a lot of places, we went to Jamaica, Caribbean cruises and the most elaborate were the European vacations. We did not socialize too much because he did not have any friends.

--Respondent 8

He made over \$200,000 dollars a year. We had very nice things, but what good did that do?

--Respondent 9

We had seven pregnancies, total. We had our first, and the first time I ever saw his temper come out he was fabulous at keeping it. He had never shown me one glimpse of ever being impatient or fly-of-the-handle. We had not slept together at all. He offered me a trip to go to Cancun and I had not been out of the country before. I was very excited about it and wanted to go, so he obtained the passport and got all the things together and we went on the trip. That was the first time that we had slept together and I knew my cycles pretty well. I knew there was no chance of getting pregnant during that trip. Well, I did. I went to the doctor and of course, it was confirmed. I wanted to have an abortion. It wasn't something that I would ever, ever consider, but at that time in my life, and I knew that was one of my options.

--Respondent 4

- l) *Overall scrutiny and control over all finances, if the victims were not shut out altogether.*

Every bill was sent to his business address. Every statement, every credit card statement, and every phone statement. I was never able to check the phone or anything with the house. If I had credit cards, they were in my name. I paid for them myself. I was expected to use the child support from the older children to live on. For a brief period of time, he had tried to set me up on an allowance for food. After a month, he deemed that I wasn't purchasing the correct items or I wasn't making the dollars stretch as much as I should. So therefore, we began doing the shopping together, and we would go and he would pay for it. Rarely would he ever fill up my vehicle or maintenance my vehicle. He took care of his own items and I was expected to take care of whatever I wanted. No access to anything. At one point, at the beginning of our relationship, I was pregnant, he gave me his credit card and he said, use this and I put it in my wallet and I wouldn't use it. Two or three months went by and then he goes, I gave that to you--I want you to use it. He said, 'if you need gas, get some maternity clothes, and go get something'. I think I spent \$120.00 on pants or something, they are not cheap--\$30.00 each. And a couple of times with filling up the car with gas, and at the end of that month, he came to me and he took that statement out and said, you spent over \$300.00. Do you see this? He had them all highlighted and circled and so, I was in trouble if I didn't use it; and I was in trouble if I did. There was never any consistency.

Even today, the one thing I say is the only thing consistent is the lack thereof

--Respondent 4

My name was not on the checks or on the checkbook. I was authorized to sign his name only. I couldn't sign my name. I had no credit card. I had nothing in my name. The house was in his name, and as far as cars or me having my own money, no. I was not allowed to work. He handled everything and I had to account for every penny. In our household, if we did not earn it, then we didn't get it--no matter how bad we needed it. We would have to do something to earn it.

--Respondent 2

I lived on my child support from other kids. We had separate accounts. He never would apply for a joint account. I was shut out of finances. I was shut out of his business. He called it my allowance and I did have to live off of it that child support did not cover.

--Respondent 6

He would watch over everything, every penny.

--Respondent 11

I was not allowed to work, I had no job and nothing in my name. I mean, when you have to ask your husband, um....Do you think I can have twenty-dollars, I'd like to buy me a bra and maybe some underwear? He'd say, "Well, do you need it?" I'd say, "well, I guess not".

--Respondent 2

He'd ask me, "How many times did you do to Wal-Mart this month?" I'd say 5 or 6. He said once, "You have written out 33 checks and 9 of them are to Wal-Mart, that's one-third. Where's the receipt? You had better find them." He chased me around the table a couple of times and told me that I was going to learn how to do it and am going to do it the way that he would teach me to do it (manage my allowance for food and toiletries).

--Respondent 1

- m) *He valued and controlled things, social events and trips over family: exhibited extreme narcissism and lack of responsibility towards his children.*

We had status, going to all the balls, and all of that. And I was like, he would allow me to do this, but then when that was over, then I could not do it anymore. At the Balls, I never got to say anything; I never got to talk to anyone. He would take me to these functions, and I would just sit there. I was a wallflower. "Don't talk to anyone unless you are spoken to." And then I would say, why do you make me go? It was very humiliating to me, because if I did strike up a conversation with one of the other women, he would immediately come over and ask

us what we were talking about. Then it would turn into like he had to show them that he was very much in control over me. So, I would just excuse myself, go sit down and felt like an idiot.

--Respondent 3

I had to have him removed from the hospital when my oldest son was less than a year old son had RSV. My husband wanted me to leave him to go to a concert out of town with him over night. How could I leave my baby sick in the hospital to go to a concert? It got heated and security had to remove him. Four years later, security had to remove him from the hospital (again) when my 5-year old son had his tonsils out. I refused to attend a college basketball game with him while my child was spending the night in the hospital. However, neither time did anyone call the police? Both situations were very threatening and violence. Did they think because we were wealthy, that we could seek help on our own?

