# The battered woman's response to abuse: Familial, psychological, situational and relationship correlates

By

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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# THE BATTERED WOMAN'S RESPONSE TO ABUSE: FAMILIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, SITUATIONAL AND RELATIONSHIP CORRELATES

BY

APRIL L. PHILLIPS

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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# Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship among several psychosocial variables and the battered woman's response to abuse. Participants were 122 women who had sought shelter because of physical abuse. Women were interviewed to determine their past and present responses to abuse and completed a questionnaire package which measured their standing on a number of family-of-origin (witnessed spouse abuse in childhood, received abuse in childhood, family health), psychological (self-esteem, depression, traditionalism), situational (number of dependent children, economic dependence, perceived social isolation), and relationship (physical and emotional abuse in current relationship, marital satisfaction) variables. Response-to-abuse variables included number of different kinds of help-seeking action taken, number of help-seeking contacts, duration of abuse prior to help-seeking, and total duration of abuse. A four-month follow-up telephone interview was used to assess whether the woman had returned to her partner after leaving shelter. Canonical correlation analysis indicated a significant relationship between the two sets of variables, with the number of dependent children and marital satisfaction predominating on the one side and the number of different kinds of help-seeking action taken predominating on the other, followed by the number of help-seeking contacts and the total duration of abuse. The relative importance of the psychosocial variables in predicting return to the abusive partner was assessed with a logistic regression analysis. Results indicated that the most potent predictor of return was the number of different kinds of help-seeking action taken, with greater breadth of help-seeking predictive of less likelihood of return. Changes in depression and perceived social isolation at follow-up were assessed by repeated measures ANOVAs. Both the return and no-return groups showed a drop in depression scores at follow-up, with no significant differences found between them. In contrast, group differences emerged for the perceived social isolation scores, with the no-return group reporting a significantly greater drop in loneliness than the return group. Research findings were discussed in terms of clinical applications and implications for theory and future research.

# INTRODUCTION

Wife abuse, or more precisely wife battering, is a subject that evokes mixed and varied reactions. For some the subject elicits strong feelings of anger and revulsion; for others it arouses feelings of compassion and pity. Still others respond with curiosity or perhaps complete indifference. Prior to the 1970s, the subject was as likely as not to evoke laughter. In those days, wife beating was grist for the comic's mill; humorous anecdotes and situation comedies all capitalized on the wife-beating image. Although it was recognized that some men beat their wives in earnest, it was also believed, whether through choice or ignorance, that the problem was limited in scope and confined primarily to certain ethnic groups and people of low socioeconomic status. So entrenched was this belief that the scientific community was all but silent on the subject. The extent to which contemporary researchers and writers ignored the issue of family violence is reflected in O'Brien's (1971) documented finding that the index of the Journal of Marriage and the Family, from its inception in 1939 through 1969, contained not a single reference to family violence. Not until the 1970s did evidence begin to appear that would shake society out of its complacency. In the space of little more than a decade, some sobering truths were revealed, with the result that, today, jokes about wife-beating are seldom heard; and if they are, few people are laughing.

Feminists played a key role in awakening society to the plight of the battered women. It was the image of women as victims of social, political, and economic injustice that fuelled the anti-rape movement of the early 1970s and the battered women's movement which soon followed (Schechter, 1982). While the anti-rape movement established the image of women as victims of male violence, the battered women's movement sharpened that image by demonstrating that violence against women occurred not only at the hands of strangers but also within the context of their most intimate relationships. There is no doubt that in the absence of feminist ideology concern about this grave social problem would not have been so dramatically forced into public consciousness. The earliest attempts to document prevalence, to examine causes, to raise funds for research, and to mobilize shelter and treatment programs were largely due to the conscientious efforts of feminist activists, practitioners, and researchers (Schechter, 1982). It was through their efforts that the myths surrounding wife abuse were finally exposed and the truth revealed.

One of the first myths to be exploded was the belief that wife beating is a small-scale problem. In its place came the harsh statistic that, annually, approximately 1.8 million American women were beaten by their husbands (Straus, 1977-78). Based on even the most conservative Canadian statistics, it was estimated that, yearly, one out of every ten women who are married or in a relationship with a live-in lover would be beaten (MacLeod, 1980). The belief that wife battering is an ethnic aberration or a problem of the poor also proved untenable in the light of mounting evidence to the contrary. Research findings soon left little doubt that wife battering is a serious social problem that cuts across all social, cultural, religious, and ethnic lines (Flynn, 1977; Martin, 1976; Pagelow, 1981). Faced with these revelations, and their startling implications, researchers, policy makers, and social service providers scrambled to understand and remedy the situation.

The search for answers to the cause of wife battering and solutions to the problem resulted in a number of theoretical and conceptual formulations. Chief among them were the patriarchy theory, which holds that the battered woman is at once a victim of her partner and society, with the roots of her victimization to be found in sexism; the violent-culture theory, which holds that wife battering is a result of cultural values which condone and in some cases normalize violence; psychological formulations, which highlight individual psychopathology and couple dynamics as key determinants of battering; and systemic formulations in which wife battering is conceptualized as a complex problem with social, familial, and individual determinants. It will be the purpose of this paper to review the different theoretical perspectives on wife battering from the standpoint of their contribution to our understanding of the problem and its remediation. When discussing feminist theory, a liberal feminist view will be endorsed, with primary emphasis on "socialization" and "sex roles." Following the review, a research study will be presented. The central question addressed in this research was how specific familial, psychological, situational, and relationship factors are related to battered women's help-seeking responses and to their decision to remain with or leave an abusive partner. The answer to this question was thought to have relevance not only for understanding battered wives' behaviour but also for identifying those battered women who might be at risk for escalating and potentially life-threatening abuse. Early detection of such women could permit early intervention aimed at breaking the "cycle of violence" before it has become firmly established in the relationship.

## Literature Review

Over the course of the past decade and a half, an impressive body of wife battery literature has emerged. That literature paints a vivid picture of the degree and extent to which battered women suffer at the hands of their male partners. For some battered women, violence appears to occur sporadically or intermittently; for others, it is a common feature of day-to-day living. Research clearly indicates that over time battering incidents tend to increase in both frequency and severity (Giles-Sims, 1983; Hofeller, 1982; Pagelow, 1981, 1984; Scott, 1974; Stacey & Shupe, 1983; Walker, 1984), suggesting that, without intervention at the first sign of abuse, a woman runs an ever increasing risk of more frequent violence and more serious injury.

Although precise incidence and prevalence rates of wife battering are virtually impossible to come by, owing to the myriad factors that make this a hidden crime, it is generally agreed that early estimates of the magnitude of the problem were probably conservative. Thus, it has been estimated that, in Canada, almost one million women may be battered each year (MacLeod, 1987), and the estimate of incidence has risen from one in ten to one in eight women beaten by their partners per year (Guberman & Wolfe, 1985). Several American surveys indicate that even this revised estimate may be too low. In their landmark survey of over 2,000 American families and couples, Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) found that 16 percent of the sample had experienced violence at some point in the relationship. Russell (1982, 1984), reporting on a randomized survey of 900 women in the San Francisco area, stated that, of the 644 women who had ever been married, fully 21 percent had been beaten by their husbands. In her study of relationship violence, Frieze (1983) reported that 29 percent of a matched control group of women had been physically assaulted by their partners. These findings have led to the conclusion that the true incidence of wife battering may be as high as one in four women. And some researchers have gone so far as to suggest that a more accurate estimate of how many women will be abused by their partners is closer to 50 percent (Finkelhor, Gelles, Hotaling, & Straus, 1983).

While the true incidence of wife battering may be a matter of speculation, the seriousness of the problem is not in dispute. By now the serious injuries sustained by battered women have been well documented. Gayford (1975), in a preliminary survey of 100 battered women in Britain, reported extensive physical injuries ranging from bruising and lacerations to penetrating head injury, retinal damage, and permanent disability. In almost one-third of the cases, fractures of nose, teeth, ribs, and other bones had occurred. Seventeen women had been attacked with a sharp instrument such as a razor, knife, or broken bottle, and 42 reported having been attacked with other objects. All had been hit with a clenched fist and 59 were also repeatedly kicked. In addition, the women in this study had been bitten, burned, scalded, strangled, and suffocated. Nine had been hospitalized after being found unconscious.

Hilberman and Munson (1977-1978) reported similar injuries and modes of attack in their sample of 60 battered women. They also noted a history of psychological dysfunction in over half of the cases. As with Gayford's sample, most of the women had been treated, or were currently being treated, with antidepressants and tranquilizers, and many had a history of suicide attempts or gestures. Other investigators have provided still further evidence for the serious injury suffered by battered women (Carlson, 1977; Coleman, 1980; Fagan, Stewart, & Hansen, 1983; Hofeller, 1982; Rounsaville, 1978a, 1978b; Stacey & Shupe, 1983) and for the relationship between battered-woman status and psychiatric disturbance (Carmen, Rieker, & Mills, 1984; Herman, 1986; Hoffman & Toner, 1988; Post, Willett, Franks, House, Back, & Weissberg, 1980).

It was this portrait of the battered woman that ultimately shattered the cherished image of the family as a safe haven, an image that had already been seriously challenged by the burgeoning child abuse literature. That the true picture was finally revealed is due, in large measure, to the countless battered women who courageously came forward to tell their stories and relive their experiences so that other battered women might benefit. Credit must also go to those within the women's movement who worked tirelessly to keep the picture of the battered woman alive in public consciousness and to bring about necessary changes in the social and legal response to the problem. As their efforts bore fruit and the truth about wife battering slowly dawned on the scientific community and the lay public, efforts to elucidate the causes of wife battering intensified. Two major sociological explanations of battering have guided research in the area, the patriarchy theory, which formed the platform of the battered women's movement, and the social-structural theory, which arose out of the research interest generated by the movement itself.

## Why Do Men Batter?

### Sociological Explanations

The patriarchy. The patriarchy theory of wife battering begins with the notion that wife battering is a product of the patriarchal structure of society wherein males are accorded positions of power and privilege, based on their "natural" superiority, while women are relegated to lesser more restricted roles, in keeping with their "innate" inferiority (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Martin, 1976; Schechter, 1982). It is held that under the patriarchal system women have been exploited and oppressed socially, politically, and economically. Moreover, the sexist organization of society has effectively denied women access to the kinds of power needed to change their status and end their oppression. Although discrimination against women is thought to occur at all institutional levels, nowhere, it is argued, is male domination more apparent than in the institution of the family. According to feminist thinking, the structure of the patriarchal family ensures the subordination of women and their subjugation to male authority and control and, in so doing, sets up the conditions for the abuse of power known as wife beating.

In support of their argument, feminists are quick to point out that the use of force against women has a long and sordid history, with much of that history involving legally sanctioned abuse. For centuries wives were viewed as the property of their husbands and as such were subject to their authority and control. Indeed, in England, as recently as the last century, husbands had absolute power of chastisement over their wives. Under English common law, a husband "had the legal right to use force against (his wife) in order to insure that she fulfilled her wifely obligations, which included the consummation of the marriage, cohabitation, maintenance of conjugal rights, sexual fidelity, and general obedience and respect for his wishes" (Schechter, 1982, p. 217). For purposes of chastisement, a husband could use a stick to beat his wife, provided the stick was no thicker than the width of his thumb (Shainess, 1979).

Throughout history wives have been beaten, kicked, and subjected to all manner of cruel punishment and torture, all in the name of male prerogative and obligation. Indeed, as recently as a decade and a half ago, there were many men, and apparently some women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979), who still believed that it was a man's "right" to chastise his wife through physical force. A study by Pogrebin (1974) is relevant here. This researcher found that males who were witness to a man being attacked by either a man or a woman rushed to the man's aid, just as they came to the assistance of a woman being hit by another woman. To the amazement of the researchers, however, not one male bystander interfered when a man (a male actor) apparently beat up a woman. To feminists these findings are not surprising; they simply reflect the values of our society. Men who assault their wives are "actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are cherished in Western society--aggressiveness, male dominance, and female subordination--and they are using physical force as a means to enforce that dominance" (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, p. 24).

While acknowledging that ours is a violent culture, feminists reject the violent culture explanation of wife battering. They note that "only half of the population (males) is encouraged in violence while the other half (females) is encouraged to avoid and fear violence and perhaps initially to accept it" (Pagelow, 1981, p. 32). It is further noted that violence within the family is not randomly distributed. Certain family members, specifically women and children, suffer much more brutality (Schechter, 1982, p. 215). The issue, according to feminists, is one of power and control. Men use force against women in order to establish their authority, an authority to which they feel entitled by virtue of their presumed masculine superiority. That entitlement takes on added meaning in the context of marriage where, upon assuming the status of wife, a woman becomes the "appropriate" victim of violence aimed at "putting her in her place" (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). In a patriarchal society, that place is in the home fulfilling her wifely duties and responsibilities and accepting her husband's dominion over her. As "appropriate" victims, wives are also subject to blame for virtually all ills that befall the family and its members (Caplan, 1989). It is thus that they become the scapegoats for their husbands' disappointments and the legitimized target of their anger.

The patriarchy theory of wife battering offers the broadest application of the victim label to the battered woman. In addition to recognizing her as a victim of harm and injury at the hands of her partner, the theory also recognizes her as society's victim. The lack of legal, economic, and social support for battered women is legendary (Gelles, 1976; Martin, 1976; Schuyler, 1976; Truninger, 1971), giving rise to what has been termed the "double victimization" of the battered woman: First she is abused by her partner, then she is abused by society.

Contained within the patriarchy theory is an explanation for society's slow and often inadequate response to the battered woman. Although laws no longer sanction violence against wives, "the inaction, indifference, and contradictory policies and procedures of social institutions continue to reflect the ideal of the subordinate position of women in the family and of the right of men to dominate and control their wives by various means including force" (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, p. 234). In short, society's response supports and maintains the patriarchy.

Violent culture/social-structural theory. The violent culture or social-structural theory of wife battering (Gelles, 1974; Goode, 1971; Straus, 1977-78) rests on the notion that battering arises out of a complex set of factors, one of which is the high level of conflict inherent in the family. It is suggested that, although the family is typically viewed as a place of peace, harmony and safety, in fact, the structural organization and various features of family life make for a high level of intrafamily conflict. The time spent interacting with family members; the emotional investment in those interactions; the implicit right to influence which comes with family membership; the privacy of the family; the difficulty, if not impossibility, of terminating family relationships; and the high level of stress which characterizes family life are some of the features that combine to make the family a seedbed of conflict (Straus, 1977-78).

The likelihood of conflict erupting into violence is thought to be increased by the fact that ours is a violent culture and, therefore, some carry-over might be expected from one sphere of life to another. It is further postulated that family socialization in violence contributes to the acting out of intrafamily conflict. While the family as an institution is geared to protecting and nurturing its members, it is also a place where a certain amount of force is accepted, approved, and even mandated in family life (Goode, 1971). Gelles (1974) refers to this as "normal" violence and cites as an example the parental right to use force in the course of disciplining children. He also identifies two types of "normal" conjugal violence: a victim-precipitated type where the wife assumes responsibility for the violence, normalizing it on the grounds that she caused it and therefore deserved to be hit; and a second type where the offender justifies his behaviour on the grounds that it was necessary for the good of the victim, for example, to calm her down. It is unclear precisely what Gelles means by "normal" violence; however, as used here, the term would seem to imply acceptable. One must question whether violence directed toward a child or a spouse can or should ever be characterized as acceptable. Certainly, the fact that it occurs under the guise of discipline does not make it so, nor does the fact that the woman normalizes it and the man justifies it.

It is posited that in the course of receiving physical punishment and observing parental violence, children learn some unintended lessons which can become an integral part of their personality and world view. Specifically, they learn that love and violence are related and that those who love you the most are also those who hit you; they learn that when something is really important, physical force is justified; and they learn the moral rightness of hitting other family members (Straus, 1977-78). These lessons are thought to become incorporated into the "behavioural scripts" of the child where they are reinforced by overt and implicit cultural norms that legitimize family violence. Although largely implicit, the norms permitting husband-wife violence are well understood by society. This is evident in the "hands-off" policy where spousal violence is concerned. The reluctance of bystanders to interfere in what they perceive to be a domestic dispute is a case in point (Rounsaville, 1978b; Shotland & Straw, 1976). This apparent acceptance of violence between spouses has led to the notion that the "marriage license is a hitting licence" (Gelles, 1974; Straus, 1976).

Implicit in the foregoing is another answer to the question: Why has society been so insensitive to the plight of the battered woman? The answer suggested by the social-structural theory is that the high level of conflict inherent in the family, our cultural exposure to violence, and the explicit and implicit norms legitimizing intrafamily violence may inure us to, and indeed make us accepting of, all kinds of violence including wife battering. The theory also implies that in order for wife battering to end, it is not enough that sexual inequality be abolished. In addition, societal values and cultural norms promoting and legitimizing violence, both inside and outside the family, must be eliminated or at the very least radically altered (Straus, 1977-78).

## Research Findings

In marshalling evidence to support the patriarchy theory of wife battering, feminists have been able to draw on a rich body of literature. Much of that literature consists of battered women's descriptions of their partners and the circumstances surrounding battering incidents. In describing their husbands, battered wives paint a remarkably similar portrait, with certain features appearing with such regularity as to be almost predictable. Sexual jealousy, often reaching pathological proportions, is one such characteristic (Bernard & Bernard, 1984; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Hofeller, 1982; Pagelow, 1981; Rounsaville, 1978b; Walker, 1984). Indeed, intense jealousy is reported by most battered women as one of the key sources of conflict in the relationship and a main trigger for violent episodes (Dobash & Dobash, 1984; Finn, 1985; Flynn, 1977; Rounsaville, 1978b; Roy, 1977; Stacey & Shupe, 1983; Star et al., 1979; Walker, 1984). Violence arising out of sexual jealousy has been interpreted by feminists as reflecting the man's belief that he "owns" his wife, that she is his property, his possession (Martin, 1976) and, as such, is there to serve his needs, to cater to his wishes, to do his bidding. Should she fail to do so, whether in fact or fancy, he is justified in "putting her in her place." The finding that many conflicts and subsequent violent episodes center around domestic issues has been offered as further proof of the batterer's belief in his right to dominate and control his wife. The Dobashes (1979) found that demands concerning labour and service were the most frequent source of conflict and violence reported by the women in their sample. Other researchers have also cited the husband's dissatisfaction with his wife's housekeeping, household management, or parenting as primary contributors to violence (Carlson, 1977; Giles-Sims, 1983; Hofeller, 1982; Koslof, 1984; Straus et al., 1980).

Many battered women have recognized the power issue as central to the violence in their lives. Thirty-two percent of the women in Hofeller's (1982) study indicated that their husbands were violent in order to achieve total domination and control over them. And many of the women in Flynn's (1977) investigation identified their refusal to conform to their husband's expectations, to be submissive, as precipitants of the violence. Battered wives have reported being beaten any time they said "no" to their husband (Hofeller, 1982), any time he did not immediately get his own way (Hilberman & Munson, 1977-1978), or any time he perceived them to be questioning his authority or challenging the legitimacy of his behaviour. They were expected to agree with their husbands, to accept their position of authority without question (Coleman, 1980; Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

The relationship between marital violence and status inconsistency provides further insight into the power dynamic and its possible role in wife abuse. Because men in our society are typically better educated and enjoy higher status occupations than their wives, their dominant position as head of the household is presumably legitimized. It is predicted that where the man lacks the educational attainment or occupational achievement to justify his position of dominance he will resort to force as a way of establishing his authority. Support for this prediction comes from an investigation of violence in divorce-prone families (O'Brien, 1971). The results of this study indicated that husband-to-wife violence was most prevalent in families where the actual achievement ability of the husband was less than or inconsistent with his prescribed superior status. Other investigators have also found evidence for the presence of status inconsistency in violent homes more often than in non-violent homes (Carlson, 1977; Gelles, 1974; Rounsaville, 1978b).

An investigation by Hornung, McCullough, and Sugimoto (1981) of status relationship in marriage and the risk of spouse abuse produced further support for the role of status inconsistency as a contributor to violence. Results of their survey of 1,553 couples indicated that underachievement in occupation by the husband, defined as a discrepancy between educational attainment and expected occupational achievement, was associated with very high risk of spouse abuse, particularly life-threatening violence. By way of contrast, overachievement in occupation by the husband was associated with a relatively low incidence and prevalence of spousal violence. Where the woman was high in occupation relative to her husband, a high risk for life-threatening violence obtained. Although this study did not differentiate husband-to-wife violence from wife-to-husband violence, there is reason to believe that the abuse was primarily directed toward wives. Research findings indicate that wife-to-husband violence is typically retaliatory (Straus, 1980) and that husbands have much higher rates of the most dangerous and injurious forms of violence relative to wives (Straus et al., 1980).

While the findings of the above studies may be variously interpreted, the feminist perspective suggests that they reflect the husband's reaction to threats to his position of power within the relationship. Such an interpretation is consistent with other research linking status incompatibility and wife abuse. Hofeller (1982) reported a high rate of "downward mobility" among battered wives in her sample. Educational discrepancy was also high, with 54 percent of the women having achieved a higher education than their partner. The link between wife battering and the wife's "downward marital mobility", her higher educational attainment relative to her husband (Carlson, 1977; Gelles, 1974; Walker, 1984), and her higher occupational status relative to her husband (Gelles, 1974) may be viewed as a reflection of the husband's commitment to traditional sex roles which accord him dominant status in the relationship. Walker (1984) suggests that because of their sexist biases, battering men cannot tolerate a status discrepancy in favour of their wives.

Although the link between wife battering and such factors as status incompatibility and the wife's "downward mobility" may reflect the batterer's reaction to threats to his position of power within the relationship, it is important to recognize that not all men who batter are less educated than their partners, earn less money, have lower status occupations, or come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Indeed, many men who batter are professional men with high status occupations. Because the wives of such men are underrepresented at women's shelters and helping agencies, largely because of the different problems they face when contemplating leaving their partners or seeking outside help, it is easy to lose sight of this fact. Moreover, one can easily draw the erroneous conclusion that wife battering is essentially a problem of the lower classes and the poor. In fact, as was noted previously, wife batterers come from all walks of life and all strata of society.

While the specific factors contributing to wife battering among low SES couples may not hold for middle- and upper-income families, the underlying dynamic may be the same, namely, the man's commitment to traditional sex roles that accord him dominant status within the relationship. In an investigation of violent, non-violent, and non-violent distressed couples, Telch and Lindquist (1984) found more stereotyped sex role attitudes among all three groups of males relative to their female partners, with the violent males reporting the most traditional attitudes overall. Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981) compared violent, non-violent distressed, and maritally satisfied couples and found significant differences on the variable of conservatism (traditionalism). Interestingly, battered wives and wives who were in non-violent distressed marriages did not differ from each other but did differ from the happily married wives, with the latter being rated as significantly more conservative. Walker's (1984) sample of battered women also saw themselves as holding more liberal attitudes toward women's roles than most other women. They also described their husbands as very traditional.

The significance of these findings may well lie in their implications for couple interaction. One might speculate that the less traditional or more liberal-minded a woman is the more likely she is to question her husband's authority or at least demand a more equal role in decision making. To the extent that the woman's legitimate bid for a more egalitarian relationship challenges her husband's male superiority norms, the stage may be set for conflict and perhaps violence (Brown, 1980; Toby, 1974). In this regard, Telch and Lindquist (1984) reported that the violent couples in their study expressed the greatest degree of dissatisfaction and disagreements in the area of decision making, and this was found to be significantly greater than the dissatisfaction and disagreement reported by non-violent couples.

While the need to dominate and control in general appears to be a prominent, pervasive characteristic of many batterers, it is also clear that not all batterers display this characteristic. Some battering men, for example, have been described as generally passive

(Faulk, 1977; Shainess, 1977; Symonds, 1978), unassertive (Feazell, Mayers, & Deschner, 1984; Koval, Ponzetti, & Cate, 1982; Saunders, 1984; Sonkin, Martin, & Walker, 1985) individuals who erupt into violence and then are consumed by guilt when confronted with their behaviour (Symonds, 1978). Although these findings would seem to provide little support for the feminist belief that battering reduces to a sexist belief in a man's "right" to dominate and control his wife, it is important to recognize that many men are detached and uninvolved but erupt when a demand is not met. At the same time, it seems quite clear that many men who batter their wives are fully aware that their behaviour is inappropriate and indefensible; otherwise, why would they forbid their wives to reveal the abuse to anyone, even to the point of physically preventing them from seeking medical attention for their injuries.

The observation that many batterers do not conform to the stereotyped image of the aggressive, dominating, controlling male has been interpreted by proponents of the violent-culture/social-structural theory as indicating that sexism alone cannot explain wife battering and that other factors must also be called into play when attempting to explain this behaviour. One factor that has been strongly associated with wife abuse is stress (Barling & Rosenbaum, 1986; Finn, 1985; Flynn, 1977; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Rounsaville, 1978b). As the number of stressors impinging on the family increases, so too do the rates of wife battering. Two stress factors that have achieved particular prominence in the literature are low income and unemployment. Straus et al. (1980) found that lower income couples were more likely to be violent than higher income couples and that violence was greater for the unemployed or part-time employed. Both of these findings have been well documented in the wife-battery literature (Carlson, 1977; Coleman, 1980; Fagan et al., 1983; Fitch & Papantonio, 1983; Gayford, 1975; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-1978; Rounsaville, 1978b). It is to be noted that the previously reported finding of a positive link between status inconsistency and wife battering may also be a function of stress rather than the man's need to dominate. Such an inconsistency may well translate into lower earning power as well as occupational frustration, both of which might be expected to increase stress levels.

While the link between low income and unemployment and wife battering appears to be well established, this does not prove that these factors cause wife abuse. After all, many men are subjected to high levels of economic stress without becoming violent toward their wives. The question still remains: Why do some men become violent under these circumstances while others do not? In attempting to answer this question, researchers have studied alcohol abuse as a possible contributing factor. In several studies, the batterer's problem with alcohol topped the list of stressors identified by battered wives as problematic (Finn, 1985; Giles-Sims; 1983; Stacey & Shupe, 1983). Telch and Lindquist (1984) reported that alcohol was the most significant factor operating in violent marriages. At the very least, alcohol has been identified as a frequent trigger for violent episodes (Claerhout, Elder, & Janes, 1982; Coleman, Weinman, & Hsi, 1980; Fagan et al., 1983; Flynn, 1977; Gayford, 1975; Gelles, 1974; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Hofeller, 1982; Roy, 1977; Walker, 1984).

Once again, the positive relationship between alcohol consumption and battering incidents does not prove that alcohol causes abuse. Obviously, many men drink to excess without becoming violent. Based on what is known about the disinhibitory effects of alcohol, a more likely explanation for the relationship is that alcohol lowers the batterer's inhibitions against acting out his aggressive impulses. One must ask, however, why it is that those impulses are, in most cases, directed toward the batterer's wife. The battering husband often drinks to excess, controlling his aggressive impulses until he arrives home, whereupon he assaults his wife. Such behaviour belies the notion that battering represents a loss of control triggered by the alcohol. Indeed, even while under the influence of alcohol, wife batterers, as distinct from men who are generally violent, exert enough control to choose when they will become violent and toward whom. The fact that they choose their wives as the sole target of their aggression would seem to support the feminist argument that wife battering is related to sexist attitudes which result in women, and wives in particular, being viewed as appropriate targets of male aggression.

The fact that many batterers continue to abuse alcohol even though they know from past experience that it frequently, if not invariably, results in violence toward their partners has prompted some feminists to suggest that the battering man drinks in order to have an excuse for beating his wife. There is little empirical support for this claim. Rather, what seems to be suggested by research findings is the batterer's vulnerability to stress and his poor coping abilities. Finn (1985) reported that battering males relied most heavily on passive-avoidant strategies in dealing with stress. Since alcohol is widely used in our society as a passive escape strategy, it seems probable that its abuse by batterers is, in many cases, stress related.

