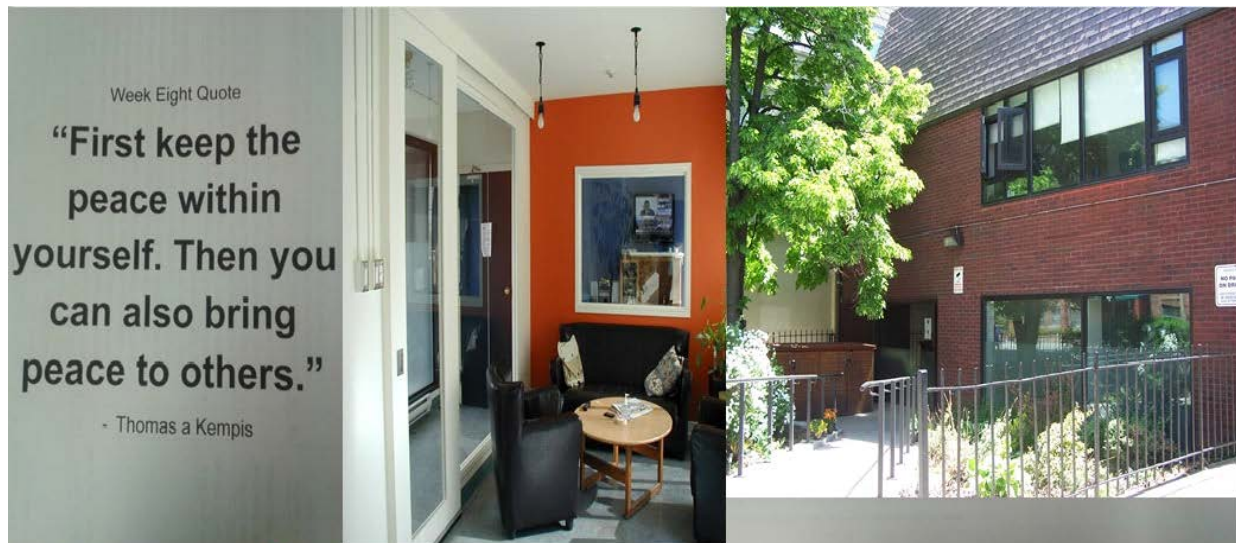


# Negotiating Empowerment

*An Ethnography of Hope, Strength & Justice*



Week Eight Quote

**“First keep the peace within yourself. Then you can also bring peace to others.”**

- Thomas a Kempis

**Elizabeth Fry** toronto  
Hope. Strength. Justice.

**SESSION FIVE**  
Dealing with Conflict: How Beliefs and Attitude Affect Behaviours

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*“When we are able to transfer the knowledge that every women can become empowered, to take control of their own lives, and to be able to fight the systemic oppression and the violence that is in their lives, that is when we feel like we have succeeded” (community program manager).*

## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on women's empowerment within the complex context of criminalization using as a case study the Elizabeth Fry society in Toronto. Formerly incarcerated women, or women who are, or have been at risk of being in conflict with the law are busy taking control of their own lives with the help of the Elizabeth Fry society. The women in conflict with the law are generally seen as in need of correction but this thesis describes an organization working on empowering these women, arguing that some of these laws are actually in conflict with women.

Fieldwork at this organization shows how empowerment is formed on a reactive site of struggle where staff is trying to work within 'the social machinery of structural violence' (Scheper-Hughes:2004). It shows how an organization, while being aware of social inequality and oppression for their clients, is trying to do what they can in terms of empowerment on an everyday basis. The impact of criminalization on empowerment in practice is described on three different levels through technologies of *hope*, *strength* and *justice*. Technologies of *hope* are described as an exploration of empowerment on the personal level. *Hope* because it is an important emotional state that is needed to look forward to a positive future. On this level of empowerment, clients learn about self-care and awareness to help reduce self-blaming and internalized oppression. *Strength* illustrates how awareness of one's position and working on the self in a social setting provides these women with a safe place and shows how the social setting influences an individualistic concept of empowerment. *Justice* describes an ongoing struggle between working with and empowering women who are in conflict with the law while working within, for & together with that same law. It explores the complexities of mandated empowerment programs and working in environments that are not supportive. Overall this ethnography of *hope*, *strength* and *justice* shows that to study empowerment in practice, one has to take into account the different ways empowerment has to be negotiated within specific marginalization contexts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Three months of fieldwork at this inspiring, high-spirited, empowering organization was the experience of a lifetime for me. A student from the small city of Amsterdam endorsing in the complex structures of the big city of Toronto. I have a hard time getting my keyboard to express all that I need to say.. I have never felt so inspired, to experience all that this world can give and take. My Thanks go out to all the wonderful women I have met and worked with at the Elizabeth Fry organization. Jo- Anne, Iryna, Fenil, Wanda, Debbi, Cynthia, Karen, Jerre, Lori, Lori from CDI, Jacqui, Michelle, Leslie, Sherette, Sophia and all the other women I've met during my stay. Thanks for having me around, inspiring me, teaching me and sharing your time! I also want to thank my wonderful family in Toronto, Port-Hope, Ajax, and Peterborough! Thanks for having me stay over and showing me around! I also want to thank Dr. Amade M'Charek for keeping in touch with me during my fieldwork and providing me with useful feedback during the writing process. I hope that everyone reading this thesis will feel content with what is written here. If not please do not hesitate to contact me at [rubymonde@hotmail.com](mailto:rubymonde@hotmail.com), please note that this thesis will not be put online if anyone disagrees with or feels offended with any of the contents.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**PAR** - 'The partner assault response program is a psycho-educational program offered by Elizabeth Fry Toronto for women who have been charged within a domestic violence situation. Women are referred to the program by Crown Attorneys, the Toronto Early Intervention Plea courts and probation officers. The program consists of an Orientation session which provides clients with the rules and regulation of the Elizabeth Fry Toronto. An agenda of the program will be provided, along with signing of contracts to participate in the program. An intake will also be provided to all Clients to be completed at the orientation. There will be 12 weeks of closed group. Each session runs for approximately 2 hrs. Some of the topics discussed in the program include the concept of anger, self-esteem and the difference between assertive and aggressive communication. How these concepts manifest in healthy and unhealthy relationships is also discussed. In addition to the work with the women also a letter will be mailed out to the victim'.

**DAP** – Direct accountability is Program at college park court Toronto. It is an alternative to prosecution for eligible individuals who have been charged with minor criminal offences. The program involves accused persons being held accountable through community- based sanctions. The program is run by Elizabeth fry at this particular court.

**Healing from abuse** - for women seeking assistance in healing from trauma and abuse, with opportunities to work on trauma and abuse experiences and support for reaching present day goals.

**Substance use** - for women on provincial probation and parole to work on past or present use issues within a harm reduction framework.

**Outreach** - Elizabeth Fry Toronto provides unique programs in support of women who have experienced homelessness, are at-risk of conflict with the law or have experienced such conflict.

**Theft and Fraud** - for women to understand shoplifting/fraud as coping behaviors and develop alternatives.

**Anger management** - for women to understand anger as a coping behavior and develop alternatives.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.efrytoronto.org/programs-services/>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

‘It is these laws and policies that are causing human suffering. It is these laws and policies that effectively criminalize poverty, disabilities and resistance to colonization. It is these bureaucrats, parliamentarians, welfare and police officers, as well as their friends in universities who come along and develop classification schemes, methods of assessments and correction tools. These are the folks pretending that the poor people who have been grabbed, sucked, or thrown into the criminal and correctional systems are there because of their own wishes and will power. [...] It seems quite ludicrous to say to women and girls not to take drugs to dull the pain of abuse, hunger, or other devastation. It seems ludicrous – until we actually start to change the situation these women and girls are faced with. What should we say to truly help women and girls who have no current or prospect of any income, housing, medical, educational, or other supports? We have to recognize that it is futile to release women and girls to the street with little more than psycho- social, cognitive-skill, or drug-abstinence programming. We have to recognize that it is wrong to believe that these women and girls are in control of, and therefore responsible for, their desperate situations. Or to suggest that they are the ones who have caused their own criminalization. We have to absolutely reject and resist such notions.’ (Kim Pate Executive director Canadian Elizabeth Fry Societies) <sup>2</sup>

Formerly incarcerated women or women who are, or have been at risk of being in conflict with the law are busy taking control of their own lives with the help of the Elizabeth Fry society in Toronto. The Elizabeth Fry society creates specific programs and services for these criminalized women in the form of individual and group counselling, crisis intervention, release planning, referrals, transitional housing and community education. Elizabeth Fry places women's experiences and their life contexts at the centre of their work. Working from the belief that when women can access the information, tools and supports they need, they have more options to move forward in their lives and to avoid further conflict with the law. With support, criminalized women are empowered to sustain positive changes in their lives, and to become actively engaged

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<sup>2</sup><https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/if-you-have-come-here-to-help-me-...-why-women-are-in-canadian-prisons-kim->



in their communities.<sup>3</sup> The empowerment based counselling that takes place in this organization on an everyday basis is informed by the notion that these women in conflict with the law are, and feel very marginalized by their various experiences of addiction, trauma, poverty and criminality. This belief that women who are considered criminalized, are actually victims of greater systemic oppressions and structural violence does not seem to concur often in the general opinion. Thus changing the globalized capitalist laws and policies that are causing harm to its citizens is a long, though and idealistic struggle. Meanwhile, the local Elizabeth fry society in Toronto is trying to provide their women empowerment within these circumstances. Trying to figure out what it exactly is what they should say to truly help these women and girls. This thesis focuses on women's empowerment in practice within the complex context of criminalization. It shows how conflicting ideas of criminalization, from the organization and the structures they work within, give shape to empowerment in practice. This case study is meant as an illustration of how empowerment 'focuses on identifying capabilities instead of cataloging risk factors and exploring environmental influences of social problems instead of blaming victims' (Perkins and Zimmerman 1995:570). It adds to the understanding of how anthropology can and should exist on the 'immediate and reactive sites of struggle and resistance' (Scheper-Hughes 2004:15) to explore concepts such as empowerment.

What does empowerment actually refer to? How is it translated into practice? And how is it translated into practice for this particular group of women? When looking up the word empowerment, Webster's dictionary defines the word empower as, "to give power or authority to; to give ability to; enable; permit."<sup>4</sup> But for anthropologists and other social scientists the concept of empowerment acquires deeper notions of understanding and analysis. Attention should be paid to the highly contested and diverse notions that the concept of empowerment entails and how it could be studied as something that has actual consequences and meaning on an everyday basis. Instead of looking at empowerment as a risk of governmentality or even 'a key modality of neoliberal self-government from the state' (Sharma 2008: 79). I want to show what ethnography and fieldwork can do to analyse empowerment as something constantly being constructed and transformed depending on contexts and beliefs having concrete meanings to the people that work

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<sup>3</sup> [www.efrytoronto.org/](http://www.efrytoronto.org/)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/empowerment>

with it. A perspective from below like this, allows the concept of empowerment to be broadly interpreted and embedded into political anthropological discussions.

The main objective of this study is to identify and gain a better understanding of empowerment shaped in practice, and to discuss the impact of social factors and circumstances in the empowerment process of criminalized women. What does empowerment look like for women who are basically not considered worthy of empowerment, because of the general view of criminalization? Two different actors in the field told me how 'working with these women is not considered sexy'. Social factors and beliefs such as these seem to define an area of social experiences and experiments which are mediated socially and expressed through empowerment in practice. The main question that I will try to answer is: What does empowerment in practice look like for women who are in conflict with the law?

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Empowerment at Elizabeth Fry Society

First and foremost it is important to outline how the Elizabeth fry society of Toronto goes about their empowerment- based work. 'Elizabeth Fry was an English woman, born in 1780 into a wealthy Quaker family. In 1812, she began visiting women imprisoned in London's infamous Newgate Prison. Appalled by the squalid conditions of poor and illiterate women incarcerated with their children, Elizabeth Fry began services such as a school for the children, and work projects so the women could earn money for their release. She also advocated with government and the public for female guards and better conditions. Her persistence and compassion led to real change for women in prison.'<sup>5</sup> The Elizabeth Fry society of Toronto provides empowerment-based counselling informed by their vision that 'ensures all women have the dignity and capacity to make informed choices about their lives and avoid conflict with the law. Women-centred, ensuring that women and girls receive services and supports that respect social, physical and cultural realities working from the values of

- **Agency:** to be instrumental in our lives and the lives of others
- **Dignity:** to ensure each person is regarded as worthy, honoured and esteemed

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.efrytoronto.org/history/>

- **Diversity:** to respect and celebrate human difference
- **Innovation:** to create change that makes things better
- **Resilience:** to recover from and adjust to change and challenge'<sup>6</sup>

Provided programs and services are: Healing from Abuse, Substance Use, Theft and Fraud prevention, Anger Management, Incredible Years Parenting, and the Financial Literacy Program. These programs are described as 'often the first stage of healing for women and are provided in group or one-to-one counselling sessions'<sup>7</sup>. Because they are community programs they are free of charge and every woman is welcome to attend them. Next to the community programs, the organization provides homelessness and outreach programs such as Pre-Employment and Work Safe programs.<sup>8</sup> Programs in the court division of the organization, such as the Partner-Abuse Response (PAR) program, Court Support and Direct Accountability Program, help women to navigate the Toronto court system and fulfil court-mandated requirements. What stood out for me was the overall mutual respect between participants, facilitators and others involved. The organization helps participants to recognize their own values and beliefs, and encourages expression of their own issues as they define them. Furthermore, they encourage individual change through training sessions and support. Overall, the Elizabeth Fry organization provides opportunities, resources and the support that is needed to gain control over their own lives again. The empowerment that they provide is based upon these beliefs and values.

## 2.2 Empowerment in Academic Literature

The origins of the concept of empowerment seem to be unclear and there seems to be no agreement on the exact meaning of the term. Most scholars do agree that it is the concept of *conscientisation*, termed and developed by Brazilian critical educator and philosopher Paulo Freire in the 1970's that has contributed to how empowerment is broadly understood today. This concept of *conscientisation* 'centres on individuals becoming 'subjects' in their own lives and developing a 'critical consciousness' – that is, an understanding of their circumstances and the social environment that leads to action' (Rowlands 1995:103). Rowlands (1995) argues that 'the often uncritical use of the term 'empowerment' in development thinking and practice disguises a

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.efrytoronto.org/mission-vision-values/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.efrytoronto.org/community-programs/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.efrytoronto.org/homelessness-and-outreach-programs/>

problematic concept' (Ibid: 101). She argues that the concept is problematic because its root concept 'power – is itself disputed, and so is understood and experienced in differing ways by different people' (Ibid: 101). This is why she frames the meaning of empowerment in relation to the user's interpretation of power. Talking about power she argues that 'in the context of the conventional definition, empowerment must be about bringing people who are outside the decision-making process into it' (Ibid: 102). In this way, empowerment seems to be about 'individuals being able to maximise their opportunities available to them without, or despite constraints of structure and State'(Ibid: 102). Also, she argues that 'empowerment is thus more than simply opening up access to decision-making space' (Ibid:102) and must involve 'undoing negative social constructions, so that the people affected come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and have influence' (Ibid 102-103).

Page and Czuba (1999) describe empowerment as a construct 'shared by many disciplines and arenas' (Page and Czuba 1999:1) They argue that 'the meaning of the term empowerment is often assumed rather than explained or defined' (Ibid). Furthermore, they state that 'it is easy to define empowerment by its absence but difficult to define in action as it takes on different forms in different people and contexts' (Ibid). Like Zimmerman (1984) they state that 'asserting a single definition of empowerment may take attempts to achieve it formulaic or prescription-like, contradicting the very concept of empowerment' (Ibid). They suggest as a general definition 'that empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important' (Ibid: 1).

For this thesis the focus is on empowerment in practice at an organization that provides social work. Parsons (2001) describes different empowerment models when she talks about social work intervention. She argues that 'a common set of principles of empowerment-based social work practice is emerging in various agencies' (Parsons 2001: 161). In another article she argues that:

'Social work's uniqueness as a profession lies in its recognition that the source of problems in which individuals is interactional with the structures and dynamic of society's major social institutions, and that individuals have unequal power in relation to such institutions. If the common goal of social work is to enable or empower clients to find and engage in resolutions to their problems and in the betterment of society, then methods and

strategies chosen by social workers must be compatible with empowerment as a goal' (Parsons 1991:8).

Methods and strategies of empowerment are influenced by the organization's understanding of power and their recognition of the uniqueness of the specific interactional issues of women who are in conflict with the law.

### **2.3 Empowerment in the context of Criminalization and Structural Violence**

At the core of the concept of empowerment is the idea of power. The way in which power is conceptualized will influence the way in which strategies of social change and empowerment technologies are developed. The organization's understanding of power is described in their vision that the source of most of their client's problems is interactional with the structures and dynamics of society's major social institutions. For the organization, criminalization seems to be a consequence of the inequalities produced by these institutions. Laws even seem to be in conflict with women. The organization seem to believe like Faith (1933) that the labelling of their clients as 'women in conflict with the law' denies a fundamental inequality. Arguing that 'One cannot simply be in conflict with a power to which one is subordinate' (Faith 1993:58).