--Respondent 7

So many times when I was pregnant, he said, "I am going to file for divorce and you are probably going to lose the baby"

--Respondent 9

Oh, he loved his cars

--Respondent 11

The very first time that we went to his parents, I was pregnant and I had cleaned the car. Evidently, when I cleaned the windows, I had sprayed something to clean them because he was a smoker. There was a film of cigarette smoke over the window. From the Windex I had used, there were some droplets that got into his radar detector and it didn't work, so he smashed the steering wheel, he was furious, yelling and I was just beside myself. I just had never seen anything like that, so I knew then that that was what frightened me. Just the inconsistencies, the drinking. I was a responsible person in that as far as getting the kids up and getting them to school. There were times when he didn't pay the bills on time. He let them slide. That was one of his concerns during court was that I wouldn't pay the bills on time.

--Respondent 4

n) Life in the aftermath of abuse

One of the things that I miss the most is being taken care of or the feeling of being taken care of in a way of nice cars—just that knowing the bills are paid, when you are going to dinner you always know that he's paying. Knowing he's got it under control. There's a part of that, now you get out and now you are attempting to take care of yourself and you are flipping your credit card on the counter to pay for the bills. It's a little scary and a little frightening.

--Respondent 4

I think that it's too easy to women to not place themselves in number one and to place everyone above them first. That's funny; I was accused of doing that in this relationship. He called me selfish and I never took care of anyone else, but myself. I was like, no; I was the only person that I didn't take care of. I may have purchased nice clothes and he made sure that I had all the nicest handbags. But I wasn't taking care of myself. I would question my own judgment. When you are questioning your own judgment and then you realize it, and then downplay it. The emotional damage takes a very long time to recover from.

--Respondent 6

Well, I actually feel better about myself now because I am making my own money. There are things that come back to haunt me. I am freer, but I think I trap my own self, because I am just really hung up on that stuff.

--Respondent 11

I am in the process of applying for a job. Even though we split 50/50 in the divorce, I have real estate, but no liquid assets. He spent a lot of money while he was in drug rehab and had a gambling problem. I have a nice house, but I have to find a job if I want to keep it. I changed my last name, so I would not be associated with him and his drug habits. We sold off the businesses and gave up everything. Emotionally, I was generally an out-going person, but I lost the business that I made successful. It's been spiritually difficult. I am a broken person. I feel like no one would want to date me after all of the condescending remarks. My self-esteem is right out the door, if someone says I look pretty, I start to cry. When you get badgered so much, it wears you down.

--Respondent 1

I am living on student loans.

--Respondent 4

I feel like my character has been smashed into the ground and stomped on. What are you outside of your character and your reputation and who you are? There's a whole lot of rebuilding my entire person. It's extremely daunting to have to rebuild this entire person inside. It just feels awful and I feel terrible.

--Respondent 8

I choose my jobs right now (cleaning houses) because I don't like people watching me do something. Even though I know that I am doing it right, I have self-doubt in there that I am going to screw it up. For about the first three years (after it ended), when 9:00 would come around and I'd go home, I'd get a sinking feeling in my gut, because my husband used to call me every night at 9:00. If I didn't answer the phone, I would have hell to pay. So, I'd look at my watch and told myself I needed

to go home and I'd sweat. It's 9:00 and my friend would say—"he's not here. You can stay out until 2:00 am if you want to." It is still hard to realize that I am free. There are people that say I just need to let it go. Some of it I can. I don't feel guilty anymore. The only thing I feel guilty about is that I allowed it to happen for so long, and that my kids had to see all that.

--Respondent 6

o) *Words of wisdom:* how victims can be better served
I think that judges should be trained in the aspect of knowing what signs and symptoms to be looking for that might be atypical of what they've normally been taught, that. Somebody that feels anxious and intimidated in that setting—that an abused person automatically feels that anxiousness and that it's not the signs and symptoms of what they see and believe and I don't know if that should be conducted away from the abuser. It's much like a child who tries to testify against a parent, they remove the child most of the time and visit with them separately. They don't allow that parent to sit there with that influence over that person and while was sat there. My husband sat there and I did love him, but it was very difficult to remember the things when I was asked questions.