An additional finding which may reflect the batterer's vulnerability to stress is the high rate of wife battering during pregnancy or following the birth of the first child (Fagan et al., 1983; Flynn, 1977; Gayford, 1975; Gelles, 1975; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Hofeller, 1982; Pagelow, 1981; Roy, 1977; Walker, 1984). Pregnancy or birth of the first child was the second most frequent event cited by Giles-Sims (1983) as preceding the first instance of physical abuse. The transition to parenthood is recognized as a major stressor for families (Miller & Sollie, 1980), with the birth of the first child thought to be especially stressful owing to the multitude of changes it brings, not only in the marital relationship itself but also in role expectations and responsibilities. Gelles (1975) speculated that the abuse may represent the husband's attempt to end the pregnancy and thus the stress that a new child will bring. Stress explanations fail to explain why women do not become physically abusive toward their husbands in response to the stress of pregnancy and motherhood when, obviously, these circumstances are much more stressful for them than for their partners.

Dutton, Fehr, and McEwen (1982) have suggested that increased violence during times of pregnancy and new births may be related to changes in intimacy. These authors speculate that perceived rapid, uncontrollable changes in intimacy may give rise to acute anxiety in men who have exaggerated dependency needs. For such men, arousal may be experienced as anger, with this eventually finding expression in aggression. "For (these men) the psychological and perceived loss of the female produces ... panic and hysterical aggression" (p. 17). This explanation could account for the increase in battering behaviour during times of pregnancy or following the birth of a new child that is reported by many battered women. To the extent that these circumstances make a woman relatively less available to her partner, they may trigger anxiety-based arousal in the overly dependent male. Dutton et al. further speculate that the arousal resulting from changes in intimacy is expressed as anger rather than anxiety because anger is male sex-role appropriate. Moreover, "anger is more likely when the male is in or feels he should be in a position of coercive power over the person 'causing' the arousal" (p. 18). In explaining the final transition from anger to overt physical aggression, the authors note that individuals are inclined to engage in stereotypic behaviour under conditions of high arousal, stress, or threat, with these behaviours perhaps reflecting those they have seen performed by a role model. This brings us to the potential importance of socialization factors as contributors to the battering husband's behaviour.

According to the violent culture or social-structural theory of wife battering, the family is a major training ground for the learning of violent behavioural "scripts" (Straus, 1977-78). And, in fact, the evidence linking a violent upbringing and the likelihood of a man becoming a battering husband is considerable. Research findings indicate that a male child who grows up in a home where he receives a lot of punishment and also witnesses violence between his parents stands a one in four chance of growing up to abuse his spouse (Straus et al., 1980). Witnessing spouse abuse and receiving abuse as a child have both been independently linked to subsequent marital aggression, with the observation of parental violence surfacing as the more potent predictor variable (Kalmuss, 1984; Rouse, 1984).

The high percentage of batterers who either received abuse as a child or witnessed spouse abuse has been well documented. Fitch and Papantonio (1983) reported that 71 percent (133/188) of the men in their sample had either seen or heard physical violence between their parents, and nearly half (49%) considered themselves to have been abused as children. In Roy's

(1977) sample, 81 percent of the men were reported by their wives to have come from violent homes in which they were beaten or had observed their mothers being beaten. Almost 75 percent of the husbands in Giles-Sim's (1983) study were reported to have come from violent backgrounds. In their comparison of violent and non-violent husbands, Coleman et al. (1980) noted that violent husbands had observed parental violence, experienced physical abuse, or both more often than non-violent husbands. Similar findings were reported by Telch and Lindquist (1984) and by Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981) in their comparisons of violent and non-violent couples.

Taken together the data derived from the violent culture/social-structural perspective suggest that factors other than sexism may need to be considered when attempting to explain wife battering. After all, many men hold sexist attitudes toward women without these finding expression in wife battering. It would seem, therefore, that for some men at least, sexist attitudes alone may not be sufficient to trigger violence. Factors such as low stress tolerance, poor coping skills, and learned behavioural "scripts" for violence may also be necessary. As the work of Dutton et al. (1982) suggests, psychological factors may also play a part in increasing the likelihood that a man will resort to battering.

## Psychological Explanations

The image of the battering man that emerges from the psychological literature is anything but unified. Battering men have been described as paranoid or sadistic individuals whose central way of achieving relatedness is through destruction of the other person (Shainess, 1979). Erin Pizzey (1974) viewed wife beaters as psychopaths--aggressive, dangerous, and deeply immature. Battering men have also been described as suffering from a sense of masculine inadequacy (Ball, 1977; Bernard & Bernard, 1984; Pagelow, 1981; Snell et al., 1964; Weitzman & Dreen, 1982), low self-esteem (Ball, 1977; Elbow, 1977; Feazell, Mayers, & Deschner, 1984: Goldstein & Rosenbaum, 1985; Saunders, 1984; Shaines, 1977; Sonkin, Martin, & Walker, 1985; Star, 1983; Walker, 1981), and feelings of helplessness and powerlessness (Shainess, 1977; Symonds, 1978; Taubman, 1986; Weitzman & Dreen, 1982). Several researchers have suggested that the battering man is fighting for control (Coleman, 1980; Dutton, 1984; Gondolf, 1985)--control of his masculine identity and sense of self-esteem. Morgan (1982) theorized that the battering man is driven by "neurotic pride," a substitute for real self-confidence that was warped, destroyed, or weakened in early childhood. The idealized self demands that he always be in control of feelings, always be on guard against being hurt, being humiliated, being abandoned or failing. By dominating his wife, he tries to deny his dependency needs and the feeling of vulnerability that accompanies them.

Conflict over intimacy has also been posited as a causal factor in wife battering. Kardener and Fuller (1970) present the thesis that certain violent acts are reactions to misperceived threats of equality and intimacy. They suggest that the problem with intimacy arises out of the child's failure to develop basic trust and a feeling of surety sufficient to permit authentic, intimate relationships with others. "To the extent mistrust is the outcome of those experiences with others, he adopts alienation as a means of protection against the anticipated threat of intimate involvement" (p. 311).

While problems with intimacy may be characteristic of battering men, it is also thought that the batterer's dependency needs propel him toward intimate involvement. In describing 33 men who were in treatment for conjugal violence, Coleman (1980) wrote that the men "simultaneously desired and feared intense fusion with women" (p. 211). As a result of this conflict, they tended to distance themselves from their wives, only to be thrown into a panic and overwhelmed by feelings of vulnerability and abandonment when she left. The women in Hilberman and Munson's (1977-78) study painted a similar picture, noting that when their husbands were not being aggressive they were "child-like, dependent, and yearning for nurturance." Walker's (1979) sample of battered women also reported the extremely loving and needy behaviour of their husbands following the violence.

Walker (1984) theorized that the batterer is alternately pulled toward intimacy and then repelled as the relationship becomes too emotionally close for comfort. In her formulation, battering serves as a distancing mechanism. Based on Walker's concept of intimacy regulation, Dutton, Fehr, and McEwen (1982) have posited an optimal intimacy range for men, with departures from that range creating intense arousal for battering males. For such men, uncontrollable changes in relationship intimacy may trigger fears of abandonment or engulfment. As was noted in the earlier discussion of this theoretical formulation, the arousal generated by such changes in socio-emotional distance may be experienced by battering men as anger, with this finding expression in violence (Dutton, 1984, 1985).

To the extent that the backgrounds of wife batterers are typically fraught with physical abuse, exposure to parental violence, and often serious neglect of loving investments (Ball, 1977; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Hofeller, 1982), feelings of helplessness, of threat, of isolation are likely to predominate to the detriment of basic trust, surety, and positive self-regard. In other words, the very conditions thought to spawn problems with dependency and intimacy, the hypothesized precursors of wife battering, are frequently present in the batterer's early developmental history. Notwithstanding this fact, efforts to understand the batterer's behaviour from the standpoint of psychological factors have met with a good deal of criticism from feminist writers and practitioners. It is argued that attributing the man's violence to personality factors such as low self esteem, feelings of helplessness and powerlessness, and problems with intimacy and dependency shifts the focus away from the man's responsibility for his behaviour and, in so doing, decreases the likelihood that the real causes of battering, culturally entrenched sexism, will be addressed and remedied. Attaching diagnostic labels to wife batterers, such as anti-social personality disorder, is thought to accomplish the same end. Feminists have argued that it makes little sense to attribute battering to psychiatric disturbance, an anomaly, given the number of men who batter. The sheer magnitude of the problem suggests that it is rooted in cultural values which support sexism and condone violence.

Alongside explanations of wife battering that focus on the psychology of the batterer, one finds explanations that focus on the battered woman herself. Perhaps the most salient of these is the masochism explanation. The notion that wife battering is a result of female masochism was perhaps most clearly articulated by Snell, Rosenwald, and Robey (1964). Based on their study of 12 couples, these authors concluded that the battered wife provokes her husband to violence because the husband's violent behaviour gives her "apparent gratification" and helps her "to deal with the guilt arising from the intense hostility expressed in her controlling, castrating behaviour" (p. 111). It is interesting to note that these clinicians originally set out to study "wifebeaters"; however, owing to the uncooperativeness of their subjects, they turned their attention instead to the "wifebeater's wife." The authors acknowledged that the women, all of whom had charged their husbands with assault and battery, were much more willing to talk to a psychiatrist than were the men, who tended to deny that there was a problem in the marriage. They further noted that, in some cases, the male children in the family had been actively involved in the violence, defending their mothers and attacking their fathers. Furthermore, the son's sympathies were uniformly with the mother, as reported by both parents.

It is curious that these battered wives, who reported the assault to the police, who were cooperative in trying to seek a solution to the problem, and who were supported and defended by their sons were held responsible for the violence and labelled as masochistic. Over and above the questionable basis on which these inferences were drawn, one must also recognize that Snell et al.'s (1964) conclusions, and similar conclusions reached by other authors (Reynolds & Siegle, 1959), were derived from a smattering of case studies and highly selective samples, virtually guaranteeing biased results. These biased findings were then generalized inappropriately to battered women as a group. Feminist writers have offered an explanation for this victim-blaming.

In her book The Myth of Women's Masochism, Caplan (1987) examined the concept of masochism and the role it plays in preserving the status quo. She pointed out that the very concept of masochism, "the need to derive pleasure from pain," is nonsensical. Nevertheless, this notion, as applied to women, has served to perpetuate the myth that women by nature are meant to suffer, want to suffer, and at some level enjoy suffering. As long as men and women believe the myth, there is no incentive to address the social factors that contribute to women's misery. According to Caplan, those factors include women's socialization experiences. Women are taught to accept their lot in life, to be never ending sources of nurturance, always placing other people's needs, especially their husband's and their children's, ahead of their own. They are taught not to express their anger, not to complain, and not to blame others for their unhappiness. To do less is to invite anger and perhaps rejection. Caplan notes that these very qualities, which are held up as the feminine ideal, are then used as evidence of women's masochistic need to suffer. In the case of the battered wife, they are also used to explain battering.

The woman who steps outside her socially prescribed feminine role and dares to assert herself is seen as inviting abuse, as being aggressive, overly demanding, provocative. When her husband responds with violence, she is blamed for having provoked his behaviour and perhaps for unconsciously desiring it (Storr, 1968). The culturally conditioned notion that a woman is supposed to behave in a particular way goes hand-in-hand with the notion that a man is justified in restoring the "natural" order of things when she fails to do so. Besides, so the argument goes, women enjoy being "put in their place" and "manhandled." It is thus that the myth of women's masochism relieves the batterer of responsibility for the abuse and places the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the woman. Not only is the abuse seen as her fault, it is also seen as her desire, with this tending to justify social inaction.

There is by now a good deal of empirical evidence disputing the claim that battered women are masochistic and provoke their husbands into abusing them (Kuhl, 1984; Schechter, 1982; Star, 1978; Wardell, Gillespie, & Leffler, 1983). In refuting the masochism explanation of wife battering, however, feminists have had to contend with the fact that many battered women knowingly escalate arguments to the point of violence. In his study of 31 battered women, Rounsaville (1978b) reported that 68 percent of the women admitted to having, at least sometimes, knowingly escalated arguments in which they predicted violence. Moreover, although 48 percent stated that they could usually predict their partner's abuse beforehand, "most used means to avert the abuse which they themselves described as inadequate or likely to escalate the violence" (p. 15). Gelles (1974) reported a similar finding noting that, while many of the women could usually predict abuse beforehand, they often used strategies which they knew were inadequate to ward off an attack or likely to worsen the situation.

Feminists have responded to what appears to be masochistic behaviour on the part of battered women by maintaining that a battered woman may engage in provocative behaviour, not because she desires abuse, but because she cannot tolerate the tension that precedes it. When violence is viewed as inevitable, evoking a violent response may be seen as preferable to waiting for the blow to fall and not knowing when it will land (Walker, 1978). Moreover, such behaviour may represent the woman's attempt to exercise some degree of control; she may not be able to avert the battering, but she can control when and where it will occur.

Perhaps the most compelling argument against the masochism theory, however, is the reaction of battered women themselves to the violence in their lives. Consistently, research has shown that most battered women reject their partners' use of violence. Rounsaville (1978b) reported that only 20 percent of the women in his sample stated that they ever deserved to be hit and only 16 percent stated that they ever approved of husbands and wives hitting one another. When queried as to whether or not they deserved the beatings they received, 88 percent of the 57 women in Star, Clark, Goetz, and O'Malia's (1979) study said "no." Similarly, 99 percent of the 350 respondents in Pagelow's (1981) survey of battered women stated that they did not deserve to be beaten. The actions of battered wives support their stated rejection of abuse. The sheer number of abused women who contact police and other service providers for assistance (Hofeller, 1982; Rounsaville, 1978b; Roy, 1977; Stacey & Shupe, 1983) and the high rate of separation among violent couples (Coleman, 1980; Fagan, Stewart, & Hansen, 1983; Gayford, 1975; Pagelow, 1981) clearly call into question the masochism explanation of wife battering.

While support for the masochism explanation of wife battering may be scant, there appears to be considerable support for the interaction hypothesis which holds that marital violence occurs in the context of couple interaction. Within this theoretical formulation, battered wives are viewed as contributors to the violence, although not necessarily the cause of it. Data speaking to the interaction hypothesis come from an early sociological investigation of family violence conducted by Gelles (1974). Participants in this study were 40 "troubled" families who had been identified through agency files and police blotters and 40 control families drawn from the same neighbourhood as one of the target families. The "troubled" group included a high number of cases in which conjugal violence was known to have occurred. Based on his conversations with members of the violent families, Gelles concluded that the victims were not simply passive "hostility sponges" or "whipping boys" for their violent partner. "On the contrary," he wrote, "the role of the victim in intrafamily violence is an important and active one. The actions of the victim are vital intervening events between the structural stresses that lead to violence and the violent acts themselves" (p. 105). Within his sample, the majority of incidents of physical abuse were associated with the victim's verbal behaviour. This apparent link between verbal arguments and battering incidents has been well documented in the literature (Coleman, 1980; Dobash & Dobash, 1984; Flynn, 1977; Gayford, 1975; Hofeller, 1982; Star et al., 1979).

The image of the battered wife as a passive object of abuse has been further challenged by the results of the Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) survey. This national survey conducted on a random, representative sample of 2,143 American families and couples, and containing approximately equal numbers of male and female respondents, indicated that the most common situation was one in which both husband and wife had used violence. Of the couples reporting any violence, 49 percent were of this type. Although the data point to a high rate of violence by wives as well as husbands, the authors note that wives sustain more injuries than husbands (Berk, Berk, Loseke, & Rauma, 1983; Steinmetz, 1977, 1980) and engage in less dangerous and injurious forms of abuse than their partners. The authors also acknowledge that their data do not reveal what proportion of the violent acts by wives was in self-defense or retaliation. In an effort to clarify this issue, Straus (1980) re-evaluated the data and came to the conclusion that women use violence more often than not in self-defense.

The Straus et al. (1980) data also support a positive link between verbal aggression on the part of the woman and acts of physical aggression by her husband. It is important to note, however, that not all violence is preceded by verbal arguments. Women have reportedly been dragged out of bed while sleeping and subjected to a beating (Pagelow, 1981). Nor is it the case that battered women necessarily instigate verbal arguments. As noted, their participation appears to be more defensive than offensive. Even where the wife has initiated the conflict, there can be no justification for physical assault. To paraphrase Straus and his colleagues, wives, and husbands for that matter, are not for hitting.

Feminists have been sharply critical of the Straus et al. (1980) survey for its failure to consider the self-defensive aspect of battered women's behaviour. In addition, they maintain that, in framing the problem as one of family violence, the researchers have diverted attention away from the batterer, the one who must ultimately be held responsible and accountable for his actions, and obscured the real meaning of the violence, namely, the man's attempt to dominate and control his wife. Feminists have argued that in defining the problem in interactional terms one automatically opens the door to blaming the battered woman for the violence and diminishing the husband's personal responsibility for his behaviour. At the very least, it is suggested, the husband's violence is minimized and the wife's victim status, and the very real danger she faces, obscured as attention becomes focused on interaction patterns and the sequence of events that culminated in the violence.

Feminists note that interactional explanations are often predicated on sexist assumptions about a woman's "natural" role vis-a-vis her husband. Gayford (1983), for example, identified three types of battered women: the inadequate wife, the highly competent wife, and the provocative wife. Whether through inadequacy, over-control, or sexual provocativeness each type was thought to produce tension in the marital relationship, thereby precipitating, either directly or indirectly, their own victimization. Implicit in this explanation is the assumption that a woman should fulfill her wifely duties as defined by her husband, should never outperform her husband or dare to usurp his authority by attempting to exercise some control within the relationship, should never be more sexual than her husband. It is interesting that, in this view, even a woman's strength, her competence, becomes a liability. Explanations of abuse that point to the woman's nagging, aggressive behaviour as determinants of battering (Storr, 1968) are also regarded as fundamentally sexist insofar as they reflect the notion that a wife should be uncomplaining and passive.

Bograd (1984) writes that interactional formulations are biased against women because they imply that the battered woman could and should control her husband's feelings and actions; attenuate the man's responsibility for his violence; ignore physical size differences between men and women; and deny that violence may be linked to preexisting personality characteristics of the abusive husband and not only to transactional variables that developed over the course of the relationship (p. 561). Furthermore, interactional explanations are found wanting in that they fail to account for the fact that women are often battered regardless of their interactional contribution. Many battered women, for example, attempt to change their behaviour so as to avoid a beating but without success. Still others are battered for no apparent reason, other than that their partner felt like it (Pagelow, 1981). Even where interactional explanations may shed light on why a particular man abused his wife on a particular occasion, they fail to address the more fundamental question of why husbands physically abuse their wives. In short, the focus on couple interaction patterns and family structure is thought to ignore the larger social, political, and economic realities that impact women in general and battered wives in particular. Feminists maintain that, in disregarding the very real constraints that trap battered women in abusive relationships, the family systems approach serves to support the status quo and the sexual inequality that leads to violence against women.

While there is no denying the role that sexism plays in the abuse of women, this does not negate the contribution of interactional factors. From a family systems perspective, there is no inherent contradiction in holding the view that the man is solely responsible for his violence while simultaneously maintaining that the couple is locked in an interactional pattern to which each contributes (Cook & Franz-Cook, 1984; Weitzman & Dreen, 1982). A man may very well resort to physical abuse as a way of asserting his dominance over his wife, with his actions reflecting a deep-seated belief in his "right" to control his wife and enforce her subordinate position in the relationship. It is in the context of threat to his perceived right to dominate and control, however, that battering occurs, and that threat often arises out of his partner's behaviour. As noted previously, wife battering often occurs in the context of heated verbal exchanges between husband and wife, or where the woman has refused to comply with her partner's demands or otherwise defied or questioned his authority. To claim that the battering is unrelated to the wife's behaviour simply does not square with the facts. After all, the woman who totally accepts her husband's position of authority and dominance may never incur his anger and, therefore, may never suffer physical abuse. Should she decide to challenge her husband's authority, however, she may well find herself a victim of battering.

As Miller and Mothner (1971) pointed out, irrational sexual inequality between men and women leads to inevitable tensions which often get played out in their families. "To the extent that the subordinates move toward free expression, exposing the inequality and questioning the basis for its existence, they create open conflict" (p. 770). This is not to deny that battering sometimes, and perhaps often, occurs in the absence of any threat to the husband's authority but simply to acknowledge that some women continue to assert themselves in their relationship, as they have every right to do, and in so doing, trigger their partner's countermoves to quell the perceived insurrection. To accept this fact is not to blame the woman for the resulting violence. The woman who demands equality, who seeks to develop her own capacities and interests has done nothing wrong and, therefore, is not deserving of blame. Obviously, a woman has every right to express herself, to voice her opinions, to disagree with her husband, to have expectations of others, to determine what she will and will not do. Her partner's inability to accept her right to self-determination, freedom of expression, and equality within the relationship is his problem, and if that problem results in wife battering, then he is solely responsible and accountable for his actions. It is only by viewing the behaviour in context, however, that the meaning of the battering is revealed, namely, the husband's attempt to dominate and control his wife.

## Summary

Taken together, the research findings arising out of the different theoretical approaches to wife battering suggest a multideterministic causal model. There can be no doubt that sexism plays a major role in wife battering at the most fundamental level. The socialization of men and women into rigid sex roles which favour a male-dominant, female-subordinate power structure, both within the family and within society at large, leads to the devaluing of women and their roles and ultimately to their scapegoating. It also leads to the belief that male domination and control are hallmarks of manliness and must be preserved and maintained for the sake of self-esteem and masculine pride.

While sexism may indeed be a primary factor in wife abuse, it is not in and of itself sufficient to explain all cases of wife battering. After all, many men are avowedly sexist and yet they do not physically abuse their partners. Similarly, many men suffer from low self-esteem and feelings of masculine inadequacy without this finding expression in violence. Research suggests that wife battering may result from the interaction of sexist beliefs with other predisposing factors such as feelings of helplessness and dependency, problems with intimacy, poor problem solving and stress management, and exposure to violent role models in childhood. At this stage in our understanding of the problem and its remediation we can ill afford to overlook any potential determinants. If our primary objective is to stop the battering, then we must address the problem on all fronts, social, familial, and individual. Attempts to provide simple, linear explanations will do little to advance our understanding of this complex social problem and elucidate the steps needed to remedy it. Nor will they shed adequate light on the reasons why battered wives remain with their abusive partners, a question that has long intrigued and puzzled researchers and the general public alike. It is to a consideration of this important question that we now turn.

## Why Do Women Stay?

Of all the questions that have been addressed in the wife battery literature perhaps none has received more attention and stimulated greater interest than the question: Why do battered women remain in abusive relationships? While one can fathom wife abuse, it appears to be infinitely more difficult to fathom why a woman would endure it. To many, the fact that battered women do stay in abusive relationships, often for years, seems to imply acceptance of the abuse and hence some responsibility for it.

When feminists and other battered women's advocates declared the battered woman a victim, they sought to underscore her nonresponsibility, her noncomplicity in the acts of violence. In particular they sought to refute the masochism explanation of wife battering which charged the battered woman with provoking or precipitating the abuse out of her neurotic need for punishment (Snell et al., 1964).

Feminists took issue with this position and also with the suggestion that many battered women were co-conspirators in crimes of violence against them (Kleckner, 1978; Lion, 1977; Shainess, 1979). They argued that one cannot hold the battered woman responsible for the abuse on the grounds that she stays with her abusive partner, when her options for leaving are often virtually nonexistent. Support for their argument abounds. Indeed, several factors have been identified which singly or in combination are thought to effectively "lock" the battered woman in. Some of these involve external constraints while others are more psychologically based.

## External Constraints

Professional response. As previously noted, feminists view the battered wife as not only a victim of the batterer but also a victim of society. The failure or inability of the various social agencies and legal organizations to respond appropriately to battered wives has been identified as a "powerful (force) which (keeps) women with their abusive husbands" (Gelles, 1976, p. 666). Overwhelmingly, battered women have reported the indifferent and sometimes callous treatment they have received at the hands of service providers. Police response has come in for particular criticism. Roy (1977) found that although two-thirds of the women in her sample had contacted police, only about 30 percent found the police response helpful. While 65 percent of the women in Rounsaville's (1978b) study had called the police, only 10 percent indicated satisfaction with the intervention. And Hofeller (1982) reported that of the 39 women in her sample who had contact with the police, 82 percent were either moderately or completely dissatisfied with the officer's response.

Within the past decade, a good deal of attention has been directed toward examining police response to domestic violence. Early research suggested that crisis intervention took precedence over arrest and that police almost never made referrals to social service agencies (Oppenlander, 1982; Brown, 1984). Research findings also highlighted the tendency for police departments to attach low priority to domestic dispute calls, to pay attention to the offender while virtually ignoring the emotional needs of the victim, to record charges under an offence other than assault, such as resisting an officer or public drunkenness, thereby denying the victims their right to pursue legal action against their abusers (Oppenlander, 1982). Buzawa's (1982) research on the impact of discretionary arrest policies on police officers' attitudes toward arrest indicated that officers used arrest as a last resort, were most likely to arrest in cases where the violence occurred in their presence (41%) and were least likely to arrest in the case of prior violence (17%), the most frequent situation. Bell (1985, 1987) found that the police were likely to arrest offenders when criminal complaints were initiated by the victims but that women who did not initiate criminal complaints did not receive adequate protection or services from the criminal justice system. He also found that the type of disposition was often influenced by the police interpretation of domestic violence as a non-criminal event.

In an effort to establish the criminal nature of wife battering and in recognition of the factors that militate against a woman's decision to lodge a criminal complaint against her partner, a number of jurisdictions have introduced mandatory or presumptive arrest policies in cases of domestic violence. Under this policy, police officers are instructed to arrest abusers in cases of domestic violence where probable cause exists, even if the victim does not desire prosecution and even if the officer did not witness the assault. Based on survey data, Cohn (1987) reported a substantial increase in arrests of batterers following the implementation of domestic violence policies among urban police departments. Between 1984 and 1986, the number of reported arrests almost doubled from 24 percent to 47 percent. The data also showed that the use of officer discretion was declining and was being replaced by the use of stated policy guidelines. Burris and Jaffe (1983) also reported the positive effects of a police policy encouraging officers to file charges in cases of wife abuse. The results of their study showed that the policy change had resulted in an increase in the number of common assault charges laid as well as charges of "assault causing bodily harm." The authors noted that officers were more inclined to treat wife assault in the same way they treated stranger assault.

In a more recent study, Ferraro (1989) examined the impact of a presumptive arrest policy and found that most of the officers rejected arrest as an option after weighing legal, ideological, practical and political considerations. In short, the presumptive arrest policy was not implemented in a uniform way. Despite well-publicized policy changes and training in domestic violence, police officers still exercised considerable discretion when it came to arresting offenders. Indeed, there is some research to suggest that the major factor influencing the likelihood of arrest is whether violence has been directed toward the police (Dolon, Hendricks, & Meagher, 1986).

While presumptive arrest policies and policies that encourage the laying of assault charges are clearly a step in the right direction, they obviously do not guarantee adequate police response in cases of domestic violence. Furthermore, even where arrests are made and charges laid, this does not guarantee adequate follow through at the level of the courts. The deficiencies of the legal system were outlined by Truninger (1971) in an early review of the laws and procedures available for dealing with marital violence.

Truninger noted that while laws were in place to protect citizens from violence, those laws were often unenforced in cases of wife assault; where domestic violence was concerned, the courts were reluctant to prosecute on the grounds that it would be disruptive to family life. Pagelow's (1981) data, collected a decade later, indicated that the courts had been slow to rectify the situation. Of the 350 survey respondents beaten by their spouses, not one claimed that her spouse was arrested, tried and found guilty, and sentenced to jail on a charge of assault and battery. Ford's (1983) survey data also indicated that a woman attempting to prosecute a violent husband was likely to find the criminal justice system far less responsive than she might expect. He noted that women often encountered discrimination on the part of agents of the system which rendered their efforts futile.