Kim Pate, the executive director of the Elizabeth Fry societies in Canada, describes this understanding of power and criminalization further:

'Canada has been one of the first countries to be impacted by the new-globalized capitalist laws and policies that facilitate the desire for cash and products. These policies are destroying our social-safety nets – from social and health services to economic and education standards and availability. As we have recognized very concretely by the change of our mission, these laws and policies are increasingly coming into conflict with people's lives. The result is virtual inevitability of criminalization. For example, by creating extremely low welfare rates, the government has ensured that many poor people are relegated to the criminalized underclass. In their efforts to survive, poor people are resorting to welfare fraud, prostitution, drug trafficking, or whatever survival strategies they need to provide food for themselves and their families.'

Their view of power originates in state structures and policies. The state is thus a subject for the organization. How the state plays a role in everyday life is a lively discussion among scholars. 'As Clifford Geertz (1973) said long ago, (the concept of state is) a certain genre of

representation, a particularly powerful one. If the fictional reality of the state is socially powerful, then scholars must focus not only on those discourses and practices that produce this state form as real but also on the actual social and subjective life of this formation we call the state' (Aretxaga 2003:401). In the view of the organization 'the imagined national state, which is supposed to provide for its citizens, seems remote and careless, not fulfilling its obligations and generating a discourse of state deficit, an insufficient state which has abandoned its citizens' (Aretxaga 2003:396). The understanding of power in this sense seems to be comparable with what Nancy Scheper-Hughes terms as structural violence which:

'refers to the invisible 'social machinery' of social inequality and oppression that reproduces pathogenic social relations of exclusion and marginalization via ideologies and stigmas attendant on race, class, sex and other invidious distinctions. Structural violence is violence that is permissible, even encouraged. Indeed most every violent act are not seen as such, and are condoned, miss recognized, and deemed as necessary to the maintenance of crucial cultural, social and political institutions. [...] Violence is always mediated by an expressed or implicit dichotomy between legitimate/illegitimate, permissible, sanctioned acts as when the 'legitimate' violence of the state in its various manifestations is different from the unruly, illicit, violence of dangerous populations' (Scheper-Hughes 2004:14).

The understanding of power is related to the structural 'legitimate' violence that Scheper-Hughes describes and the general understanding of criminalization can be seen as the 'unruly and illicit' violence of dangerous populations. The clients that the organization is trying to empower are therefore considered dangerous and in need of punishment. Maidment (2006) describes a possible cause for this: 'Theoretical and empirical traditions of those of us in academia towards the study of "women offenders" has led to a myopic approach to research based on the implicit assumption that criminalized women are markedly different from the rest of mainstream "law - abiding citizens' (Maidment 2006:36). This illustrates how most people and even academia have thoughts about women offenders that are in line with 'the baseline assumption that one's criminal transgressions constitute one's master status which, in turn, needs to be studied, explained and corrected' (Ibid:36). These thoughts lead to the assumptions that the blame for being a woman offender is accounted on 'cognitive deficiencies to account for one's own wrongdoing'. The Elizabeth Fry organization clearly does not work from these assumptions but their empowerment has to be shaped in interaction with these visions, since they are not an isolated entity. These

conflicting views continue to influence the empowerment of these women and the need for the organization to negotiate their empowerment on a regular basis.

Describing the Elizabeth Fry organization not to be an isolated entity implies that they might be part of the social institutions, structures and dynamics of society as well, even part of the social machinery that Scheper-Hughes describes. The concept of governmentality lurks through as a risk of empowerment. Sharma (2008) describes how empowerment has become a 'key modality of neoliberal self-government from the state.' In her article she wonders about the usefulness of feminist activists to provide empowerment through the state. 'Instead of working as an alternative means for consciousness raising, a spontaneous mobilization tactic, or a loosely defined blueprint for radical action against oppression, empowerment is increasingly becoming mainstreamed and packaged into government-sponsored development programs. It has in other words become a category of governance' (Sharma 2008: 79). Although the organization is not run by the state, they do have court-mandated programs. This risk of governmentality thus has to be kept in mind. Bob Pease (2002) rethinks empowerment in a context of postmodern theories of power. He argues that 'postmodern theory provides new ways for progressive social workers to conceptualize power and empowerment and enables them to construct strategies more relevant to the postmodern context of contemporary social work' (Pease 2002:136). He makes his argument by describing a series of risks that can be associated with empowerment. Citing Foucault (1980) he argues that 'there is no guarantee that a particular discourse or form of knowledge will lead to emancipatory practices. Empowerment as emancipation may be dangerous, like any other discourses, to the extent that it sees itself as not requiring further justification or critique. It is thus possible to regard empowerment as a more subtle refinement of domination masked by the respectability of liberatory discourse' (Ibid: 138). By reconceptualising power, Pease considers empowerment to be the insurrection of subjugated knowledge. Through citing different authors, Pease argues that the Foucauldian concept of subjugated knowledge is used to privilege 'some cultural practices over others, also acts to disqualify whole groups of people who through their actions are viewed by the culture as different. They are displaced by dominant truth. They continue to exist but are denied legitimacy and acknowledgement in the larger social arena' (Ibid: 141). Empowerment, in his opinion, thus has to focus on 'how do we liberate people from dominant knowledge/power practices? Given that one of the ways in which power is exercised is through some discourses becoming dominant over others empowerment can be understood as

producing alternative power saturated knowledges rather than as seeking to seize or take power' (Ibid:141). It is thus important to recognize the link between empowerment and the development and distribution of knowledge and 'to develop strategies to contest current dominant discourses and practices and produce new knowledges and truths'(Ibid: 142). Empowerment is thus not neutral but, in his opinion, 'can support marginalized people's resistance and assist in the insurrection of subjugated knowledges' (Ibid: 141-142).

It is important to note that the main objective of this thesis is to understand how the empowerment in practice provided by the Elizabeth Fry organization, is influenced by these different workings of power. Scheper-Hughes argues that anthropology has to exist on two fronts namely as 'a disciplinary field, operating in its normal space and time and as a more immediate and reactive site of struggle and resistance', something that this thesis strives to do. As Sharma (2008) summarized:

'The concept of empowerment has layered histories and multiple avatars: a leftist strategy for political conscientization and class based politics, a feminist strategy for awareness raising and gender equality, and now a governmental and entrepreneurial strategy for development. Critical analyses of how these contentious meanings overlap and clash in different contexts, how they articulate with global neoliberal ideologies, and what risks they pose are crucial for scholars and political activists alike. The outcomes of these intersections are neither given nor unproblematic, and they point to the need for exerting constant vigilance when engaging in the politics of empowerment' (Sharma 2008:82).

## **2.4 EMPOWERMENT IN PRACTICE**

Throughout this thesis I will identify technologies of empowerment on different levels. I will integrate Rowlands' (1995), described levels of empowerment. Throughout my chapters I will describe empowerment from a personal level (chapter Hope) towards a social level (chapter Strength) up to the organizational level (chapter Justice). Exploring empowerment on different levels is necessary to provide a complete overview how empowerment in practice is shaped for women in conflict with the law, because it acquires analysis of empowerment for the women themselves and empowerment within and for the law. Although empowerment may be considered multilevel in nature, most empirical work has been limited to the individual (Zimmerman 2000). The reintegration process of the women involved can show us contradictions and tensions of empowerment. This case study will add to the argument that 'empowerment has been approached

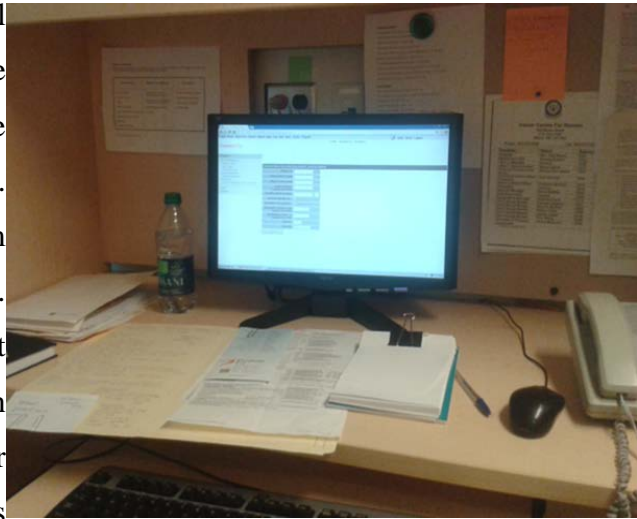


from an individualistic perspective, while power is a social phenomenon. Instead of focusing on individual mastery, researchers propose that more useful studies of empowerment would measure how empowerment brings about social cohesion' (Russel et al 2009: 893). To create strategies connected with empowerment, a necessary linkage to larger systems has to be made and worked within. This is why I will identify different levels and different techniques of empowerment. As became clear the Elizabeth Fry organization clearly has certain knowledges about the culture they have to work within and, at the same time, they provide a certain 'organizational culture' as termed by Susan Wright (1994). The 'organizational culture' can be understood as 'the informal concepts, attitudes and values of a work force' (Wright 1994:2). Furthermore, the groups, counselling and other empowerment spaces of the organization can be viewed as sites of constructing and reconstructing the meaning of empowerment. Therefore, these practices require specific techniques to understand the organizational empowerment in itself. Technologies of *Hope* are described as an exploration of empowerment on the personal level. On this level, clients learn about self-care and awareness to reduce self-blaming and internalized oppression. Technologies of *Strength* illustrate how awareness of one's position and working on the self in a social setting provides the clients with a safe place and show how the social setting influences an individualistic concept of empowerment. Technologies of *Justice* describe an ongoing struggle between working with and empowering women who are in conflict with the law while working within, for and together with that same law. It explores the complexities of mandated empowerment programs and working in environments that are not fully supportive.

Overall, this ethnography of *Hope*, *Strength* and *Justice* shows that to study empowerment in practice, one has to take the different ways of empowerment that have to be negotiated within specific marginalization contexts into account. Empowerment in practice seems to be fostered by some specific conditions for these women. A safe place, interaction with others, commonality, acceptance and validation are all factors that contribute to 'appropriate' empowerment of these women. Looking at technologies of empowerment in practice, I will explore if and how these conditions and processes are met and how they are influenced by the specific marginalization of this group of women.

## 2.5 IN THE FIELD

From behind my student desk I hear the emotional voices talking about problems and issues in the counselling rooms. I try to grasp and make sense of the different persons and events that I observe. Every time the desk phone rings when I am working on intake calls my heart skips a beat. Will I be able to refer this woman to the right program? Will I be able to understand her and can I give her some useful or soothing advice or connect her to the right counsellor? From this



desk placed in the back of the long hall on the downstairs floor, I meet all the women working at Elizabeth Fry. They occasionally come to me for small talk or I meet them in the kitchen while making some lunch or grabbing some coffee. This desk is my point of departure for this research. It is from this place that I start to feel comfortable and at times even useful at this organization. In the court halls I meet women who I've emailed or called from behind this desk. It is here that I build up the courage to ask the counsellors and peer leaders for interviews or opportunities to observe their workshops and groups.

My position during my stay was that of student working and learning at the organization. It was decided that I would come to the office on Wednesday, Thursdays and Fridays, but most of the time I found myself at the office around four days a week. At first I was assigned to assist in the court programs, later on I gained access to the different community programs and felt able to move around the organization in directions that interested me. My tasks for the organization existed of working on the intake phone, assisting in setting up group rooms, filing, helping design a prison-visit manual for volunteers and being present at the weekly PAR-groups. A little insecure and overwhelmed at first, soon enough I found myself working comfortably at the student desks and computers to process and write about my different experiences. Being a student in the office was a valuable position to do fieldwork from, it meant that I got caught up in the everyday happenings at the organization and was able to observe the everyday practice of empowerment in the most honest and open way.

Reading and writing about oppression, violence and criminalization for the initial research proposal could have never prepared me for the women I actually met and the stories they shared. In the field I understood how fragile and traumatized some of the women were and still are and I did not at all want to compromise their feeble feeling of security and trust. The past six months I've had the opportunity to think, reflect and write on what I have experienced in a very constructive manner. This is why I decide to use pseudonyms for the women I have encountered. Also, due to the elaborate data that was collected and the limited space of this thesis I will integrate observation and interview data in line of the story and not as separate units. Three months of fieldwork are not nearly enough to grasp a full understanding of what is happening on all levels of this organization and with their clients but I do hope to make a worthwhile contribution through this thesis.

### 3. HOPE

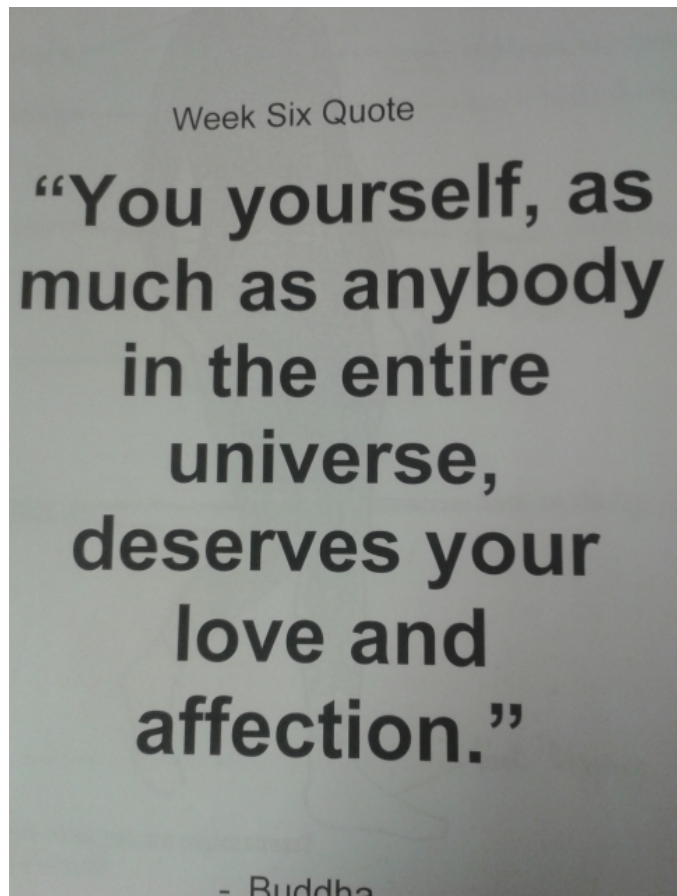
My thing is around the fact that, what is successful for me is the fact that the women can take the first step in actually taking a program, that is a success in itself, that they can actually come, if they can maintain it, even better, and if they can actually complete it then you know everybody got twinkles in their eyes! But I do think that these kinds of programs, they work I will say, more to increase the socialization and building a bit of a network to let women know that the potential exists to move beyond their current situation or just to give them that, sometimes you know that... we have to think it, we have to imagine it first and foremost even though it's not a potential realistic thing at first you can actually grow your intention internally right in a positive way, like visualization that actually changes the way you feel internally (Interview Homelessness outreach manager, 2014).

Hope seems to be an important emotional state that is needed to look towards a positive future. It seems to be simultaneously a feeling and an action since it is moved by desire and a sense of mediated future. The aspects of empowerment I describe in this chapter are identified as trying to provide the women with hope. The way change and chances are presented are aimed at creating hope, hope for a conflict-free life and hope for a new outlook on a more positive future. These aspects take place on the personal level, as the social experience wherein the journey from the old self to a new self is given shape. This is described by Rowlands (1995) as the aspect 'where empowerment is about developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the effects of internalised oppression' (Rowlands 1995:103). To explore how this looks in practice I will describe how techniques of empowerment are given shape. I will do this by laying emphasis on new understandings, future paths and changes of the self and how they are created and learned. It is in those practices that the internalised effects of oppression, power and control that come from outside are trying to be tackled. An attempt, as we will see, to provide the women with heightened feelings of self-esteem, thoughts and behaviour recognition. This process seems to start with education about the self, for attainment of one's own goals and hopefully, like the facilitator of the PAR-group stated, to 'put an end to all the madness in their lives'. It is the first step and, like the *Theft and Fraud* workshop facilitator said in one of her workshops: 'The

worst thing that can happen (today) is that you walk away and you've learned something about yourself.'