--Respondent 4

Judges need to hear why women won't speak up because they will not know know the whole story if the abuser is standing beside them or in the courtroom. It doesn't matter; they shouldn't make a judgment if they don't know the whole thing. If they don't understand it, they should say, "I am going to give you this amount of time to seek counseling, or just anger management, and then I will take a look at it. I will then have to read the reports. Well, one judge asked me, when you got the order of protection, did you lie? Regarding my husband throwing dishes at me and breaking them, the judge said, "Technically, they are his dishes, so he can break them. Who paid for them? Where did the money come from? Yes him."

--Respondent 3

I think just actually taking it and reporting it based on what is being said and if that takes recording the circumstance verbatim, video-taping it. Something that actually gives a real representation of what is going on is monumental. That would have helped in so many ways. I knew going to trial that I should have had more information. I was reassured; the judge has been through this. He will know that happens in domestic disputes. The cycle of violence—he's well aware of that. We don't need to bring witnesses in to discuss and explain the cycle of abuse. He will know that that. No, he didn't. He should have had someone trained to assist him in

the courtroom. We should have had a professional on the stand talking about the cycle of abuse, levels of abuse. I visited with the Safe House for two and one-half years, before this went to trial. It took two years to go to trial. In four years, not one word according to what I observed, in the 32 page divorce decree, he clearly states in there that because I went back to him; time--and-time-again, he felt that it wasn't as bad as I explained. And that's typical; that's textbook abuser. The vicious cycle of domestic abuse and that was the first thing that was brought to my mind. When I first started visiting with the Safe House, I learned about that little cycle of abuse how could he (the judge) not know that? Something that simple; because I went back to him time and time again, he refused to hear me.

--Respondent 4

"Judge, please listen..... to me..."His attorney handed my court transcripts from a custody hearing when I was being cross-examined. "And what is it that you think is required for your children to be perfectly safe from their father?" I said, "Safe from their father or anyone else in the household; not being hit; not being put down; not being called stupid; not being called an ass or a bitch; making sure they are being supervised at all times; making sure that they don't fight with each other; making sure they have food to eat and no drugs or sex toys they the kids could find left out in the open. All of that is safety for me. Telling them they are smart and capable, and they're doing wonderful, and they're going to be somebody, and they're not going to abuse a woman when they get older. That is what safety is to me."My husbands attorney then asked me, "All of these abuses that you claim exist as to your children have existed since the judgment of dissolution three years ago?" I said, "Oh no, there has been abuse the whole way through. There has been abuse since the divorce. Since that time; before that time, always." In the final decree, no counseling was ordered and my ex-husband had no restrictions on visitation. I guess it didn't matter what I said, or the evidence I had. The judge didn't hear me or didn't hear me or didn't care. My ex-husband's mother said to me, "Don't you know that we play with this the judge?" Then she poked an umbrella into my back as hard as she could.

--Respondent 7

I think they all need to do it differently. If I could talk to judges, police and prosecutors, I would tell them that they absolutely need to separate them, and make sure whoever is having the confrontations are separated safely. So then, the wife would not be intimidated by the husband who is standing there

under his breath, saying, "I am going to break your neck when this foolishness is over!"

-- Respondent 1

The punishment should be a lot more harsh than just anger management classes. I think batterers should have to go in front of judges and report more often. I think someone from the courts should randomly show up in the homes and ask how it is all going at least on a monthly basis.

--Respondent 7

Some of the judges should not always judge because we don't have anything to say; they just might not like the way we look. Me, I had no self-esteem or self-confidence or self-worth, not a bit. I feel like I am now getting it back. I feel like I am doing things successfully now, but when a judge is in a position to make decisions and doesn't not know, then he needs to reflect and think about it and check on it. While he is checking, we should make sure to put us in a safe environment somewhere.

--Respondent 10

I just know in my cases, everybody that was in the position to help me was a man. The prosecutors should go at them; abuse is abuse and it does not matter if the abuser is wealthy or not. The judge should order that the whole family should get counseling, including the batterer. Let the counselor help draft a safety plan and recommend proper treatment for the batterer.

--Respondent 4

Sub-themes

- p) *The perpetrators call the police to blame it on the victim*

Several times, he was the one who called the police to tell them I was the perpetrator of violence. Actually, one time, I accidentally put on a pair of his socks. I was not to touch anything of his. He called the police and lied to them. I don't think they believed him because they sat me down and told me that I was a really pretty girl and could find someone a lot better. They didn't take him away though, even though I had marks on my neck from him choking me.