On a more positive note, Bowker (1983) reported that of the 146 battered women interviewed for his survey most rated the legal service received as very or fairly successful. This was especially true for the more severe cases of abuse. At the same time, there were many negative experiences reported including district attorneys who refused services or discouraged women from filing charges, lawyers who sided with the assailant or attempted to take advantage of the woman. As is true with police policy regarding arrest and the laying of criminal charges in cases of wife battering, legal codes have been reformulated in recent years to redress the problem of wife battering. As Carringella-MacDonald (1988) noted, however, discretionary enforcement of reforms is also problematic at this level, resulting in gains, protection, and prosecutions that fall far below reform goals.

While battered women may turn to the police and the courts for help, there is reason to believe that medical personnel may be the first professionals with whom they come in contact. Regrettably, the medical profession has also been found wanting in its response to battered wives. In Hofeller's (1982) sample, 73 percent of the women who had seen a physician for treatment of abuse-engendered injuries were pleased with the service they received; however, the majority of women in Rounsaville's (1978b) study found physicians unable to be of help. In their survey of major human service groups, Burris and Jaffe (1984) found that battered women were least likely to confide in physicians and that physicians identified the lowest number of abused women. In a similar vein, Bowker and Maurer (1987) and Brendtro and Bowker (1989) found that battered wives rated health care personnel as the least effective of all formal sources of help. Although there is some evidence to suggest that physicians' attitudes and practices regarding wife abuse may be changing (Trute, Sarsfield, & MacKenzie, 1988), there is still a tendency for physicians to underestimate the occurrence of wife battering among their female patients. As Trute et al. note, "most doctors will provide primary care to a wide range of women and will not be aware of, or effectively deal with, situations of wife battering" (p. 68).

Support for what appears to be a conspiracy of silence between battered women and physicians comes from an investigation of emergency room practices in a large city hospital (Stark, Flitcraft & Frazier, 1979). In this study, 25 percent of the women treated were later identified as probable victims of wife battering. Of these women, only 2.8 percent had been identified as battered women by the attending physicians. Of note, however, is the finding that this group of probable abuse victims was far more likely to have been prescribed minor tranquilizers or pain medications than other injured women, suggesting that their status was recognized although not acknowledged. Based on these findings, the authors concluded that the medical profession actually helps to create battered women. They suggested that the widespread practice of administering tranquilizers to battered wives serves to "cool the abused woman out, to reduce her capacity to understand, adequately respond to or resolve her crisis" (p. 475). The dangers in such a practice have been duly noted. Advocates for battered women claim that, above all else, the battered woman needs to be alert and ever vigilant in order to anticipate and avoid battering incidents (Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Walker, 1978).

The tendency for physicians to prescribe tranquilizers to battered women is viewed by feminists as yet another example of the social oppression of women aimed at preserving the status quo. This oppression is thought to be particularly evident in the field of psychiatry, where women in general receive psychiatric diagnoses far more often than men for identical symptoms. It is further noted that battered wives are more likely to be treated for family problems than for the effects of repeated abuse (Penfold & Walker, 1986). The battered woman who winds up in the psychiatrist's office may find herself being prescribed tranquilizers rather than being helped to disengage from an abusive partner.

Sexist attitudes which encourage women to stay in abusive marriages have also been found among the clergy. In the Burris and Jaffe (1984) survey mentioned earlier, members of the clergy were second only to physicians in their low rate of identifying abused women. Clergy members were also similar to physicians in that battered women were disinclined to confide in them. Battered women report that when they have confided in their pastors they have often been told to pray more and to go home and try to be a better, more responsive wife and mother. In short, they have implicitly, if not explicitly, been blamed for the abuse.

As might be expected, social workers and psychologists have been identified as the professional groups with whom abused women are most likely to discuss their problems (Burris & Jaffe, 1984). Even here, however, the results are frequently unfavourable. Although traditional social service agencies may be effective in the short term, there is some question as to their long-term effectiveness in remedying the wife battering problem (Donato & Bowker, 1984). Indeed, in their survey of 1,000 battered women, Bowker & Maurer (1986) found that among the various types of counselling services utilized by battered women (social service counselling agencies, clergy, and women's groups), women's groups received the highest effectiveness ratings followed by agencies, and then the clergy. Of note is the fact that despite the higher perceived effectiveness of women's groups, such groups were generally not available in the communities where the battering occurred.

Given the uneven and often woefully inadequate response of service providers to battered women, it is small wonder that many battered wives remain with their abusers. In the absence of adequate police protection and support from the criminal justice system and the other helping professions, a woman may have little choice but to remain. In addition to highlighting the sundry ways in which the system fails battered women, the above findings also underscore the inadequacy of masochism theories as explanations for why women stay with abusive partners. There can be no justification for maintaining that women stay because they condone the violence and perhaps even desire it when various systems combine to keep them in such relationships. In the eyes of feminists, the inadequate professional response to the problem of wife battering is a clear indication of patriarchal values which see women's place as in the home, subordinate to men. By denying the battered woman protection and legal redress, by turning a blind eye to her injuries, by defining the problem as hers or as rooted in family dysfunction, these social and legal systems effectively keep her locked in.

Economic dependency. Over and above the constraints imposed by inadequate social and legal assistance, many battered women are trapped in abusive relationships by their lack of economic resources. Gelles (1974) found that the more dependent a woman was on her husband, economically speaking, the more likely she was to remain in an abusive relationship. Kalmuss and Straus (1982) found that economic dependence and severe physical abuse were positively correlated. In fact, the link between economic dependence and the likelihood of staying with an abusive partner has been well documented (Carlson, 1977; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Rounsaville, 1978a; Stacey & Shupe, 1983; Strube & Barbour, 1983). Aguirre (1985) reported that the probability of a woman returning to her husband increased considerably if her husband was her sole source of income. This factor was a more potent predictor variable than her previous experience with violence, the amount of conflict in the marital relationship, or the number of injuries sustained during current batterings. Among the wives who were totally dependent on their husbands' income, 84 percent indicated their intention to return. By way of contrast, 82 percent of those wives who were not solely dependent on their husbands' income indicated their intention to separate. Once again, the above findings refute masochism explanations for why battered women remain with their abusive partners. Clearly, when women have the economic means to do so, they frequently opt to leave rather than stay, a decision that is not in keeping with masochistic needs.

Although total economic dependence may be a primary factor in keeping many women tied to their abusive partners, a woman's employment outside the home does not automatically render her capable of severing the ties that bind. Stacey and Shupe (1983) reported that almost half of the women in their sample were employed; however, none of them earned sufficient money to support themselves and their children. It would seem that the substantially lower earning power of women relative to men is another important factor in keeping women economically dependent despite gainful employment. To the extent that economic resources translate into personal power, women in general and battered wives in particular are clearly disadvantaged relative to men. At present, women, on average, earn just two-thirds of what men earn. Patriarchal values which keep women in the lowest paying jobs, limit their job opportunities and deny them access to positions of power severely restrict women's options when it comes to leaving an abusive partner. As an added deterrent to "going it alone," the woman who leaves her husband must consider not only the precipitous decline in her own standard of living, but also the commensurate drop in her children's economic circumstances. In many cases, leaving her husband is tantamount to consigning her children to a life of poverty. Faced with such a prospect, many battered women feel they have little choice but to stay.

Social isolation. The lack of an adequate support network has been identified as yet another factor which contributes to the battered woman's failure to leave her abuser. In fact, social isolation has emerged as a common feature of battering relationships, with that isolation effectively cutting the woman off from emotional supports and from information that might alter her perception of her situation. As regards the latter, Gelles (1974) noted that battered women who were employed outside the home were less likely to see their situation as "normal." Presumably, through their contact with others, they had acquired a glimpse of the way other couples behave, throwing into sharp relief the abnormality of their own situation.

The isolation of battered women tends to take a common form. Hofeller (1982) reported that 48 percent of the women in her sample had been forbidden to have personal friends or to entertain friends in their home. Mills (1985) found that most of the husbands of the women in her study had attempted to restrict their wive's friendships. Similar restrictions were reported by Hilberman and Munson (1977-78) who stated that husbands often forbade their wives to work outside the home, thereby effectively cutting them off from outside contacts and supports (Mills, 1985; Roy, 1977). Many battered wives have been described as having virtually no one to whom they could turn for help (Carlson, 1977; Stacey & Shupe, 1983), or as being subjected to long periods of isolation (Giles-Sims, 1983). It appears that the beginning of the isolation may coincide with the transition from a casual to a more permanent relationship. As the woman takes on the status and responsibilities of a wife, her husband may expect her to sever her former relationships (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). He may begin to object, often strenuously, to her outside activities (Rounsaville, 1978a). As her social contacts become more and more restricted, the woman becomes increasingly dependent on her husband, socially, emotionally, and economically. Eventually, she may become totally dependent on him, at which point the likelihood of her leaving the relationship is marginal at best.

The social isolation of the battered woman, the restriction of her friendships, and her enforced social, economic and psychological dependence on her partner provide compelling reasons why many women stay with an abusive partner, reasons that challenge masochism explanations. Rather, what is suggested by these findings is the significance of the power imbalance between the batterer and his wife and the role it plays in the woman's entrapment. It is important to recognize that the batterer's attempt to dominate and control his wife could not succeed were it not for the support of the larger social system. Insofar as society fails to provide the social, legal, and economic supports needed for the woman to break free of her abuser, it becomes party to the abuse and its perpetuation. It has been noted that while society increasingly seeks to punish men who abuse their wives and tries to teach them ways to control their aggressive behaviour, it is not committed to overturning or transcending the limits of existing social arrangements, as reflected in issues of inequality, privilege, entitlement and coercion. In short, current treatment approaches address the symptoms of wife battering not the root cause.

In sum, economic dependence, a lack of social and legal assistance, and an inadequate support network may all contribute to the battered woman's likelihood of remaining in an abusive relationship. While admittedly important, these explanatory variables cannot explain the behaviour of those battered women who are neither economically dependent on their husbands nor socially isolated (Hanks & Rosenbaum, 1977; Rounsaville, 1978a). They also can not explain why so many battered women move to have charges against their husbands dropped, or fail to cooperate in the legal proceedings initiated on their behalf, or turn their backs on adequate social assistance and return to their husbands. Clearly, for an understanding of these situations, other explanations must be sought. The search for those answers has led researchers into the psychological realm.

## Internal Constraints

### Commitment, hope, and fear.

Various emotional and cognitive factors have been offered in explanation of the battered wife's tendency to remain with or return to her abusive mate. One of these is commitment to the marriage (Martin, 1976; Stacey & Shupe, 1983). Strube and Barbour (1983) examined the contribution of psychological commitment to a woman's decision to leave an abusive relationship and found that it was significantly and independently related to decisions to leave. The authors noted that women who had given "love" as a reason for initially remaining with their partner were more likely to be with their partner at follow-up than women who had not indicated such a commitment. Commitment to one's partner is seen by Loseke and Cahill (1984) as a primary factor in keeping battered women with their partners, just as it keeps non-battered women in relationships that have become dysfunctional. "Despite problems, 'internal constraints' are experienced when contemplating the possibility of terminating the relationship with the seemingly irreplaceable other" (p. 304).

Commitment is thought to arise out of women's socialization experience. Feminists contend that in our culture girls are taught that their true fulfillment lies in serving others, especially their husbands. Westkott (1986) refers to this as the "female nurturing imperative," defined as "the expectation that women, simply by being female, are to meet the material and emotional expectations of men" (p. 219). It is marriage that is supposed to give meaning to women's lives, and insofar as their lives are lived through their husbands, they have no value or identity apart from them (Martin, 1976). The degree to which a woman subscribes to this traditional ideology is thought to influence her decision to stay with an abusive partner. Traditional ideology has been defined as, "an internalized way of viewing the social system and one's own position in it from a traditional frame of reference that endorses the patriarchal-hierarchical family system, resulting in behaviors that conform to this outlook" (Pagelow, 1981, p. 126).

Although it is commonly held that battered wives are traditional in outlook (Ball, 1977), research findings lead to a questioning of this assumption. It will be recalled that the battered women in Walker's (1984) study held more liberal attitudes toward women's roles than most other women. Specifically, the women rated themselves as more liberal than 81 percent of a normative control group of college women. It will also be recalled that Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981) found battered women and women from distressed but non-violent marriages to be more liberal in their outlook than maritally satisfied women. In a similar vein, Hofeller (1982) reported that, while 66 percent of the battered women in her sample were rated as high on a measure of traditionalism, this was lower than the 79 percent of the control group who were rated as traditional. Star et al. (1979) also reported that almost all of the battered women in their study claimed that marriage is a 50/50 proposition. At the same time, however, a large portion of the women believed that the man should be head of the house and that a woman's greatest joy is to be a wife and mother. In addition, one-third of the sample felt that it is a wife's duty to obey her husband in family matters and submit to him sexually whenever he wishes.

Research has also provided evidence for no differences between battered and non-battered women on measures of traditionalism (Bernard & Bernard, 1983) and evidence for greater traditionalism among abused women relative to non-abused women from both discordant and satisfactory marriages (Telch & Lindquist, 1984). The degree to which traditional ideology influences a battered wife's decision to leave an abusive partner was a primary focus of the Pagelow (1981) survey. Survey results provided support for a positive relationship between traditionalism and the length of time a woman stays in a battering relationship, with this variable accounting for 17 percent of the variance.

While traditional values may keep some battered women with their abusive partners, others, who do not embrace such views, may stay because of the anticipated social censure should they leave. For one other consequence of the "female nurturing imperative" is the belief that a failed marriage is the wife's responsibility, a sure sign that she has not lived up to her wifely duties and her responsibilities to nurture and care for her partner. The criticism, explicit or implied, from friends, family, and society in general may simply be more than a woman can bear, particularly when coupled with a dearth of support from the social system and the professional community.

Hope that the husband will change (Pagelow, 1981; Roy, 1977), feelings of sympathy for the husband (Hofeller, 1982), belief in the husband's promises of reform (Gayford, 1975; Pagelow, 1981; Stacey & Shupe, 1983), and concern for the children (Carlson, 1977; Stacey & Shupe, 1983) are other reasons commonly given by battered women for staying in a battering relationship. Martin (1976) has identified fear--for themselves, for their children, for their families--as the single most important determinant. Pagelow (1981) concurred, noting that by the time the abuse had reached the stage of secondary battering (repeated violence), 78 percent of the women surveyed listed fear as their primary reason for staying. In Roy's (1977) sample, fear of reprisals from their husband was the third most common reason for staying. Research has shown that efforts on the part of the wife to leave, even temporarily, often result in more serious assaults (Dobash & Dobash, 1984) and that, indeed, the woman's very life and the life of her children may be threatened should she dare to leave (Rounsaville, 1978b). There can be little doubt that these threats and punitive actions constitute strong inducements for her to stay.

Cycle of abuse theory. In an effort to understand the dynamics underlying the battered woman's entrapment, researchers have examined her initial response to the appearance of violence in the relationship. For many battered wives that initial response appears to be one of shock and disbelief (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Rounsaville, 1978a) often accompanied by feelings of shame and guilt (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Giles-Sims, 1983). The battered wife often blames herself for provoking the violence and tends to view it as an isolated incident, an aberration that is unlikely to reoccur (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Giles-Sims, 1983; Mills, 1985; Rounsaville, 1978b). Most battered women, it seems, are only too willing to put the incident behind them and get on with their lives. Giles-Sim (1983) found that 93 percent of the women in her study adopted this forgiving attitude after the first battering episode. The fact that most battering begins early on in the relationship (Roy, 1977), often within the first year of marriage (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981; Rounsaville, 1978b) and frequently during the first pregnancy or following the birth of the first child (Giles-Sims, 1983; Rounsaville, 1978b), may greatly influence the wife's decision to stay.

Based on interviews with over 120 battered women, Lenore Walker (1977-78) developed a cycle theory of violence to account for the woman's tendency to stay with her abuser, not only after the first incident but also after repeated abuse. She theorized that battering is neither a constant nor random behaviour but follows a definite cycle which is repeated over a period of time. That cycle involves three distinct phases which may vary in duration and intensity. First, there is the tension building stage, during which the batterer becomes increasingly agitated. At this stage threats, verbal harassment, and minor physical abuse may be present but are denied or minimized. As the tension builds, a point is eventually reached where the violence erupts into a serious battering incident. This explosion constitutes the second phase of the cycle. It is followed by the third and final stage, a period of calm and kindness during which the husband apologizes for his behaviour, begs forgiveness, and promises never to hit his wife again. He may shower her with love and attention as a way of demonstrating his sincerity. In describing this third phase, and in particular the woman's reaction to it, Walker wrote:

> It is in the third phase of this cycle that the battered woman's victimization becomes completed. She wants to believe that her man's kind and loving behavior will last. It is at this time that she gets a glimpse of her original dream of how wonderful love is. This is her reinforcement for staying in the relationship. She hopes that if the other two phases can be eliminated, the battering behavior will cease and her idealized relationship will magically remain. Since almost all of the rewards of being married occur during this loving phase, this is the most

> difficult time for her to end the relationship (p. 532).

While some researchers have found substantial evidence for a pattern of violence (Rounsaville, 1978a; Stacey & Shupe, 1983), others have not. Many of the women in Hofeller's (1982) sample, for example, indicated that their husbands' behaviour was almost totally unpredictable. The women in Pagelow's (1981) study stated repeatedly that there was no pattern to their husbands' attacks. Evidence for the presence of remorse and contrition is also variable (Coleman, 1980; Dobash & Dobash, 1984; Hofeller, 1982; Pagelow, 1981; Rounsaville, 1978a; Stacey & Shupe, 1983). Apparently, some men are inclined to apologize and try to make amends for their behaviour while others act as though they have absolutely nothing to apologize for (Stacey & Shupe, 1983).

One factor which may help to explain these differential reactions is the stage in the couple's battering relationship. The Dobashes (1979) found that where remorse and contrition did appear, it was usually after the first battering incident, or early on in the relationship. Walker (1984) observed a similar pattern, noting that over time tension-building became more common, or at least more evident, and loving contrite behaviour declined. Even where remorse and contrition remain, however, the battered wife must eventually face the fact that despite all the apologies, all the promises, nothing has changed; the beatings still continue. Why a woman remains with her abuser in the absence of compensatory rewards, or where it is evident that the abuse will continue and in all probability escalate, is the question. One answer to this question is provided by the construct of learned helplessness.

Learned helplessness. Walker (1977-78, 1979) has invoked the construct of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975) to explain the process of entrapment in an abusive relationship. She suggests that the battered woman learns to believe that nothing she does will make a difference. This belief develops over the course of receiving repeated, noncontingent attacks. Because the attacks are noncontingent, the woman's energies become increasingly focused on strategies of self-defense to the neglect of escape strategies. Gradually, her perception of viable alternatives becomes restricted to the point where she fails to perceive any alternatives at all. In this regard, Pagelow (1981) reported that 69 percent of the women in her sample felt "trapped" and 61 percent felt powerless to prevent the abuse or escape from it.

Other investigators have also documented the battered woman's sense of hopelessness about her situation (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Hofeller, 1982; Rounsaville, 1978a, 1978b). It is at this point that the battered woman is thought to abandon all attempts to change her situation and simply resigns herself to the beatings. To outside observers, her behaviour appears passive, feeding into the belief that she is accepting of the abuse. As research has shown, however, many battered women see passivity as their best line of defense. Women have often reported that they failed to fight back because they thought, or had learned through experience, that fighting back was not only futile but dangerous (Carlson, 1977; Dobash & Dobash, 1984; Giles-Sims, 1983; Hofeller, 1982).

The psychological changes, both emotional and cognitive, that are thought to accompany learned helplessness have been described by Ferraro and Johnson

(1983). They noted that, initially, the battered woman feels betrayed. This is followed by feelings of guilt and shame arising out of a sense of having somehow failed. In time, after years of physical abuse, ridicule, and criticism, self-confidence and hope are replaced by loneliness, pessimism, depression, and perhaps fear. The high rates of depression (Gayford, 1975; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Hofeller, 1982; Mitchell & Hodon, 1983; Pagelow, 1981; Rounsaville, 1978a, 1978b; Walker, 1984) and low self-esteem (Carlson, 1977; Hilberman, 1980; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Hofeller, 1982; Mitchell & Hodon, 1983; Prescott & Letko, 1972; Star et al., 1979; Walker, 1981), which seem to characterize many battered wives, serve as further impediments to leaving an abusive partner. Martin (1976) has suggested that suppression of the battered woman's "fight-or-flight" instinct puts her in a state of suspended animation where she is in grave danger of losing her self-respect. Once that is gone she is "lost" because self-respect is the inner source of strength on which she will need to draw in order to leave the relationship.

Traumatic bonding. The learned helplessness paradigm, and its accompanying emotional sequelae, may be useful in explaining the battered woman's passivity and inertia in the face of physical abuse. It cannot, however, explain the pattern of separation and reconciliation so typical of many, if not most, battering relationships. Dutton and Painter (1981) have proposed the concept of "traumatic bonding," which incorporates certain features of the learned helplessness paradigm, to account for such behaviour patterns. They define traumatic bonding as "the development and course of strong emotional ties between two persons where one person intermittently harasses, beats, threatens, abuses or intimidates the other" (p. 13). In such situations, the attachments formed "manifest themselves in positive feelings and attitudes by the subjugated party for the intermittently maltreating or abusive party" (p. 13). Dutton and Painter posit that the alternating periods of negative arousal occasioned by the abuse, and the relief or release associated with the removal of that arousal, constitute a powerful intermittent reinforcement schedule producing strong emotional bonding effects.

They further suggest that the battered woman's emotional collapse in the wake of the battering incident (Walker, 1979) makes her highly vulnerable to her husband's loving, contrite behaviour. At a time when she is experiencing feelings of depression, self-blame, and helplessness, his "improved behaviour serves to reduce the aversive arousal he himself has created, while also providing reinforcement for his partner to stay in the relationship" (p. 19). With each battering incident, these trauma-based emotional bonds are strengthened making long-lasting separation all the more difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Separation from her partner "leads to an emotional deprivation state of increasing intensity which ... may snap a woman back into the relationship" (p. 21).

Psychological infantilism. Another psychological explanation for the battered woman's ties to her abuser has been offered by Symonds (1979). This conceptualization takes as its starting point fear. It will be recalled that fear has been identified as a primary factor in keeping many battered woman with their abusive spouses. Indeed, Hilberman and Munson (1977-78) described their sample of battered women as "a study in paralyzing terror." Symonds has likened the terror experienced by battered women to that experienced by other victims of violent crime. During or immediately following assault, victims typically register shock, denial, and disbelief. This is followed by a state of terror and a condition known as "traumatic psychological infantilism" wherein the victim may cry or cling to the criminal or become ingratiating and appeasing. During the final phase, the victim becomes depressed, withdrawn, and self-blaming. Of note, is the remarkable similarity between these stages and those reported by battered wives (Walker, 1979).

It is Symonds' contention that the second phase, the phase of terror, is most crucial for understanding the behaviour of the battered wife. Following a beating by her husband, the woman experiences terror which traumatically infantilizes her, reducing her to the coping mechanisms of early childhood, namely, obedience and cooperation. In explaining the process, Symonds draws a parallel between mind control techniques and the forces at work in a battering relationship. Isolation from peers, humiliation and degradation followed by kindness, with the threat of returning to the previous degradation state, are all features of brainwashing as well as of battering relationships. And just as the recipient of brainwashing becomes zombie-like and exhibits apathy, despair, and finally total submission, so too does the battered wife. Her life is lived in a state of fear, never knowing when the next attack will come or from what quarter. Externally, she may present as passive, but internally she is a study in paralyzing terror. It is perhaps this image which led one researcher to coin the phrase "conjugal terrorism" in reference to wife battering (Morgan, 1982).

Personality factors. Over and above the contribution of such factors as learned helplessness, traumatic bonding, psychological infantilism, and commitment and hope, personality factors have also been implicated in the battered wife's decision to quit or remain in a violent marriage. Hofeller (1982) identified a subset of women in her sample who had remained assertive and self-confident throughout their marriage. Like most of the women in Giles-Sims's (1983) study, these women did not feel guilty about the abuse, nor did they accept their husbands' negative evaluation of them. They also tended to remain in the relationship a relatively short time. Hofeller noted, however, that the majority of women in her sample appeared to have had low self-esteem at the time of their marriage, a finding consistent with Carlson's (1977) data. This would seem to suggest that, rather than being a product of learned helplessness, personality characteristics such as low self-esteem and passivity may actually pre-date the battering relationship for some women and perhaps even contribute to their victimization. It is entirely possible, for example, that some abusive men may seek out women who present as passive and low in self-esteem (Berg & Johnson, 1979).

Evidence for passivity among battered women has been reported by Star (1978) who found that, while battered women were not low in self-esteem relative to non-battered women, they did repress anger, were timid and emotionally reserved, had low coping skills, and subscribed to the view that any action on their part would only exacerbate the situation. Collectively, she viewed these characteristics as signs of passivity and suggested that this was the primary rationale underlying the battered woman's tolerance of abuse. Although Star's data do not rule out the possibility that passivity was a function of the abuse, a reflection of learned helplessness, the early socialization histories of the women suggest that it may well have been present at the outset of the relationship. In this regard it is noteworthy that a high percentage of battered women marry their spouses even though they have been abused by them prior to marriage (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gayford, 1975; Giles-Sims, 1983: Pagelow, 1981: Rounsaville, 1978b). Pagelow (1981) reported that 57 percent (n=86) of the women in her sample stated that their spouses were known by them to have been violent toward another wife. She suggested that wife batterers may select women who will likely tolerate abuse.

A passive personality style could help to explain why some battered women fail to deliver a clear message to their partners that the violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. In this regard, Hofeller (1982) noted that 28 percent of the women in her sample had never discussed the violence with their husbands and 54 percent had never discussed it with anyone while it was happening. Similarly, Pagelow (1981) found that 22 percent of the battered women surveyed had not tried to avoid attacks. Claerhout, Elder and Janes (1982) also documented the ineffective avoidant strategies of battered women, and Finn (1985) observed that battered women tended to use passive-avoidant strategies for coping.

Findings such as these have fuelled speculation that some women may be at risk for becoming battered wives, with that risk originating in their early developmental histories. Childhood exposure to violence, either in the form of witnessing spouse abuse or receiving physical abuse, has been offered as a possible predisposing factor. And, in fact, evidence has been found for a link between childhood exposure to violence and the likelihood of becoming a battered wife (Flynn, 1977; Gelles, 1976; Hanks & Rosenbaum, 1977; Kalmuss, 1984; Parker & Schumaker, 1977). On the other hand, several researchers have reported that the majority of battered women in their samples had not been exposed to violence in their families of origin

(Carlson, 1977; Pagelow, 1981; Stacey & Shupe, 1983; Star, 1978; Star et al., 1979; Walker, 1984).

Regrettably, most of the studies cited above did not include a control group of non-battered women, thereby rendering the findings uninterpretable. When one considers the few studies that have included a control group, results are inconsistent. Hofeller (1982) found that while the majority of battered women in her sample had not come from violent family backgrounds, the percentage that had was higher than the percentage found for non-battered women. Telch and Lindquist (1984) noted that both husbands and wives from their violent group experienced a significantly greater incidence of violent, abusive behaviour in their families of origin than the maritally satisfied and non-violent maritally distressed groups. In contrast, Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981) found no significant differences between abused wives and either non-abused wives who were in distressed marriages or wives who were maritally satisfied on whether or not they had received physical abuse as a child or witnessed spouse abuse. Similarly, O'Leary and Curley (1986) reported that violence in the family of origin was not a critical distinguishing characteristic of women in abusive relationships.