### 3.1 Always be healing

During my observations of different counselling groups, the moments that struck me most were the moments women suddenly seemed to realize the importance of taking care of the self and their low self-esteem. This sounds like something that does not happen all of a sudden or just in a moment, but reading and talking about certain topics really seemed to stir up those kinds of realizations. One vivid moment was during an observation of the PAR-group. The women had just finished sharing the impact of their incidents and arrests and we were reviewing the topics for the upcoming weeks, which included self-care. Upon reviewing this topic one of the women sitting closest to me, in the opening of the sharing circle all of a sudden looked at us (me and facilitators) and commented: 'To care for you is the most important thing right?' She then turned to the group: 'because earlier I was like, yeah right, how do I care for myself...?! I need to take care of my children first! But now, after all what has happened, I see that is not true, taking care of me is most important'.<sup>9</sup> Self-care is a returning topic in the PAR-groups as well as in the other community counselling programs. To appreciate themselves and to take care of themselves is viewed as necessary to become a better person towards others in difficult situations. I identify self-care as a technology of Hope in the empowerment process of the Elizabeth Fry organization and their clients because self-care is a



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<sup>9</sup> Observation notes PAR-group 08-07-2014.

very important aspect of the empowering process. The women have faced a lot of issues in big parts of their lives. Because of their marginalization it is fair to say that most part, at least during their criminalization, no one really has cared about them or they have been busy taking care of others. It seems a logical consequence that taking care of the self has been something they might not even have thought about before. An observation of the *substance use* group illustrated this more clearly. When we were working on an exercise called 'my beliefs about relapse', one of the women shared that her belief about relapse is: 'I am just an addict and relapse is what people expect from me anyway'. Immediately the peer leader, co-facilitating the group, reacted with 'let me spank you!' steering up some laughter in the group. The facilitator reacted on a more serious note and talked about how self-doubt is our own worst enemy. She illustrated this: 'All of you here in group agree that everyone is equal, but we also know that the labels society attaches to addiction can make you question your equality'. A young woman reacted on this by telling that indeed she is always labelled as: 'Oh that's my addicted daughter or my addicted sister'. In response to this, the facilitator asked her the question: 'But do you believe that addicts are less than others?' She answered: 'No we are all equal but still they look down on us'. The facilitator continued: 'There is this mind-set that addicted people are trash, and although we say we don't see it that way, it seems to have a way of searing in. It is comparable to internalized homophobia; queer people that come from strict families feel an internalized shame for being gay. It seems to sometimes work the same way with addicts.' She emphasized: 'Please, don't treat yourself like this, recognize your value! When we first started this group we all agreed that the substance will not define us!' The peer leader added to this that instead 'we have to internalize the tools from rehab groups, like daily self-care, eat three meals a day, go for a walk, keep up a journal!' she emphasizes: 'Listen I've been there, you need to get interested and always be healing!'.

Undoing the effects of internalized oppression thus starts with a realization that taking care of the self must become a standard technique to regain individual confidence and capacities. Being able to take care of the self can be seen as something that gives hope for a better independent future and as a necessity in the empowerment process. The facilitator advocates for them by deconstructing general mind-sets they might have, and warns them not to internalize shame or stigma. By deconstructing some aspects of marginalization the women learn to realize that it is important to care for the self in order to heal and become empowered.

### 3.2 Awareness

The second technology of Hope that I have identified can be considered a start towards realizing that one is worthy, at least, of their own love and affection. To be able to take care of the self and become empowered, the women who are in conflict with the law need to become aware of what is happening to and with them. I will describe the goal of awareness as a second empowerment technology on the personal level. It is argued at the Elizabeth Fry office that most of the women are not even aware of the abusive situations they are living in. The PAR-program manager indicated the following about this aspect provided in the PAR- program:

When we deliver the program and when we write the curriculum for the program, we write it from a perspective of consciousness raising about what abuse is. A lot of the times the women in our program are not even aware of what abuse is and that they may be in fact in an abusive relationship (Interview PAR program manager 2014).

For this reason she argues that the empowering of women in the PAR-program is successful if

A woman is able to start to identify, to wanting to make changes in her life that benefit herself and her family. I'm looking at it as a success if she actually does leave and we're able to assist her with doing that. We definitely look at it as a success if she continues to access services here at Elizabeth Fry to get that support I consider that a success. That we've got her with the services that she needs for her and her family and then from there we can refer to other agencies to make sure that she gets that family support. So even if she's starting to think maybe this isn't a healthy relationship where at one point she didn't have an idea that it wasn't a healthy relationship... baby steps, right because each woman is at a different place in her journey and her reality and we have to honour where she is on her journey (Ibid).

When I asked her what she considered to be the important topics of the PAR- program she emphasized raising awareness:

I think power and control is a very important one, women don't understand what power & control is and looking at the systemic issues around domestic abuse I think that's very important. Helping women increase their self-esteem. Raise awareness that is hugely important, helping them envision a better life for themselves and their children is important (Ibid).

Abuse within the self, internalized from certain belief systems, is thought important to be recognized. When interviewing the Community Program Counsellor about the *Theft and Fraud* and *Anger Management* groups about what she considers a successful outcome of her community program she answers:

I want them to be more aware of themselves, aware of their behaviour, aware of their thought processes, what is coming out of your mouth, like the anger cycle, in knowing that you do have a chance to stop your behaviour. Because there is an anger cycle that I do right? The event like, it is a drawn circle, then there is the event like what gets you really, really upset. The next thing in the cycle is that you are feeling yourself getting angry and you feel physiological changes, your face is getting red, your hands getting sweaty that kind of stuff. And then there is, your acting out! So now you're swearing, you're hitting you're punching you're doing whatever. And then the last thing is when you are trying to calm down and you're making excuses for your behaviour, so there is a window in there, where you are feeling yourself getting excited and when you actually going to do what got you in trouble, in between there is a 90 second window and it has been psychologically proven right, that you actually have a choice of it, what is it you are going to do but a lot of women don't know that they have those choices, that they can, I mean if you choose to go and hit someone anyways then you have to pay the consequences.. and a lot of communication, healthier communication, if they are having problems, usually it is a loved one, a boyfriend, some boundaries that's what I would like them to pick up. (Interview theft and fraud facilitator 2014. Edited by author)

Becoming aware of what is actually happening with and to you is an essential part of understanding that there is hope for change.

Another example of how awareness in the empowerment process is raised is through the *types of abuse*<sup>10</sup> assignment, handed out in the session on abuse in the PAR-group. This assignment is a list of different types of abuse with checkboxes on each side. In one checkbox the women ought to check of it they have ever done some of the abusive things on the list to others. The other side gets a checkmark if it's is ever done to them by others. In PAR-session<sup>11</sup> I have observed the women filling out this assignment and a lot of them can't hold back their tears. The facilitator decided to give the group a break and to discuss the assignment after this. She asks if the women found anything surprising or have any comments on this assignment and, if so, do they want to share? Two women answered that they found it painful to see that everything on the list has been done to them by others, and especially that these things appeared almost normal to

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix: image I

<sup>11</sup> Observation notes PAR-Group 29-07-2014



them. Other hand-outs and assignments are designed in a similar way. They are for example about recognizing what triggers you, recognizing violence and abuse, warning signs and knowing that abuse is not your fault. By becoming aware of all the things that are happening to them on a personal level the women seem to get rid of the internalized oppressions. As argued by Rowlands (1995), 'if you understand your situation, you are more likely to act to do something about it' (103). This understanding starts at the personal level. But before they can do something about their situation there needs to be some acknowledgment about what led up to it.

### **3.3 Responsibility for irrationality**

As described in the introduction, the group called criminalized women or women in conflict with the law is a group that deals with a lot of different circumstances and stigma's and is marginalized in a complex way. While empowerment is mostly viewed as something to be done with people who are powerless, dealing with 'women offenders' almost automatically leads to the implicit assumption that they themselves must have done something to be termed as 'criminalized'. Empowerment is something that is usually provided for victims, whilst criminalized women are mostly seen as making other people victims and they themselves are viewed as offenders. In the worst cases they are viewed as women who don't deserve help and should pay for what they have done. Gaining the right for wanting to empower these women is a difficult process and this influences how empowerment in practice on the personal level is shaped. Although the organization is women centred and keeps in mind all these contextual circumstances, there is still a piece of responsibility for actions and behaviour that is put in their empowerment in practice. This responsibility technology of empowerment is not a presumed 'pro-social fix for the anti-social thinking of criminalized populations' (Maidment 2006:36) but instead as Kim Pate (2006) argues 'we have to recognize that it is wrong to believe that these women and girls are in control of, and therefore responsible for, their desperate situations. Or to suggest that they are the ones who have caused their own criminalization.'

Thus women finding themselves in desperate situations sometimes act out or behave 'irrational' and therefore get caught up in criminal acts. Kim Pate explains: 'It seems quite ludicrous to say to women and girls not to take drugs to dull the pain of abuse, hunger, or other devastation. It seems ludicrous to tell them that they must stop the behaviour that allows them to

survive poverty, abuse and disabilities.<sup>12</sup> Arguing that when your situation is irrational, your behaviour will be irrational. The organization seems to work from this assumption and this is why they lay emphasis on the women being responsible to make changes for and within themselves. What did *you* do, or what happened in the past to get to this point and how can *you* change that? Taking responsibility to make changes at least for and within themselves. Awareness about what happened is one of these tools but developing a sense of self and individual confidence, also means that you are able to recognize things that go wrong within the self. Gaining control as to avoid getting caught up in a negative or desperate situation (again). Empowerment in practice at a personal level at Elizabeth fry is thus not only about developing a sense of self in a confidence building way it is also about recognizing how you can turn around the negative thoughts, feelings and images you have in order to change your behaviour. An observation of the PAR-group illustrated this more clearly.

This group starts the check-in question: 'What do you think the difference between anger and abuse is? The counsellor explains to the group of women that:

anger is an emotion, in fact many different emotions. We have to determine the separate secondary emotions that come in between anger and abuse' the counsellor continues: 'Emotion is a big part of anger & pain. But it all depends on the situation and you, and how you feel anger. Anger is an emotion and it mostly comes paired with something like jealousy. When we act upon this emotion it may become abusive. We need to try and manage it but the emotion tends to takes you over and we might make decisions we regret later. However because anger is an emotion. We can change it over; it can be used instead to make us make changes, for example getting out of our abusive relationship. Anger unfortunately also comes paired with aggression but in general we have much more control over this emotion than we realize or give ourselves credit for. Many times the first emotion lots of people use is anger. It is used as a shield because it is a safe emotion, part of our defence mechanism. But at the same time it become destructive, the angry energy should be turned around to work on the relationship instead of being revengeful, spiteful, destroying property or having hateful thoughts. Anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other one to die because in the end it makes you bitter. It's not the emotion you want to be, so how do we express anger in a healthy way? Aggression is not what you wanted. We want you to think back at the incident or other moments and ask how we could've acted differently. A different way to resolve your anger. Today we will be thinking about our style of anger.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/if-you-have-come-here-to-help-me-...-why-women-are-in-canadian-prisons-kim->

<sup>13</sup> Observation Notes PAR-group 22-07-2014

Using the angry emotion to make changes instead of acting upon it. Something that needs to change about the way that you use your anger because aggression is not what you wanted. While it is more often described that empowerment is about making yourself a subject in your own life the Elizabeth Fry organization seems to put emphasis on you being the one responsible for making changes on the personal level as well. To learn, that everybody can experience anger but doesn't act on it right away, because that is what got them into trouble at the first place, provides hope. Realizing that they're not criminal persons but just experience feelings like everybody else. Their situations or circumstances made them react on it in an irrational way. More of the groups that I observe talk about acting differently, learning new coping skills or taking a critical look at your belief systems. One woman who realized her responsibility in the PAR-group was praised for her insight sharing the details of the incident and the impact the incident had on the women is an important part of the PAR- group first sessions. While sharing is a hard part and not everyone opens up right away, this woman decided that she wanted to start sharing. She told the group that the impact of the incident has been more positive than she ever thought. She explains how she 'feels stronger now and that everything happened for a reason', the impact made her realize that she needed a break from it all to find out what the matter was with herself. The woman is thanked by the counsellor for sharing this and they praise her because they thought it to be very empowering. The hand-outs that are treated in the different groups illustrate this as well. 'Disrupting irrational thoughts'<sup>14</sup> is a hand out that is considered important and talked about extensively. It describes 'seven basic truths that are life changing'. A great emphasis is laid here on the self, how only you create your feelings, and how only you can change your feelings, views and interpretations. When working on this sheet a lot of stories in the group are shared. When it is read out loud all of the women nod and recognize statements on it. The stories shared are mostly about how the women feel unsure and unhappy with themselves and it seems acknowledged that their own negative interpretations of situations in their lives and of the situations that have led up to the incident are a huge part of the problem. Another hand-out that is used in different groups is 'creating coping skills'<sup>15</sup>, it describes that it is a 'dangerous myth that it is good to “let it all hang out”'. Some people use this theory as a license to hurt others. Research has found that “letting it

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix: image II

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix: image III

rip” with anger actually escalates anger and aggression and does nothing to help you (or the person you're angry with) resolve the situation.’ Strategies described in this hand-out look at self-talk how to make it positive and what positive thoughts and feelings you might use at each phase of your anger. Another strategy is the rage letter. You let all your angry thoughts and feelings out on paper but under no condition you send this letter, a better advice is to 'tear it up, flush it, burn it or bury it afterwards.’ Other strategies that are talked about are repeating a calm word or phrase, visualizing a relaxing experience and timing, use of humor, change of environment, avoidance or finding alternatives. ‘Cues what are they and managing my cues’ <sup>16</sup> is another hand-out that is used a lot. ‘Cues are treated here as signals, or warning signs that let you know that you are in danger of acting abusively, they tell you that you are under stress. It is important to be able to recognize your own cues, so that you can take a timeout when you need one. It is your responsibility to watch your cues and leave before it's too late.’ The hand out divides up the cues in different areas: red flag words, physical changes, negative self-talk, mental imagery and emotional. Recognizing these cues, getting to know what triggers you, what you feel about yourself and your situation are part of the technology of taking responsibility. Irrational situations provoke irrational thoughts in this fashion; these thoughts need to be recognized to be empowered in this complex context of criminalization.

### **3.4 Empowered self-talk**

It is important to know how the empowerment technologies related to the self are perceived and experienced. Focusing on narratives and personal stories and also by reviewing the evaluations and homework assignments of the groups illustrates how women regain hope while being empowered on the personal level. This can be compared to the research of Cain (1991) on how individuals come to reframe their lives as expressed in personal stories told according to the principles and cultural knowledge of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). She shows how through participation in AA meetings and assimilating the messages in the stories of established AA members a culturally specific narrative and form of genre is learned. One that provides the schematic basis for the reflexive construction and communication of an individual’s past. The AA member thus learns the AA story model and learns to place the events and experiences of his

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix: image IV

own life into this model and in this way he or she learns to understand his own life. Telling and retelling experiences can create new understandings and a revised view of the self. Retelling not only reshapes the past but can also create new ideas and pathways for the future. Caine's article is useful for methodological reasons but her view of a culture provided by the AA Model I think is too short-sighted. In her book: *The Anthropology of Organizations* Susan Wright argues that, the term 'culture has turned from being something an organization is into something an organization has, [...] the use of the term culture itself becomes ideological' (Wright 1994:4). Rather we can view the 'cultural knowledge' provided by the AA as meaning and concepts that are not fixed but constantly constructed and contested. They are multi-layered and reflexive and there should be more attention for that and other workings of power and subjectivity. The culture of an organization thus is influenced by these inter-relational aspects.

I will focus on how empowerment on the personal level is internalized in a form of narrative and self-talk and how meaning and concepts learned in counselling groups are used whilst talking about the self. Reflections on the group and future plans are reviewed in the same fashion as Caine did. The Elizabeth Fry organization hopes that the knowledge they pass on is used and remembered in future daily life, but there is no stable way to tell or prove this. Still it is interesting to see how concepts are integrated when talking about the new self and how the empowerment is understood by the women themselves. One woman for example wrote how (the *substance use*) group has helped her: 'It has helped me more than I realized, I am not alone. At times I isolated myself too much. The group has helped me in more ways than I bargained for, I am not relapsing, getting arrested or worse trapped in another abusive relationship.' Another woman wrote: 'The group is helpful because it helps you understand your own struggles and gain insight and strength off others going through similar problem which through time will eventually help you with your own addiction.' The peer leader wrote: 'I love it. It helps me. Strength, self-care, goals, personal advocacy, healing, talking, sharing, helping being positive. I am a survivor not victim' To learn what the women take away from the group I asked them to answer the question: How will the information that you have learned in the program help you in your current and or future life on of them answered: 'recognize and change my old habits, to set reasonable goals I can attain, to take care of myself. Also to cope better with my grief as I have lost my firstborn son, my second husband and then my father also over the years friends.' Another woman

learned: 'to live one day at a time' and 'To learn how to get over past and deal with it in a positive matter'.<sup>17</sup>

The PAR-group hands out an evaluation form to each woman in group after they've completed the 12 sessions. The answers give an overview of the integrated empowerment technologies of taking care of the self, awareness, responsibility and self-control. The women who filled in these answers seem to realize that they have to take care of themselves first to gain back control over their lives. They have learned to understand their selves better and to assess the way they think and behave before acting out.