--Respondent 7

- q) *Vacations and holidays are times of hell, much anticipated, but always frightening. They anticipated the trips, which turned out becoming nightmares in themselves*

They were times of hell. They were very stressful. Christmas, I know on many occasions, that I was told that we wouldn't have a Christmas; that there was no money. Everything was being paid out;

property taxes were due at the end of year as well. For a person that owns a great deal of personal possessions, you end up paying quite a bit more. Many times he insisted on keeping the store open, making money. It was so much more than making the money.

--Respondent 12

Vacations, which we took many a year, were something to look forward to—if I could just make it to this vacation, I just can't wait to be gone because when we were gone, it was like fairy-tale land. It was amazing on vacations, but I was always scared to death half the time. I knew as long as I didn't go off the resort and stay in all-inclusive, which I wouldn't encourage not being at an all-inclusive. I felt safer there. Especially with being out of the country, my father would worry every time I'd go. Sometimes, I wouldn't tell him when I was leaving. I didn't want him to fear for me. I remember being in Los Cabos and we had the children with us too. We had to fly my mother in because it was our second anniversary, and she would watch the children. We had been placed in a 6-bedroom penthouse suite with seven levels. The seventh-level had a balcony that went up to the 8th level and it went outdoors. The terrace was about two-and-a-half feet tall and then you have seven stories down. I remember having nightmares about having been pushed over. I learned that when I got back that I was expecting and lost the baby. I was about 8 weeks along I had experienced my first miscarriage that I had. My mother being there remembered an argument with him. To this day I don't remember him hitting me. I remember there was an altercation that could have gotten that close, but my mother said that he had hit me several times, and that one of them was in the stomach. I still to this day don't remember that at all. I remember the harsh words you get into this whole cycle of you fat...lewd, and trash words coming from his mouth. It took years to eliminate from my mind.

--Respondent 4

We had all this money, but for Christmas and birthdays, the kids never got what they wanted; they always got what they needed. If you could watch the video that I was always taping on Christmas morning—it was like somebody died. No enthusiasm in opening the presents. He would hand them out and you would have to wait until he told you it could be opened. It was terrible. One Christmas, when my mother was visiting (she would never return after), he told us to go drive through a place that had Christmas lights. I should have said, no. But we went and had a good time, my kids and my mom. When we got back, it was like a total different person. It was like, well it did not take us

that long to drive through, but there was a wait for 30 minutes to get in. Then we started talking about how much fun we had. Well, I couldn't have any fun. So, he asked me where the aspirin was and I just said, "it's where it always is." Then he started to throw stuff all around in the kitchen and I said, please don't do anything in front of my mother. I am her youngest and she worries about me, ok? He goes, "this is my house and I will do whatever I want!" Before I know it the tree is all knocked down and tinsel and ornaments are everywhere. My mom and sister packed up and said it would be a cold day in Hell before she'd ever come back. So, holidays were not holidays. They weren't any different from any other day. Now you would think that sooner or later, he would see what he is doing to his kids and how disappointed they were, but it's a rule.

--Respondent 3

- r) *Perpetrators had drastic personality changes from public life to private life—different faces and demeanors—the Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome.*

In public, he was well respected and poised, but at home everything was different. When he abused me, it would be in private. But after time, he didn't care and would start hitting me in front of my kids. I mean, I have every scar to prove it.

--Respondent 3

- s) *Perpetrators were not kind or caring toward stepchildren*

He did not attempt to develop any kind of relationship with my children. My son and I were not allowed to walk with him in public. When we went to the grocery store, he would shop for himself and my son and I would shop for us. We were also not allowed in the living room when he was in there watching TV or reading the newspaper.

--Respondent 2

Me and my kids had to earn our own keep in our home

--Respondent 1

I was actually his third wife. I met his first wife because he had two children with her. I found out he just up and left her for a woman that had seven children. And then I came along and had just one child. But he would not allow for her and made the decision that she's got to go. I was already pregnant by then, so it was a tough decision. When she turned 16, this was right before she ran off I wanted to give her this big party. But, I could not have a party for her. He just didn't want her around when she was little. He told me the only way she could live in his home was if she worked and paid rent.... she was 9 at the time.

---Respondent 3

- t) *The victim lived without while the batterer enjoyed the wealth, but oh, the gifts were really good after the violence*

Sometimes the gifts are really good.....

--Respondent 5

He had made plans to go to Paris and happened to be that the exchange rate had been the worst that it's ever been, so it was 3 times more than it was here. I cup of coffee was like six or seven dollars. So, immediately we went to our hotel after our flight. There are no all-inclusive in Paris. By the time we had gotten there, he was livid about the exchange rate. The hotel we had stayed at had a continental breakfasts, so I decided I would pull a couple of things such as an apple and a donut and save it for later. I would just go without eating lunch and would just let him have lunch. It became an increasingly tense, nightmarish situation.