As for the suggestion that exposure to parental violence may make a woman likely to view violence as a normal part of adult relationships and hence less likely to leave a violent partner (Gelles, 1974), here too findings are mixed. Snyder and Fruchtman (1981), for example, found that women who had received frequent abuse (monthly or more) as a child were among the most likely to be living with their abusive partners at follow-up. Schutte, Malouff, and Doyle (1987) reported opposite findings. In their study, women who were battered as children were less likely to return to their batterers after leaving shelter relative to women who had not been abused in childhood (r=.20). Pagelow (1981) also reported a negative relationship between abuse in childhood and a woman's response to abuse in adulthood, with women who had been victimized as children reporting shorter stays in an abusive marriage than women who had not been abused as children.

In attempting to account for these differential findings, one cannot ignore the methodological differences across studies. Schutte et al. (1987), for example, based their conclusions on women's stated intentions at the point of leaving shelter, i.e., whether or not they intended to return to their partner. This measure is inherently problematic insofar as women's intentions and their actual behaviour may be quite discordant. While Snyder and Fruchtman (1981) used a more valid outcome measure, i.e., whether or not a woman was living with her partner at follow-up, their sample sizes were very small, raising questions about the reliability of their findings. Pagelow's (1981) results are somewhat more difficult to challenge, given the greater breadth and rigor of her study. It is important to note, however, that while her finding of a negative relationship between being abused as a child and length of stay in an abusive marriage was significant, the relationship was weak ($R^2 = .015$). Clearly, while the intergenerational transmission of violence has been well documented with respect to battering males, the relationship between violence in the family of origin and the likelihood of becoming a battered wife or of enduring abuse remains indeterminate.

Emotional dependency has been postulated as another factor which may figure prominently in some battered women's tolerance of abuse and inability to disengage from an abusive partner, with this also thought to originate in the woman's early developmental history. Smith (1984) theorized that the battered woman lacks individuation. She has never fully developed a sense of her own identity and truly believes that her mate is absolutely necessary to her very existence. Shainess (1977, 1979) postulated an unresolved symbiosis with the mother as an all-pervasive sense of badness and guilt which is so easily triggered that the woman is magnetized into victimization (p. 182). Lion (1977) asserted that self-esteem is a key factor in the battered woman's dependency on her husband; and Weingourt (1985) identified loneliness, isolation, and fear of abandonment as common themes for battered women, with these arising out of their emotionally deprived childhoods. "They see the world as a lonely, dangerous place in which survival depends on finding a protector who is always there. The goal is never to be alone" (p. 26). In commenting on the women in his sample, Gayford (1975) stated that all the women seemed to have made disastrous marriages, often undertaken precipitously by a desire to leave home and attracted by the protective image of their men. Hilberman and Munson (1977-78) reported a similar pattern among the women in their sample.

While low self-esteem, passivity, and emotional dependency may indeed be characteristic of many battered women, they do not describe all of them. It will be recalled that Hofeller (1982) identified a subgroup of battered women who remained self-confident throughout their battering relationships, and Star (1978) reported that battered and non-battered women did not differ on measures of self-esteem. The battered women in Walker's (1984) study also saw themselves in a more positive way than they perceived other women or men in general. Specifically, they saw themselves as more independent and more sensitive. Walker speculated that the women's sense of self-esteem may have developed out of their having survived a violent relationship. In this regard, it is noteworthy that three-quarters of the sample were out of the relationship at the time of testing. While the women in Walker's study may have developed a sense of self-esteem subsequent to leaving the battering relationship, there is evidence to suggest that many women still living in an abusive relationship do not lack self-esteem. Stacey and Shupe (1983), reporting on an independent study, noted that 42 percent of the women entering a shelter for battered women were high in self-esteem.

As for passivity, the research cited earlier refuting the female masochism claim clearly attests to the active stance adopted by many battered wives in the face of violence. Nor can one assume that battered wives remain with their abusers out of emotional dependency. The fact is, given adequate resources, many battered wives manage to break away from an abusive partner. And indeed, even without adequate resources, some battered wives are able to disengage. Gelles (1974) reported that two of the strongest predictors of a wife seeking outside help or leaving the relationship were frequency and severity of the violence. Severity of abuse was also recognized by Rounsaville (1978b) as a primary factor in the battered woman's decision to leave her partner along with type of abuse, fear of being killed, contact with police, and the discovery that her partner had been abusing the children. As Rounsaville so succinctly put it, "when these circumstances prevailed, it did not seem to matter whether there were adequate resources or not. Given sufficient motivation, women even with a few resources found a way to leave" (p. 17).

Leaving as a process. For virtually every factor thought to influence the battered woman's decision to stay in an abusive relationship, one can find both supportive and disconfirmatory data. Thus, while Gelles (1974) found frequency and severity of abuse to be the primary factors in the wife's decision to leave her abusive partner, Pagelow (1981) reported that "severity and frequency has had minimal accountability for a decision to break the cycle of violence according to my data" (p. 161). Similarly, Greaves, Heapy and Wylie (1988) found no direct correlation between the decision to leave an abusive partner and frequency and severity of the violence experienced. It is this lack of consistency across studies that has prompted many researchers to abandon the search for single, explanatory variables in favour of a more process oriented approach. It is held that no single factor--social, psychological, economic, or physical--consistently determines when or whether a woman will take action to change her situation. Rather, "the decision to leave (and ambivalence about leaving) reflects a careful, pragmatic weighing of risks in these categories against one another and against the known (and so far survived) risks of staying and enduring the existing cycle of violence" (Greaves et al., 1988, p. 46). This is thought to be an ongoing process, with temporal changes in the woman's circumstances calling for continual re-assessment and evaluation.

The notion that leaving a violent marriage is a process was supported by the research of Mills (1985). She identified five stages through which the battered woman progresses: entering a violent relationship, managing the violence, experiencing a loss of self, re-evaluating the relationship, restructuring the self. She further noted that battered women develop justifications for remaining with their abusers, a finding supported by the work of Ferraro and Johnson (1983). These latter investigators described six techniques of rationalization that battered women use: (1) the appeal to the salvation ethic which involves labelling their husband "sick" and then emphasizing his dependence on them, (2) the denial of the victimizer which involves the perception that the event is beyond the control of both spouses and is rooted in external forces, (3) the denial of victimization which takes the form of self-blame, thereby neutralizing the responsibility of the spouse, (4) the denial of injury, (5) the denial of options, both practical and emotional, and (6) the appeal to higher loyalties such as commitment to marriage and the family or to religious dogma condemning divorce. When these rationalizations can no longer be maintained, many battered women leave.

In a comparison of battered women who had followed through in seeking help and those who had not, Rounsaville (1978a) noted that the follow-through group was substantially older and had been involved in the abusive relationship longer than the non-follow-through group, suggesting that the follow-through group was at a different point in the history of the relationship. He further noted that almost half of those who had followed through on seeking help had already taken serious steps to end the relationship, while a much smaller number of the non-follow-through group had done so.

Other research also points to a shift, over time, in the battered woman's perception of the violence and in her response to it. Giles-Sims (1983) reported that, while 93 percent of the women in her study adopted a forgiving attitude after the initial battering episode, by the "most important" and "most recent" incidents, 55 percent of the women saw the violence as part of a pattern and attributed it to their partner's character. Along with this shift in perception came increased efforts to secure help or end the relationship. In comparing the differential reactions of the women across three time periods--first incident, most important incident, most recent incident--Giles-Sims observed a dramatic change in the women's responses to violence. After the first incident, 64 percent of the women sought no intervention. By the last incident, only 30 percent were inactive. Similarly, only 30 percent of the women left home for longer than a brief period after the first incident, whereas 54 percent had done so by the last incident. Dobash and Dobash (1984) reported a similar pattern of help-seeking over time. After the first attack, 52 women made 113 contacts. After the worst attack, 88 women made 245 contacts. Following the last attack, 105 women made 371 contacts.

The foregoing suggests that battered women do make choices. Either they choose to leave their partners very early in the abusive relationship or they choose to stay, often rationalizing their decision. Some stay permanently with their abusers while others eventually leave, sometimes after many years of abuse. Pfouts (1978) has formulated a theoretical schema to account for these differential reactions based on the wife's cost-benefit analysis of the marriage and its alternatives. The theory predicts that as long as the benefits for staying outweigh the costs, the wife will remain. Walker's (1984) research provides tentative support for this prediction. In comparing battered women who were out of the relationship with those still in, she found that those women who were still with their partners reported less evidence of tension building preceding the last incident than those women who had left their partners. She speculated that even though loving contrition following the abuse was low for both groups of battered wives, the former may still have been receiving more benefits from the relationship than costs.

## Critique of the Literature

Attempting to make sense of the wife battery literature is a formidable task. One can easily become lost in the sea of contradictory findings that seem to characterize this research domain. Rather than providing enlightenment, research findings have as often as not only added to the confusion, typically raising more questions than answers. In attempting to account for this confused and contradictory state of affairs, one cannot ignore the problems that plague this body of research. Indeed, wife battery research is replete with a host of conceptual and methodological problems and inconsistencies that often preclude comparisons across studies and frequently call into question the validity, or at least the meaningfulness, of many research findings. Those difficulties begin at the most fundamental level of problem conceptualization.

## Conceptual Issues and Problems

Although defining wife abuse would seem to be a relatively straightforward task, in fact, there has been considerable diversity in the operational definitions that researchers have employed. While there appears to be general agreement that one incident of physical abuse does not constitute battering, that wife battering occurs within the context of a committed and usually intimate relationship, and that 'wife' refers to any woman in a committed relationship whether it be a legal marriage or a common-law union, beyond these points of general consensus definitions vary widely. Thus, Scott (1974) defined a battered wife as "a woman who has suffered serious or repeated injury from the man with whom she lives" (p.434). Gayford (1975), elaborating on Scott's definition, defined a battered wife as "a woman who had received deliberate severe and demonstrable physical injury from her husband," with the minimal injury being severe bruising (p. 194). Parker and Schumaker (1977) appear to have adopted Gayford's definition with the added stipulation that repeated means "more than three times." Other researchers have adopted less stringent definitions. Rounsaville (1978b), for example, defined battered women as "females over age 16 who gave verbal evidence of being physically abused to any extent by an intimate partner" (p.54).

While physical injury has been highlighted as the sine qua non of battering in many definitions of wife abuse, so too have the abusive acts themselves. Gelles (1974, 1976), in an attempt to quantify frequency and severity of physical abuse between partners, developed a 10-point "violence severity" index, which ranged from no violence, through pushing or shoving, all the way up to shooting. A more comprehensive measure of abusive acts was developed by Straus et al. (1980) as part of their national survey on family violence. This instrument, the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), was designed to measure the use of reasoning, verbal aggression, and violence within the family. Straus and his colleagues distinguished between "normal violence" and "abusive violence," with the latter defined as "an act which has the high potential for injuring the person being hit." Included in this category were acts such as punching, kicking, biting, hitting with a hard object, beating up, shooting or trying to shoot, stabbing or trying to stab. It was this "abusive violence" category that was used to define the battered wife.

Although widely used as a measurement instrument in wife battery research (Straus et al., 1980), the CTS has come under criticism from feminist writers who view it as a flawed instrument insofar as the interactive environment within which the violent acts occur, the perceived meaning attached to the acts, and the amount of injury inflicted by the acts are not taken into account (Pagelow, 1981). Feminists have also criticized the instrument on the grounds that psychological, emotional, verbal, and even sexual abuse are overlooked as important forms of battering. Accordingly, they have defined woman battering in ways that acknowledge both physical and psychological aspects. Thus, Walker (1979) defined a battered woman as "a woman who is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical or psychological behavior by a man in order to coerce her to do something he wants her to do without any concern for her rights" (p. xv). Perhaps the most blatantly feminist definition was given by MacLeod (1980), who defined woman battering as "violence, physical and/or psychological, expressed by a husband or a male or lesbian live-in lover towards his wife or his/her live-in lover, to which the 'wife' does not consent, and which is directly or indirectly condoned by the traditions, laws, and attitudes in the society in which it occurs" (p. 7).

These different definitions of a battered wife have important implications when it comes to generalizing research findings and drawing conclusions from research data. For example, where severe and/or repeated physical injury is viewed as an essential criterion of wife battering, one may be inadvertently biasing research samples toward more severe, longstanding battering relationships. Obviously, conclusions based on such a sample cannot be generalized to all battered women. After all, women who stay in an abusive relationship long enough to experience frequent and severe injuries may be fundamentally different from women who quit an abusive relationship after the second or third battering incident. These differences may well explain some of the inconsistencies in the literature. Similarly, women who endure physical abuse and women who endure psychological abuse but draw the line at physical battering may differ in important ways. Failure to distinguish between them could lead to a masking of potentially important differences. The extent to which different definitions of wife abuse have contributed to inconsistent research findings is, of course, unknown. If, however, different operational definitions are tapping different populations of battered women, those influences are likely to be considerable.

This brings us to a major conceptual flaw that was prevalent in much of the early, and regrettably some of the present, wife battery research, namely, the conceptualization of battered women as a homogeneous population. This conceptualization guided much of the early descriptive research. Investigators sought to identify specific characteristics of battered women, the assumption being that these characteristics were related in some fashion to battered woman status. As a result of this conceptualization, no attempt was made to differentiate among battered women on the basis of such variables as marital status (living with partner versus separated or divorced) or number of times battered. That these variables are important is suggested by research linking number of battering incidents to decreased self-esteem and increased depression (Mitchell & Hodon, 1983). There is also evidence to suggest that women who are "in" a battering relationship and those who are "out" may differ in some important respects (Snyder & Fruchtman, 1981). Walker's (1984) unexpected finding that battered women were neither low in self-esteem nor traditional in outlook takes on added meaning when one considers that 75 percent of her sample (approximately 300 women) were "out" of the relationship at the time of the interviews, some for a considerable length of time. Taken together, these findings suggest that the assumption of homogeneity may have attenuated much of the early research perhaps contributing to inconsistent and conflicting results.

A second major conceptual flaw in wife battery research is the way in which separation from a battering partner has been viewed. Traditionally, separation has been conceptualized, and treated, as an all-or-none "event"; either a woman remains with her abusive partner or she does not. In recent years that conceptualization has been challenged by the process view which holds that battered women advance by degrees toward permanent separation. This distinction has important implications for existing wife battery research. If separation is indeed a process, then research based on an "event" conceptualization is likely to miss the mark. The problem arises out of the instability of the "in" and "out" classifications. As research has clearly shown, battering couples show a remarkable propensity for frequent separations and reconciliations. In consequence, one has no way of ascertaining whether a woman who is "out" at a given point is "out" permanently or temporarily. By the same token, a woman who is currently living with her partner may be one step away from permanent separation. The misclassification of such individuals could seriously attenuate or distort research findings, a problem that wife battery researchers have not yet begun to address.

## Methodological Flaws and Limitations

Samples. Over and above the conceptual problems outlined above, wife battery research also suffers from a number of methodological flaws and limitations, some of which are a direct result of conceptual errors. The notion, for example, that battered women are a homogeneous group has resulted in overinclusive sampling practices. Although, typically, samples have been drawn from single sources such as shelters (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, 1984; Giles-Sims, 1983; Mitchell & Hodon, 1983; Pagelow, 1981; Snyder & Fruchtman, 1981), legal aid offices (Parker & Schumaker, 1977), crisis hotlines (Roy, 1977), counselling agencies (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981; Strube & Barbour, 1983), hospital emergency rooms (Rounsaville, 1978a), and newspaper and magazine advertisements (Prescott & Letko, 1977), some of the major investigations have used samples drawn from a variety of sources (Stacey & Shupe, 1983; Walker, 1984). The assumption that battered women who contact shelters or crisis hotlines are indistinguishable from battered women who respond to newspaper ads must be questioned. An obvious potential difference is current marital status. It seems likely that most women seeking shelter or contacting a crisis hotline will be living with their partner, while most women who respond to newspaper or magazine ads will not.

There is, in fact, research to indicate that battered women may be distinguished from one another on the basis of the kind of help they seek. Donato and Bowker (1984) reported that battered women who contacted social service agencies differed from battered women who sought out women's groups on a number of variables. The argument has been made that sampling across a wide variety of sources increases the generalizability of research findings. This may well be true, but at what cost? If women who seek shelter are distinguishable from those who choose other kinds of help, then those differences may well reflect different needs. If this is the case, then it is the differences and not the similarities between battered women that must be highlighted and addressed. One might speculate that the inconsistencies across studies reflect, in part, different sampling practices. Regrettably, there is no way to evaluate this supposition, owing to the multitude of ways in which the various studies differ.

Another obvious sampling problem, which is by no means unique to wife battery research, is the reliance on volunteer samples. This is an exceedingly difficult problem to overcome owing to the sensitive nature of the research and the need for full cooperation if veridical and meaningful information is to be collected. On the other hand, there is every reason to suspect that women who volunteer for wife-battery research, or agree to participate when asked, are different from women who never seek outside help for the abuse, never discuss the abuse with anyone, and refuse to participate in research. To the extent that differences exist, generalizations from research samples are inappropriate and potentially misleading. The same may be said for generalizations from small sample sizes, another problem which plagues much of the existing research.

Design limitations. Another methodological issue that has been influenced by conceptual flaws is research design. Wife battery research is characterized by a preponderance of single-group, cross-sectional and correlational designs, the result, in some cases, of an "event" rather than a process conceptualization of battering and separation. Simple correlational designs have been especially popular reflecting the dominant single-variable approach wherein a particular variable (e.g., traditionalism, dependency, violence in family of origin) is used to explain battered woman status or, alternatively, battered woman status is used to explain a single variable outcome (e.g., low self-esteem, depression, passivity). Implicit in this latter approach is the assumption that whatever behaviour is in evidence subsequent to the onset of the battering was triggered by the battering. In the absence of pre-battering measures of women's functioning, the typical case in ex post facto research, there is no way to validate this assumption. While some researchers have attempted to assess pre-battering levels of functioning, based on women's descriptions of their pre-abuse histories (Star, 1978), such recollections are subject to all the biases and distortions associated with retrospective data. Without pre-abuse measures, causal inference is necessarily problematic. It is entirely possible, for example, that the behaviour in question was present prior to the abuse. An additional problem in interpretation arises where women who are "in" an abusive relationship are compared to women who are "out." Where pre-separation measures are not available, as is typically the case, there is no way to evaluate between group differences. Walker's (1984) study is a case in point. Her finding of high levels of self-esteem and low levels of traditionalism among the battered women in her sample, 75 percent of whom were "out" of the relationship at the time of data collection, some for a considerable length of time, is uninterpretable. Do these findings reflect changes that occurred subsequent to the separation, or were they present prior to the separation perhaps contributing to the woman's decision to leave? This is an important question that cannot be answered given the design of the study.

The overreliance on cross-sectional as opposed to longitudinal designs constitutes a second limitation of existing research. This approach fails to capture the emotional and behavioural changes that occur over time as battered women attempt to cope with the violence in their lives. Cross-sectional studies conducted at one point in time may present an entirely different picture of a woman's response to abuse depending on the timing of data collection. Failure to allow for temporal changes may lead to either a cancelling out or dilution of effects or perhaps to misleading effects, depending on the composition of the sample. Most studies in the literature have made no attempt to control for the temporal factor, with the result that the meaning of specific results is often indeterminate.

The use of single-group designs also poses problems for interpretation. This has been a widespread practice in wife battery research with most of the major studies suffering from this design weakness (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Pagelow, 1977; Roy, 1977; Walker, 1984). In the absence of an adequate and appropriate comparison group of non-battered women, or at the very least general population norms, descriptions of battered women as low in self-esteem, traditional, and passive-dependent are meaningless. Although these attributes may indeed be characteristic of battered women, they could just as easily be characteristic of women in general or, at least, of women in distressed albeit not abusive relationships.

Measurement. One final methodological issue to be considered is measurement. Of the various problems that plague wife battery research, this is one of the most salient. A major problem has been the failure of researchers to operationalize their constructs adequately. Thus, researchers speak in broad, general terms about passivity, dependency, traditionalism. Precisely what is being measured is often unclear. In the absence of precise definitions, one has no way of knowing whether researchers are measuring the same construct and using different labels or measuring different constructs and using the same label. These are critical distinctions when it comes to making comparisons across studies.

The way in which data have been collected is also problematic. Typically, data have been derived from nonstandardized, ad hoc measures of unknown reliability and validity and from clinical impressions. Reliance on clinical impressions may be particularly risky owing to the entrenched stereotyped view of battered women. Even where more objective, standardized instruments have been used, however, problems arise. Self-report instruments, which have been used almost exclusively, give rise to concerns about possible distortion. Given the retrospective focus of much of the research (a problem in its own right) and the emotional loading of the subject, distortion, intentional or otherwise, is quite probable. Attempts to obtain collateral, independent information are virtually nonexistent, with battered women typically constituting the sole data source.

As is evident from the foregoing, it is all too easy to find fault with the wife battery literature. In fairness to researchers, however, one must acknowledge the enormous challenge that wife battery research poses. The extreme sensitiveness and complexity of the subject makes this a research domain fraught with the usual complement of research problems and then some. These problems include the difficulty obtaining representative samples; the lack of standardized instruments to measure many of the relevant constructs; the frequent separations and reconciliations of battering couples which make classification problematic; the mobility of battering couples which makes tracking and follow-up difficult if not impossible; the high rate of attrition due to fear, embarrassment, or simply an unwillingness to re-live painful memories; the fact that violent acts typically occur in private, thereby preventing objective corroboration of reported events. While acknowledging these difficulties, the fact still remains, without conceptual clarity and methodological rigor, advancements in wife battery research will be seriously hampered if not precluded. This is a fact and a challenge that researchers must address.

## Conclusions

In reviewing the extant wife battery literature, one observation emerges with crystal clarity, namely, that despite almost two decades of scientific study, there are surprisingly few definitive conclusions to be drawn from the research data. To be sure, many myths have been exploded, such as the myth of female masochism and the myth that wife battering is a small-scale problem, but a clear understanding of the phenomenon has so far proven elusive. Rather, one finds a confusing array of data which both support and challenge existing views and theoretical positions.

Nowhere, perhaps, is contradiction more evident, and debate more heated, than in that body of research which is addressed to the question: Why do women stay in abusive relationships? Out of that research has come a plethora of answers as varied as the theoretical orientations of the researchers. Thus, those who embrace learned helplessness theory point to the battered woman's passivity, low self-esteem, and depression--all presumed consequences of noncontingent abuse--as primary factors in her inability to disengage from an abusive partner. Sociological theorists and researchers point to situational factors, most notably economic and social constraints, as central to the battered woman's entrapment. Proponents of the process view of disengagement assert that battered women advance by degrees toward permanent separation, becoming more active and less passive over time. Although there has been a marked and unfortunate tendency for advocates of each position to denounce competing explanations, in fact, there is no basis on which to favour one position over another. Each explanation simply reflects a different reality. By now, it is clear that battered women are not, as has frequently been supposed, a homogeneous group for whom a single description or explanation will suffice. Rather, they are a heterogeneous population and, like women in general, differ in personality characteristics, family history, and current circumstances. So too do they differ in their response to violence.

Considering the amount of interest that has been expressed in the battered woman's apparent tolerance of abuse, there are surprisingly few studies in which the relationship between those factors thought to influence tolerance and the actual behaviour of battered women has been systematically examined. Pagelow (1981) was one of the first to do so, focusing on the extent to which resources, institutional response, and traditionalism were related to the length of time a woman remained in a relationship after the violence began until she terminated the violence by leaving or other means. Strube and Barbour (1983) assessed the relationship between a woman's decision to leave an abusive marriage and her economic dependence and psychological commitment to the marriage. Living arrangements at follow-up, specifically whether the woman was living with her partner or had left with no intention of returning, served as the dependent variable. Aguirre (1985) also attempted to assess the relationship between economic dependence and a woman's decision to return to an abusive partner, with the woman's stated intention to return or not to return serving as the dependent measure.

Regrettably, all of these investigations suffer from one or more methodological problems which limit interpretation. Pagelow's use of a non-standardized, ad hoc measure of traditionalism, for example, makes it difficult to determine whether the weak, albeit significant, relationship between traditionalism and length of stay is a reflection of a weak relationship or a weak measure. Strube and Barbour's use of the questionable "in-out" classification as their dependent measure, coupled with an extremely variable (1 to 18 months) follow-up contact, raises questions about the validity of their findings. And Aguirre's reliance on battered women's stated intentions to return or separate, rather than objective follow-up data, severely limits the conclusions to be drawn from the study.

Over and above the additional criticism that these studies are too simplistic and fail to capture the complexity of a woman's decision to leave or remain with an abusive partner, one must also question the narrowness of the outcome measures. There is an implicit, and sometimes explicit (Walker, 1979), bias operating in much wife battery research that the only way to end abuse is to terminate the relationship. While, undoubtedly, this is true for many battering couples, it is not axiomatic that a woman who stays with her partner will continue to be battered, nor is it the case that a woman who leaves her abusive partner will necessarily be free of abuse. What may be more important than whether a woman stays or leaves is how she responds to the violence and the message that her behaviour delivers to her partner.

Pagelow (1984) views the battered woman's reaction to violence the first time it occurs as the single most important determinant of secondary (repeated) battering.

> If primary violence occurs and the victim does not take strong and decisive action that may involve

> disclosing to outsiders for immediate intervention, or making it absolutely clear that she will never tolerate a second occurrence (and meaning it), then secondary battering is most likely to occur (1984, p. 305).

In Pagelow's view, behavioural responses that attempt to placate the batterer, to meet his demands, are tantamount to reinforcing the violence. This is not to cast blame on the battered woman or to hold her responsible for the violence. As noted previously, there are any number of legitimate reasons why battered women do not take decisive action at the first sign of abuse, or even after several battering incidents. Attempts to placate their partner and to meet his demands are often adaptive responses aimed at survival. At the same time, these responses enable the perpetuation of the violence. Some feminists have argued that the battered woman's responses are unrelated to the batterer's behaviour and that what she does or does not do has little to do with whether or not he abuses her again. There can be no doubt that some actions on the part of the woman are indeed futile. On the other hand, certain decisive actions such as calling the police, pressing charges, trying to get a restraining order and seeking shelter may produce positive results to the extent that they bring into play the greater weight and influence of the larger social system.

The effectiveness of interventions in curbing subsequent abuse has been demonstrated in a series of studies by Richard Berk and his colleagues. Sherman and Berk (1984) investigated the deterrent effects of arrest for domestic assault as compared to advice (mediation) or ordering the suspect to leave the premises for eight hours. Suspects (N = 314) were tracked for six months after the police intervention in order to monitor their behaviour. Results, based on both official data and victims' reports, indicated that arrested suspects exhibited significantly less subsequent violence than those who were ordered to leave or those who were given advice. These results were subsequently replicated by Berk and Newton (1985). Once again, on average, arrest was found to deter new wife-battering incidents, especially in the case of high propensity offenders. The authors noted that among those men who had propensity-for-violence scores over .70, the probability of recurrent violence for those not arrested was approximately .65, whereas the probability dropped to around .25 for those who had been arrested. Of note, is the finding that arrest did not increase the likelihood of new violence, an outcome that had been feared. The general conclusions from the above studies were recently confirmed using a more sophisticated statistical procedure (Berk, Smyth, & Sherman, 1988).

Berk, Newton, and Berk (1986) have also examined the impact of a shelter stay on the likelihood of new violence. They hypothesized that where a shelter stay is seen by the abusive partner as reflecting the woman's effort to attain genuine independence, it will decrease the likelihood of subsequent violence. Conversely, when a shelter stay is seen by the potential assailant as a flagrant disobedience, it may actually increase the likelihood of violence (p. 484). The results of their study supported these hypotheses. Specifically, where a woman was actively taking charge of her life, defined in terms of additional efforts to seek help, the number of new violent episodes was markedly reduced following a shelter stay. Indeed, each additional effort to seek help (i.e., previous shelter stay, calling the police, trying to get a restraining order, seeking criminal justice prosecution, seeking counselling or trying to get help from legal aid or a private lawyer) reduced the number of violent episodes by a multiplicative factor of .61. The authors went on to conclude that in the absence of additional help-seeking behaviour a shelter stay may have no effect or may actually exacerbate the situation and trigger retaliatory violence.