In general what did you think about the group?	Did you find the information presented by the facilitators helpful?	If you had to choose one thing that you have learned from this program, what would it be?
<p><i>'I found group to be amazing, this was such a wonderfully beneficial counselling program. I've learned so many tools to help me through a difficult time, not only now, but in the future'</i></p> <p><i>'overall I think this group has helped me understand myself better and better myself as a person'</i></p> <p><i>'I felt I was lost before and in a bad situation I know feel I have tools and different avenues to explore.'</i></p>	<p><i>'The information presented allowed me to look at topics in a different way and approach life from different views.'</i></p> <p><i>'They helped to provide another out look upon things. This class have me another viewpoint and helped me with my everyday choices.'</i></p> <p><i>'The hand-outs were positive for me to re-read and reflect upon my actions as well as behavioural patterns'</i></p> <p><i>'I found the information presented by the facilitator helpful because I was able to use the tools and knowledge I learned in my everyday life. '</i></p>	<p><i>'it has helped me recognize some of my strengths and weaknesses. It has helped me asses my current life &amp;where I want to be</i></p> <p><i>'to love yourself... we must do that first if we are to NEVER come here again...'</i></p> <p><i>'start being more assertive and work on not being aggressive as well I come first need to take care of myself.'</i></p> <p><i>'To love myself first unconditionally that I am not a bad person, my behaviour was.'</i></p> <p><i>'This can happen to anyone it's all about the action you take, always think before you react.'</i></p> <p><i>'One thing I have learned from this program is the consequences of my actions. I have spent every month since my incident trying to make sense of what happened &amp;doing this program has made my actions clearer to me. '</i></p>

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Taken from questionnaire's handed out in the substance use group (August 2014)

### 3.5 'It just made me grow'

The conversations I had with the peer leaders (women who have gone through several Elizabeth Fry programs and now are trained to speak and represent the organization or work at the office) showed me the importance of empowerment on the personal level. Peer lady *Nancy*, the co-facilitator for the substance use group speaks about how she changed her life and encourages and motivates women to take small steps to do the same. When I asked her why it is important for her to be a peer leader and to pass this information on to other women who find themselves in similar situations she gave me a very emotional answer that described her situation and the importance of awareness, responsibility and acknowledgement:

Well it's, at my age, being 56 years old; I've been an addict for 25 years of my life or even a little bit more.. I've had mental issues, mental health issues of depression, I don't know if it was due to being high on cocaine or coming off it I used to suffer, you know the depression, the feeling. I also had, like a lot of things, just a lot of things dealing with, I guess, my husband and I broke up and I have these 4 kids looking at me kind of thing and, I just, I don't know maybe I had anger, hurt, pain also for my child that.. so it made me become the woman I am today which is I still struggle with, I still struggle sometimes with pain due to using and having adult kids and sometimes they throw little things at me like words and yeah from the past. But I'm as clean as I could ever be today the only thing I take is a, one baby aspirin, that the doctor tells me to take yeah. I don't even drink, I live by myself, and I usually always had one of my kids living with me.. (High pitched voice, crying) I just, this helps me every day, I'd probably would still be using and wouldn't care, but it just gives me it just makes me feel, I can't explain good, you know I can help and I can help somebody because my journey started as the young girl, my mother was a prostitute and she would bring the clients to the house probably when I was 11 and 12 when I, she shared that, because I knew she was doing something she would go to another apartment, and always I would see a man come because I would stand on the stairs and watch and at 11 and 12 she, you know, it was going on and you know as much as that is not the best thing to see, she did it very lady like it was her job, they would come you know you'd hear a little breathing and they would leave I mean that's just how my mom you know bought us food and stuff. So that's you know. Ugh I don't know just a lot of things have happened in my life to me..

In the year 2000 I was raped and held for three hours and beaten and spit on.. I was using at the time and I don't know I just still suffer from that a lot.. like sounds, slamming of doors, men's voices and even if I'm on the bus or on the subway and somebody puts their hand across to hold the rail it just, like I have to kinda it's, I don't take no medication no from no psychiatrist, but I used to be on lots yeah

(Sigh and cries) And you know getting up and coming to Elizabeth Fry it's just made me grow.

She explains it is already the very small things that can help and empower the women. She tells me how she dreams of starting her own little group or activity to help women:

yeah even an everyday group I would love to have like a drop-in centre where they would like come and yeah and you just talk yeah and they'll come just have a cup of tea or whatever.. I know that might not sound like a lot but sometimes just to let somebody cry or you tell them you know what I've been there let me tell you about my little story you know and then if I can do it, because my addiction got very out of hand when I lost my mom, I'm an only child and eh that was just a year of probably using like probably using 200 dollar worth of dope every day I was using at one time and pulling tricks and everything.. And I've been there it's not no lie no.. but I can say today you know that, you know even if it's just one day and I don't do anything here I mean you'll just see me cleaning up a little bit, doesn't matter I know that, and that's my, it helps me so.. (Interview with author 2014. Edited by author)

### **3.6 Conclusion**

I've identified different empowerment techniques by focusing on hope. To look forward to a positive future I see the rehabilitation and counselling sessions functioning as spaces and interactions where the seed of hope is planted. The first technology of hope is the realization that taking care of the self must become a standard technique to regain individual confidence and capacities. This technology of hope is closely intertwined with the second technology of hope that I've introduced. To be able to take care of the self and become empowered the women need to become aware of what is happening to them and with them. Interviews with staff members made this clear, many of them argued that most of the women are not aware of what abuse is, either done to them or done by them to others. The staff considers it important for a woman to become able to identify what is happening in her life. On the personal level this means being able to become aware that you can change certain things and stop the internalized oppression. While this is clearly a complex and emotional process, it is also hopeful to start looking towards a new positive future. The third technology of hope that is described is the part of responsibility, in order to empower these women they have to recognize their own desperate situations and get responsible to make changes at least for and within themselves. How these technologies of *hope*



actually plant the seed of hope became clear from the fractions of internalized self-talk that were collected in the field work. The technologies of *hope*, the importance of self-care becoming aware and being responsible for change all seems to be internalized by the women that answered these questions. These concepts, although not fixed, illustrate what form empowerment in practice on the personal level has. Empowerment on a personal level for women in conflict with the law seems to have many similarities with other empowerment strategies for marginalized groups. Still we can argue that the aspect of being in conflict with the law shapes this empowerment differently in subtle manners. Next to the fact that the Elizabeth Fry organization is a women centred, secure and safe place for the women to come share, heal and be empowered, also the way they have given shape to their empowerment helps to not scrutinize these women further. Sharing feelings about their situations and most of all about themselves and how they have been functioning until now seems to create a situation of trust and through time the women in most of the groups feel supported by one another. The next chapter will focus on this social aspect of being in a group and learning about social injustice to eventually understand better how the Conventional correctional logic of Toronto and even larger Canadian's society is something that influences how empowerment takes place in the organization.

#### 4. STRENGTH

One of the most empowering field work experiences for me was the lunch I had with peer leader *Nora*. Not only did her story illustrate the importance of the empowerment work of the organization, her story perfectly illustrates the difficulties, stigmas and issues that criminalized women face. It shows how empowerment for this group is something that is not easy and has to be negotiated and fought for. The voice of *Nora* introduces this chapter about the *strength* that is needed for empowerment and in turn also gained through empowerment.

I became unemployed.. I was going into programs and meetings due to substance issues that came from abuse and traumas. So not being able to maintain work, I didn't realize that there were other emotional psychological concerns that were impacting my ability to... you know, I will say being a citizen that is productive. So I was on the verge of being homeless, because when you don't have a job you can't.. I was trying to apply and getting social welfare, and so when I was trying to look for work I was excluded from a lot of positions because I had some charges. I remember being around 16 or 15 years old and going around town and that got me in and out of the system and obviously because of some of the stuff I did, I had a few things.. They weren't huge or anything like that, but they surely made sure that I wouldn't apply to banks, it just narrowed right..? So the worker there (at the *substance program*) actually gave me the information to call Elizabeth Fry wanting me to take some classes because I was coming of.. some substances. So trying to get out of my issues I didn't realize all the emotional turmoil, I was so sad, whether it was the withdrawal or whether it was.. I don't know. So I started seeing a social worker and I would see her at a certain location, just to talk about the emotional stuff. So I went there and just started the process, the great thing about that is that the social services were covered because the law had changed. So I got referred, I got a referral and then.. I really didn't see her for a while.. I didn't see her.. And I really honestly felt like she'd abandoned me.. But finally she sends me an email about the peer training program and so I joined. I learned so much about my situation, attended so many seminars and workshops. It really broadened my, I was volunteering also because I was thinking of working with seniors, or going back to school but I always had an interest coming back to the scene and giving back right? Because I'm a child of immigration, so I'm a child that has faced racism and discrimination.. In the group we learned public speaking skills, which is something that I think I have a talent for anyway, again just participating in so many of these different workshops, regaining my confidence and just learning that just because I'm poor and I'm black and have a criminal past.. I learned that I can still, by working with the women and giving back, I feel like, okay I survived a lot of things but now I am acceptable in society. They're allowing me to be in the office reconnecting me with my computer skills that I have had in the past and feel like I can enter the workforce. That's why I sent you the booking of the meeting (she had just send me a confirmation of our lunch meeting through the planner in outlook) just to make sure I get outlook and booking meetings. So it allows me to pick up these practical work skills and that is gonna help me move forward or feel *strengthened* by it. [...] But a lot of women are falling through the cracks, I've definitely fallen through the cracks and when

with the social worker and I didn't hear for a while I really felt abandoned.. Here I met this wonderful woman and then.. (starts crying) I thought I did something wrong.. I couldn't get no help anywhere.. you know what I mean? When I tried to get help with housing.. they said well oh.. you're not exactly homeless, but I was in only a room and getting social welfare in the month, I had no computer, as a matter of fact I got a computer through the Elizabeth Fry. So I always had to use a social service and everybody knows that finding a job is hard work right? So I needed support around that... and even.. When I came to Elizabeth Fry and did the program.. They fed us you know what I mean? They fed us and they gave us a token (for public transport) so you don't have to worry about what you are going to eat because you're going to have a meal and you're going to have a token.. so big deal! Because I remember days I was looking on the ground to get a token or a transfer to get somewhere right..? And that's their thing is they help women, making changes in their lives and that's.. I came here because I couldn't.. The peer program just opened up my world; I would never have had those opportunities if it wasn't for Elizabeth Fry. I still would have been at home trying to figure out how to get a job. The work is so important because I was like, I kept saying I'm falling through the cracks! Help! (Interview peer leader *Nora* 2014)

Strengthened through not feeling alone, by finding that safe haven, and by learning that you're an accepted member of society. The use of the word '*allowing*' seems to illustrate how weak these women initially feel or have felt. This chapter explores technologies of *strength* as a part of the empowerment process. It takes place on the the social level and is comparable to what Rowlands describes as 'the second aspect of empowerment', where 'empowerment is about developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of the relationship and decisions made within it' (Rowlands 1995: 87). I will also look at relationships related to what Parsons 1991 describes as a level of empowerment where 'in order for empowerment to occur, it is important to link clients with others in similar situations for validation of experience and for mutual help and support '(Parson 1991: 14). This chapter will show the importance of being aware of the self, taking care of the self and taking some responsibility for making changes in one's life. It also will show how important it is that the women learn about their circumstances and social injustices, realize that they are not alone and that they can support each other, and the ability to create a social group setting where no one is judged and can speak freely and safely about their issues. It shows the importance of the individualistic process of empowerment taking place in a very social way, while becoming aware of their surroundings and feeling safe. The staff providing this empowerment also needs strength to negotiate relations with their vulnerable group of clients and strength in the fight for the right to empower them.

#### 4.1 Strength from oppression

The first technology of *strength* that I've identified is raising consciousness between the problems that the women face and their environments and structures that oppress them. As described in the story above, having some small criminal charges clearly obstructs women from finding a job. Moreover, being an immigrant and facing racism are issues that clearly hold one back and might have caused the substance abuse. The program's counsellor told me how the women's position in society is the reason why they come into conflict with the law. This is a concept the organization works with:

I think what sets us out from other agencies, in the medical model, is that we... I'm going to say that it is because we help women who have had so many different barriers, who have been locked in the poverty cycle, who have experienced racism, homophobia, trauma, physical, sexual, emotional and mental abuse so we try to work with women where they at. It's not about saying you need to do this to stay out of trouble. It is about working with them where they are, whether it is just getting out of jail, whether it is in and out of jail for years, whether it is they simply been reported and now they're in jail, and it is really doing it from a women centred point of view, understanding the tough shit that they have gone through in their live, and how the trauma affects them right. (Silence) Because the causes of crime are not, I mean, are, are poverty, racism, trauma, all that kind of stuff and it, you know some of these women have been in and out the system for so long and they've never gotten out. (Interview *Theft and Fraud and Anger Management* counsellor)

As described before, the women working at the Elizabeth fry organization are very much aware of these societal problems and do anything they can even though there is no clear-cut solution for all these issues. The only way they are able to put this knowledge of the contextual and systemic oppressions for their clients in use, is by making them aware of these issues. This works, as I will argue, strengthening. I have observed this for the first time in the *Theft and Fraud*-workshop.<sup>18</sup> The workshop is in a group setting and takes one afternoon I came to learn that the women in the group were either charged with a minor theft, fraud offense, or signed up themselves. Five women attended the group that afternoon. The facilitator opened the group by saying: "The system is still not trying to help people but is instead shaming people.. We're not going to talk about what you did but instead about motivation, stress, women in society and self-esteem issues." After this statement the guidelines were introduced: no cell phones, no substances, but most important: no judging. Listening and participating are viewed as the most important

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<sup>18</sup> Observation Notes *Theft and Fraud* workshop 12-06-2014

guidelines of this group. After an introduction assignment and topics about impact, shame and self-esteem the facilitator moves on to the facts of women in society part.<sup>19</sup> It reads that 51 % of women in Canada have experienced violence as defined by the criminal code. The facilitator states that 'it is much higher now, even in 2014.' After reading the other facts, the facilitator adds that Elizabeth Fry is a women-centred organization that works from the women's perspective. This particular orientation is unfortunately still needed because of the unequal position of women. She then explains how almost all the women involved in crime, experience some kind of trauma and that trauma always seems to come back to 'bite you in the back' , even if you think you have dealt with it. She then explicitly states that trauma and anxiety are not things you are born with, but that it is something learned in youth and household experiences. The next sheet on women in society<sup>20</sup> is read out loud which states that women are basically second-class citizens in our society. On the bottom it states: 'Stop for a moment and ask yourself if these situations would be tolerated in our society if men were the victims of the abuses listed above'. This sheet stirs up recognition and stories in the group. The middle-aged women talk about how there was a blatant disregard for women in the 80's and how one would do inappropriate things to keep one's job at that time. The facilitator herself gives an example of how she was not allowed a hockey stick when she was younger because 'it was not appropriate for girls'. She explains that it is still common that women are not being seen or heard and that the general assumption still is that women need to be soft; otherwise they are regarded as 'bitches'. The group agrees that this causes a lot of underlying insecurity. Adding their own examples from their youth and lives opens up a lively conversation and helps some of them recognize their incidents in a framework of being a girl in this society.

A big part of the empowerment in practice is thus making the women aware of systemic oppression and other issues that are part of their marginalization. It's a technology of *strength* because knowing more and getting educated gives the women an explanation of why aspects of their lives are shaped the way they are. As Parsons describes in her study of two groups (2001), 'It is commonly agreed that raising consciousness is key to empowerment because women are often unaware of the connection between their problems and their environments and hence tend to blame themselves.' (160) Wilson and Whitmore (1994) also note that a model of

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix: image V

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix: image VI

empowerment is needed which recognizes not only the 'Immediate situations in which women find themselves, but also the structures that oppress women' (61). The organization recognizes this and strives to let their women experience another feeling about themselves than what they have felt about themselves on a regular basis. In my interview with *the outreach program* manager, she talks about how important it is to let the women experience this and to get them out of their isolation:

I think just the biggest part of it for most of the women is just the stigma, that its very internalized and you know that results in the low self-esteem or the breaking down of the self-esteem where in a women just naturally feels like nobody will hire me right? And that is probably what they are told in jail anyway and by social workers out there because the system recreates itself in a sense that if you're able to not rehabilitate people it means that you will be seeing them again. So the regular consensus would be for people, they go to jail and they're being told see you in 6 months.. right or you are never going to get a job or you will never amount to anything, you're no good this, this and that. We know that at least maybe ten percent of the women will be able to find a job right away and then there is 90% still left. And then you have a mental health of being traumatized just by the experience. And then just going to jail and the whole shaming around that.. especially in the community and your family..I think that what we try to do in some way shape or form is more psycho educational and trying to get women to see that they're more than their experience right? And that takes a lot it depends on where the women is at, at the time, and as you know that women are social creatures so we like to be in group they like to hear people's stories, they like the fact that they realize oh I have been in isolation but I like the fact that it's not just me, that I have very similar experience to these persons so that seems to work really well for women

#### **4.2 Unpack and repack your backpack**

A second technology of *strength* that I identify is recognizing 'personal belief systems' that might obstruct these women. In order to feel strengthened it seems important to recognize where certain types of behaviour, feelings and uncertainties have come from. Upbringing and learned belief systems are frequent topics in the groups. The *Theft and Fraud* counsellor illustrates in an interview how important it is:

I've actually had a couple [of women] say to me, over the years, that they thought that their anger was biologically passed on to them, but it's not, it is learned, right? So if you grow up in a house where people yell and scream, you are going to yell and scream. If there was violence, that is what you gonna go too, so, sometimes they're surprised by that., and the aggression versus the assertiveness, sometimes they're surprised that you know, people, there is no one way to describe somebody, everybody shows passive aggression or assertiveness one time.. So it's just not labelling one person as a such it's that it, it changes all the time

Thus their belief systems can change, and it is important for the women to know this.