--Respondent 4

Interviews identified the extent of injustices experienced, as well as additional difficulties in leaving the wealthy and/or powerful batterers. The findings should assist in determining whether victims of wealthy batterers need greater assistance in holding the abuser accountable and receiving proper resources upon leaving the batterer. Lastly, this analysis will aid in educating the criminal justice system pertaining to inadequate services that victims currently receive. Therefore, the criminal justice system can impose more appropriate punishments upon abusers in similar situations. The survivors deeply reiterated that we need to look closely at how judges interpret cases and how police act or don't act.

VI. LIMITATIONS

The interview questions utilized in this analysis have not been previously implemented; therefore, sufficient evidence for validity cannot be provided. Furthermore, validity and reliability cannot be established, as this was a very small sample. Although the small sample provides rich examples and lays groundwork for future research, the results cannot be assumed to be random and cannot be generalized to all populations of victims of batterers, rich or poor. Due to taking a phenomenological approach, the study is only exploratory in nature and does not test theory. However, by expanding this study in the future, theory building is potentially viable.

VII. DISCUSSION

Imagine a domestic violence victim, who has three children, no job, no attorney, no support system, or no family nearby. What does she have ahead of her? Likely court battles, finding a job, getting money to live

and eat, building a resource network, going to school, getting a bank account, finding somewhere to stay and daycare for children or new schools and building a social support network. Now, add a victim of an affluent batterer to the mix, which further complicates what lies ahead for her: fighting stereotypes of domestic violence victims'; lengthy court and custody battles; fear of losing reputation upon exposing her victimization; loss of social status; potentially losing custody of her children to the father, and not having a voice to achieve justice.

A common misconception exists as to why battered women do not leave relationships, as relatively few understand that the abuse develops slowly over time. The abuser begins to use violence as an effective method for gaining and keeping control over his/her partner, usually the spouse (Romero, 2011). By the time the pattern of violence has emerged, there may be children, financial and emotional bonds that are arduous to break. Kouremetis (2012) detailed common triggers associated with domestic violence: environments where a sudden change in circumstances occurs; acute financial problems, or loss of self-esteem. Women often face the arduous decision of potentially dissolving the family; no matter how dysfunctional family-life was. If she would leave, where would she go with no resources of her own?

Relevant themes from the voices of these participants in this analysis demonstrate that the affluent batterer bears additional challenges. As additional research is conducted on wealthy batterers, police, prosecutors, and judges may provide better treatment and protection, as they too will become more appropriately prepared in dealing with wealthy and powerful batterers, without causing injustice or prejudice to the victims.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study exposed significant and noteworthy information about the perceptions and lives of women who suffered violence at the hands of their wealthy partner. As noted above, discovering injustice was the main objective of this project. Moreover, the research focus centered upon the events surrounding women's attempts to receive justice, while experiencing difficulties due to societal images of being in wealthy relationships. Therefore, such victims are assumed to have resources that would enable them to be able to leave abusive relationship more easily. However, in reality, victims of wealthy batterers may experience more difficulty upon leaving their abusers due to the abuser's wealth and prominence in the community.

Sharing the perspectives of women who are victims of wealthy batterers sheds light on how these women experienced injustices while seeking justice from the criminal justice system and how these implications will affect future victims of wealthy batterers. Interviews

of these victims may show the extent of injustices experienced, as well as additional difficulties in leaving the wealthy and/or powerful batterers. Furthermore, the findings determine that victims of wealthy batterers may need more assistance in holding the abuser accountable and receiving proper resources when leaving the batterer. Lastly, the results of this analysis should help to educate the criminal justice system on the inadequate services that victims receive. Therefore, the criminal justice system can impose more appropriate punishments on abusers in similar situations.

Future exploration must focus on domestic violence among the rich and poor, rural and urban. Others should concentrate on police and criminal justice responses on a global scale, as both topics have been a neglected area of research. Research over the past 20 years indicates that women who leave their abusers are at a 75% greater risk of being killed than those who stay. Whatever the case and regardless of the social class, domestic violence occurs across all social and economic lines and it occurs very often, but in one-half of the cases, it will continue in silence (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). Most battered women believe that they can change the abuser or save him. However, as a result of chronic abuse, victims are likely to be diagnosed with suicide ideation, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. Both victims and batterers share a commonality of low self-esteem, which typically keeps the victim from leaving the relationship (Groetsch, 1997).

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