The importance of the woman's commitment to ending the abuse, as evidenced by the breadth of her help-seeking efforts, has also been demonstrated with regard to the efficacy of restraining orders. Horton, Simonidis & Simonidis (1987) found that restraining orders were typically a "choice of last resort," after extensive efforts to obtain relief through community agencies and resources had failed. Under these circumstances, restraining orders appeared to be effective, largely because the women were determined to stand by their decision. The authors cautioned that taking out a restraining order before one is emotionally committed to the process may place a women in added danger insofar as she may be disinclined to contact the police when the order is violated.

## The Present Study

Although many factors have been linked to the battered woman's entrapment in an abusive marriage, there are no studies in which these relationships have been systematically examined using a full range of predictor and response variables. The aim of the present study was to redress that deficiency. At this juncture in wife battery research, it would seem advisable to begin to clarify and validate some of the relationships that have been posited between various psychosocial and situational factors on the one hand and the battered woman's behavioural response to abuse on the other. The elucidation of factors strongly associated with those behaviours thought to reduce the likelihood of subsequent abuse, such as leaving the relationship and broad help-seeking efforts, could have important implications. Not only could it help to identify those women most at risk for ongoing, escalating abuse but, in addition, it could help to establish intervention priorities.

The need to approach this task from the standpoint of sound research design and modes of analyses commensurate with the complexity of the problem is evident. While all the shortcomings of previous research were not addressed in the present study, an effort was made to overcome some of the limitations. First, only women who were living with their partners at the time of seeking shelter were considered for inclusion. This eliminated the potential bias associated with a woman's decision to leave her partner, a bias which may come into play where women who are already "out" of a battering relationship are lumped together with women who are still "in." Second, a sample size sufficient to accommodate multivariate analyses was used. Third, wherever possible, standardized instruments of known and acceptable reliability and validity were employed. Fourth, in the interests of continuity across studies, standardized instruments that had been used in other wife battery research were chosen, after ascertaining that their psychometric properties met selection standards.

Finally, although retrospective data were collected, an effort was made to reduce the unreliability of these data by selecting for recall behaviourally-defined events and experiences that were directly observable and measurable. Studies suggest that quantifiable events and experiences are more easily and more accurately recalled than events and experiences calling for qualitative judgement (Burton, 1970).

## Definition

For purposes of this study, physical abuse was broadly defined as "any act with a high potential for causing pain or injury" and included such acts as slapping, biting, kicking, punching, hitting or trying to hit with something, beating up, threatening with a knife or gun, using a knife or gun. It is recognized that this definition fails to tap, directly at least, a rather large category of women's experience, namely, rape and sexual assault. While there is no question that these behaviours do occur in marriage and in families and constitute forms of physical abuse, previous researchers have not, for the most part, included them in their working definitions of abuse.

Inasmuch as the present study aimed at clarifying the findings of previous research, it was decided, in the interests of continuity and comparability across studies, to adopt the definition of abuse that has guided much, if not most, of the previous wife battery research (Straus et al., 1980).

## Variables

Two sets of variables were examined with a view to establishing the relationship between them. The first set (psychosocial) may be broadly grouped into four categories: family-of-origin, psychological, situational, and relationship. The variables selected for inclusion in each of these categories had been implicated, either empirically or theoretically, in the battered woman's response to violence. What was unclear was the strength of these associations and, perhaps more important, the relative contribution of each variable to response patterns.

Family-of-origin. Within the family-of-origin category, three variables were examined. These were (1) childhood exposure to spousal violence, (2) physical abuse received as a child, and (3) perceived level of health in the family of origin. Childhood exposure to spouse abuse was operationally defined as "witnessing or hearing physical abuse between parents or parent surrogates (e.g., stepparent, foster parents, or a parent's lover)." Physical abuse during childhood was defined as "having received physical abuse from either a parent or parent surrogate." Perceived level of health in the family of origin referred to the extent to which intimacy and autonomy were thought by the respondent to have been encouraged in the family, with high encouragement thought to reflect healthy family functioning.

There is evidence that exposure to violence in the family of origin may have implications for a woman's response to violence. Snyder and Fruchtman (1981) found that experiencing neglect and abuse as a child increased the likelihood that a woman would be living with her partner at follow-up. Abuse in childhood was also associated with short-term as opposed to long-term separation from the partner. These findings may be seen as consistent with social learning theory which predicts that women who are socialized to view violence as a normal part of family life will be inclined to endure violence in their adult relationships.

A second family-of-origin variable with potential implications for a woman's response to battering is the extent to which intimacy and autonomy were fostered in the family. Feminist writers and activists (Martin, 1976; Pagelow, 1981; Walker & Browne, 1985; Westkott, 1986) have long decried the socialization experiences of women which accord them status and value only as extensions of others, thereby denying them a true identity of their own. Smith (1984) theorized that the battered woman has never fully developed a sense of her own identity or autonomy, a deficiency which presumably results in her emotional dependence on others. Shainess (1977, 1979) viewed the battered woman as locked in an unresolved symbiosis with the mother. To the extent that a woman has not been able to achieve self-differentiation within her own family, she may be vulnerable for repeating patterns of intense emotional attachment in other relationships. Similarly, the extent to which the family fostered intimacy may also have a bearing on a woman's response to abuse. One might speculate that a woman who grew up in a warm, supportive family environment where family members were sensitive to one another, where feelings were freely and openly expressed, and where conflicts were handled without undue stress, would be less inclined to endure abuse than a woman who had been socialized to expect much less from relationships. To date, there are no studies in which the relationships of such socialization factors to a woman's response to abuse have been specifically examined.

Psychological. The psychological variables considered for examination in this study were (1) level of self-esteem, (2) depression, and (3) traditionalism. Self-esteem referred to global self-attitude or self-acceptance, a presumably stable personality variable. Depression referred to depressed mood, which was expected to fluctuate over time. Traditionalism was defined as attitudes toward women's roles that are consistent with traditional role prescriptions, which accord men greater status and privilege relative to women.

While low self-esteem, depression and traditional attitudes toward women's roles have frequently been cited as factors which keep women trapped in abusive marriages, contradictory findings have also appeared. Indeed, Walker's (1984) own research, which was designed to validate the learned helplessness phenomenon, produced results that were inconsistent with the model. Contrary to expectations, battered women were neither low in self-esteem nor traditional in outlook. In fact, they rated themselves higher on these variables than they rated women in general, a finding which may reflect "self-enhancing bias," the tendency to rate oneself higher on positive attributes than the "average" person. Additionally, women who were "out" of the relationship at the time of testing reported higher levels of depression than women who were still living with their abusive partners.

Although these unexpected findings are difficult to interpret given the design of Walker's study, they nevertheless suggest that level of self-esteem, traditionalism, and depression may be factors in the differential responses of battered women to violence. One might speculate that high levels of self-esteem and liberal attitudes toward women's roles are factors in a woman's decision to leave her partner or seek help to end the abuse. As for the higher level of depressive symptomatology among women who were "out" of the relationship relative to women who were still "in," this may reflect the difficulties encountered in "going it alone." It may well be that a decision to separate is accompanied by a decrease in depression as other emotions such as anger and disgust take over, but that once out of the relationship these emotions gradually give way to depression as the woman encounters the harsh realities of "going it alone."

Relationship. The two relationship variables considered in this study were (1) extent of abuse and (2) marital satisfaction. Extent of abuse referred to the frequency and severity of both physical and emotional abuse in the relationship. Marital satisfaction was defined as the woman's rating of the overall quality of the relationship, the assumption being that higher quality was associated with greater satisfaction.

In attempting to account for the higher level of depression among women who were no longer living with their partners compared to women who were still living in an abusive relationship, Walker speculated that women living with their partners may have been receiving benefits from the marriage that offset the abuse. In short, the benefits of staying may have outweighed the costs. This notion is central to process theory which predicts that a woman will show increasing signs of disengagement or help-seeking behaviour once the balance shifts in favour of greater costs than benefits. While much has been written about this evaluation process and the role it plays in a woman's decision to take or not to take action in the face of abuse, there has been no attempt to assess the process directly. A marital satisfaction measure was used in the present study to permit testing of the hypothesis that a decrease in the perceived benefits of the relationship results in an increase in help-seeking actions or in behaviour suggestive of disengagement.

Situational. The following situational factors were examined for their association with responses to abuse: (1) number of dependent children, (2) economic dependence, and (3) perceived social isolation. Number of dependent children referred to those children who were currently living with the woman and for whom she felt responsible. Economic dependence referred to the extent to which the woman relied on her partner's income or social assistance as opposed to having some personal resources of her own. Perceived social isolation referred to the extent to which a woman felt connected to others and had people to whom she could turn in times of need.

There are those who would argue that situational factors are the most potent predictors of a woman's entrapment in an abusive marriage. Research indicates that the more dependent children a woman has and the greater her economic dependence and social isolation, the more likely she is to remain with her partner (Aguirre, 1985; Greaves et al., 1988; Strube & Barbour, 1983; Pagelow, 1981). It has been assumed that these findings reflect the woman's entrapment and consequent vulnerability to ongoing abuse. Clearly, however, there is no firm basis on which to draw such a conclusion. As the research of Berk and his colleagues (1986) indicates, the most critical factor in predicting subsequent abuse may be the extent to which the woman has engaged in help-seeking action to end the abuse. Their data indicated that greater help-seeking efforts were associated with less subsequent abuse. In this view, the relationship of interest is not whether situational factors are related to length of stay in an abusive relationship or the decision to return to a violent partner but, rather, how these factors are related to the woman's behavioural responses to abuse, particularly her help-seeking behaviour.

The second set of variables considered in this investigation was response to abuse. The specific variables chosen for inclusion in this category were derived from research, theory, and consultation with experts in the field[1]. In selecting these variables, an attempt was made to tap a range of behavioural responses, in contrast to the single measures typically employed in previous research. In addition, behavioural responses with implications for reducing subsequent abuse were selected. The final set included the duration of abuse prior to seeking help, the number of help-seeking actions, the number of help-seeking contacts, the total duration of abuse, and whether a woman returned to her abusive partner.

Duration of abuse prior to help seeking. This was defined as "the length of time from the first incident of physical abuse until the woman first took decisive help-seeking action such as seeking shelter, calling the police, trying to get a restraining order, pressing charges, trying to get help from legal aid or a private lawyer, or seeking counselling."

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[1] Marlene Bertrand, Director of Osborne House Shelter

Number of help-seeking actions. This was defined as "the number of distinct kinds of help-seeking actions (as outlined above) taken by the women in response to physical abuse."

Number of help-seeking contacts. This was indexed by "the sum of all contacts made over each of the six help-seeking categories in response to physical abuse."

Total duration of abuse. This was the total length of time from the first incident of physical abuse up to the present.

Returned to abusive partner. This was whether the woman had returned to her partner at any time during the four-month follow-up period regardless of whether she was still residing with her partner at the time of contact.

## Hypotheses

Previous research and current theory suggest several hypotheses concerning the relationship between the battered woman's help-seeking responses and her decision to leave an abusive partner on the one hand and familial, psychological, situational, and relationship factors on the other. The specific hypotheses tested in the present study were:

1. Exposure to violence in the family of origin, whether through witnessing spouse abuse or receiving physical abuse as a child, will be positively associated with duration of abuse prior to help seeking and likelihood of returning to partner and negatively associated with number of help-seeking actions and number of help-seeking contacts.

2. Level of family health will be negatively associated with duration of abuse prior to help seeking and likelihood of returning to partner and positively associated with number of help-seeking actions and number of help-seeking contacts.

3. Level of self-esteem and liberal attitudes toward women's roles will be negatively associated with duration of abuse prior to help seeking and likelihood of returning to partner and positively associated with number of help-seeking actions and number of help-seeking contacts.

4. Degree of physical abuse in the current relationship will be positively correlated with number of help-seeking actions and number of help-seeking contacts and negatively associated with likelihood of returning to partner.

5. Marital satisfaction will be negatively correlated with number of help-seeking acts and number of help-seeking contacts and positively correlated with likelihood of returning to partner.

6. Number of dependent children and perceived social isolation at time 1 will be negatively correlated with number of help-seeking actions and number of help-seeking contacts and positively correlated with likelihood of returning to partner.

7. Employment will correlate positively with number of help-seeking actions and number of help-seeking contacts and negatively with likelihood of returning to partner.

8. Women who returned to their partners over the follow-up period will show a greater reduction in depressive symptomatology than women who did not return to their partners.

# METHOD

## Participants

Participants were recruited from among women seeking shelter at Osborne House, a government-funded, residential shelter for abused women and their children. Osborne House is located in Winnipeg, Manitoba and serves all women who are in, or have been in, an intimate relationship and who have experienced physical or emotional abuse at the hands of their partner. Because the differential effects of physical and emotional abuse on women's responses are presently unknown, only women who had entered shelter because of physical abuse were considered for inclusion in the study. In addition, participants had to have been married or living with their partner in a heterosexual relationship for at least 6 months, to have experienced at least one previous incident of physical abuse by their current partner, and to have been living with their partner at the time of the most recent abusive incident. Women who did not speak or read English were not included in the study because of the reliance on questionnaire material as a major data source. Participation was voluntary, with 89% of the women approached agreeing to participate (see Table 1 for response rate). A total of 124 women participated in all phases of the study, with the final sample consisting of 122 women. The data for two women were removed from the sample owing to extreme scores.

Table 1

Response Rate

Number of women approached = 157
Refusals = 17 (11%)
Acceptance = 140 (89%)
  Completed = 124
  Incomplete = 3
  Left shelter before interview = 13
Follow-up
  Completed = 60 (48%)
  Contact lost touch with participant = 11 ( 9%)
  Contact could not be reached = 19 (15%)
  Participant failed to/
    unable to return call = 33 (27%)
  Woman grieving death of partner = 1 ( 1%)

## Materials

Participants completed a questionnaire package consisting of eight self-report instruments to be described below. With the exception of a demographic questionnaire and a measure of spouse abuse, all self-report instruments were randomized within questionnaire packages in order to control for possible order effects. Because the questionnaire and abuse measure had the greatest potential to elicit emotional reactions that could affect responses to the other scales, they were placed at the end of the questionnaire package.

Family-of-Origin Scale. The Family-of-Origin Scale (FOS; Hovestadt, Anderson, Piercy, Cochran, & Fine, 1985) is a 40-item, Likert-type scale which assesses perceived levels of autonomy and intimacy in one's family of origin, with these, in turn, providing a measure of perceived family health (see Appendix A). Respondents are asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 the extent to which they agree or disagree with a series of statements reflecting different aspects of family functioning. The healthiest response receives a score of 5 and the least healthy response receives a score of 1, with scores ranging from 40 to 200.

Items for the FOS were chosen to reflect 10 constructs of family health developed by Lewis, Beavers, Gossett, and Phillips (1976), with final item selection based on the ratings of a panel of six nationally recognized authorities in family therapy. The instrument was standardized on a sample of 278 undergraduate and graduate students. In an independent study of 116 students, a Cronbach's alpha (internal consistency) of .75 and a Standardized Item alpha of .97 were obtained. A test-retest reliability coefficient of .97 was obtained over an interval of two weeks on 41 graduate psychology students. Test-retest coefficients for the 20 items of the autonomy construct ranged from .39 to .88 with a median of .77, and test-retest coefficients for the intimacy construct ranged from .45 to .87 with a median of .73. Although the FOS was constructed around the two central concepts of autonomy and intimacy, the instrument provides a total score.

Empirical validation of the FOS has been reported. Fine and Hovestadt (1984) found a significant relationship between FOS scores and individuals' perceptions of marriage, with high ratings of family-of-origin health associated with more positive perceptions of marriage. In addition, the FOS has been found to distinguish between men in alcohol-distressed marriages and men in non-alcohol distressed marriages, with the latter reporting healthier families of origin (Hovestadt, Anderson, Piercy, Cochran, & Fine, 1985). The above authors also reported a significant positive correlation between FOS scores and scores measuring levels of perceived health in the subjects' current family. The ability of the FOS to distinguish between clinical and nonclinical samples in a psychotherapeutic setting (Lee, Gordon, & O'Dell, 1989), provides further evidence for the scale's discriminant validity.

Center for Epidemiologic Studies--Depressed Mood Scale. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies--Depressed Mood Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) was used as a measure of depression (see Appendix B). This 20-item scale was designed to measure level of depressive symptomatology in the general population; however, it has also been used with clinical populations (Corcoran & Fischer, 1987). Respondents are asked to indicate on a 4-point

Likert-type scale how often they have felt or behaved in a particular way during the previous week, with response categories ranging from 0 (less than 1 day) to 3 (5-7 days). Possible scores range from 0 to 60, with higher scores indicative of higher levels of depression.

The CES-D has been found to possess good internal consistency (alpha = .85 to .90) and good reliability (split-half and Spearman-Brown coefficient = .77 to .92) (Radloff, 1977). Somewhat lower test-retest reliability coefficients of .51 to .67 have been reported over two to eight week intervals, reflecting the scales emphasis on the affective component of depressed mood which is expected to vary over time (Radloff, 1977). The scale has good content validity as a measure of the syndrome of depression insofar as it includes symptoms of the four dimensions of depression (cognitive, affective, behavioural, somatic). Construct validity was found in a variety of subgroups (Radloff, 1977), and clinical validation with a group of depressed outpatients showed that the CES-D correlated highly with other self-report scales and with clinical rating scales for depression (Weissman, Sholomskas, Pottenger, Prusoff, & Locke, 1977). The CES-D has been used in previous research with battered women (Rounsaville, 1978b; Walker, 1985).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965, 1979) is a 10-item scale designed to measure global self-attitude or self-acceptance (see Appendix C). Respondents are asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with a series of statements. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem.

The RSE has a Coefficient of Reproducibility of .92 and a Coefficient of Scalability of .72, suggesting satisfactory internal reliability. Construct validity has been demonstrated with measures of depression, anxiety, and peer-group reputation, and evidence for both convergent and discriminant validity has been reported (Crandall, 1973, cited in Rosenberg, 1979; Silber & Tippett, 1965). The RSE also possesses good test-retest reliability (.85) as measured over a two-week interval (Silber & Tippett, 1965).

Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976) was used as a global measure of marital satisfaction (see Appendix D). This instrument is a 32-item paper-and-pencil test designed to assess the quality of marriage and similar dyads. It is suitable for use with either married or unmarried cohabiting couples. The scale has a theoretical range of 0 to 151, with higher scores indicative of higher marital adjustment.

Items selected for inclusion in the DAS were evaluated by three judges for content validity. Only those items that were judged to be relevant measures of dyadic adjustment for contemporary relationships were included. In addition, items had to be consistent with nominal definitions of adjustment and its components (satisfaction, cohesion, and consensus) and had to be carefully worded with appropriate fixed-choice responses. In order to assess criterion-related validity, the scale was administered to a married sample of 218 individuals and a sample of 94 divorced individuals. Significant differences were found between the married and divorced samples on each of the 32 scale items. In addition, the mean total scale scores for the married and divorced samples were significantly different, with the former group reporting the higher level of marital satisfaction.

Construct validity has also been established through the scales correlations with other measures of marital satisfaction. In this regard, correlations ranging from .86 to .91 have been reported between the DAS and the Locke Marital Adjustment Scale (Locke & Wallace, 1959). In terms of overall reliability, a Cronbach's alpha of .96 was reported (Spanier, 1976). In recent re-evaluations of the scale, Spanier and Thompson (1982) reported an internal consistency reliability of .91, and Sharpley and Cross (1982) reported a coefficient alpha of .96.

Index of Spouse Abuse. The Index of Spouse Abuse (ISA; Hudson & McIntosh, 1981) is a 30-item summated-category, partition scale which taps the severity or magnitude of both physical and psychological abuse that is inflicted upon a woman by her spouse or partner (see Appendix E). Respondents are asked to indicate on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (very often) how frequently their partner engages in specific kinds of behaviour. Each of the items in the scale represents some form of behaviour or partner interaction that is considered to be abusive. Items are weighted for severity of abuse and two separate scores are calculated: a physical abuse score (ISA-P) and a nonphysical abuse score (ISA-NP). The range of calculated scores for each of the scales is 0 to 100, with higher scores reflecting greater degrees of abuse.

The ISA was standardized on three samples, totalling 693 individuals. The samples consisted of graduate and undergraduate students; women who were independently judged to be victims of spouse abuse or free of such abuse; and a calibration sample of graduate students, undergraduates, and faculty members. Internal consistency reliabilities, based on the first two samples, were .90 and .94 for the ISA-P and .91 and .97 for the ISA-NP scales. The correlations between the ISA-P and ISA-NP scales for the two groups were .66 and .86 respectively. The subscales were found to have low standard errors of measurement. In addition, the coefficients of discriminant validity were .73 and .80 for the ISA-P and ISA-NP scales respectively, suggesting good discriminant validity. The ISA also has excellent content validity and good construct validity.

Attitudes Toward Women Scale. The Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS; Spence & Helmreich, 1972,

1978) was designed to measure the degree to which an individual subscribes to traditional or liberal views of women's roles (see Appendix F). A 15-item version of the original scale has been developed and was used in the present study. Respondents are asked to indicate on a 4-point Likert-type scale the extent to which they agree or disagree with a series of statements reflecting different (traditional or liberal) viewpoints. Response categories range from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with higher scores indicative of greater liberalism.

The AWS was standardized on a population of 427 college students. It possesses good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .89) and split-half reliabilities of .83 and .86 have been reported for the 15-item scale along with a test-retest reliability of .86 (Daugherty & Dambrot, 1986). The AWS has been used to measure traditional ideology in battered women and its use in future research with such populations has been recommended (Walker, 1984).

Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale. The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (RULS; Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980) was used as a measure of perceived social isolation (see Appendix G). This 20-item self-report scale measures loneliness and isolation, with higher scores reflecting greater loneliness. Respondents are asked to indicate on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (often) how often they have felt the way described in a series of statements, with possible scores ranging from 20 to 80.

The revised scale was designed to eliminate response bias and social desirability response set and to demonstrate the scale's discriminant validity by showing that loneliness is distinct from related constructs such as depression and low self-esteem. In tests utilizing non-clinical samples, the revised instrument was found to be unaffected by social desirability response set, to possess both concurrent and discriminant validity and to have excellent internal consistency (coefficient alpha = .94). Concurrent validity was also reported, with loneliness scores negatively correlated with number of social activities and number of close friends (Russell et al., 1980).

Questionnaire. The questionnaire included in the instrument package was specially designed for this study (see Appendix H). It elicited information regarding the woman's and her partner's education, employment status, personal income, and alcohol use. The woman's employment status served as a measure of economic dependence. It was assumed that employment, whether full-time or part-time, offered a woman some degree of independence or, at the very least, some sense of independence which could influence her decision to stay or leave.

The questionnaire also assessed the degree to which the woman had been abused or witnessed violence as a child. Women were asked to rate the severity of spouse abuse in their family of origin by checking items on a list of abusive behaviours that they had ever witnessed or heard as a child. In addition, women rated the overall frequency of abuse from once only to more than once a week. Similar scales were constructed to tap the severity and frequency of physical abuse received as a child. For purposes of data analysis, women were classified according to whether or not they had witnessed or received abuse as a child.

## Procedure

The present study involved a repeated measure panel survey (Babbie, 1973) encompassing two time points: At entry to shelter (phase I) and four months later (phase II). Data were collected over a 14-month period, from March, 1990 through April, 1991. Phase I of data collection consisted of a structured interview (see Appendix I) conducted by the researcher and the respondent's completion of the previously described questionnaire package. Phase II involved a telephone interview four months after the in-person interview. This phase consisted of structured and open-ended questions (see Appendixes J and K) followed by the oral administration of the CES-D and the RULS. In order to control for experimenter bias, the researcher remained blind to the women's previous scores on these instruments as well as to all other information that had been collected during the phase I data collection period.

Two sets of data were collected, one involving familial, psychological, relationship, and situational factors (the psychosocial set) and the other involving battered women's past and present responses to physical abuse (the response-to-abuse set). With the exception of the depression and loneliness scales, which were administered across both time periods, all data for the psychosocial set of variables were collected at the initial data collection point. Data for the response-to-abuse set were collected across both time periods. Specifically, the duration of abuse prior to seeking help, the total duration of abuse, and the number of past and present help-seeking acts and contacts were assessed at time one (shelter). At time two (follow-up), it was determined whether any additional help-seeking actions or contacts had been made in connection with the abusive incident that had brought the woman into shelter.

In cases where women could not be reached at follow-up, it was possible to obtain information from shelter records and, in some cases, police records. Specifically, current police records provided information on whether or not the woman had followed through on her intention to press charges. Similarly, shelter records provided information on the woman's help-seeking actions such as calling police, contacting a lawyer or applying for a restraining order.

Whether the woman had returned to her partner at any time over the four-month period was also asked at follow up. Again, where women could not be reached, information was available, in come cases, through shelter records or through a contact person to be described below. Although panel attrition at follow-up was 52%, information regarding return status was available for 82% of the sample.

Prior to data collection, all counsellors and intake workers at Osborne House were thoroughly briefed on the role they would play in implementing the study. Intake workers were asked to complete a prepared checklist of the inclusion criteria (see Appendix L) at the end of the standard interview conducted on all incoming women. This checklist remained with the file to be reviewed by the assigned counsellor. Although initially counsellors were given responsibility for approaching the women and soliciting their support, this arrangement proved impracticable owing to heavy demands on the counsellors' time. In consequence, it was decided, about three weeks into the study, that the researcher would take full responsibility for explaining the study to the women and, if possible, enlisting their cooperation. As women entering shelter are typically in distress, it was decided that counsellors would determine whether or not a woman was sufficiently settled to be approached. No woman was approached within the first 24 hours of arrival; however, every effort was made to make contact within the first 48 hours.

Women who met the inclusion criteria were approached by the researcher and asked if they would be willing to participate in a University of Manitoba research project involving women who use the Osborne House shelter. All potential participants were given an introductory letter to read which briefly outlined the purpose of the study and what their participation would entail (see Appendix M). Confidentiality and safety were emphasized, and every effort was made to allay any fears or concerns the women might express. Once verbal assent had been given, an appointment time was set up for the first interview. Written, informed consent (see Appendix N) was obtained at the time of the interview.

In addition to gathering demographic information and other data relevant to the study, the phase I interview served as an opportunity for the researcher to establish a personal connection with each of the participants. This was viewed as an important aspect of the study insofar as cooperation throughout the different phases of data collection was thought to hinge on the degree to which rapport had been established with each of the women.

At the end of the interview, the researcher outlined the follow-up procedure (phase II of data collection), emphasizing the way in which contact would be made so as to ensure the woman's safety and minimize any inconvenience to her. Specifically, women were asked to provide the name, address, and telephone number of a contact person. This was to be someone close to them, someone who knew their situation and who would always know their whereabouts and how they could be reached, and someone who was likely to be living at the same address at follow-up.

Once the woman had provided the name of a contact person and signed a consent form (Appendix N) granting the researcher permission to contact that individual, she was given the questionnaire package to complete. In the interest of confidentiality, each package was numbered, and no names or other identifying information appeared on any of the enclosed material. Participants were instructed not to place their name or any other identifying information on any of the questionnaires. They were informed that, while a master list of names and numbers was being kept by the researcher for purposes of follow-up, no one else would have access to that list. Once general instructions had been given, the woman was left on her own to complete the questionnaires. On average, the questionnaire package took approximately one hour to complete. Throughout this time, the researcher remained available to answer any questions that might arise during the testing period and to collect completed questionnaires.