For individual community counselling sessions, one-on-one help is available for women whose problems are too overwhelming for only a workshop or a group. An assessment is done with every applicant. The *Theft and Fraud* counsellor and I reviewed it. The assessment tries to survey all the aspects of the applicant's life. It consists of different topics and questions about their lives. What stood out is that each topic has a description underneath for the applicants about why these questions are asked. The topics range from Finances (*We ask these questions to gain a better understanding of your financial needs at this time*), Housing and neighbourhood (*We ask these questions to get a better understanding of any challenges you face with your housing and the area where you live*), Family information (*We ask these questions to get a better picture of who is important in your live right now*) and Family history (*We ask these questions to get a better sense of how your family members' experience may have influenced your situation*). These questions cover a broad range of life topics, I argue, to make the women aware that their situation is influenced by a lot of factors.

The weekly PAR-group regularly discusses awareness of where certain behaviour and problems come from. The next quote is observed in a group where the impact on children witnessing violence is the main topic. The counsellors talk about romantic relationships and parenting styles:

The culture you got from your from your upbringing and in your own family is something that you take with you to other relationships and that your partner also brings with him to his relationship. You both come from different family cultures and in these culture is where you learn your first ideas about communication styles and responsibility. When talking about culture it is not about the culture you take from the country you are from, but it is about certain values and morals that you have been thought and that you have witnessed when growing up. When we join in a relationship we join those parts. It can be material, religion, plans, education. So it's clear we are not dealing with behaviour but culture. Children witness this culture as well it is even a fact that 80% of the boys that saw violence in their youth will re-enact this behaviour later. Violence towards children is not only physical it can also be neglect. Also the fact that children can hear their parents arguing all night or hearing violence noises can affect them deeply. This is where layering starts, and anger and confusion begins. This is where we start to learn unhealthy coping skill like drugs or alcohol. We need to make sure the cycle of violence is broken. This pain makes you hurt the people closest to you because we need an outlet. The piece we mostly look for is appreciation. When appreciation is missed you become resentful. So with this piece of information in mind start to think about your children, childhood and

family, what is it for you? We are making no judgments today about good or bad parenting but we are trying to understand the dynamics of this all. (26/08)

Introducing the term 'culture' as a set of beliefs one obtains from growing up is a strategy that I saw a lot in different groups. The recognition that the 'culture' is unique for every individual and their circumstances. Knowing that their behaviour is something that is created and learned gives them the strength to realize that they can undo and change it. The facilitator explains this to a group in another PAR-group session:

We carry things unaware, we create habits, but try to move forward once you recognize the habits you got for example from your parents. They are not healthy coping styles but they are rooted deep. You identify betrayal with the people you are supposed to trust because it always happened that way. Those are unresolved issues, and they define who you are, but there is more to you than your circumstances!' What you tell yourself is mainly responsible for creating your feelings and behaviour.' so these are basically a whole lot of words saying that you got the way you cope from what you saw with your parents. What you learned as first response on behaviour. We can change different parts of our belief system but it is still part of our conscience. Ask yourself why am I affected so much by this? Because of your core beliefs. Become aware of the beliefs and attitudes that cause you to think the way you do. When arguing, back up, why do I feel this way? How is it serving me? Why am I so sensitive? We need to examine these feelings before we can change anything. Like a backpack full of beliefs. Sometimes you need to take a look into it and see what we still want to carry' (12/08)

This culture and its aspects should be recognized and deconstructed for they are described as your personal belief systems. They can be re-examined and are therefore strengthening aspects of the empowerment process.

#### **4.3 So many other women suffering too?**

Giving them a platform to share makes a difference. I think once initially they share and they've listened to other women makes a difference. Because then they realize: I'm not alone, I'm not the only person who feels this way, and then they can actually have some



hope and it is interesting to see how all these women go through this group and use this information(PAR- facilitator).

The social level where the women are linked with others in similar situations for validation of experience and mutual help and support, shows the importance of the process of empowerment taking place in a social way. 'You did a bad thing, you must be a criminal person, normal people don't behave like that' are things that the women heard or internalized in their lives and situations. Finding a connection with others and having a safe place are the third and fourth technologies of strength. They are closely intertwined, for the connections that are made can improve or decrease a feeling of safety. In the article *specific strategies for empowerment-based practice with women* (2001), Parsons argues that 'safety is the primary common human need, and it is especially critical for populations whose safety is at risk' (Parsons 2001:166). The women in the groups that were studied in her research 'emphasized the importance of a safe environment in which they could join with others who shared common experiences that may have been devaluing and demoralizing' or 'to end their isolation and find others who were as frustrated and angry as they were' (Ibid). This is the third technology of *strength* I identify: connection with others.

Firstly, group interactions are provided and constructed by the organization. For the PAR-group there is a hand-out that the women receive beforehand. On this hand-out is described what makes a good group experience. It explains that a group only works if the participants participate by talking about themselves, their thoughts, their feelings and what they are experiencing at that moment. Unpleasant feelings are encouraged to be shared and the participants are encouraged to be respectful and supportive because as the hand-out reads: if people know they are not going to be judged, labelled, put down, or attacked, their confidence will increase and their anxiety will decrease.

Providing the women with guidelines could be interpreted as an act of governmentality. Rules to oblige to, don't seem very empowering. Still, I argue that this is yet another specificity of how empowerment is shaped for women who are in conflict with the law. To know that they are here, in these groups, not to be punished but to learn and share their experiences is something that needs to be made clear to them from the start. Not to impose rules for order and obedience but for trust and empowerment. The facilitators of the group encourage proper group participation with these rules, and they try to stimulate the group experience by making verbal encouragements. One group observation illustrated this. After the break one woman shares her impact of the arrest.

She tells the group how she'd stay with her man for her daughter so that she could have a father. She also explains that she didn't share her story with anyone before, because she was afraid for judging and swore that she would take it to her grave. The counsellor asked for the reason why she kept it to herself. The women responded that she didn't want anybody to worry about her and that she always felt she could handle it herself. She said that sharing in the group made her able to sleep better and that she is smiling more now. She also talks about the stress of the arrest, how it made her lose her job and that her hair was falling out because of the stress. The counsellor responded that this is because she didn't have a healthy outlet and that this can have a severe impact on one's body. In response, she emphasized the importance and need for sharing. Another woman shared in a similar fashion that the impact of the arrest had provided her an opportunity to learn about herself and how to control herself, and that she has stopped drinking every day since. She also told how she lost her job and even her house; but that she is now trying to re-organize her priorities. The facilitators of the PAR-group react to her story with 'Thank you all for sharing, I know that wasn't easy'.

#### **4.4 Facilitators role**

The facilitators of the group thus seem to play an important role in making the group experience a strengthening and safe one. The role of the facilitator can also be a contested one. When Pease (2001) talks about eventual risks associated with empowerment in his article *Rethinking empowerment*, he describes empowerment often to be spoken about as 'something that is done to people, or that people do to others. Those people that 'do' the empowerment are increasingly likely to be health and welfare professionals' (Pease: 2001:137). He cites different authors to show that

Postmodern analysis alerts us to the potentially oppressive role of professional and scientific discourses in the power to define the social world. Such discourses claim objectivity and portray themselves as part of moral and social progress. Social work as a professional discourse is based upon an assumption of expert knowledge [...] thus the professional knowledge claims of social work can become a means of ideological domination (Ibid).

Rowlands (1995) points out a similar concern about the role of the professional. She argues that 'a process of empowerment that seeks to engage poor and marginalized people cannot be

effective if the methodology is 'top-down' and directive, or encourages dependency.' Furthermore, she states that 'empowerment is a process that cannot be imposed by outsiders – although appropriate external support and intervention can speed up and encourage it. It calls for a facilitative approach and an attitude of complete respect for and confidence in the people being worked with or accompanied' (Rowlands1995:105). Pease (2001) argues that 'the tension inherent in the professional-client relationship is likely to undermine empowering interventions unless that relationship itself is reconstructed and the professional knowledge base upon which it rest is subjected to critical scrutiny' (Pease:2001: 144). The importance of being critical and reflexive is voiced by one of the facilitators:

Self-disclosure requires a delicate balance in any kind of therapeutic interaction. The default is non-disclosure of personal experience, and one departs from there only to the extent that the disclosure will add value to the conversation. When people are, and feel very marginalized by their experiences of addiction, trauma, poverty, victimization, criminality etc. they general feel very “other” from the people who are trying to help them. In empowerment based counselling, it is often helpful to break down the “us and them” barrier. (Interview *Substance use* facilitator 2014)

This quote comes close to Rowlands description: 'It requires conscious and sustained effort to modify that pattern of behaviour and to clarify mutual expectations' (Rowlands 1995:105). What this can look like in practice is something I have experienced during the observation of the *Healing from Abuse* group.<sup>21</sup> The group is a group consisting of 8 to 10 women and takes up to eight weeks. The focus is on trauma and childhood abuse. In the group they discuss abuse and anger management, but the main focus is insight of where the abuse came from. Why, for example, did their mother behave the way she did? What current patterns can be recognized in their current lifestyle and relationships? The *Healing from Abuse* group was the most intense group that I observed, I was touched very deeply. My observation notes of this group are not very extensive because I did not feel comfortable to make notes. Also it did not seem an ethical thing to do at those moments because the problems and stories that were discussed were still impacting the women. For this group I was warned in advance to keep myself as neutral as possible and not be an inquiring student, because safety and trust still needed to be built. There were only three women in the group and in my notes I've described them as anxious and cautious in their movements and way of speaking. All three women expressed that they were trying to talk but that

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<sup>21</sup> Observation Notes *Healing from abuse group* 22-8-2014

it was very hard because they were afraid of reliving their experiences and, as a consequence, that it would become too real. The facilitator told the women they could scream, cry, and break down, because 'we've all been there and we will all understand'. A lot of time was used on the impact of the trauma. This helped the women realize they are not alone, that their symptoms aren't strange or unique, and that their problems originate from these traumatic events. One hand-out that stood out for me was the 'true and false quiz' about power and control.<sup>22</sup> This hand-out was used to make the women aware that abuse isn't their fault. Some illustrative statements are 'If you're being abused, it's your fault', 'If I am being abused and want it to stop, I should change my behaviour', 'I've pissed off my partner, so I deserve to be punished' and 'Witnessing abuse will not have any impact on my children'. Realizing that these statements are false is an important aspect of the empowerment process. Although the group is very intense and emotional, it was said to be the first to have opened up this much in the second session already. One woman in the group commented that she felt very comfortable here because we, the facilitators, also took part and shared our stories. She said that in other groups she hadn't felt comfortable because of the distance between herself and the facilitators. In this session the facilitators (two from the organization and me) were very engaged. The facilitators shared their stories about abuse and anxieties, past and current. They also involved me by asking me what I do in stressful situations. I got very emotionally engaged with this group and felt slightly troubled afterwards. I had participated in this group, talked about coping and stressful situations and almost felt like a fraud because I've never experienced abuse and trauma comparable to these women.

#### **4.5 Safe place**

A visit to one of the outreach programs (the work safe program) made it clear to me how strengthening it is just to have a safe place to come together and talk. The outreach programs provide education and support to homeless and at risk women in the community. During my fieldwork I resided in Scarborough, a district and former municipality within the eastern part of Toronto. I soon came to find out that this part of Toronto is seen as 'crime-ridden' and one of the area's Elizabeth Fry strives to implement more programs. This area and some of its residents are viewed in a very stigmatized way in the general opinion and especially the media. The

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix: image VII

consequences for street workers are explained more clearly in an interview with the *outreach* program manager:

What then happens in Scarborough is the area that we actually target is called the, it used to be called the motel strip. Basically in the last two to three years they've been redeveloping and building new condominiums or new apartments and stuff like that. And so a lot of women, it has kinda been pushing women underground. So that is basically where things are at right now. And off course pushing women underground means again possibility of higher STD's, crimes, violence, safety is then a huge issue and stuff like that because they're afraid to come out and actually access services. One of the other reasons why that is particularly troubling for Scarborough is that two years ago there was a shooting that occurred and there were 21 people that got shot and one or two persons that died I think. However the police were targeting the sex workers because they assumed that they would know information.. So that started the underground movement once again for women so basically we partnered with Scarborough healthy communities, which is where the drop-in is being held, because they themselves have also indicated that they've seen activities around the neighbourhood and so we kind of jumped on the opportunity to have the space not just for the drop-in but have it so the women can come in and take a break, feel safe like if they're doing something or if they need to run away and they need somewhere safe they have that space. So that happens every Tuesday and then there is street outreach that happens every Friday for the work safe program.'

The safety of this particular group is at risk, they are viewed as the unruly, illicit and dangerous population in this area. My observation of the outreach program illustrates what this safe place looks like in practice. The program is at a community drop-in office in a quite big meeting room with tables and chairs set up as a canteen-like setting. Me and *Deborah*, the peer leader that facilitates this group, are preparing health and safety packages. *Deborah* tells me to put in about three or four clean crack smoking tubes, a handful of condoms and ten clean smoking filters. These bags will be handed out by her on the street to the female street workers, but also to the men that hang around in the parks and on the streets. *Deborah* explains: 'If they are not healthy, the women can't be healthy either'. The women that came this day entered, got introduced to me, helped themselves to some coffee or tea and started chatting with each other. Topics range from having French-Canadian family and the traditions it brings, to pizza, tea, etc. They talk a lot and they talk loud. These women are not per se street workers, but they have a history of either prostitution and/or drug abuse. They talked about being insecure, depressed, being too proud to ask for help and thinking that they were special, that no one else had 'the same shit going on'. One woman claimed to be in this drop-in only because she has no other female friends and wants to talk every now and then. But to me it is emphasized by *Deborah* and acknowledged by the other

women that: 'all that these women need is good support'. After the drop-in, *Deborah* tells me: 'I'm hoping to change people's life because they look up to me, I'm like a living testimony and so hopefully they see that and they'll change their lifestyle because they know that they can'.



#### 4.6 Space

Interaction with others, commonality support, trust, acceptance and validation are all factors that influence a feeling of safety. But how about actual space? As stated above, the specific marginalization of this group of women, pushing them underground and in the worst areas of

Toronto makes clear that providing a safe place should literally have safe spatial dimensions. This, I argue, influenced how the office of the organization is located, decorated and set-up. The office is resided in a big street in downtown Toronto. In the street it is hard to spot because it is further to the back than the other buildings on the street. The building has two large windows in the group room. The women inside are able to see the street but people outside are not able to look in directly because of shading paper on the window. Letting in plenty of light to make the room nice for the people who are in it, but also securing privacy. On the building there is a sign that notifies 24h camera surveillance. In order to get in, one has to press the buzzer and, depending who is working, the door will be opened either by the receptionist or by someone working upstairs in the residential surveillance room. If there are groups in process in the main floor meeting room, the receptionist will pay extra attention to who is entering. She also keeps general notes of disturbances in front of the building or suspicious activities on the street. The building consists of three floors: the main floor holding the receptionist desk, several offices and a big group room. The upper part of the building is transitional housing, where there is also a small group room that is used for in-house counselling and sometimes meetings for staff. The downstairs area consists of the community program offices and a smaller group room used for several community programs for smaller groups. I will not describe the full details of the inside of the building (like the placement of the different offices or surveillance rooms) because of security reasons. The main floor group room is a spacious room that can be set-up in different ways for different groups. In it are a lot of chairs that can be placed and replaced as one wishes. For group sessions the chairs are placed in a large circle. In the middle of this circle, on the floor, a box of tissues and a basket with pens is usually placed. Before a group starts the women can wait in the receptionist area, which holds some chairs and a flyer holder with information that could be helpful for the women.

On a table next to the reception desk a basket full of condoms is placed for anyone to take. Another thing that stands out in the office are the heroin needle disposal boxes that are placed in every toilet. Downstairs is an open kitchen that is mostly used by staff but also to prepare meals for a group. The cabinet with the food has a big lock on it. The facilitators of the PAR-group always wear safety buttons around their neck. They are obligated to wear it, but sometimes they remember it last-minute or even after the first break. The conflicting concepts of criminalization in empowerment can be found in the spatial aspects of the building. On one hand, the

organization focuses on harm reduction and works hard to make the building and everything in it a place that feels safe for the women that they consider victimized. On the other hand, they have taken (obligated) measures, like the alarm button and locks on the offices and cabinets to protect everyone in the building for people with possible bad intentions. An organization that has profound reservations about the context in which they work, is constantly negotiating its stance and therefore safety.