At the end of the testing session, the woman was debriefed by the researcher with an eye to alleviating any negative emotional reactions that might have been elicited by the questionnaire material[2]. This proved necessary in only a couple of cases. In addition, the extreme importance of the follow-up phase was emphasized. It was anticipated that some women might be reluctant to resume contact at follow-up, whether out of embarrassment at having returned to their partner or simply because they did not wish to dredge up the past. In an effort to minimize such reactions, the researcher raised and addressed possible concerns and feelings that the woman might experience at that time.

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[2] The researcher was an experienced counsellor completing Ph.D. studies in clinical psychology.

Four months after the in-person interview, women were contacted in order to collect follow-up data. The selection of a four-month follow-up period was based on the need to allow sufficient time for differential response patterns to emerge while at the same time minimizing attrition. For reasons outlined earlier, battered women are a difficult population with which to collect follow-up data, with the likelihood of attrition increasing the greater the elapsed time from initial contact to follow-up.

Contact with each of the women was made through the appointed contact person. The contact was asked to call the participant as soon as possible and advise her that the researcher was trying to get in touch with her. Contacts were given a list of times when the researcher was most likely to be available, although participants were encouraged to call any time, even weekends if that was more convenient. Because follow-up data were crucial to the study, every effort was made to contact participants. If the researcher had not received a call back from the participant within one week of speaking to the contact, a second call was made to ensure that the message had been delivered. If it had not been, the contact was reminded to do so as soon as possible. If it had been delivered, contacts were asked to call the participant once again and inform them that the researcher had called a second time and was eager to hear from them. If this second attempt failed to produce results, the woman was considered lost from the study. In such cases an effort was always made to establish through the contact whether or not the woman had returned to her partner at any time over the four-month follow-up period.

# RESULTS

## Sample

The battered women in this study were comparable in many respects to other samples of battered women in the literature (see Table 2 for sample characteristics). Of particular note were the similarities in age, length of relationship and number of dependent children. Also in keeping with previous samples, the women reported early onset of abuse, typically within the first year of marriage or living together, and often within the first six months. In addition, they reported a high level of alcohol abuse by their partners. Fully 60% of the men drank to excess (inebriation) anywhere from two or three times a month to once or twice a week, whereas only 9% of the women reported a similar drinking pattern. Of note, was the significant relationship between the man's drinking frequency and the degree of physical abuse in the relationship ($r = .38$, $p = .0001$).

## Table 2

## Characteristics of Sample

Total N = 122
Age
Mean = 30
Median = 28
Range = 18 - 48

Marital status
Married = 56%
Common law = 44%

Mean length of relationship = 6 years 6 months

Race
White = 59%
Native = 32%
Black = 2%
Asian = 5%
Other = 2%

Education
Graduate degree = 1%
Bachelor's degree/technical diploma = 9%
Some university/technical college = 16%
High school graduate = 22%
Some high school = 34%
Junior high = 16%
Less than 7 years formal schooling = 2%

Employment status
Full-time = 16%
Part-time = 12%
Unemployed = 72%

Religious affiliation
None = 23%
Roman Catholic = 32%
United = 11%
Anglican = 13%
Lutheran = 2%
Pentacostal = 2%
Non-denominational = 5%
Other = 11%

Dependent children = 79%
    Median, Mode = 2
    Range = 0-5

Exposure to abuse as a child
    Neither witnessed nor received abuse = 34%
    Witnessed spouse abuse = 17%
    Received physical abuse = 16%
    Both witnessed and received abuse = 33%

Relative to other samples of battered women, this sample contained a high percentage of minority women (41%). On average, the women also tended to be relatively less educated and to have higher levels of unemployment. It is noteworthy that, while 37% of the women were better educated than their partners, they were far less likely to be employed. In this sample, 41% of the men were reported as unemployed, compared to 72% of the women. In 34% of the sample, both husband and wife were unemployed and living on welfare, unemployment insurance, or both. Consistent with previous research findings, the women who were employed reported low incomes. For the handful of women who were employed full time, 53% earned less than $20,000 a year, and of these, 70% earned less than $15,000 annually. In terms of religion, the majority of women had some religious affiliation; however, only 23%

viewed their religion as having a very strong influence on their lives. For most of the women, religion exerted from a slight (28%) to a somewhat strong (32%) influence.

Exposure to abuse in childhood was generally high in this sample, as was severity of abuse. Of the women who had witnessed spouse abuse, 67% had witnessed their mothers being kicked, bitten, or hit with a fist, and most had observed more severe assaults. Among the women who had been abused as a child, 69% reported severe abuse. As for the degree of abuse in the current relationship, the vast majority of women could not provide an estimate of the number of physically abusive incidents that had occurred; there had simply been too many to count.

In keeping with previous research findings, the women in this study did not hold attitudes toward women's roles that were consistent with traditional role prescriptions. On the contrary, as a group, they tended to be quite liberal in outlook. As for level of self-esteem and symptoms of depression, they ran the gamut. Although the qualitative meaning of the self-esteem scores could not be determined, owing to the absence of a comparison group, it was possible to assess the qualitative meaning of the depression scores. In this sample, 89% of the women scored above the clinical cutoff score of 16 on the depression measure. The means for this variable and the other psychosocial variables are presented in Table 3.

## Relationship Between Familial, Psychological, Situational, and Relationship Variables and Response-to-Abuse Variables

Canonical correlation analysis using the SAS (SAS/STAT USER'S GUIDE, 1988) CANCORR procedure was used to assess the relationship between the psychosocial variables (i.e., family-of-origin, psychological, situational, relationship) on the one hand and the response-to-abuse variables on the other (i.e., duration of abuse prior to seeking help, total duration of abuse, number of help-seeking acts, number of help-seeking contacts). Because of the exploratory nature of the investigation, and in particular the objective of assessing the relative association of the different variables to response patterns, all variables were included in the canonical correlation analysis,

Table 3

Mean Raw Scores for Standardized Psychosocial Variables for Total Sample (N = 122)

| Variable | Mean | SD | Theoretical Range of Scores |
|---|---|---|---|
| Family-of-origin health | 118.74 | 38.55 | 40 - 200 |
| Depression (time 1) | 33.23 | 12.59 | 0 - 60 |
| Self-esteem | 27.39 | 5.97 | 10 - 40 |
| Attitudes Toward Women | 51.29 | 6.83 | 15 - 60 |
| Marital satisfaction | 58.81 | 22.34 | 0 - 151 |
| Social isolation (time 1) | 50.86 | 11.41 | 20 - 80 |
| Physical abuse | 46.40 | 21.51 | 0 - 100 |
| Emotional abuse | 60.17 | 20.48 | 0 - 100 |
| Depression (time 2) | 19.41 | 14.58 | 0 - 60 |
| Social isolation (time 2) | 42.22 | 13.79 | 20 - 80 |

even though the zero-order correlation between a given variable and response measure may have been low. Owing to the high percentage of native women in the sample, ethnicity was included as a control variable. For purposes of this and subsequent analyses, two classifications were formed, native and other. The decision to group whites with all ethnic groups other than native was based on the results of a MANOVA. These results indicated that the other ethnic groups were more similar to whites than to natives on most of the variables.

Four canonical correlations were calculated, with only the first canonical correlation, $\underline{R}_{c1} = .616$, yielding a significant F value ($\underline{F} = 1.86$, $\underline{df} = 48$, $398.81$, $\underline{p} = .0008$). This result indicated that the first two canonical variables were significantly related, with the canonical correlation accounting for 38% of the shared variance in the two sets of variables. An examination of the means of the squared structure coefficients (zero-order correlations of the canonical variables with their constituent variables) indicated that 10% of the total variance of the first set (psychosocial variables) and 46% of the second set (response-to-abuse variables) was extracted by the first canonical variate.

The structure coefficients for each set of variables were examined to determine the relative contribution of each variable to the correlation. These are presented in Table 4. In order to evaluate the relationship between the two sets of variables, the individual variables of each set were cross-correlated with the canonical variables of the other set. The resulting structure coefficients are presented in Table 5.

Canonical redundancy analysis showed that the proportion of variance of the second set of variables (response-to-abuse set) explained by the first set of variables (psychosocial set) was 17%. The squared multiple correlations further indicated that the first canonical variable of the first set of variables had some predictive power for number of help-seeking acts (.269) and number of help-seeking contacts (.208), was a poorer predictor of total duration of abuse (.160) and had virtually no predictive power for duration of abuse prior to help seeking (.062).

Table 4

Structure Coefficients for the Significant Canonical Correlation Between the Psychosocial Variables and the Response-to-Abuse Measures

| Variable | $R_{C1} = .616$ C |
|---|---|
| Psychosocial factors | |
| Maximum abuse witnessed | .086 |
| Maximum abuse received | -.164 |
| Family-of-origin health | .001 |
| Self-esteem | .107 |
| Attitudes toward women | -.067 |
| Number of dependent children | .641 |
| Social isolation (time 1) | -.255 |
| Employment status | .252 |
| Marital satisfaction | -.578 |
| Physical abuse in relationship | .317 |
| Emotional abuse in relationship | .427 |
| Ethnicity | -.153 |
| Response-to-abuse measures | |
| Number of help-seeking acts | .842 |
| Number of help-seeking contacts | .740 |
| Duration of abuse to help seeking | .405 |
| Total duration of abuse | .650 |

Table 5

Cross Correlations of the Individual Variables of Each Set With the Canonical Variate of the Other Set

|  | $R_{c1} = .616$ |
|---|---|
| Variable | C |
| Psychosocial factors |  |
| Maximum abuse witnessed | .053 |
| Maximum abuse received | -.101 |
| Family-of-origin health | .000 |
| Self-esteem | .066 |
| Attitudes toward women | -.042 |
| Number of dependent children | .395 |
| Social isolation (time 1) | -.157 |
| Employment status | .155 |
| Marital satisfaction | -.356 |
| Physical abuse in relationship | .195 |
| Emotional abuse in relationship | .263 |
| Ethnicity | -.094 |
| Response-to-abuse measures |  |
| Number of help-seeking acts | .519 |
| Number of help-seeking contacts | .456 |
| Duration of abuse to help seeking | .249 |
| Total duration of abuse | .400 |

As the foregoing indicates, the results of the canonical correlation analysis provided only partial support for the hypotheses of this investigation. The predictions (hypotheses 2, 3, 4, 7) that level of health in the family of origin, self-esteem, severity of physical abuse in the current relationship, and employment status would all correlate positively with number of help-seeking acts and number of help-seeking contacts were not supported, and neither were the predictions (hypotheses 2, 3) that level of family health and self-esteem would correlate negatively with duration to help-seeking, while exposure to physical abuse in childhood, whether through witnessing abuse or receiving abuse, would correlate positively (hypothesis 1). The predictions (hypotheses 1, 6) that number of dependent children, perceived social isolation, witnessing abuse in childhood and receiving abuse in childhood would correlate negatively with number of help-seeking acts and number of help-seeking contacts were also not supported.

Contrary to expectation, the number of dependent children correlated positively, not negatively, with number of help-seeking acts and number of help-seeking contacts. The more dependent children a woman had, the greater were her help-seeking efforts. As the correlations between number of dependent children and help-seeking efforts could reflect the influence of duration of abuse, which would be expected to co-vary with number of children, partial correlations were calculated with the effects of duration of abuse removed. The resulting correlations of .34 and .35 indicated that number of dependent children was related to a woman's help-seeking efforts quite apart from the length of time she had been in the relationship.

The only hypothesis supported by the canonical correlation analysis was the prediction (hypotheses 5) that marital satisfaction would be negatively correlated with number of help-seeking acts and number of help-seeking contacts. As predicted, the more dissatisfied women were with their marital relationship, the broader were their help-seeking efforts and the greater were their number of help-seeking contacts.

A logistic regression analysis using the SAS CATMOD procedure (SAS/STAT USER'S GUIDE, 1988) was used to test the hypotheses relating to the returned variable. Because of the possibility of suppressor effects among the predictors, all variables were included in the analysis, even though they may not have correlated significantly with the returned variable. The ethnicity factor was also included for control purposes. Additionally, the four response-to-abuse measures (number of help-seeking acts, number of help-seeking contacts, duration to help seeking, total duration of abuse) were included. Regression results indicated that the strongest predictor of return was the number of help-seeking acts, $X^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 99) = 8.29, $\underline{p}$ = .004: the broader a woman's help-seeking efforts, the less likely she was to have returned to her abusive partner within the four-month follow-up period.

Although none of the other variables was statistically significant, two trends in the data are noteworthy. First, women who had witnessed spouse abuse as a child tended to return to their partners more often than women who had not witnessed abuse in childhood, $X^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 99) = 3.57, $\underline{p}$ = .059. Similarly, the probability of returning to an abusive partner tended to be higher among women who reported high rather than low marital satisfaction, $X^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 99) =

2.90, p = .089. These trends were consistent with research expectations.

## Changes in Depressive Symptomatology from Time 1 (shelter) to Time 2 (follow-up) for Return and No-Return Groups

The prediction (hypothesis 8) that women who returned to their partners over the follow-up period would show a greater reduction in depressive symptomatology than women who did not return to their partners was assessed by a repeated measures ANOVA. Results failed to support the prediction. Although depression scores dropped significantly from time 1 to time 2, F (1,56) = 34.24, p < .0001, no significant group differences were found (see Table 6).

Table 6

Mean Scores on Depressive Symptomatology at Time 1 (shelter) and Time 2 (follow-up) for Return and No-Return Groups

| | | Time 1 | | Time 2 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | N | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Return | 25 | 30.12 | 15.15 | 20.84 | 16.73 |
| No-Return | 33 | 32.42 | 13.14 | 18.33 | 12.89 |

### Changes in Perceived Social Isolation from Time 1 (shelter) to Time 2 (follow-up) for Return and No-Return Groups

Changes in perceived social isolation for the return and no-return groups were assessed by a repeated measures ANOVA. Results indicated a significant reduction in perceived social isolation from time 1 to time 2, *F* (1, 56), = 19.82, *p* < .0001, with women who did not return to their partners showing a greater reduction in perceived social isolation than women who did return, *F* (1, 56), = 3.97, *p* = .05 (see Table 7).

Table 7

Mean Scores on Perceived Social Isolation at Time 1 (shelter) and Time 2 (follow-up) for Return and No-Return Groups

| | | Time 1 | | Time 2 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | N | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Return | 25 | 49.84 | 13.32 | 45.76 | 13.51 |
| No-Return | 33 | 50.24 | 12.66 | 39.55 | 13.59 |

## Relationship Between Current Response-to-Abuse Variables and Depressive Symptomatology and Perceived Social Isolation at Follow-up

A family-wise error rate of .05 divided equally among four correlations indicated that a probability of less than .01 was required for significance. An examination of the zero-order correlations among the current response to abuse variables (i.e., number of help-seeking acts this time in shelter) and depressive symptomatology and perceived social isolation at follow-up revealed negative correlations between number of help-seeking acts and depression and number of help-seeking acts and perceived social isolation, $r = -.400$, $p < .003$ and $r = -.391$, $p < .003$ respectively. The broader a woman's help-seeking actions while in the shelter, the less depressed she appeared at follow-up and the less isolated she perceived herself to be. Whether or not a woman had returned to her partner over the follow-up period was not related to depressive symptomatology and perceived social isolation scores.

## Intercorrelations among Familial, Psychological, Situational, Relationship and Response Variables

In addition to testing specific hypotheses, the relationships among the psychosocial and relationship variables were also explored in the present study. A family-wise error rate of .05 divided equally among 120 correlations indicated that a probability of less than .0004 was required for significance. As shown in Appendix O, being abused in childhood was negatively correlated with reported level of family health, $r = -.502$, $p = .0001$. The greater the severity of abuse received as a child, the more poorly a woman rated the health of her family of origin.

The self-esteem variable correlated negatively with perceived social isolation (time 1), $r = -.499$, $p = .0001$. The higher a woman's level of self-esteem, the less socially isolated she perceived herself to be.

The degree of emotional abuse experienced in the current relationship was positively correlated with the degree of physical abuse, $r = .592$, $p = .0001$, and negatively correlated with marital satisfaction, $r = -.525$, $p = .0001$.

As the previously reported results of the logistic regression analysis indicated, number of help-seeking acts and the decision to return to the abusive partner were negatively correlated, r = -.421, p = .0001. The broader a woman's help-seeking efforts, the less likely she was to return to her partner within the four-month follow-up period. As one might expect, number of help-seeking acts also correlated positively with number of help-seeking contacts, r = .766, p = .0001. Finally, a positive correlation obtained between total duration of abuse and duration to help seeking, r = .702, p = .0001. The longer a woman had been in the abusive relationship, the longer was she exposed to abuse before seeking outside help.

# DISCUSSION

In considering the overall results of the present study, one is struck by the lack of relationship between the majority of the psychosocial variables and women's response patterns. Indeed, only two variables, number of dependent children and marital satisfaction, surfaced as significantly related to women's responses. Exposure to abuse in the family of origin, frequency and severity of physical abuse in the current relationship, employment status, perceived social isolation, and psychological factors were all statistically insignificant when it came to women's help-seeking efforts and to the likelihood of their leaving an abusive partner. These findings contradict many of the assumptions that have been held about battered women and, in particular, the factors that inform their decisions and determine their actions. To the extent that our understanding of these factors guides remediation efforts, it behooves us to understand as clearly and as fully as possible the relationship of each of these factors to women's help-seeking behaviour. Without a clear understanding of those relationships, efforts to assist battered women will almost surely miss the mark. As a starting point to achieving greater clarity and more relevant and effective interventions, previous findings and assumptions need to be examined in the light of current research results.

## Family-of-Origin Variables

Over the past decade or so a substantial body of literature has accumulated attesting to the relationship between violence in the family of origin and violence in the family of procreation. Much of that literature has centered on the intergenerational transmission of violence as it relates to batterers. It has by now been widely accepted that males who witness their mothers being abused are at considerable risk for repeating the same patterns of behaviour in their own adult relationships. Much less clear is the relationship between witnessing spouse abuse as a child and growing up to become a battered wife. Although there are those who maintain that a significant risk factor exists (Chappell, C., & Heiner, R., 1990), others disagree, noting that the majority of women in their studies came from nonviolent homes. Perhaps witnessing abuse as a child does not place a woman at risk for becoming a battered wife; however, the question still remains, does it make a woman more likely to tolerate abuse if by chance she should wind up in an abusive relationship?

From a social learning perspective, one might predict that a woman who saw her mother being abused would be inclined to view such behaviour as normal and, therefore, would be inclined to endure similar behaviour from her own partner. This question was examined in the present study and no support was found for the proposition. In this sample, witnessing spouse abuse as a child was not related to a woman's help-seeking behaviour or to her length of stay in an abusive marriage. The latter finding supports Pagelow's (1981) results. On the other hand, there was some suggestion that witnessing spouse abuse may be related to increased likelihood of returning to an abusive partner.

One possible explanation for these findings may lie in the notion of modelling, a concept central to the intergenerational transmission of violence hypothesis. It may be that maternal response to violence is a more potent determinant of a battered woman's response to abuse than witnessing spouse abuse per se. More specifically, the woman who witnessed spouse abuse as a child, and in particular her mother's active response to it, may be more inclined to take decisive action in the face of her own abuse than a woman who had no childhood exposure to abuse and hence no internalized scripts for responding, or a woman who had witnessed her mother's ineffectual or passive response to abuse. The failure to find a significant relationship between exposure to abuse in childhood and help-seeking behaviour in the current abusive relationship may also be a reflection of low levels of help-seeking on the part of the women's abused mothers. It is noteworthy that the help-seeking actions currently available to women in abusive relationships were virtually unheard of a generation ago. What may have been modelled, therefore, was a high rate of return to the abusive spouse, which could explain the trend toward increased likelihood of return among women who had witnessed wife abuse relative to women who had not. The questions raised here cry out for answers and underscore the need for further research.

While witnessing abuse in childhood may not directly influence the battered wife's response patterns, what about being abused as a child? Unlike the battered woman who, in principle at least, can seek outside help or leave her abuser, the abused child typically has no such options. Under these circumstances does the child simply internalize her sense of powerlessness and helplessness, with this sense of impotence carrying over into her adult relationships? If so, then one might expect the battered woman who was abused as a child to endure the abuse in adulthood rather than seek solutions. Once again, the results of the present study offer no support for this proposition. Abuse in childhood was not linked to help-seeking actions, to length of stay in a battering relationship, or to the decision to leave the abuser.

The failure to find a relationship between childhood abuse and response to abuse in adulthood in the present study contrasts with the contradictory, albeit significant, findings reported by other researchers (Pagelow, 1981; Schutte et al., 1987; Snyder & Fruchtman, 1981). Given the methodological difficulties that plagued these studies and the very weak relationship that was found in Pagelow's data, perhaps the most one can say at this point is that if a relationship exists between childhood abuse and response to abuse in adulthood, it is probably a negative relationship and a very weak one at best.

The third family-of-origin variable included in this study was level of family health. It had been hypothesized that women who grew up in families where autonomy and intimacy were fostered would be less likely to put up with abuse in their adult relationships. In fact, in this sample, growing up in a healthy family environment offered a woman no special advantage when it came to dealing with an abusive partner. These women were no more likely to seek help or to leave their abusers than were women who came from emotionally impoverished backgrounds.

It may be that women who grow up in a healthy family environment and women who are raised in dysfunctional families will both be inclined to stay with an abusive partner, albeit for vastly different reasons. While the former may stay because they know what marriage can be and because they are committed to turning their relationships around, the latter may stay because they have no expectation that things would be any different with another partner. Apart from the literature that addresses the intergenerational transmission of violence, very little research has focused on the role the family of origin may play in determining a woman's response to abuse. While the present study provides no answers to this question, it does suggest, at the very least, that a healthy upbringing may not necessarily render a woman more likely to break away from an abusive partner or seek help more actively.

## Psychological Variables

The results of the present study offer no support for the role of psychological variables as potential determinants of the battered woman's help-seeking behaviour. In this sample, level of self-esteem had no bearing on the length of time a woman endured abuse before seeking outside help, the length of time she had been in the abusive relationship, the number and breadth of her help-seeking efforts, or her decision to leave her partner. In keeping with previous findings

(Walker, 1984; Star, 1978; Stacey & Shupe, 1983; Giles-Sims, 1983), the women in this sample were not generally low in self-esteem but ran the gamut. This finding supports the notion that low self-esteem is not a necessary prerequisite for becoming involved in an abusive relationship. Although one cannot rule out completely the possibility that self-esteem improved for many of the women over the course of their abusive relationships, this seems doubtful. Evidence from battered women clearly suggests that a primary effect of battering is to lower not raise self-esteem.

Earlier it was speculated that the high level of self-esteem reported by the women in Walker's (1984) study, relative to their estimate of self-esteem for women in general, might reflect an increase in self-esteem arising from the women's decision to quit an abusive relationship. It will be recalled that three-quarters of the women in Walker's study were out of the relationship at the time of testing, some for a considerable length of time. Improvement in self-esteem may be a consequence of leaving an abusive relationship, with length of time "out" corresponding to greater improvement. Perhaps the women in Walker's study were significantly higher in self-esteem than the women in the present study, all of whom were in the relationship at the time of testing. Because different measures of self-esteem were used in the two studies, this question cannot be examined. An alternative explanation for Walker's finding is that the women were relatively high in self-esteem to begin with and this enabled them to leave their abusive partners. The results of the present study do not support such an explanation in that level of self-esteem was not related to a woman's decision to leave.

The second psychosocial variable explored in this study, depressive symptomatology, was also included in Walker's investigation of battered women. Her findings pointed to a high level of depressive symptomatology among women who were "out" of the abusive relationship relative to women who were still living with their abusers. In the present study, both the return and no-return groups were significantly less depressed at follow-up with no differences found between them. Thus Walker's finding of greater depression among women living alone relative to women living with their partners was not supported. Although the outcome measure used in this study differed from Walker's measure in that "returned" did not necessarily mean currently living with one's partner, in fact, of the 25 women in the "returned" group, all but three were residing with their partners at follow-up, making comparisons across the two studies appropriate.

One possible explanation for the differential findings of these two studies is the length of time since separation. It will be recalled that many of the women in Walker's study had been out of the relationship for a year or more. As was suggested earlier, it may be that a decision to separate is accompanied initially by a marked reduction in depression, but that over time depressive symptoms return as the women encounter the harsh realities of "going it alone." In this regard it is noteworthy that, in the present study, the women who had not returned to their partners experienced a greater reduction in depression relative to the women who had returned, although these differences were not statistically significant. Perhaps over time, however, the balance may shift toward greater symptomatology among women "out" relative to women "in." Such a finding would be in keeping with Walker's results.

Although depressive symptomatology at follow-up did not differentiate between the return and no-return groups, it did relate to the women's most current help-seeking behaviour. The broader a woman's help-seeking actions this time in shelter, the lower her depression scores at follow-up, regardless of whether or not she had returned to her partner. To the extent that depression is fuelled, at least in part, by feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, taking decisive action may help to reduce depressive symptomatology by counteracting the battered woman's sense of powerlessness. A primary objective of the women's movement is to empower women. The findings reported here suggest that empowerment translated into action may indeed result in significant gains for battered women, at least psychologically speaking and in the short term.

The relationship between breadth of help-seeking actions this time in shelter and lower depression scores at follow-up among women who had returned to their partners is also of interest. Perhaps what is reflected here, over and above a sense of empowerment, is the effect of decisive action on the batterer's behaviour. As Berk et. al. (1986) noted, the broader a woman's help-seeking behaviour, the less likelihood there is of subsequent abuse. To the extent that a woman's actions are successful in effecting change in her partner's behaviour, so too would one expect a lifting of depression. The same explanation may hold for women out of the relationship. After all, leaving an abusive partner does not guarantee an end to abuse. Even where a woman has taken decisive action such as laying charges and obtaining a restraining order, the abuse may well continue and even escalate.

Turning now to past help-seeking actions, one finds that these did not influence current levels of depressive symptomatology or self-esteem. Given that the depression measure used in this study tapped temporary rather than chronic depressive symptoms, this is not surprising. On the other hand, one might have expected past help-seeking actions to correlate positively with the more stable self-esteem measure (Mitchell & Hodson, 1983). After all, the woman who takes decisive action in response to abuse is engaging in very self-affirming behaviour and this, in principle at least, should enhance her feelings of self-worth. Such was not the case. As noted previously, self-esteem and help-seeking actions were not correlated. Perhaps, as was suggested earlier, increases in self-esteem occur as a result of having left an abusive partner. As long as a woman remains in an abusive relationship the negative effects of the abuse may offset any gains made as a result of actions taken. Since the women in this study were all living with their partners at the time of seeking shelter, one would not expect to see positive changes in self-esteem. Because the present study did not include a follow-up measure of self-esteem, one cannot assess possible changes in self-esteem as a function of having left the relationship.

The third psychological variable considered in this study was traditionalism. In this sample, women scored high on liberalism. This finding is consistent with Walker's (1984) results and with other research suggesting that battered women are not necessarily high in traditional values relative to non-battered women (Hofeller, 1982; Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981). In today's society where women are constantly bombarded with messages proclaiming their right to social, political, and economic equality with men, these results are perhaps to be expected, and may simply reflect the consciousness-raising of women in general and battered women in particular. Alternatively, it may be that battered women who seek shelter perceive values differently than those who stay in abusive relationships.

Although battered women may verbally subscribe to liberal views when it comes to sex role prescriptions, it does not automatically follow that they subscribe behaviourally. Star's (1979) research indicated that although battered women disagree with their partners' rules and orders, they are nevertheless more apt to submit to them than non-battered women. These results suggest that the critical issue is not so much what battered women say but what they do. Researchers may need to address the question of traditionalism from this perspective if meaningful answers are to be found.