## 4.7 Conclusion

Gaining strength from being listened to and heard, hearing similar stories from others, realizing that you're not alone and becoming part of a social group. Empowerment through knowing that you are not your circumstances or experiences. Although the technologies described above make the women aware of their unequal position they still work strengthening, because by becoming aware of the bigger issues that are causes for being in conflict with the law it strengthens your position in relationships and society. Technologies of *strength* are formed on a social contextual level. As Rowlands describes, they help to strengthen the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of these relationships. As I've shown, this takes place in relationships between the women and between them and the facilitators. To learn where certain behaviours, feelings and beliefs come from, making connections and feeling safe are identified as specific empowerment technologies. The empowerment in groups makes the women see that they're not alone, that there exists a safe place to share, and that they and their stories are worthy and valid. Sharing can help with repositioning yourself and your problems in life.

The facilitators of empowerment-based counselling constantly need to show strength in negotiating their position and their stance. Aware of bigger dominant structures, they try to stay reflexive and try not take a position that could be interpreted as dominant. Aspects of criminalization and becoming aware of systemic oppressions and structural violence influences empowerment on this level as well. As peer leader Nora told, becoming aware of the bigger issues that are causes for being in conflict with the law and learning that one still is or can become an 'acceptable citizen of society', is something that these strengthening technologies illustrate.

## 5. JUSTICE

Of course our cause isn't sexy. It's a tough road because, again that's the stigma.. people think: lock them up and throw away the key.. and there is a huge portion of society that believes that, you know, they're not unaware they just don't even care..(Court-program manager).

During my fieldwork I've encountered a lot of situations that illustrated an ongoing struggle between working with women in conflict with the law and working within, for and together with that same law, e.g. offering court-ordered and mandated programs and at the same time being a service centred organization that first and foremost *supports* these women. As mentioned in the introduction, the Elizabeth Fry organization works from the belief that there is a fundamental inequality in being in conflict with the law, as 'one cannot simply be in conflict with a power to which one is subordinate' (Faith 1993:58). Laws can even be seen as being in conflict with women. A lot has been written about the injustices faced by women who come into conflict with the law. In this chapter I will try to translate such powerful articles to the actual empowerment in practice of an organization that needs to work on both sides of the law. This translation will illustrate this struggle in what I describe as technologies of *justice*. My focus will be on the individuals working at the court programs for the Elizabeth Fry organization. These individuals are trying to achieve a more meaningful participation in the development of criminal justice policy, more access for their clients to victim services, fair and affordable legal aid, and, on a higher level, more just and non-discriminating laws for women in society. Empowering their clients for whom empowerment is not viewed as something they need or deserve, in restricted environments. This chapter describes empowerment in practice within a framework of justice.

### **5.1 At risk of being in conflict with the law while helping women in conflict with the law**

During my fieldwork at the Elizabeth fry organization my position was the court programs student. This meant that I assisted the partner's assault abuse program when in the office, and work with the court volunteers and the college park court diversion program outside the office. Me being the student meant that I was responsible for sending out partner contact letters, calling the women to make sure they would attend sessions, and keeping track of the homework assignments. At one of my first days I received training about the PAR-program and about

Canadian laws and the justice system. I was told that actually 'everyone is at risk (to be in conflict with the law) and they make us believe that everybody is innocent until proven guilty, but it seems to actually be the opposite, the system is just not fair'. The more staff I talked to the more it showed that everybody at the organization had similar views. Over time it became clearer to me how this is dealt with in practice. Because the PAR-program is a mandated program where women are referred to after they've been charged within a domestic violence conflict, providing this program means that the women need to follow certain rules, complete all the sessions, be productive and prove that they want to participate. The facilitators of the organization providing the PAR-group are trying to format the sessions in a positive supportive and empowering way (according to the mandate of the organization). At the same time, they have to provide the women in the group with strict rules about being on time and not missing any session under any circumstances (unless death, emergency or jail), as ordered by the courts and the probation and parole officers. The official goal of the program is an opportunity for the women to examine their beliefs and attitudes towards domestic abuse, and to learn non-abusive ways of resolving conflicts. The difference between the people who mandated this program, such as the probation officers, and Elizabeth Fry is that the organization works from the point of view that women who are charged with abuse are often victims of abuse. In the group they try to make them aware through examining beliefs and attitudes so they can learn what abuse is and how to leave their desperate situations. This means that the organization has to find clever ways to implement these conflicting interests in the program.

During my participation as a student in the court programs there were times that I felt like an intruder, this was because of the continuous struggles I will describe in this chapter. I was not a student of social work needing practical experience to learn more about facilitation skills, so it was often unclear for the facilitators who I was and what I wanted. My requests to observe the PAR-program was something that might not have been understandable for the facilitators; this made me feel a bit insecure. Gaining access to the PAR-group had its difficulties at times because the facilitators were worried about safety and trust issues. The program manager allowed me to participate in the groups but the facilitators formed second thoughts on this. The first time I observed I sat in the circle with the women, visibly making notes, and it made me feel a little awkward because I wasn't able to reveal a lot about myself. The second time I was told by one of the facilitators that I was welcome to observe, but that I should not write as much as I did last

time. Some of the women in the group apparently asked her if I was writing down personal information and showed some honest concerns about this. The facilitator then explained to me how women in the program might still be on probation and if some stories leave the group it might get them in trouble in terms of violating their parole conditions. Furthermore, if they get in trouble I could also be called in court as a witness, meaning that I have to share all the information that I have written down. This might jeopardize their frail feeling of safety. I continued to observe the group from within without making notes but got concerned that I wasn't able to remember everything going on. I voiced my concern. In order to learn more I would like to make notes. The facilitator, who warmed up to me a great deal now, understood this very well and together with the manager we thought of another solution. For the new groups I was located behind the reception desk and they kept the door open. This way I could keep an eye out on the main entrance, let the women back in when the break was over, refill coffee and tea and, most importantly for me, I could observe the group, hear them and make notes without making the women nervous or suspicious. Additionally, I believe my keeping an eye out helped the women in their perception of safety. Concerns and mandatory aspects of the program even influenced my position as an observer. This example illustrates the difficulties of gaining trust of women who are referred to the organization because of a criminal charge.

## **5.2 Vision in mandate**

Aspects of working together with the law system and mandated group counselling influence the facilitators. They are constantly trying to figure out moral questions and concerns they face. In the court program staff meeting, several issues were discussed concerning the program and its mandatory aspects. One facilitator voiced the concern that the homework that is given to the clients could give them a lot of unnecessary stress when they have to do it at home, with the risk of their violent partners seeing this. She notes that it is not possible to do the homework during the session because, as part of the mandated participation, they have to do this at home by themselves. Concerns for their clients' safety and the strict rules that have to be followed in group often clash. There is also talk about conflicts between the system, facilitators and the women themselves, who are sometimes testing the boundaries of the group or don't open up at all because of fear of the system or a feeling that they should not be there. The ministry that ordered

this program wants to see what the PAR- curriculum looks like, which makes the pressure on the facilitators even greater. There seem to be some moral questions about how many the women can be forced to conduct the rules and do their homework. The facilitators also wonder what to do when they are trusted with issues concerning breaking parole conditions or setbacks in substance abuse by the clients. Officially this needs to be presented to court but on the other hand the women confide in them. In turn, the facilitators don't want to shut them down, because they feel that they have already experienced similar shut-downs in the system and at court. To explore how the facilitators are trying to provide the women with the original social service mandate of the organization, instead of oppressing them again, it is important to look at how the women get in the program in the first place.

Pollack, Green and Allspach (2005) conducted a research about the unintended consequences of the mandatory charge policies in Ontario's law enforcement:

Since 1983, the Ontario provincial government has promoted mandatory charge policies for domestic violence cases. The purpose of this policy directive was to better protect women when abuse is taking place. The spirit of the policy was both to hold the abusive partner accountable and to reduce the likelihood of putting women at a greater risk of abuse by having to press charges. Although, in Ontario, the policy direction was initiated in 1983, it has only been since the creation and wide scale implementation of specialized domestic violence courts (in 1996-1997) that the policy has been put into practice in a more consistent manner. Since these changes, however, there has been an alarming increase in the number of women arrested in domestic violence situations. Initially, the increase was manifested through dual arrests; both the male and female were arrested in domestic violence situations. After much discussion and concern in the community, and analysis within the police service, the number of dual arrests went down considerably. This change, however, resulted in a noticeable trend of women being solely arrested. (Pollack et al. 2005:3)

Pollack et al. (2005) argue that this is firstly because the legal definition of domestic violence tends to focus on a single incident rather than on ongoing abuse, power and control over a partner, and secondly because men tend to have more and enhanced knowledge of how the criminal justice system works, which 'allows abusive men to 'use' the criminal justice system against their female partners' (Pollack et al 2005:4). Key findings of this research show that almost all of the participants in the research stated 'they had a history of physical, emotional and sexual abuse by the same male partner against whom they were charged with using force. In fact, 6 of the 19 participants called the police in order to obtain protection from their male partner.

However, they were themselves arrested' (Ibid:7) and 'the physical act for which they were charged (e.g. pushing partner away from her, throwing plastic bottle or phone, biting when being held down, and in one case using a knife against her partner) was women's attempts to protect themselves from further abuse'. However, 'because they are categorized as 'offenders', women arrested for domestic violence are often not eligible for support from a variety of victim services' (Ibid: 26). Pollack et al. argue that 'it is imperative that there be increased support and advocacy for women arrested in domestic violence situations, such as help negotiating an unfamiliar court/legal system and access to community and social services' (Ibid:26). This is exactly what Elizabeth fry tries to do through taking up the responsibility of providing the PAR-program and through other court programs. The research of Pollack et al. is equivalent to stories of charges that I heard or read in files during my involvement within the PAR-group. These stories are familiar with the facilitators as well, during an interview with the co-facilitator of the first par cycle we talk about what the consequences are of mandatory charges and highly complex court struggles:

I think it is hit and miss because if we listen to some of the par women some of the women had really bad experiences with the police and some women very well and I think it depends on the officer it depends on where his state of mind is if he had a bad day then he is going to, like they don't care.. So and when it comes to the court systems.. well you can't really blame the courts in many ways because if it is the women that has been abused and has never reported it, and finally gets caught defending herself it's her own fault in a way but at the same time I think there should be more compassion towards the women who has experienced all this abuse because she doesn't know better. She is filled with shame and everything else and all of a sudden you're just like her abuser who is this big massive usually male role.. Even if it's a lesbian situation there is always an alpha right.. And then you have the court system which is basically the same thing looking down on you, you'd be scared to death.. So it's like that role doesn't change for the women she is always in fear, and the first thing that you do, what do you do? My dog does it all the time... she becomes submissive and then she pleads guilty because that what she is supposed to do.. Like when the husband beats.. Oh I'm sorry it was my fault you know what I mean? I don't think society is comfortable with recognizing what a woman actually goes through, the trauma that she goes through..'

An ongoing challenge between empowerment and mandated aspects of the PAR-program continue to influence the way the actual PAR-group is shaped. Understanding the complexities of the charges these women are faced with, making sure that they are not oppressed again, and giving them an opportunity to talk can be identified as a technology of justice that the organization tries to provide. It can be compared with the collective level of empowerment that

Rowlands describes, empowerment at a level 'where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone. This includes involvement in political structures, but might also cover collective action based on cooperation rather than competition. Collective action may be locally focused for example, at village or neighbourhood level or institutional, such as national networks or the United Nations' (Rowlands 1995: 104). I will describe how the individual staff members work together, creatively working with and around the mandated parts of the PAR-program to provide justice according to their own women-centred mission, vision and values. Although empowerment and collaborations with the state are viewed upon critically, I will illustrate that such 'programs, perhaps unintentionally, make it possible for women to recognize that the goal of social change requires transforming governance and re imaging the state' (Sharma 2008: 82).

### **5.3 Serviceable guidelines**

Guidelines are introduced to the women in their individual intake assessments but to make them less abstract they are also discussed and negotiated in the group itself. At the new PAR- cycle that I observe the facilitator does this by asking the group what they need and want in order to feel safe and secure enough for sharing. The first rules are agreed up right away: no eating during group, confidentiality, no cell phones, no side conversation or talking over each other. The next rule emphasizes to the women to talk from their own experience. This means that they have to start their sharing sentences with, I feel or I've experienced and be careful about making generalizing statements like: 'we women should or feel'. Also it is asked to use healthy words to express yourself, written down as 'no foul language'. The facilitator adds to this that if one of the clients will say I feel fucked up, 'I'm going to ask, what you mean', a few grins and laughs are shared in response. The rest of the rules are quite strict again: be on time, no gossiping, attendance is mandatory ('unless you are either hospitalized, in jail or dead'), participation is expected in the form of reading, sharing and supporting each other. The other mandatory part is homework which is explained meant to process and think about the discussed subjects at home. The facilitators remain strict about the rules; one woman is missing from the group due to severe back problems and being hospitalized. It is emphasized that although this is a valid reason to miss a session, Still she has to do a make-up session to complete the program. It seems that the facilitators tell this story to illustrate how important it is to attend all sessions. Another important

and repeated aspect is the fact that all the information shared in the group is confidential and that everybody has to share their incident because that is mandated. The facilitator states that no question is a dumb question and she asks for respect during disclosure of the incidents. She explains that some women might get emotional and that everybody deals with their incidents and impacts in a different way and in a different pace. Finally it is stated that the group is not a place to complain about man or the law system, although men are very complex and the law can be unjust it we should not see it as why we are here. 'We are here to support each other and to work through our own processes.'

The emotional and tense experience of women sharing their incidents and the impact it had in the group makes it clear that there is still a lot of confusion as to why they were charged. The facilitator stated before and again that she doesn't want to get into this too deeply 'because we are no lawyers' but almost automatically the conversations turn to the arrests. There is discussion about how the police are not specially trained to show compassion, that the police sometimes have to lay mandatory charges and that it is mostly the person who appears the most upset or angry or in other cases, the one that is the calmest is charged. It is unpredictable and the facilitator adds that sometimes the police just lay arrest to get the person out of a bad or dangerous situation. It seems to be a grey area. The facilitators do not share clear cut solutions for issues with the police or law but they do share other tips like documenting injuries you might have from previous abuse or future abuse at the hospital. The hospital is obliged to treat this confidentially and in this way you will build proof over time that you are the one that is being abused and then you have information to disclose to the police when it comes to an arrest. Other stories that they tell or let the women share in relation to the justice system illustrate how the facilitators try to gain trust by making their view about abuse apparent. One of them tells a story to the group about how she heard of a client that she had that was chased by her man who wanted to hit her. She ran downstairs and the man followed her and fell of the stairs, he ended up with severe head damage and called the police. After this, she was the one that was charged for assault. The story triggers a lot of similar angry stories in the group and more of these unjust charges and stories about abuse are shared. The group then continues to talk about the impact of what happened after their arrest. One woman talks about how surprised she was how much handcuffs hurt, the impact of the traumatic drive to the police station 'shaking all the way through because of the cold', how she had to go to work after her release and that she couldn't stop crying



and that it was very painful traumatic experience. Another women shares how she was so cold in her holding cell that she wrapped herself in toilet paper to keep herself warm and that she was desperate for information but that she didn't receive any of the officers at the station. The facilitators listen carefully to these stories and one of them adds “the justice system is the most powerful system you will find'. Opening the group with rules and stories about impacts of arrests, I've identified as a technology of *justice*. While a lot of the women feel like they should not be in the group because of these unjust arrests and charges, talking about it opens up the group as indeed a place of support and empowerment. It becomes clear through this and the next parts that it tends to make the women forget they are in the group as part of their conditions or sentences. In this way the organization is able to implement their vision in this mandated program.

After the sharing the facilitator tries to centralize the conversation again and emphasizes to the women that all of these incidents are foremost part of the risk of being in unhealthy relationships. From an understanding and informative point of view they try to move the group towards constructive empowerment (Self-care, awareness, responsibility and providing hope, safe place to share) even though some of the women feel like they are not supposed to be there/charged in the first place. The role of the facilitator is a very important one in trying to construct technologies of *justice*. As we have already seen it is also a complex one. Taliaferro (1991) argues that

any notion of empowerment being given by one group or another hides an attempt to keep control (..) Outside professionals should therefore be clear that any 'power over' which they have in relation to the people they work with is likely to be challenged by them. This raises an ethical and political issue: if the reality is that you *do* have 'power over' – as is the case with statutory authorities or financially powerful organization, such as development agencies – it is misleading to deny that this is so (Rowlands 1995:104).