In summary, psychological factors appear to have little relationship to a battered woman's help-seeking behaviour or to her decision to leave an abusive partner. On the other hand, there is some suggestion that how a woman responds to abuse may have implications for her emotional well-being. Specifically, a strong, decisive response, as reflected in breadth of help-seeking, may reduce symptoms of depression in the post-shelter period. How enduring those effects will be is the question. It seems likely that they will be relatively short-lived for women who return to their partners, unless the woman's actions have effected significant changes in the batterer's behaviour. Women who choose to live apart from their abusive partners may also be vulnerable for a return of depressive symptoms, depending on their circumstances during the separation period. Clearly, much more needs to be learned about the effects of separation on the battered woman's emotional health and, in particular, how these emotional factors may influence subsequent decision making, such as the decision to return to the abusing partner.

## Situational Variables

A good deal of the extant literature on wife battery has been focused on the role of situational factors as determinants of a woman's response to abuse.

The presence of children in the relationship has been cited as a major determinant of a woman's actions. Children have been seen as contributing to the woman's decision to stay as well as to her decision to leave. Research suggests that the more dependent children a woman has the longer she stays with her abusive partner (Pagelow, 1981; Greaves et al., 1988). The results of the present study support these findings. It should be noted, however, that the positive correlation between number of dependent children and length of stay may also reflect the fact that women who stay longer are apt to have more children. In other words, women may not necessarily be staying because of the children, but rather out of commitment to the marriage or for some other personal reason. As the number of children increases, however, it seems reasonable to suppose that children may become an impediment to leaving.

As for the suggestion that women leave their abusive partners out of concern for the children, the present study provides no data that speak to this question. What it does provide is clear evidence that number of dependent children is not related to the likelihood of a woman leaving the relationship but is related to her help-seeking efforts. The more dependent children a woman had, the broader were her help-seeking actions and the greater were her help-seeking contacts. Why this would be so is the question.

Perhaps it is simply a matter of cumulative stress. As the number of children increases, so too do the demands on a woman's time and energy. A woman with only one child may feel capable of managing the abuse, whereas a woman with three or more children may be so stretched in terms of personal resources that the added stress of the abuse becomes intolerable. It may also be the case that the effects of the abuse on the children become more apparent over time, prompting the woman to take action. A battered woman may feel that she can put up with the abuse for the sake of keeping the family together; however, when the abuse begins to affect the children, either directly or indirectly, she may be galvanized into action. Battered women often cite the effect of the abuse on their children, fear that the children will be harmed, and anger at their partner for allowing the children to see them being abused (Giles-Sims, 1983) as primary motivating factors in their decision to seek outside help.

It appears that the presence of children in a battering relationship may indeed influence a woman's response to abuse, albeit not necessarily in the manner frequently supposed. While there is reason to believe that a woman may stay longer in an abusive relationship the more children she has, number of dependent children may not be a primary factor when it comes to deciding whether or not to leave. Where the number of children may exert its greatest influence is in spurring a woman into action. It is what happens as a result of that action that ultimately decides the fate of the relationship.

Social isolation, a prominent feature of many battering relationships, is another situational variable that is thought to influence a battered woman's response to abuse. The assumption has been that the more isolated a woman is from social supports, the less likely she is to seek outside help to end the abuse, either because she is prevented from doing so or because she does not know that help is available. It has been further assumed that with adequate support a woman would be more likely to take appropriate action. This was not the case for the women in this sample. Although many women indicated that they felt well connected to others, their sense of relatedness, of having available supports, did not make them any more likely than their socially isolated counterparts to seek outside help or to leave their abusers.

Perhaps the measure of perceived social isolation used in this study did not tap relevant dimensions of social support. It may be that specific kinds of social support facilitate a woman's help-seeking efforts and that simply having a support network is not, in and of itself, sufficient to spur a woman into action. Or it may be that the presence of a support network has no bearing on how a woman responds to physical abuse; its function may simply be to provide emotional support as needed. After all, women, and men for that matter, are rarely persuaded by others to give up a relationship to which they feel committed. Despite the most ardent, well-intentioned advice from friends and family, people generally have to arrive at their own decisions in their own time. There is no reason to believe that battered women are any different.

While a woman's sense of social isolation may not figure prominently in her decision to quit a battering relationship, there is evidence to suggest that a sense of greater connectedness to others may follow from a decision to leave. In the present study, women who had not returned to their partners showed a significantly greater reduction in their sense of social isolation than women who had returned. These findings may reflect the greater contact with friends and family that is likely to occur once a woman is on her own. Moreover, many of these women had joined support groups through the shelter and other service providers. This was not the case for women who had returned to their partners.

It may also be the case that members of a battered woman's support network are more supportive once the woman has left her partner. Friends and family of battered women often become frustrated when, despite their best advice, the woman fails to take action. A woman's decision to leave a battering relationship may be met with a show of approval in the form of increased support and assistance. The continued availability of that support may largely determine whether or not a woman returns to her partner or succeeds in making it on her own. In short, where social support may be most critical is after the battered woman has left her partner.

Previous research has also suggested a link between economic dependence and a woman's decision to remain in a battering relationship (Strube & Barbour, 1983). In the present study, women who were unemployed were just as likely to leave an abusive partner as women who were employed. A number of possible explanations for this finding come to mind. First, it may be that for many of the unemployed women the cost of staying became greater than the cost of leaving. As Rounsaville (1978b) so succinctly put it, "Given sufficient motivation, women even with few resources found a way to leave" (p. 17). A second possible explanation comes from the research of Greaves et al. (1988). These writers noted that unemployed women on welfare were more likely to leave their abusers than women reporting their own wages as the primary source of income or those relying solely on their partners' income. They suggested that the woman on welfare has less to lose by leaving as far as changes in her standard of living are concerned. It will be recalled that a large percentage of the women in this sample were living on welfare; in 34% of the cases, both partners were unemployed and on social assistance.

In the case of women who were employed, other factors may be at work to keep them in the relationship. The notion that employment brings women into contact with others where they may find the emotional support needed to take action against the abuse carries with it the expectation that a relationship will exist between employment status and perceived social support, with employed women reporting lower social isolation scores than unemployed women. Such was not the case. Greaves et al. (1988) have offered an explanation for why an employed battered woman might choose to stay with her partner. They suggest that an employed woman may be confronted with the paucity of support available to her as well as the social risk of coming forward and declaring herself a battered woman. This greater awareness, they suggest, may actually increase a woman's sense of isolation resulting in less, not more, likelihood of leaving.

To summarize, whether or not a woman was employed, perceived herself to be socially isolated, or had dependent children appeared to have little bearing on her decision to leave or stay with an abusive partner. On the other hand, the number of dependent children a woman had appeared to be a major factor in her help-seeking behaviour. This finding is entirely consistent with the verbal reports of battered women, who frequently cite the children as the single most important factor in their attempts to get help to end the abuse. For many battered women, it is concern for the welfare of the children and, in particular, the discovery that the children are being abused that first prompts them to take decisive action. While a battered woman may, for her own personal reasons, be prepared to endure abuse, she may be much less willing to subject her children to the consequences of that abuse. Under those circumstances, the desire to protect her children may override all other concerns.

## Relationship Variables

Of the two relationship variables examined in the present study only marital satisfaction surfaced as significantly related to a woman's help-seeking efforts. The failure to find a strong link between severity and frequency of physical abuse and a battered woman's response to violence contradicts earlier research which suggested that severity of abuse was a primary factor in a woman's decision to leave a violent marriage (Rounsaville, 1978b). Hilbert and Hilbert (1984) cited severity of abuse as predicting return and frequency of abuse as predicting no return. Pagelow (1981) and Greaves et al. (1988), on the other hand, found that severity and frequency of physical abuse did not predict length of stay in an abusive marriage or whether or not a woman would leave. The present results support these latter findings.

As one considers the question of physical abuse and its role in determining women's actions, it seems clear that, to a large degree, society attaches more importance to the abuse variable than do battered women themselves. Rather than viewing the battering as one aspect of the relationship, there is a tendency to see it as overshadowing all other considerations and, in effect, defining the relationship and, perhaps more important, the woman herself. Thus, we speak of a battered woman, not a woman who has been battered. The distinction is an important one and goes to the very heart of the problem. If we define the relationship strictly in terms of the physical abuse component we risk losing sight of the positive aspects of the relationship that keep a woman with her partner.

It may well be true that battered women defend against the reality of the abuse through denial, minimization, and other defense mechanisms; however, the presence of abuse does not alter the fact that they may also feel genuine love and affection for their partners and derive some, and perhaps considerable, satisfaction from other aspects of the relationship. The assumption that a woman would necessarily leave her abuser if only she could be made to face the abuse is surely simplistic. As Loseke and Cahill (1984) stated in their article on "the social construction of deviance," battered women are no different than other women who are in dysfunctional, albeit non-violent, marriages. In support of Loseke and Cahill's position, Campbell (1989) found that battered women and non-battered women who were also having problems in an intimate relationship with a man were highly similar in their responses. The fact is, both groups of women experience the same ambivalence, the same emotional wrenching when it comes to contemplating separation and life without the other. No matter how troubled the relationship, the decision to leave one's partner is never an easy one, even when physical abuse has been part of the relationship package.

What surfaces as a more important variable than physical abuse is the degree of emotional abuse experienced in the relationship. Emotional abuse refers to insults, criticisms, accusations, threats and isolation. Many battered women report that emotional abuse is much more difficult to bear than physical battering. In their examination of the role of emotional abuse in battering relationships, Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, and Polek (1990) reported that 72% of the women ($N = 159$) in their sample indicated that the emotional abuse had a more severe impact on them than the physical abuse. In the present study, emotional abuse was also more strongly related to women's help-seeking efforts and to marital satisfaction than physical abuse. To date, relatively little attention has been focused on this variable. Rather, physical abuse has commanded our attention, perhaps because it is more visible, not to mention potentially life threatening. Clearly, however, from the perspective of battered women, emotional abuse is a variable of considerable importance and one which deserves further study.

As the results of this study indicate, it is the quality of the marital relationship in its entirety and not the intensity or frequency of the physical abuse that is associated most strongly with a woman's help-seeking efforts. It may be that a woman can overlook physical abuse as long as the marriage is more or less meeting her other needs. Once it ceases to do so, she may begin to consider other options. The more dependent children a woman has, the greater are her help-seeking actions as she struggles to cope with the demands of parenting, concern about the effects of the abuse on her children, and declining marital satisfaction. The breadth of a woman's help-seeking efforts may reflect her degree of commitment to ending the abuse, one way or another. Where a woman has tried a wide variety of responses in the hope of ending the violence and nothing has worked, she may decide that the only way to go is "out." In short, this may be her only remaining option.

What is being suggested here is that help-seeking actions are part of a process which may ultimately end in separation and divorce. To put it quite simply, when the cost of staying outweighs the benefits, a woman may decide to leave (Pfouts, 1978; Greaves et al., 1988). What the present study suggests is that the number of children a woman has and her overall satisfaction with the marriage are among the most salient factors in that decision-making process. In relative terms, her perception of the emotional and physical costs of the relationship are next in importance, followed by her economic situation and her sense of social isolation. Level of self-esteem, traditionalism, and experiences in the family of origin appear to have little relevance when it comes to a woman's decisions regarding how best to respond to violence.

## Research Applications

Before considering possible applications of the research findings, a few words are in order concerning the limitations and strengths of this study. As regards limitations, this was not a random sample but rather an opportunity sample of all women entering a shelter for battered women over a fixed time interval. This raises the question of representativeness and hence generalizability. Second, this study did not include a comparison group of non-battered maritally distressed women. In consequence, one cannot ascertain the relationship between the various psychosocial variables and battered woman status. In other words, one cannot establish that battered women, as a group, are lower in self-esteem than non-battered maritally distressed women, come from more abusive backgrounds, are more depressed, are more socially isolated, and so on. Third, some of the data were retrospective. Even though an effort was made to choose response measures that could be behaviourally anchored, thereby increasing the likelihood of reliability, some distortion was inevitable. Finally, the data were, for the most part, correlational and as such did not permit causal interpretations.

While acknowledging the study's limitations, it is also important to recognize its strengths. It will be recalled that all women entering shelter who met selection criteria were approached, with 89% of the women agreeing to participate. Thus, the sample is representative of all women who use the study shelter. It will also be recalled that sample characteristics were, in many respects, consistent with those reported in other studies of wife abuse. Moreover, the shelter itself shared a number of characteristics with other shelters across the country, in terms of basic philosophy, goals and objectives, and services provided (Gilman, 1988). An additional strength of this research was the 10-month primary data collection period. Consequently, research findings are not likely to have been the result of seasonal fluctuations in shelter usage. The use of standardized instruments, objective collateral information, follow-up procedures and an adequate sample size, lend added weight to the likelihood of reliable findings. Finally, although the data were for the most part correlational, and as such did not allow for causal interpretation, they nevertheless met study objectives inasmuch as the primary purpose of this study was to establish relationships between variables in order to predict which women were most at risk for subsequent abuse.

Perhaps one of the most important applications of this research centers around the finding that breadth of help-seeking and likelihood of leaving an abusive partner were related. This would seem to have important implications when it comes to choosing an appropriate intervention. A proper fit between intervention and likelihood of disengagement may be crucial. To put it more concretely, preparing a woman for independent living when she has not yet begun to think seriously about separation is not only of questionable utility, it may actually be harmful. The implicit message that the woman should leave her abuser may result in feelings of not being understood, feelings of personal inadequacy and perhaps shame that she should want to return to a partner who abuses her, and a sense of failure when she does return. The net result may well be a reluctance to return to shelter in the future.

Breadth of help seeking is a variable that may prove useful when it comes to assessing likelihood of disengagement and requisite need. According to the present data, the broader a woman's help-seeking efforts, the greater the likelihood that she is on the threshold of disengagement. On the other hand, a woman who has tapped into very few available resources is, in all probability, likely to return to her partner. Insofar as each of these women is at a different stage in the disengagement process, so too do they have very different needs. What the woman with a high probability of returning to her partner needs, above all, is a good safety plan and assurances that she can and should return to shelter if the need arises. The woman who has arrived at a decision to leave will benefit most from practical help in making the necessary arrangements for housing, financial and legal assistance, child care, and so on. For the woman at an intermediate stage, who has perhaps just begun to entertain thoughts of leaving, an explanation of the services available to assist her in making the break may be most helpful and appropriate.

From the standpoint of counselling, research findings suggest that focusing on the ineffectiveness of past help-seeking efforts and the overall quality of the marital relationship may be more helpful and germane to the woman's decision making than focusing on self-esteem, social network building, and economic independence. In the first place, many battered women do not suffer from low self-esteem, social isolation, or economic dependence. Failure to recognize this fact many result in totally inappropriate and ineffective intervention strategies. In the second place, even if a woman does fit the stereotype, these factors do not appear to be the most salient when it comes to breaking away from an abusive partner. Indeed, increased self-esteem and a more supportive social network may be consequences of leaving, not precursors. Nor would it appear useful to focus on the physical abuse per se as a primary motivating factor in the woman's decision to seek help or to leave. On the other hand, emphasizing the effects of the abuse on the children may be one strategy for spurring a woman into action. Evidence from this study and others suggests that while a battered woman may be able to turn a blind eye to the violence, for a time at least, she is much less likely to do so once the effects of the abuse begin to tell on the children. Under these circumstances many battered women are moved to take broader help-seeking action. A better understanding of the effects on children of witnessing abuse, from the standpoint of both psychological disturbance (Wolfe & Jaffe, 1991) and the intergenerational transmission of violence, may spur a woman into action sooner rather than later.

Although the relationship between breadth of help seeking this time in shelter and lower depression and perceived isolation scores at follow-up would seem to suggest the advisability of urging a woman to take decisive action, some caution must be exercised in this regard, especially where legal remedies are concerned. As Horton, Simonidis and Simonidis (1989) noted, encouraging a woman to take out a restraining order before she is emotionally committed to ending the relationship may place a woman at risk. The woman who is not completely committed to calling the police when a violation occurs places herself outside the protection of the law and in possible danger. Once again, breadth of past help-seeking efforts may serve as a rough index of a woman's readiness for such a decisive step.

## The Battered Woman: An Overview

If the present study lays to rest any one misconception about battered women it must surely be the notion that battered women, as a group, are homogeneous and conform to some stereotyped image. Indeed, what was most striking about the women in this sample was their diversity. Although the study did not include a comparison group of non-battered, maritally dissatisfied women against which to gauge the characteristics of the sample, the variability of responses suggests that in many, if not most, respects battered women are probably more similar than dissimilar to their non-battered counterparts. Other researchers (Loseke & Cahill, 1983) have been making the same point for some time now and backing it up with research data (Campbell, 1989).

If, as is being suggested here, battered women are a heterogeneous population, then how does one account for the stereotype? Could it be that early researchers were mistaken and that current research has simply uncovered the truth? This is not a compelling explanation; there is no reason to question the validity of early descriptions of battered women. A more likely explanation, and the one being advanced here, is that battered women, at least those who seek shelter, have changed in some fundamental ways and those changes may be rooted in society's response to the problem of wife abuse. Over the course of the past decade and a half, research on wife battering has proliferated. Out of that research has come a greater understanding of the problem and greater efforts to redress it. Among the major societal responses to wife abuse are the emergence of shelters to provide respite for battered women and their children, legal reform to offer protection, and widespread media coverage to educate and spread the word that wife abuse is a crime and will not be tolerated. Given the high publicity accorded the problem, through television and radio, the movies, newspaper and magazine articles, today's battered woman may be less likely to take personal responsibility for the violence, to accept wife abuse as normal and unavoidable, and to believe that no help is available.

To the extent that a woman is able to view the abuse more objectively, so too may she be less likely to experience the diminishing self-esteem and paralyzing depression that were heretofore consequences of a battering relationship. As noted previously, the majority of women in this sample scored high on liberalism, indicating that they were not subscribing to the legitimacy of male dominance and female subordination in marital relationships or in society in general. That battered women may be seeking help sooner, before the effects of ongoing abuse can take their toll, is suggested by the high correlation (.70) between total duration of abuse and duration to help seeking. In this sample, the longer a woman had been in the relationship, the longer she endured the abuse before seeking help. Conversely, women who had been in the relationship a relatively short time, sought help sooner.

Perhaps what is being reflected here are the positive effects of society's commitment to eradicating, or at the very least mitigating, the problem of wife battering. As a result of public education and the provision of supportive services, battered women may be more likely to seek help than they were a decade ago. The steady increase in shelter usage over the past decade would seem to support this notion. Moreover, the heterogeneity of the present sample indicates that women are seeking help regardless of their level of self-esteem, depressive symptomatology, economic status, sense of isolation, and severity and frequency of abuse, past and present. It may well be that before the advent of the shelter movement and the availability of other supportive services, these factors were important determinants of a woman's response to abuse. After all, the woman with no money and no place to go had few options. Such a woman may well have stayed in an abusive marriage until the abuse escalated to the point of life-threatening violence. Today, women do not have to make those kinds of extreme choices. In consequence, the decision to stay or to leave may have increasingly come down to other factors such as the efficacy of past help-seeking efforts in reducing the violence and improving the relationship. This is not to suggest that situational factors are unimportant in the decision-making process but simply to suggest that they may be relatively less important than they once were.

Implicit in the foregoing is a challenge to yet another assumption about battered women, namely, that they are passive. The broad help-seeking efforts of many of the women in this sample roundly dispels that notion. Two points need to be made here. First, passivity has often been inferred from the battered woman's failure to leave her abuser. Clearly, however, this is a deficient measure of passivity. The woman who remains with her partner while actively seeking any and all solutions to her problem can hardly be described as passive. Second, the notion that battered women develop learned helplessness over the course of trying and failing to redress the problem is not supported by the present data. In this sample, the result of repeated, failed efforts to remedy the situation, as reflected in broad help-seeking actions, was increased likelihood of leaving. Schwartz (1989) made a similar observation. Commenting on the results of a National (USA) Crime Survey, he noted that survey data suggest "that most women do not stay in abusive situations indefinitely" (p. 46). This is not to suggest that learned helplessness is an invalid concept. Again, before the emergence of formalized social support and legal assistance, the battered woman's options were severely limited, and many battered women may well have experienced the futility of trying to curtail the abuse. For such women, despair and learned helplessness may have ensued. Inasmuch as times have changed, however, and greater options are now available to battered women, the concept of learned helplessness as an explanation for why a woman stays with an abusive partner may simply have less explanatory power.

Given the availability of shelters and other supportive services, today's battered woman may be more inclined to take decisive action in response to abuse. The record numbers of battered women pouring into shelters and seeking protection through the courts attests to the efficacy of current programs aimed at reaching this population. Indeed, the success of these programs is such that the increased demand for shelter has outstripped available resources. Although more and more women are seeking shelter this is not to be construed as an indication that more and more abused women are necessarily seeking to end their relationships. As the results of this study clearly indicate, for many battered women shelter provides a respite from violence, not a stepping stone out of the relationship. Of the 100 women for whom post-shelter information was available, 53 had, at some time over the four-month follow-up period, returned to their partners.

A particularly noteworthy finding is that, of the 53 women who returned to their abusers, 21 had applied for a restraining order while in shelter. In actuality, the number of women who returned to their partners after applying for a restraining order is probably much higher considering that the post-shelter decision of 13 other women who had taken this course of action was not known. By way of contrast, of the 47 women who did not return to their partners, 37 had applied for a restraining order. Research suggests that a restraining order is typically a measure of last resort, after a woman has sought relief from a wide variety of other sources without success; it usually signals a woman's commitment to ending the relationship

(Horton et. al., 1989). Clearly, this was not the case in the present study.

This raises an important question concerning the possible changes in women's response patterns over the past decade. There can be no doubt that more battered women than ever before are seeking shelter. As noted previously, the present data suggest that women also may be seeking help much sooner in the abuse process, i.e., before violence has become firmly entrenched in the relationship. The question arises: Are today's battered women engaging in broad help-seeking actions sooner, the result of changing attitudes and beliefs on the part of battered women and the proaction stance of social service providers? And if they are, what are the implications, particularly with regard to outcome? Is it the case, for example, that women who respond to abuse with broad help-seeking actions early on in the history of the abusive relationship experience a different outcome than women who, over an extended period of time, gradually tap into the various response options?

One might expect, for example, that early, decisive action would deliver a strong message to the abuser that violence will not be tolerated, with this, in turn, resulting in less likelihood of subsequent abuse (Berk et al., 1986). To the extent that a woman's actions are successful in marshalling sufficient support from the system, they may result in the curtailment of abuse and the possibility of salvaging the relationship. This outcome would seem more likely, the sooner the message is delivered. After all, at this point, the woman will, in all probability, still have positive feelings for her partner and still be deriving some degree of satisfaction from the marriage. On the other hand, the longer a woman has endured abuse, the greater the likelihood that love and commitment will have eroded to the point where there is nothing left to sustain the relationship.

In the present study, broad help-seeking actions were associated with less likelihood of returning to an abusive partner. This was interpreted as reflecting the gradual process of disillusionment and disengagement that results from failed help-seeking actions and resulting ongoing abuse. It is important to note, however, that some of the women who took decisive action and left did so relatively early on in the relationship. How many of these women returned to their partners after the follow-up period is unknown, as is the effectiveness of their actions in eliminating violence from their relationships. By the same token, it is not known how many women from long-term relationships eventually returned and with what effect. These are extremely important questions with direct implications for service delivery.

An equally important question concerns the implications of broad help-seeking actions where these are not backed up by firm resolve, i.e., where a woman returns to her partner shortly after leaving shelter, or perhaps directly from shelter, despite having taken broad, decisive steps. As was noted previously, Horton et al. (1989) have cautioned against urging victims of abuse to take out restraining orders unless and until they are emotionally committed to the process, arguing that such actions may place a battered woman at increased risk. In a similar vein, laying charges if one is not prepared to stand firm may also increase the risk factor.

If counsellors and other social service providers are to act in the best interests of battered women, they need to be aware of the different implications of a woman's actions. While it may indeed be the case that decisive action curtails subsequent abuse, perhaps this is only true where a woman is committed to her actions and acting out of her own resolve and not the expectations of others. Studies to address these and related questions are urgently needed, lest we inadvertently add to the battered woman's burden.

## Closing Remarks

The purpose of the present study was to clarify the relationship between several psychosocial variables on the one hand and the battered woman's behavioural response to abuse on the other. A primary objective was the identification of those factors most strongly linked to behaviours thought to reduce the likelihood of subsequent abuse, the aim being the early detection of women at high risk for ongoing abuse. Among the variables examined, only number of dependent children and marital satisfaction surfaced as significantly related to a woman's breadth of help-seeking actions, the variable thought to influence the likelihood of further violence. Specifically, the more dependent children a woman had and the lower her marital satisfaction, the greater were her help-seeking actions. In turn, the broader a woman's help-seeking actions, the less likely she was to return to her partner after leaving shelter.

In addition to suggesting some possible applications when it comes to identifying women who are at risk for subsequent abuse, these findings underscore the importance of the marital relationship, as it relates to women's help-seeking efforts. This variable was more salient than the extent of emotional and physical abuse, economic dependence, perceived social isolation, self-esteem, or exposure to abuse in the family of origin. Clearly, battered women, like women in general, are committed to their relationships and are prepared to engage in a wide range of help-seeking actions before finally admitting defeat and leaving their partner. From the standpoint of addressing the needs of battered women, social service providers and other battered women's advocates need to begin with a clear appreciation of the woman's commitment to the relationship and the implications this may have for her choice of response options. The more committed the woman is to her partner and the marriage, the less likely she may be to react forcefully and decisively when confronted with abuse. This may be especially true early on in the relationship, the very point at which decisive action is called for.

In their eagerness to protect battered women from further abuse, service providers must take care not to exert undue influence on the decision-making process. This is especially important given the paucity of data on the effectiveness of different response options in curbing subsequent abuse. While calling the police, laying charges, taking out a restraining order and leaving one's partner are all ways of delivering a firm message that abuse will not be tolerated, there are relatively little outcome data that speak to the effects of these actions on the batterer's behaviour, particularly over the long term. At this point, longitudinal research is desperately needed to determine which help-seeking actions or combinations of actions are most effective in curbing the violence and under what circumstances. Especially important are the conditions under which specific actions may actually increase rather than decrease a woman's risk for further abuse. Without answers to these fundamental questions, we are on shaky ground when it comes to offering advice and counsel.

Today, as never before, battered women are turning to social service providers and the legal community for help and guidance. So far, we have responded to their appeal for safety and protection and directed our efforts toward improving police response and implementing stronger legal sanctions against abusers. There is no question that these are high priorities and will continue to be so. What battered women are asking of us, however, goes far beyond the provision of personal safety for themselves and their children. At a much more basic level they are asking for our help in ending the abuse and, in some cases, saving their marriages. As a society, we have failed to respond adequately to this aspect of their appeal, in part because limited resources have been funnelled primarily, and understandably, into the more immediate goal of providing adequate refuge and protection. We cannot continue to neglect the larger goal, however;

the cost is simply too great in terms of human suffering.

Clearly, the time has come to look beyond the battered woman and to focus our attention, in at least equal measure, on the batterer. It is here that one must place responsibility for the battering, and unless and until we address the problem on this front, wife battering will not and indeed cannot be eradicated. At an even more fundamental level, society must redress the sexist values that support the battered woman's entrapment in an abusive marriage. The enormous pressure on women to keep the family together coupled with the inadequate social, legal and economic support available to them seals the fate of many battered women and their children. At this point, battered women and their families are still waiting for us to respond. We cannot afford to keep them waiting any longer.

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## Appendix A

## Family-of-Origin Scale

Directions: The family of origin is the family with which you spent most or all of your childhood years. This scale is designed to help you recall how your family of origin functioned. Each family is unique and has its own way of doing things. Thus, there are *no right or wrong choices* in this scale. What is important is that you respond as *honestly* as you can. In reading the following statements, apply them to your family of origin, *as you remember it*. Using the following scale, circle the appropriate number. Please respond to each statement.