The facilitators providing the PAR- group indeed seem to have the power over because of the program being a mandated one and the reports and evaluations they have to send back to the probation offices. They have to be in power to provide the women with the rules, but at the same time they are not denying this as we have seen above. The court program manager told me in an interview how this is a complex balancing act for them:

It is a challenge because you know we try to give them extra chances to you know and I'm very frank with some of them saying: hey you know what, you need to complete this

otherwise it is out of my hands.. and letting them know how important that is. I work here to support you through this and know how difficult it is but our hands are tied as well and I know that is a challenge for us up in the residence because we have women who are coming from provincial and federal institutions and we have to comply with correctional service Canada to some degree we have to meet their criteria or lose our funding so that's back to that being very careful with how we present our information, without breaking the law.. “

Trust issues and a small line between support and breaking the law is also made clear by the court- program manager:

It can be challenging because you have to create a place of trust with the women. And for women to open up and really speak of their experiences but also for them to take the accountability to talk about what's going on it's important that you built a trust with them and that trust depends on the women in the group, because we don't do one on one so this is in a group, so not just creating an atmosphere for one women but for all women within the group and letting them know that aside from disclosing homicide, suicide or abuse of children anything that in terms can incriminate them or others, we have to report it. So aside from establishing that I think it's important that women have that place to talk about what is going on for them without being penalized. If I feel something that is disclosed could be harmful usually I will open a conversation and try to get a better understanding of it and maybe helping them put this in perspective if they're open for it.

#### **5.4 Negotiating safety**

Another technology of *justice* provided by the Elizabeth fry organization are the creative ways they negotiate mandated aspects around the program to fit in more with their mission statements. The understandings that the organization has that most of the women are not offenders but a victim of abuse becomes clear in the case of the partner contact letters. In the PAR- program it is mandated to send out a partner contact letter to inform the ‘abused’ partner that the accused is now following a program. When I was doing my first cycle of the PAR-group it used to be four letters that the office would send out. One discloses information about the accused having started the program. A second one with referral information in case the victim needs help (*healing from* abuse, trauma etc.), a third one containing a safety plan and contact information for unsafe feelings of the victim, and finally a completion letter. The staff working at the court programs felt this to be a scrutinizing and unjust part of the par program because they felt that it would put their clients at unnecessary risk of their partner knowing about their whereabouts. The Court program manager explained it more clearly:

We have been working with the ministry of the attorney general to look in putting some changes and looking at putting a gender response piece into the female PAR-program. One of the things that we have managed to accomplish that, part of the par program is that we contact the partners, so let's look at it from a male perspective, so the men assaults a women, we know that a women is usually 35 times assaulted before the police is actually called on average, so this is actually an ongoing issue. So she's been assaulted, and there's definitely a safety component there we also know that women and men actually, once he's been charged and she tries to leave that is the most dangerous time for a women. So the male gender, the male piece of the PAR- program that was initially set up was to contact the women that had been assaulted and to ensure her safety so if you look at that from the perspective of a women's program, if he's usually the perpetrator, in a good number of cases, why would we contact him to check on his safety? So that's one of the pieces, we now in our intakes try to determine what risk she's at from the perpetrator, the male perpetrator and if she's at high risk we no longer will contact the man, or we will just send out a letter saying she started the program, not say where, she started the program and also when she finishes we send a concluding letter saying that she completed the program. In order to keep her safe because her safety has to be paramount within our programing.

This is why they came up with a compromise and changed the four letters to the following one:

*Dear, (name)*

*We are writing to you from the Partner Assault Response (PAR) Program to advise you that (The accused) has been referred to our program as a condition of her court order. Group service delivery has begun at one of our locations.*

*Partner Contact is a service that is offered to the complainant and/or current partners of offenders who are attending the PAR program. The purpose of providing this service is to:*

- 6 Provide you with information about the program, its philosophy/principles, structure, content and limitations.*
- 7 Provide support, safety planning and referrals to community services that may be of assistance to you.*

*Please be advised we will send you a letter once (The accused) has completed the PAR Program.*

*If you wish to receive these services, which are offered to you, free of charge, please contact, {...} Manager of the Partner Assault Response Program at .....708 Ext: 255 for assistance.*

*We look forward to serving you.*

*PAR Counselling Staff*

This new letter would save them a lot of work, because they didn't expect any of the partners to contact the manager for more services but still made sure that they were providing the mandated partner contact but in a way that they'd feel better about it as well.

Another similar technology that the court program manager already touched upon is the way the organization works with their funders. Rowlands (1995) argues that 'Most funding agencies are understandably preoccupied with showing results. Yet the work needed for raising levels of confidence and self-esteem amongst poor and marginalized people, in such a way that will enhance their ability to take charge of their own needs is necessarily time-consuming.' (Rowlands 1995:105) The balance between this at the organization is clearly visible in the following statement of the Court program manager:

The ministry decides, they just rewrote some standards (..) we do have to comply with the ministry or risk losing our funding. So what my job has been is to advocate for the women and go directly to the ministry and talk about what we see as problematic within those standards for women and then advocate for change. We've been fairly successful, I wouldn't say we've been a 100% successful, I think the other unique thing about our program, and the ministry knows this, is that because a lot of women that are in the program are actually being abused and not the abuser when we deliver the program and when we write the curriculum for the program we write it from a perspective of consciousness raising about what abuse is. A lot of the times the women in our program are not even aware of what abuse is and that they may be in fact in an abusive relationship.

It's a balancing act yeah you know because we certainly cannot break the law or lie, so we do, but we are sometimes very cautious about the way we write a report. Because our goal is to work with women at risk and women who've been incarcerated and assist them to get out the difficult position that they're in and to replace some stability in their lives.

Creative and innovative ways of bending the knowledge of injustices and advocating in the ministry to ensure their clients are safe and get the empowerment that the organization views as the right empowerment is a clear technology of *justice* that shapes how empowerment is given form and looks in practice.

### **5.5 Court support volunteers and Direct Accountability Program**

As we have seen for empowerment on this level it is complex interwoven with touchy subjects of governmentality. Sharma argues that, although it would ideologically be the best, 'sealing oneself off from processes of government that permeate all of society may not be an option. Rather it may be more useful for activists to assume tactical positions within the regimes of governance

themselves.' (Sharma 2008: 81). My work with the court volunteers and the direct accountability program gives a good illustration of an organization trying to empower their clients in environments that are most often not that empowering. The Direct Accountability Program (DAP) is an alternative to prosecution for eligible individuals who have been charged with minor criminal offenses. The program involves accused persons being held accountable through community based sanctions. Most of the sanctions I saw while working with this program were apology letters, a charitable donation and referrals to help programs such as those provided by the organization. The community justice worker explains why the organization has taken on this part of the justice system in college park court.

So Elizabeth Fry Toronto has a history at college park court and when the DAP was put into place in Ontario different charitable organizations bid on the funding. So they won college park court, springboard has other courts in Toronto and John Howard society has two others. So and part of the reason why that is, because all accused women come to college park court, so the new arrests, all the women come up here, even if their charge is at Scarborough all the first appearances are going to be here.

While the program was designed to save up time and space at the courts for more important cases. The program has had some unintended consequences in regards that the people that go through with it still end up with a criminal record that obstructs them from many things.<sup>23</sup> Something that the organization does not want. The fact that the DAP is part of the organization can be identified as an technology of *justice* because this program makes the process of prosecution and court a little less stressful and unequal and a little more humane. Like the community justice worker says:

Police officers may not necessarily or the law officers can't, they have the obligation under the law, to follow through with the law. But The justice, the peaces, the magistrates, the court can then be that voice of compassion and say u made a mistake let's move on. And I believe that's what this program is set up to do, to allow those people to accept responsibility for their actions and then move on. I don't believe the intent was ever to have a record necessarily that would then prevent people from future employment or volunteer opportunities but that's been, I think, an unforeseen circumstance. For the vast majority of the individuals the DAP is a sense of relief. There is often anxiety, more often than not it's their first time coming in contact with the law, and it's frightening them to no ends! And so by the time they have a conversation with me, when the time they charged

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<sup>23</sup> <http://ccla.org/our-work/public-safety/police-background-checks-and-non-conviction-records/non-conviction-records-faq/>

to their first court appearance is about six weeks.. So they had a whole bunch of time to not sleep, to not eat, to worry about it! So for the vast majority for the individuals they are just relieved to have this offer presented to them and...So I love, I love being that agent who can calm them yes! And let them know that it is okay and often times people say: 'but I'm not a criminal' and I say 'no you have a criminal charge' but there is this idea of a monster being a criminal and that they are not that person.'

Like Pollack et all. (2005) argue

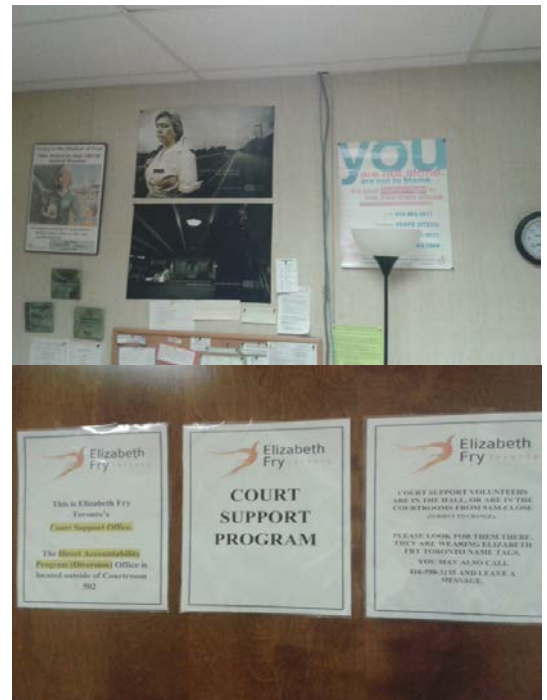
Women experienced the inability to contextualize their use of force as extremely disempowering and as causing them to be very sceptical that the criminal justice system will protect them from abuse. All of the women we interviewed stated that they felt the criminal justice system should have provided them with a greater opportunity to tell their side of the story. Nine of the nineteen women we interviewed were not given the opportunity to provide a statement, either at the scene of the incident or at the police station, or even share their side of the story.'

This is where the court support volunteer workers come in. These are volunteers that come to the court halls weekly to provide any kind of imaginable support to women that are in court or in the downstairs holding cells for any reason. They approach every women in the in the hallway to determine why they here and try to provide them with practical and emotional support or anything else they may need at the moment. Like the main volunteer tells me when I'm helping her one day

So when we talk to the women in the hallway we find out what's going on, do they need legal help, do they need housing help, do they need help with bail, do they need to find out where the courtroom is like anything that we can help with we do. If they are quite emotional we bring them to the office for privacy or if you have to give them tissues or whatever. If they have small kids with them we have toys, little books just something to entertain them it's not really a wholesome environment for a child and they get bored., the other thing we do is, as soon as we come in, depending on the time of day we'll call down to the female cells, identify ourselves and say is there anyone who wants to see us?'

The volunteers in the court halls are for me the clearest example of a technology of *justice*. The court hall is a large confusing and stressful place to be. When I entered it the first time I remember being very nervous myself. After going up with elevators to the third floor of an office building in downtown Toronto one is faced immediately with officers and body search scanners. Everything on your body (except clothes) has to be removed and after going through the security gates one is searched by the onsite police officer. After the security check you enter a busy hall

with court rooms on each side. Where the organizations volunteer office is placed outside courtroom 507. The first thing that the court volunteer does on her day is calling down to the downstairs cells to inform with the officers if there are any women in the holding cells that require help or some information. The volunteer shows me the map that she takes with her downstairs. It is a folder with blank paper to write on and pockets full with flyers of information and referrals for community services. Also she takes a consent book, informing me that most of the women ask the volunteers to call someone for them (Their family, their work) to inform on their situation, or to let them know that they will not make their appointments. She also shows me that there are no staples in all the flyers because they can't be brought in (safety reasons). In the halls me and the volunteer speak with the chaplain from Salvation Army. She tells us she is not happy today and actually never really is here. She explains that she feels upset because she thinks that the officers need training in compassion, when she is down at the cells, the guards yell at her telling her to not waste her time helping these criminals. The volunteer tells me that it is hard to find the right services for women because there are waiting lists, or not enough options available. It's sometimes a maze of referrals, counsellors, court orders and waiting lists. The volunteer explains that she thinks that there should be more campaigning for the volunteer services at the court. 'The Salvation Army has got a big table with services outside, we need something like that, or a poster down in the female cells'. The volunteers put in a lot of work trying to reach the women and refer them or provide them with the right help and information, they are running up and down to the holding cells and talk to many different women in the big hallways of the court becoming a part of the complex criminal justice system to ensure the voice of compassion (that they know *can* be there) is put to use.



## 5.6 Conclusion

The Elizabeth Fry organization considers conflict with the law to be an unequal conflict and their mission is to support women in all possible ways. The knowledge they have of the injustices shapes the empowerment they provide to their clients in practice. Trying to pursue justice in creative ways and unexpected places. Mandatory aspects of the PAR- program influenced my own position in the field and keeps challenging the facilitators while they're trying to form the program and gaining the trust of their clients, empowering them in a way that is in line with their women-centred mission statement. A first technology of *justice* that I described is the way the rules are shaped in the PAR- group and how trust is gained by talking openly about the unjust and confusing aspects of the charges and justice system and by letting them know that the facilitators are on their side. To show that the organization doesn't fully agree with the ways of the law either and rather are here to help them further after their charges in a constructive way. Part of this is the way that the facilitators put themselves in the group. They are aware that they have power over their clients but they don't deny this. They actually share with their clients that they are put in a position that they don't feel comfortable with. A second technology of *justice* that I have identified is the way knowledge of injustice is bend around in a creative way to keep their clients safe. This becomes clear through how the organization advocates with the ministry, changed the PAR- letter and made sure the PAR- program is reshaped in a gender responsive way. The third technology of *justice* is identified as how the organization places themselves in complex environments to make these environments less stressful in the best way they can. Trying to find a way for aspects of the court to incorporate that voice of compassion more effectively by becoming a part of the law they work with, against and around in a way. Done through the direct accountability program and through the hardworking compassionate court support volunteers. It becomes clear that as an organization the staff is continuously busy trying to empower themselves, their mission, values and visions as common sense knowledge in the greater criminal justice system.



## 6. CONCLUSION

The journey to explore what empowerment in practice for women in conflict with the law looks like is an illustration of working within complex power structures, trying to provide empowerment. An exploration of 'The actual social and subjective life of this formation, we call the state' (Aretxgata 2003:401), that plays an actual role in the empowerment practices. An organization that sees unjust and unfair causes for criminalization and recognizes that their clients feel very marginalized. They work within the notion that different law, policies and dominant structures of the state play a role in this. This notion and other opinions about criminalization influences the empowerment in practice in many different ways. Not being an isolated unity in society themselves means that they cannot stay totally unaffected by these power structures, even though most of them are recognized. What influences the empowerment in practice the most is the wish of the organization not to become yet another layer of oppression. Instead it seems that they use whatever privilege they have, to share and to empower others, to raise awareness and trying to make changes. This is done by constantly requiring and reflecting justification for the way they provide empowerment. Trying to avoid becoming part of the 'social machinery of structural violence' termed by Scheper-Hughes (2004). The individual viewed process of empowerment within these power structures is thus not only identifiable as self-governance. It's better studied as a process wherein women come to understand structural inequalities and aspects of their oppression, so they learn that it is not just their individual problem.

Through different technologies they learn to advocate and help formulate tactics for challenging power (and control) relations (both for the clients and the women in the organization). The technologies identified help these women to negotiate a broader notion of empowerment that is about understanding and confronting the structural inequalities that shape their individual and collective realities. Empowerment is a contested and complex concept 'Critical analyses of how these contentious meanings overlap and clash in different contexts, how they articulate with global neoliberal ideologies, and what risks they pose are crucial for scholars and political activists alike.' (Sharma 2008:82) Fieldwork taking place in this time and age not only needs postmodern theories to be affirmed by describing the consequences of unequal power relations. It needs to take place in the actual context everyday life to see how we can't just give up on empowerment as yet another way of *governmentality*. Like Pease (2002) argues

empowerment aware of structures of power instead can take the form of the insurrection of subjugated knowledges liberating people from dominant knowledge and power practices by providing them with knowledges about these power structures and eventual alternatives. Fieldwork can assist to show how empowerment can assist marginalized people in ways helping them to resist their marginalization. Empowerment in practice is thus informed by the knowledges of power that the organization has. The aspect of being in conflict with the law makes the concept in practice complex.

In this fieldwork, we have attended to focus on empowerment on the reactive site of resistance. What does empowerment in practice looks like for women who are in conflict with the law is thus is a question that can be answered in many ways. Like Rowlands (1995) argued empowerment can be about bringing people who are outside the decision making process into it. Chapter three and four showed how this is done in their own lives and circumstances. Undoing negative social constructions despite constraints of structure and state that they are made aware of. Because they are in conflict with the law this seems to be an important aspect in the process of empowerment. Chapter three describes how becoming aware of the importance of self-care is an aspect of empowerment influenced by being in conflict with the law. Being criminalized means that the lives of these women takes place in stigmatized space that makes them feel vulnerable and unsafe. They are being looked down upon, so self-care is something that is not obvious to them. In practice making the women aware of self-care is done through being in the group and doing assignments that make them aware. Also this chapter shows how facilitators become advocates and try to deconstruct aspects of marginalization. Making the clients aware of marginalization, abuse and violence on a personal level stimulates them to try and make changes that benefit the self. While honouring where each woman is on her journey, empowerment in practice thrives to make them envision a better life, firstly for themselves and as a logical consequence for their children and families. Abuse from within the self is trying to be solved. Breaking anger cycles and setting boundaries that others should not cross are done through different assignments. Being aware of the structural oppressions, the organization asks responsibility of the women to make changes in the things that they are able to change. To get out of the desperate situations this structure creates and by understanding that they themselves are not criminal persons. Empowerment is negotiated here, letting the women take some responsibility to change is a precarious move in the empowerment process. It is considered necessary but the

organization tries not to become dominant while doing this. The empowerment practices on this level are integrated, as showed with the section on self-talk, and are meant for women in conflict with the law to envision a better future for themselves, hope.

Chapter four on *strength* illustrates how the concept is needed for both providing empowerment and as something being gained by empowerment. The social level were those technologies of *strength* take place illustrate how empowerment is not an isolated process. Being in conflict with the law is being viewed as an unequal conflict, making the women aware of this is a strengthening technology. Learning that you are more than your personal belief systems, gained from the way you grew up is another strengthening technology that is described. Finding connections and validations is very important to undo the idea of criminalization as something individual. *Strength* is also needed for the organization to not become yet another layer of oppression. Safety aspects are part of his as well, the danger identified with criminalization influences how this safe place should look and that it should be a part of empowerment in practice.

*Justice* is a chapter where struggles over empowerment in practice become very clear. It shows the negotiating for implementing the specific empowerment practices while also fulfilling mandates of the law. Negotiating rules, conversations about charges and arrests and creatively changing some mandated aspects that are in conflict with the organization's visions illustrate this. Dealing with assigned power but at the same time trying not to become part of oppressing layers is a complex struggle. It shows how the staff are active collaborators in a context about which they may have profound reservations to put the voice of compassion that they know could and should be there, to work.

The study of empowerment in practice is thus beneficial to understand how a conflicted and political concept as empowerment takes form. It opens up the broadness of the term for anthropologists. Since empowerment is a term that is an integral part of different organizations and international organizations, it is crucial to study how this concept looks in everyday practices. Working with organizations that know and recognize the different aspects of power structures and inequalities contribute to the negotiation and usefulness of the concept of empowerment in practice. Since it's mostly a concept understood serving existing power structures and subordinating the marginalized. Where does it leave empowerment, is it still an important agenda, how can it be achieved? Those are questions that are and could be answered by

ethnographies of empowerment in practice. Making the concept visible as providing technologies of *Hope, Strength* and *Justice*.

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## Appendix - Hope

Image I – Types of Abuse Assignment

**TYPES OF ABUSE**

There are many different types of abuse. Check off which of the following applies to you:

<u>YOU</u>	<u>OTHERS</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Any physical attempt to hurt others:	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Pushing, shoving, beating	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Using a weapon on others	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Slapping, choking, or pulling hair	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Any attempt to attack sexual parts of another person's body	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Views others as sex objects	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Denying or withholding sex	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Putting others down	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Calling names	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Playing mind games	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Controlling what others do	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Shift responsibility for abusive behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Saying other person caused abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Threatening to take children away	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Use children to relay messages	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Making others ask for money	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Threatening suicide	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Smashing things	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Destroying property	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Image II – Techniques for disrupting irrational thoughts

**Techniques for Disrupting Irrational Thoughts**

The seven basic truths that are life changing:

1. **You and only you create your feelings.**
  - We all know that people see their experiences differently and are affected differently. The same conditions and obstacles that defeat some people spur others on to great accomplishments. One person's half-empty glass is another person's half-full glass
  - ***Taking another view can change everything***
  
2. **Your view of a person, situation or event determines your reality of it**
  - Suppose you are in an elevator. You ask a man in front of you to please step aside to let you out but he ignores you. Wouldn't you be annoyed? Maybe even indignant? You might make a sarcastic remark or push past him. But what if you realize he was deaf and had not heard your request? Wouldn't your feelings completely change? Wouldn't you suddenly feel understanding and empathetic? Maybe even guilty for your thoughts and behaviours? Why would your feelings change when the incident remained the same?
  - ***Because your view or interpretation of the incident has changed so did the things you were telling yourself about it.***
  
3. **People, situations, and events do not upset you. It is your interpretation of them and what you tell yourself about them that cause you to become upset**
  - As you see, you upset yourself by your interpretation of situations, events, and what people say and do. Your interpretation takes the form of thoughts that are usually expressed in mental statements. This means that you usually talk to yourself silently in your head. The things you tell yourself are what create your emotions and influence your behaviours. You literally feel the way you think and you act the same way you feel. Your thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are intergrated and interdependent. In almost any situation. As in our elevator example, if you change your interpretation and tell yourself different things your feelings will change.
  - ***When your feelings change, your behaviours will also change.***
  
4. **Thinking produces feelings that generate behaviours**
  - Now you understand that your thinking (that includes your interpretations and the things you tell yourself) create your feelings and behaviour. ***Your thinking is based on the beliefs and attitudes you have.***
  - Your beliefs and attitudes generally come from your childhood experiences. But your childhood experiences were coloured by your innate tendencies to interpret the in a particular way and to think in a particular manner. Even your ability to think rationally has a biological component. You can readily see that your present feelings and behaviours are based on the foundation of your innate tendencies and your childhood experiences both resulted in your forming a particular set of beliefs and attitudes that influence how you perceive everything that happens to you. It is

through the filter of your basic beliefs that you can see yourself and the world. These basic beliefs are called **CORE BELIEFS** and usually you are not aware of having them. Nonetheless, they influence what you tell yourself about most things in life, and **what you tell yourself is mainly responsible for creating your feelings and behaviours.**

**5. Your views of yourself, others and everything that happens to you is filtered through the screen of your beliefs.**

- To this day, unless you have done something to change them, the same beliefs you adopted in your childhood still serve as the foundation of your decisions, choices, perception, reactions, feelings and behaviours. Some of these beliefs are responsible for getting you - and keeping you- abusive. Some of your beliefs were valid when you formed them and still are; some were once valid but no longer are; and some were not valid in the first place. Some beliefs are life enhancing, while others are diminishing. Some beliefs are helpful while others are destructive. Whatever your beliefs are, they are working diligently at running your life. Often below your level of awareness. **Your beliefs will grow stronger with each passing year unless you take the following actions:**
  - i. **Listen to what you are telling yourself**(that causes you to think, feel, behave the way you do)
  - ii. **Become aware of the beliefs and attitudes** that cause you to think the way you do
  - iii. **Re-examine** them based on new information you have as an adult.
  - iv. **Re decide** whatever they are valid and serve your well being
  - v. **Change** those that are not valid and do not serve your well being
- The bottom line is that you are outdated, invalid, destructive, irrational core beliefs must change if you are put a lasting stop to your confusion, and fear, and get your runaway emotions and your life under control. How can you change your beliefs you have held for a lifetime? By challenging the programming that created them and perpetuate them. Can you really do it? Yes, you programmed yourself – and you can reprogram yourself. Updating your mind programming is a skill you can learn.

**6. You keep painful feelings alive with your upsetting thoughts by repeating them over and over again.**

- **Feelings cannot survive without being continuously fed by thoughts.** This is important to remember. When you stop thinking extremely upsetting thoughts and replace them with less upsetting ones, you will feel less upset. It may seem that thinking your way out of emotional distress and destructive patterns of behaviours is too simplistic. But the most valuable trust is often very simple. Crooked thinking causes emotional distress and straight thinking puts an end to it.

**7. You can change your feelings and behaviours by changing your underlying beliefs and thinking that creates them.**

- **You can change your irrational beliefs by disrupting them and replacing them with rational, constructive, sensible thoughts that cause constructive rather destructive emotions and behaviours.**

## Image III – Creating Coping Skills

**Creating Coping Skills**

There is a dangerous myth that it is good to "Let it all hang out". Some people use this theory as a license to hurt others. Research has found that "letting it rip" with anger actually escalates anger and aggression and does nothing to help you (or the person you're angry with) resolve the situation.

It's best to find out what it is that triggers your anger and then to develop strategies to keep those triggers from tipping you over the edge.

**Strategy #1: Self-Talk**

The use of self-talk is a great way to cope with anger. A personal anger sequence consists of different phases:

- Preparing for stressful encounters and getting worked up
- Having to deal with confrontations
- Dealing with anger at it's most intense point
- Reflecting back on how they handled the situation

What positive thoughts and feelings might you use at each phase?

**Examples**

- "Try not to take this too seriously"
- "Just roll with the punches"
- "Don't get bent out of shape"
- "There is no need to doubt myself. What he says doesn't matter"
- "I can't expect people to act the way I want them to"
- "Don't take it personally"

**Strategy #2: Rage Letter**

Write a letter to the person with whom you are angry. Say everything you ever wanted to say to them. Write out all your anger, then destroy the letter. Do not leave it in a place where the person you are angry at can find it. Tear it up, flush it, burn it or bury it. Writing can get your feelings out, where they can do no damage. Also writing can often put you in touch with feelings you didn't know you had. **Under no condition do you send this letter, even when your mind tells you it would be a good idea.**

**Strategy #3: Repetition**

Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase, such as "relax", "take it easy," to yourself while breathing deeply.

**Strategy #4: Imagery**

Visualize a relaxing experience from either your memory or your imagination.

**Strategy #5: Timing**

If you and your significant other tend to fight when you discuss things at night-perhaps you're tired, distracted, or maybe it's just habit. Try changing the times when you talk about important matters so these talks don't turn into arguments.

Image IV – Cues what are they

<b>Cues: What are they?</b>	
<b>What are they?</b>	Cues are signals, or warnings signs that let you know that you are in danger of acting abusively. Cues tell you that you are under stress.
<b>When do they appear?</b>	They are the warning signals before an incident of violence or abuse. Your cues are part of a build up or escalation phase that can lead to a sequence of abuse.
<b>Why are they important?</b>	Pay attention to your cues, so that you can take a timeout when you need one. It is especially important to watch for cues that happen before several of your past explosions.
<b>What do I do When I notice them?</b>	It is your responsibility to watch your cues, so that you can take a time out when you need one. It is your responsibility to watch your cues, and leave before it is too late.
<b>Situation</b>	Problem situations when you often escalate: events, incidents, arguments and circumstances when you get angry <b>Examples:</b> money, finances, family, disciplines of children, bad days at work, holidays, bad weather, and being late.
<b>Red Flag Words</b>	Words and phrases that you say out loud before acting abusively during the build up to the abusive situation. <b>Example:</b> "I can't stand you", "Leave me alone". This is not name calling and put downs, swearing or threats.
<b>Physical Changes</b>	Your body's physical sensation and uncontrolled response to stress. <b>Examples:</b> muscle tightness, stomach tension, shaking, clenched jaw, increased heart rate, changes in breathing, body temperature increases.
<b>Negative Self Talk</b>	The thought and plans that are running through your mind before the abusive situation. <b>Examples:</b> "I hate his crap", "He needs to shut up", "Here we go again", "If he brings that up again I'm going to lose it"
<b>Mental Imagery</b>	The picture that you see in your mind during the build up to the abusive situation. <b>Examples:</b> picturing him cheating on you, picturing him laying around the house all day not cleaning
<b>Emotional</b>	Feelings you have during your escalation. <b>Examples:</b> frustration, hurt, anger, powerlessness, ashamed.

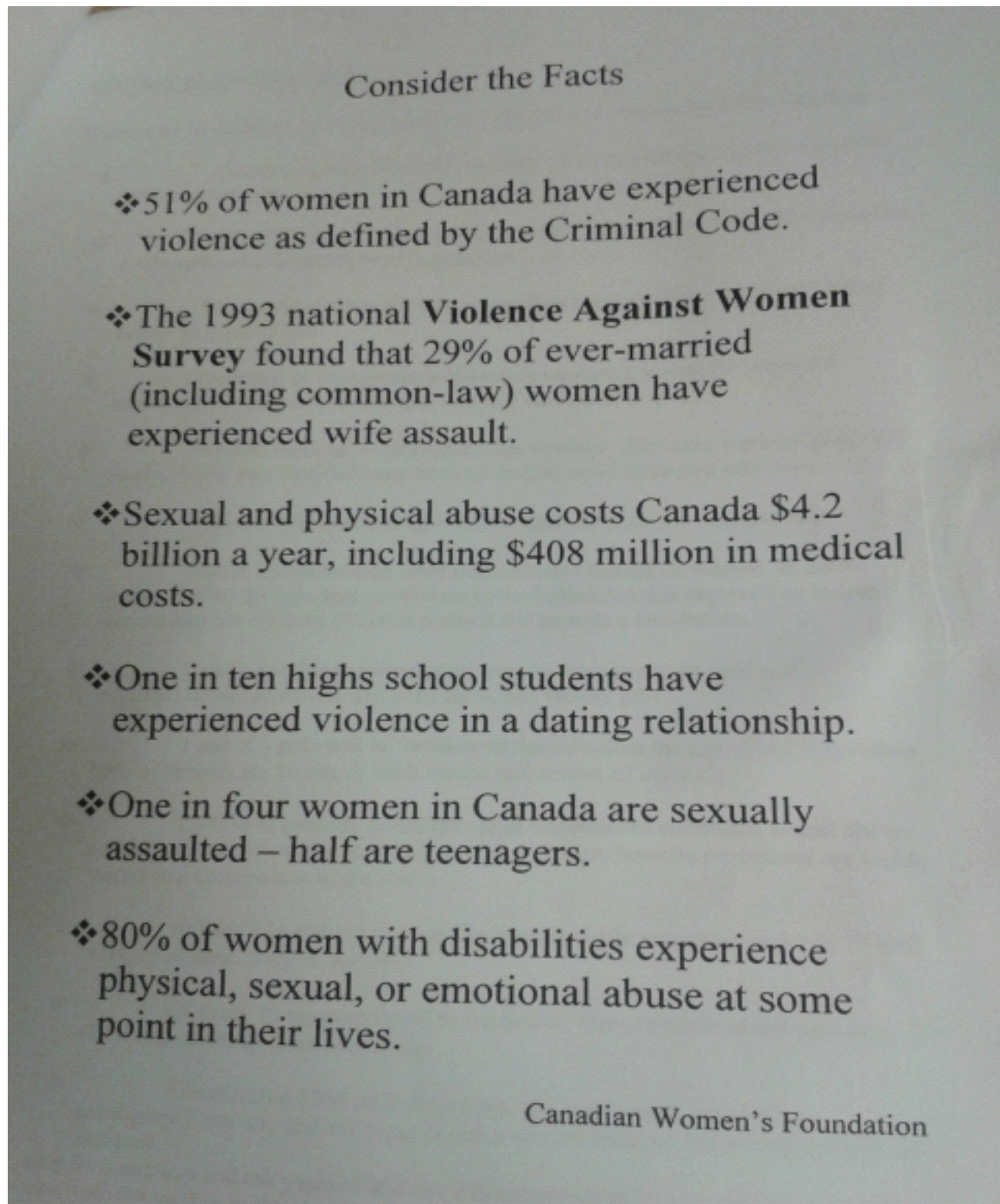
Image V – Managing My Cues

Managing My Cues

What cues(most relevant) from yourself control plan do you recognize first?	What change can you make to manage your cues (action plan – specific steps)
Situation:	
Red Flag Words Mine:  My Partners:	
Physical Cues and Changes:	
Negative Self Talk:	
Mental Imagery:	
Emotional:	

## Appendix Strength

Image VI – Consider the facts



## Image VII - Women in Society

### WOMEN IN SOCIETY

Women are basically second-class citizen in our society. Consider the following facts:

- ❖ Almost half the labour force is female, yet, on average, women earn 62% of what men earn.
- ❖ 57% of working women hold clerical, sales, or service jobs. Less than 6% hold managerial or administrative positions.
- ❖ Women head 83% of single parent families, and 44% of these are living below the poverty line.
- ❖ Over half of women are subjected to unwanted sexual attention and harassment or the job with no final resource other than to quit.
- ❖ Women make up ¾ of all part-time workers. Part-time workers generally receive lower pay than full-time workers despite equal skills and education.
- ❖ 70% of widows and single women aged 75 or over live in poverty.
- ❖ Native Indian women were discriminated against as women, as native people, and by the marriage provisions in the Indian Act that deprived an Indian woman and her children of status rights if she marries a non-Indian.
- ❖ Nearly one third of immigrant women work in poorly paid and ill-regulated domestic service garment, farm, and factory jobs.
- ❖ 1 out of 3 girls will be sexually molested before the age of 18. More than 85% of abusers are known to their victim and almost all are male.
- ❖ 75-85% of juvenile prostitutes have experienced childhood sexual abuse, and because of their vulnerable and powerless image, juvenile prostitutes are highly valued as a commodity on the street
- ❖ At least 1 in every 4 women has been sexually assaulted, and 1 in 17 will be raped at some point in her life.
- ❖ Of every 10 rapes reported to the police, three result in arrest and only 2% of those men charged are convicted.
- ❖ An estimated \$500 million is made in Canada each year in the pornography industry and the legal controls on this industry are remain largely un-enforced.

Stop for a moment and ask yourself if these situations would be tolerated in our society if men were the victims of the abuses listed above.

Image VIII – Power and control quiz