5 = Strongly agree that it describes my family of origin.
4 = Agree that it describes my family of origin.
3 = Neutral.
2 = Disagree that it describes my family of origin.
1 = Strongly disagree that it describes my family of origin.

| | | SA | A | N | D | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | In my family, it was normal to show both positive and negative feelings. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. | The atmosphere in my family usually was unpleasant. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. | In my family, we encouraged one another to develop new friendships. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. | Differences of opinion in my family were discouraged. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| | | SA | A | N | D | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. | People in my family often made excuses for their mistakes. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. | My parents encouraged family members to listen to one another. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. | Conflicts in my family never got resolved. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. | My family taught me that people were basically good. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. | I found it difficult to understand what other family members said and how they felt. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. | We talked about our sadness when a relative or family friend died. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. | My parents openly admitted it when they were wrong. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. | In my family, I expressed just about any feeling I had. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. | Resolving conflicts in my family was a very stressful experience. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. | My family was receptive to the different ways various family members viewed life. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. | My parents encouraged me to express my views openly. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. | I often had to guess at what other family members thought or how they felt. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| | | SA | A | N | D | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. | My attitudes and feelings frequently were ignored or criticized in my family. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. | My family members rarely expressed responsibility for their actions. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. | In my family, I felt free to express my own opinions. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. | We never talked about our grief when a relative or family friend died. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21. | Sometimes in my family, I did not have to say anything, but I felt understood. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 22. | The atmosphere in my family was cold and negative. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 23. | The members of my family were not very receptive to one another's views. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 24. | I found it easy to understand what other family members said and how they felt. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 25. | If a family friend moved away, we never discussed our feelings of sadness. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 26. | In my family, I learned to be suspicious of others. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 27. | In my family, I felt that I could talk things out and settle conflicts. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| | | SA | A | N | D | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28. | I found it difficult to express my own opinions in my family. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 29. | Mealtimes in my home usually were friendly and pleasant. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 30. | In my family, no one cared about the feelings of other family members. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 31. | We usually were able to work out conflicts in my family. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 32. | In my family, certain feelings were not allowed to be expressed. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 33. | My family believed that people usually took advantage of you. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 34. | I found it easy in my family to express what I thought and how I felt. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 35. | My family members usually were sensitive to one another's feelings. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 36. | When someone important to us moved away, our family discussed our feelings of loss. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 37. | My parents discouraged us from expressing views different from theirs. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| | | SA | A | N | D | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 38. | In my family, people took responsibility for what they did. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 39. | My family had an unwritten rule: Don't express your feelings. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 40. | I remember my family as being warm and supportive. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

# Appendix B

## Center for Epidemiologic Studies

## Depressed Mood Scale

Using the scale below, indicate the number which best describes how often you felt or behaved this way -- DURING THE PAST WEEK.

0 = Rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day)
1 = Some or a little of the time (1-2 days)
2 = Occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3-4 days)
3 = Most or all of the time (5-7 days)

DURING THE PAST WEEK:

____ 1. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.

____ 2. I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.

____ 3. I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family or friends.

____ 4. I felt that I was just as good as other people.

____ 5. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.

____ 6. I felt depressed.

____ 7. I felt that everything I did was an effort.

____ 8. I felt hopeful about the future.

____ 9. I thought my life had been a failure.

____ 10. I felt fearful.

___ 11. My sleep was restless.
___ 12. I was happy.
___ 13. I talked less than usual.
___ 14. I felt lonely.
___ 15. People were unfriendly.
___ 16. I enjoyed life.
___ 17. I had crying spells.
___ 18. I felt sad.
___ 19. I felt that people disliked me.
___ 20. I could not get "going."

# Appendix C

## Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Directions: Circle the letters which best reflect how each of the following statements applies to you.

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. SA A D SD

2. At times I think I am no good at all. SA A D SD

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities SA A D SD

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people SA A D SD

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of. SA A D SD

6. I certainly feel useless at times. SA A D SD

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others. SA A D SD

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself SA A D SD

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. SA A D SD

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself. SA A D SD

# Appendix D

## Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

5 = Always Agree
4 = Almost Always Agree
3 = Occasionally Disagree
2 = Frequently Disagree
1 = Almost Always Disagree
0 = Always Disagree

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Handling family finances | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 2. | Matters of recreation | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 3. | Religious matters | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 4. | Demonstrations of affection | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 5. | Friends | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 6. | Sex relations | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 7. | Conventionality (correct or proper behaviour) | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 8. | Philosophy of life | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 9. | Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 10. | Aims, goals and things believed important | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 11. | Amount of time spent together | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. | Making major decisions | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 13. | Household tasks | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 14. | Leisure time interests and activities | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 15. | Career decisions | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

0 = All The Time
1 = Most Of The Time
2 = More Often Than Not
3 = Occasionally
4 = Rarely
5 = Never

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. | How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. | How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. | In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. | Do you confide in your mate? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. | Do you ever regret that you married? (or lived together) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. | How often do you and your partner quarrel? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. | How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?" | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

4 = Every Day
3 = Almost Every Day
2 = Occasionally
1 = Rarely
0 = Never

23. Do you kiss your mate? 4 3 2 1 0

4 = All of Them
3 = Most of Them
2 = Some of Them
1 = Very Few of Them
0 = None of Them

24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together? 4 3 2 1 0

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

0 = Never
1 = Less Than Once a Month
2 = Once or Twice a Month
3 = Once or Twice a Week
4 = Once a Day
5 = More Often

25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas 0 1 2 3 4 5

26. Laugh together 0 1 2 3 4 5

27. Calmly discuss something 0 1 2 3 4 5

28. Work together on a project 0 1 2 3 4 5

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. (Check yes or no).

| | Yes | No | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 29. | 0 | 1 | Being too tired for sex. |
| 30. | 0 | 1 | Not showing love. |

0 = Extremely Unhappy
1 = Fairly Unhappy
2 = A Little Unhappy
3 = Happy
4 = Very Happy
5 = Extremely Happy
6 = Perfect

31. The numbers on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point "happy" represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the number which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

5 I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.

4 I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.

__3__ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.

__2__ It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.

__1__ It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.

__0__ My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

# Appendix E

## Index Of Spouse Abuse

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to measure the degree of abuse you have experienced in your relationship with your partner. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Answer each item as carefully and accurately as you can by placing a number beside each one as follows:

1 = Never
2 = Rarely
3 = Occasionally
4 = Frequently
5 = Very Frequently

Please Begin.

1. My partner belittles me. _____
2. My partner demands obedience to his whims. _____
3. My partner becomes surly and angry if I tell him he is drinking too much. _____
4. My partner makes me perform sex acts that I do not enjoy or like. _____
5. My partner becomes very upset if dinner, housework or laundry is not done when he thinks it should be. _____
6. My partner is jealous and suspicious of my friends. _____
7. My partner punches me with his fists. _____
8. My partner tells me I am ugly and unattractive. _____
9. My partner tells me I really couldn't manage or take care of myself without him. _____

10. My partner acts like I am his personal servant. ______

11. My partner insults or shames me in front of others. ______

12. My partner becomes very angry if I disagree with his point of view. ______

13. My partner threatens me with a weapon. ______

14. My partner is stingy in giving me enough money to run our home. ______

15. My partner belittles me intellectually. ______

16. My partner demands that I stay home to take care of the children. ______

17. My partner beats me so badly that I must seek medical help. ______

18. My partner feels that I should not work or go to school. ______

19. My partner is not a kind person. ______

20. My partner does not want me to socialize with my female friends. ______

21. My partner demands sex whether I want it or not. ______

22. My partner screams and yells at me. ______

23. My partner slaps me around my face and head. ______

24. My partner becomes abusive when he drinks. ______

25. My partner orders me around. ______

26. My partner has no respect for my feelings. ______

27. My partner acts like a bully towards me. ______

28. My partner frightens me. ______

29. My partner treats me like a dunce. ______

30. My partner acts like he would like to kill me. ______

## Appendix F

## Attitudes Toward Women Scale

Directions: The statements listed below describe attitudes toward the role of women in society that different people have. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions. You are asked to express your feelings about each statement by indicating whether you:

A = agree strongly
B = agree mildly
C = disagree mildly
D = disagree strongly

1. Swearing and obscenity are more repulsive in the speech of a woman than a man. A B C D
2. Under modern economic conditions with women being more active outside the home, men should share in household tasks such as washing dishes and doing the laundry. A B C D
3. It is insulting to women to have the "obey" clause remain in the marriage service. A B C D
4. A woman should be as free as a man to propose marriage. A B C D
5. Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers. A B C D
6. Women should assume their rightful place in business and all the professions along with men. A B C D

7. A woman should not expect to go to exactly the same places or to have quite the same freedom of action as men. A B C D

8. It is ridiculous for a woman to run a locomotive and for a man to darn socks. A B C D

9. The intellectual leadership of a community should be largely in the hands of men. A B C D

10. Women should be given equal opportunity with men for apprenticeship in the various trades. A B C D

11. Women earning as much as their dates should bear equally the expense when they go out together. A B C D

12. Sons in a family should be given more encouragement to go to college than daughters. A B C D

13. In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in the bringing up of children. A B C D

14. Economic and social freedom is worth far more to women than acceptance of the ideal of femininity that has been set up by men. A B C D

15. There are many jobs in which men should be given preference over women in being hired or promoted. A B C D

# Appendix G

## Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale

Directions: Indicate how often you have felt the way described in each statement DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS. Circle the number which best reflects your feelings.

| THESE PAST FEW WEEKS | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I feel in tune with the people around me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. I lack companionship. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. There is no one I can turn to. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. I do not feel alone. | I | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. I feel part of a group of friends. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. I have a lot in common with the people around me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. I am no longer close to anyone. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. My interests and ideas are not shared by those around me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. I am an outgoing person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. There are people I feel close to. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

| THESE PAST FEW WEEKS: | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. I feel left out. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. My social relationships are superficial. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. No one really knows me well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. I feel isolated from others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. I can find companionship when I want it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. There are people who really understand me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. I am unhappy being so withdrawn. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. People are around me but not with me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. There are people I can talk to. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. There are people I can turn to. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

# Appendix H

## Questionnaire

Following are some final questions about you and your partner and about your experience with abuse as a child. Please try to answer as many of the items as possible. Remember all your answers are confidential.

Part A: General Information

1. What is the highest level of education you obtained?

____ graduate degree

____ bachelor's degree or technical diploma

____ some university or technical college

____ high school graduate

____ some high school

____ junior high school

____ less than 7 years of formal schooling

2. Are you currently:

___ unemployed

___ employed part time

___ employed full time

3. If employed, what type of work do you do? (please be specific, for example: teacher, secretary, lawyer, salesclerk, etc.)

____________________________________

4. _If unemployed_, how are you supported? (check all that apply)

___ spouse/partner

___ welfare

___ unemployment insurance

___ family benefits

___ other (specify) ______________________________

5. What is your _personal_ annual income (including salary, assets, family benefits, and any other source of income that you personally have)?

___ under $5,000

___ $ 5,000 - $ 9,999

___ $10,000 - $14,999

___ $15,000 - $19,999

___ $20,000 - $24,999

___ $25,000 - $29,999

___ $30,000 - $34,999

___ $35,000 - $39,999

___ $40,000 - $44,999

___ $45,000 - $49,999

___ $50,000 and above

6. If you were living on your own, how well would you be able to support yourself (and your children) taking into consideration all sources of expected income?

   ___ very well

   ___ adequately

   ___ with some difficulty

   ___ not very well

   ___ totally inadequate

7. Is your spouse/partner currently:

   ___ unemployed

   ___ employed part time

   ___ employed full time

8. _If employed_, what type of work does he do? (please be specific, for example: salesman, lawyer, labourer, teacher, etc.)

   ____________________________________________

9. _If unemployed_, what is his primary source of income? (please be specific, for example: welfare, unemployment insurance, workman's compensation, etc.)

   ____________________________________________

10. What is your spouse/partner's _personal_ annual income?

    ___ under $5,000

    ___ $ 5,000 - $ 9,999

___ $10,000 - $14,999

___ $15,000 - $19,999

___ $20,000 - $24,999

___ $25,000 - $29,999

___ $30,000 - $34,999

___ $35,000 - $39,999

___ $40,000 - $44,999

___ $45,000 - $49,999

___ $50,000 and above

11. How well do you think your household income (includes all sources of income) and assets currently satisfy your needs (including that of your spouse and children)?

___ very well

___ adequately

___ with some difficulty

___ not very well

___ totally inadequate

12. What is the highest level of education your spouse/partner obtained?

____ graduate degree

____ bachelor's degree or technical diploma

____ some university or technical college

____ high school graduate

____ some high school

____ junior high school

____ less than 7 years of formal schooling

13. How often do you usually have a drink (any wine, beer, or liquor)?

___ 3 or more times a day

___ 2 times a day

___ once a day

___ nearly every day

___ 3 or 4 times a week

___ once or twice a week

___ 1 to 3 times a month

___ less than once a month but at least once a year

___ I have never had a drink

14. How often does your spouse/partner have a drink (any wine, beer, or liquor)?

___ 3 or more times a day

___ 2 times a day

___ once a day

___ nearly every day

___ 3 or 4 times a week

___ once or twice a week

___ 1 to 3 times a month

___ less than once a month but at least once a year

___ he has never had a drink

15. About how often do you drink enough to get high or tight, on the average?

___ never or less than once a year

___ less than once a month, but at least once a year

___ about once a month

___ 2 or 3 times a month

___ once or twice a week

___ 3 or 4 times a week

___ nearly every day or more often

16. About how often does your spouse/partner drink enough to get high or tight, on the average?

___ never or less than once a year

___ less than once a month, but at least once a year

___ about once a month

___ 2 or 3 times a month

___ once or twice a week

___ 3 or 4 times a week

___ nearly every day or more often

Part B: Family History

Following are some questions about behaviour you may or may not have seen, heard, or experienced when you were a child growing up with your parents. By "parents" I mean the adults who were primarily responsible for your care. By "child" I mean up to 16 years of age.

17. When you were growing up, did you ever see or hear one of your parents physically harm or threaten to harm the other parent?

____ Yes ____ No

If yes, what did they ever do? (check all that apply)

___ threw something at the other

___ pushed, grabbed, or shoved

___ slapped

___ kicked, bit, or hit with a fist

___ hit or tried to hit with something

___ beat up

___ threatened with a knife or gun

___ used a knife or gun

___ others (describe) ______________________________

How often did this happen?

___ once only

___ 2 or 3 times

___ about once a year

___ several times a year

___ about once a month

___ about once a week

___ more than once a week

___ other (describe) ______________________

18. When you were growing up, did either of your parents ever physically harm or threaten to harm you?

____ Yes ____ No

If yes, what did they ever do? (check all that apply)

___ threw something at you

___ pushed, grabbed, or shoved

___ slapped

___ kicked, bit, or hit with a fist

___ hit or tried to hit with something

___ beat up

___ threatened with a knife or gun

___ used a knife or gun

___ others (describe) ______________________

How often did this happen?

___ once only

___ 2 or 3 times

___ about once a year

___ several times a year

___ about once a month

___ about once a week

___ more than once a week

___ other (describe) ______________________

THIS IS THE END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION. YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SHARE YOUR FEELINGS AND YOUR EXPERIENCES WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

## Appendix I

## Information Sheet

PART A: General Information

1. Age: ______

2. When you were growing up, what was the language used most often in your parents' home?

   ________ English

   ________ French

   ________ Ukrainian

   ________ German

   ________ Other (specify) ____________________

3. What language do you use most often in your own home?

   ________ English

   ________ French

   ________ Ukrainian

   ________ German

   ________ Other (specify) ____________________

4. Where were you born? ______________________
   Your mother? ______________________________
   Your father? ______________________________

5. To which ethnic or cultural group do you feel you belong?

   ______________________________________________

6. What racial category would you consider yourself?

_______ White

_______ Black

_______ Asian

_______ Native

_______ Other (specify) ______________

7. To what religion do you belong, if any?

_______ Roman Catholic

_______ Anglican

_______ United

_______ Lutheran

_______ Mennonite

_______ Jewish

_______ Other (specify) ______________

_______ None

8. To what degree would you say religion has an influence on your life?

_______ very strong influence

_______ somewhat strong influence

_______ slight influence

_______ very little influence

PART B: Current Relationship

9. Are you and your partner:

_______ married

_______ living together

10. How long have you been married/living together?

_______ years _______ months

11. How many children do you have living with you? _______

Are they all your children, that is yours and your partner's?

_____ ours (age and sex) _______________

_____ mine (age and sex) _______________

_____ his (age and sex) _______________

The next few questions have to do with the physical abuse you have experienced in your current relationship. By physical abuse I mean "ANY ACT THAT IS LIKELY TO CAUSE PAIN OR INJURY" such as: throwing something at you, pushing, grabbing, shoving, slapping, kicking, biting, hitting with a fist, hitting or trying to hit with something, beating up, threatening with a knife or gun, using a knife or gun.

12. How long has the physical abuse been going on? (onset to present)

___ years ____ months ____ weeks ____ days

13. How long had you been married/living together before it began?

____ days ____ weeks ____ months ____ years

14. How many times have you been physically abused by your spouse/partner (separate incidents)? _______

15. Have you left your partner before because of the physical abuse?

____ Yes ____ No

If yes, how many times? _____

How long were you gone (each time)?

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

Where did you go (each time)?

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

16. As a result of the abuse have you ever in the past:

Called the police? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how many times? _____

Tried to get a restraining order?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how many times? _______

Pressed charges? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how many times? _______

Tried to get help from legal aid or a private lawyer?

______ Yes ______ No

If yes, how many times? _______

Sought counselling? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, how many times? ______

17. As a result of the most recent abusive incident (the one that brought you into shelter) did you:

Call the police? _____ Yes _____ No

Try to get a restraining order?

______ Yes ______ No

Press charges? _____ Yes _____ No

Try to get help from legal aid or a private lawyer?

______ Yes ______ No

Seek counselling? _____ Yes _____ No

18. Out of all the times you've been physically abused by your partner, how many of those times have you sought outside help? _____

19. Which incident of physical abuse was the one that first prompted you to seek outside help (i.e., 1st, 2nd, 3rd)? _____

20. Was that incident different in any way from the one(s) before it?

_____ Yes _____No

If yes, how was it different? _____________

_____________________________________________

21. The very first time you sought outside help, where did you turn? ____________________

________________________________________

At that point, how long had the physical abuse been going on?

___ days ___ weeks ___ months ___ years

22. Are you currently receiving any kind of outside help other than the help you are getting at Osborne House?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, what kind of help? ______________

________________________________________

________________________________________

## Appendix J

## Four-Month Follow-Up Questionnaire (A)

When I met with you a few months ago at Osborne House and you completed some questionnaires for me, I mentioned that I would be calling you in about 4 months to see how you are doing and what has happened to you since you left shelter. That's why I'm calling you now. I have a few follow-up questions to ask you that will take about 20 minutes or so. The first question I have is:

Are you living with your partner now?

Yes _____

1. How long were you away before going back?______

2. What were the main reasons you went back? (rank order)

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

3. Did you leave your partner again at any time over the past 4 months? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how many times? _____

How long were you away before going back (each time)?

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

Where did you go when you left (each time)?

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

4. Have there been any incidents of physical abuse over the past 4 months? _____ Yes _____ No

   If yes, how many? _____

5. Over the past 4 months have you at any time because of abuse or threat of abuse:

   Called the police? _____ Yes _____ No

   If yes, how many times? _____

   Tried to get a restraining order?

   _____ Yes _____ No

   If yes, how many times? _____

   Pressed charges? _____ Yes _____ No

   If yes, how many times? _____

   Tried to get help from legal aid or a private lawyer? _____ Yes _____ No

   If yes, how many times? _____

   Sought counselling? _____ Yes _____ No

   If yes, how many times? _____

6. Would you say that things are different between you and your partner now compared to 4 months ago?

   _____ Yes _____ No

   If yes, how are they different?

   ______________________________________________

   ______________________________________________

What do you think is responsible for the difference?

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

7. Has your financial situation changed at all over the past 4 months? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how has it changed? ________________

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

8. What (else) has changed in your life since I spoke with you 4 months ago?

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

9. CES-D

10. RULS

## Appendix K

## Four-Month Follow-Up Questionnaire (B)

When I met with you a few months ago at Osborne House and you completed some questionnaires for me, I mentioned that I would be calling you in about 4 months to see how you are doing and what has happened to you since you left shelter. That's why I'm calling you now. I have a few follow-up questions to ask you that will take about 20 minutes or so. The first question I have is:

Are you living with your partner now?

No _____

1. Did you return to your partner at any time during the past 4 months? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes how many times? ______

How long were you away before going back (each time)?

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

How long have you been away this last time?

____________________________________________

Where did you go when you left (each time)?

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

What were the main reasons you went back?

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

If no, what were the main reasons you decided not to go back?

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

What has been the hardest part about not going back?

__________________________________________

______________________________________________

2. Have there been any incidents of physical abuse over the past 4 months? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how many? ________

3. Over the past 4 months have you at any time because of abuse or threat of abuse:

Called the police? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how many times? _____

Tried to get a restraining order? ___ Yes ____ No

If yes, how many times? _____

Pressed charges? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how many times? _____

Tried to get help from legal aid or a private lawyer? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how many times? _____

Sought counselling? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how many times? _____

4. Would you say that things are different between you and your partner now compared to 4 months ago?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how are they different?

________________________________________

________________________________________

What do you think is responsible for the difference?

________________________________________

________________________________________

5. What are your current living arrangements?

________________________________________

________________________________________

6. Has your financial situation changed at all over the past 4 months? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how has it changed? ____________________

________________________________________

7. What (else) has changed in your life since I spoke with you 4 months ago?

________________________________________

________________________________________

8. CED-D

9. RULS

## Appendix L

## Inclusion Criteria

Wife Abuse
April Phillips
Department of Psychology
The University of Manitoba

ATTENTION: INTAKE WORKER

The following criteria are being used to screen for participants in a study on Wife Abuse. This research seeks to identify familial, psychological, situational, and relationship correlates of the battered woman's response to physical abuse. For purposes of this study, physical abuse is defined as "ANY ACT WHICH HAS A HIGH POTENTIAL FOR CAUSING PAIN OR INJURY" (e.g., throwing something, pushing, grabbing, shoving, slapping, kicking, biting, hitting with a fist, hitting or trying to hit with something, beating up, threatening with a knife or gun, using a knife or gun). At the end of the standard intake, please assess each woman with respect to the following criteria:

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Is she married or has she been living with her partner for 6 months or more? | ___ | ___ |
| 2. Did she seek shelter because of physical abuse or threat of abuse? | ___ | ___ |
| 3. Was she living with her partner when the physical abuse or threat of abuse occurred? | ___ | ___ |
| 4. Has she been physically abused by her partner more than once? | ___ | ___ |

NAME: ______________________________

DATE OF ARRIVAL: ____________________ TIME: ______

# Appendix M -- Letter Of Introduction

Wife Abuse
April Phillips
Department of Psychology
The University of Manitoba

In the past few years there has been a lot of discussion about wife abuse. As a result, people are becoming more and more aware that this is a serious problem and that something must be done to help abused women and their children. Before we can develop effective programs, however, we need to know more about the experiences of such women, the problems they face, and how they have tried to cope with their situation.

The only people who can provide answers to these and other important questions are women who have experienced abuse. It is for this reason that you are being asked to take part in this study. Participation will involve a meeting with me at Osborne House, completion of some questionnaires, and a follow-up telephone interview 4 months after the initial interview. The purpose in contacting you later on is to see how you are doing and what has happened to you since you left shelter. Arrangements to do this will be made in such a way that there will be no risk or inconvenience to you.

Any information you provide will be strictly confidential. At no time will your name be placed on any of the questionnaires. The questionnaire will have an identification number for follow-up purposes only. This is so that information collected at follow-up can be matched up with information collected during the initial interview.

I hope you will agree to participate in this study so that we may learn better ways to help women in your situation. If you would like to talk to me first before deciding that can be arranged. I would be more than happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

April Phillips
Researcher

## Appendix N

## Consent Form

Wife Abuse
April Phillips
Department of Psychology
The University of Manitoba

I agree to participate in the study on Wife Abuse. I understand that any information I give will be strictly confidential, that only group summary information will be reported, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I further agree to allow the researcher to contact the following person in 4 months time in order to arrange contact with me.

NAME: ______________________________

ADDRESS: ______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

TELEPHONE: (     ) ______________________________

RELATIONSHIP: ______________________________

Date: ____________________

Participant: ______________________________

Researcher: ______________________________

# Appendix O

## Zero-Order Correlations Among Familial, Psychological, Situational, Relationship, and Response Variables for Total Sample[a]

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | .344 | | | | | | | |
| 3 | -.286 | -.502* | | | | | | |
| 4 | -.174 | -.130 | .253 | | | | | |
| 5 | .016 | .169 | -.017 | .056 | | | | |
| 6 | .019 | -.068 | .159 | .105 | -.234 | | | |
| 7 | .103 | .074 | -.168 | -.499* | .072 | -.044 | | |
| 8 | -.091 | .003 | .128 | -.051 | .224 | -.087 | .036 | |
| 9 | -.141 | .030 | .064 | .059 | -.130 | -.041 | -.058 | -.026 |
| 10 | .179 | -.057 | .042 | -.228 | -.215 | .009 | .149 | -.047 |
| 11 | .080 | -.079 | .049 | -.255 | -.119 | .111 | .239 | -.018 |
| 12 | -.158 | .030 | -.043 | .128 | .238 | -.284 | -.041 | .163 |
| 13 | -.051 | -.118 | -.033 | .066 | -.066 | .288 | -.118 | .121 |
| 14 | -.003 | .035 | -.060 | .105 | -.061 | .303 | -.190 | -.004 |
| 15 | .222[b] | -.030[b] | .069[b] | -.038[b] | .025[b] | .172[b] | -.051[b] | .105[b] |
| 16 | .067 | -.007 | .059 | .085 | .036 | .306 | -.094 | .141 |
| 17 | .143[c] | .001[c] | .075[c] | -.012[c] | -.090[c] | -.122[c] | .034[c] | -.149[c] |

(Appendix 0 Continued)

| | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | $-.242$ | | | | | | | |
| 11 | $-.525^*$ | $.592^*$ | | | | | | |
| 12 | $-.135$ | $-.142$ | $-.088$ | | | | | |
| 13 | $-.307$ | $.189$ | $.246$ | $-.097$ | | | | |
| 14 | $-.245$ | $.146$ | $.160$ | $-.155$ | $.766^*$ | | | |
| 15 | $-.139_b$ | $.101_b$ | $.073_b$ | $-.041_b$ | $-.109_b$ | $-.089_b$ | | |
| 16 | $-.221$ | $.044$ | $.137$ | $.006$ | $.187$ | $.270$ | $.702_b^*$ | |
| 17 | $.296_c$ | $-.017_c$ | $-.098_c$ | $-.204_c$ | $-.421_c^*$ | $-.264_c$ | $-.066_c$ | $-.192_c$ |

$^*p = .0001$ $a_n = 122$ $b_n = 119$ $c_n = 100$

1 = Witnessed spouse abuse (1 = yes; 0 = no)

2 = Received abuse in childhood (1 = yes; 0 = no)

3 = Family-of-origin health

4 = Self-esteem

5 = Attitudes toward women

6 = Number of dependent children

(Appendix 0 - Continued)

7 = Perceived support (time 1)

8 = Employed (1 = yes; 0 = no)

9 = Marital satisfaction

10 = Physical abuse

11 = Emotional abuse

12 = Ethnicity (1 = other; 0 = native)

13 = Number of help-seeking acts

14 = Number of help-seeking contacts

15 = Duration of abuse to help seeking

16 = Total duration of abuse

17 = Returned to partner (1 = yes; 0 = no)