

Winter 1979

# STABILITY AND CHANGE IN PATTERNS OF WIFE-BEATING: A SYSTEMS THEORY APPROACH

JEAN GRINDELL GILES-SIMS

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation>

---

## Recommended Citation

GILES-SIMS, JEAN GRINDELL, "STABILITY AND CHANGE IN PATTERNS OF WIFE-BEATING: A SYSTEMS THEORY APPROACH" (1979). *Doctoral Dissertations*. 1250.  
<https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation/1250>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact [nicole.hentz@unh.edu](mailto:nicole.hentz@unh.edu).

## INFORMATION TO USERS

This was produced from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure you of complete continuity.
2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark it is an indication that the film inspector noticed either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, or duplicate copy. Unless we meant to delete copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed, you will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.
3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed the photographer has followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.
4. For any illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and tipped into your xerographic copy. Requests can be made to our Dissertations Customer Services Department.
5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases we have filmed the best available copy.

**University  
Microfilms  
International**

300 N. ZEEB ROAD, ANN ARBOR, MI 48106  
18 BEDFORD ROW, LONDON WC1R 4EJ, ENGLAND

8027790

GILES-SIMS, JEAN GRINDELL

STABILITY AND CHANGE IN PATTERNS OF WIFE-BEATING: A  
SYSTEMS THEORY APPROACH

*University of New Hampshire*

PH.D.

1979

University  
Microfilms  
International

300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

18 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4EJ, England

Copyright 1979

by

Giles-Sims, Jean Grindell

All Rights Reserved

PLEASE NOTE:

In all cases this material has been filmed in the best possible way from the available copy. Problems encountered with this document have been identified here with a check mark .

1. Glossy photographs \_\_\_\_\_
2. Colored illustrations \_\_\_\_\_
3. Photographs with dark background \_\_\_\_\_
4. Illustrations are poor copy \_\_\_\_\_
5. Print shows through as there is text on both sides of page \_\_\_\_\_
6. Indistinct, broken or small print on several pages
7. Tightly bound copy with print lost in spine \_\_\_\_\_
8. Computer printout pages with indistinct print \_\_\_\_\_
9. Page(s) \_\_\_\_\_ lacking when material received, and not available from school or author
10. Page(s) \_\_\_\_\_ seem to be missing in numbering only as text follows
11. Poor carbon copy \_\_\_\_\_
12. Not original copy, several pages with blurred type \_\_\_\_\_
13. Appendix pages are poor copy \_\_\_\_\_
14. Original copy with light type \_\_\_\_\_
15. Curling and wrinkled pages \_\_\_\_\_
16. Other \_\_\_\_\_

University  
Microfilms  
International

300 N ZEEB RD., ANN ARBOR, MI 48106 (313) 761-4700

STABILITY AND CHANGE IN PATTERNS OF  
WIFE-BEATING: A SYSTEMS  
THEORY APPROACH

BY

JEAN GILES-SIMS  
B.S., University of New Hampshire, 1973  
M.S., University of New Hampshire, 1976

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

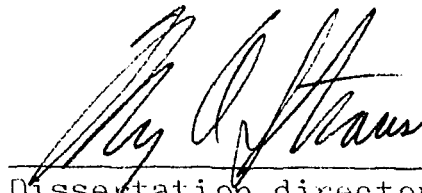
December, 1979

All Rights Reserved

© 1979

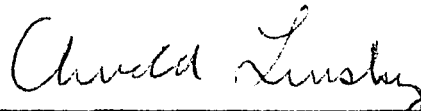
Jean Giles-Sims

This dissertation has been examined and approved.



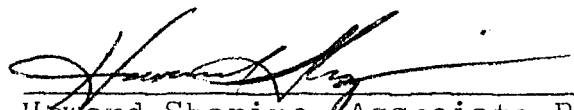
---

Dissertation director, Murray A. Straus  
Professor of Sociology



---

Arnold Linsky, Professor of Sociology



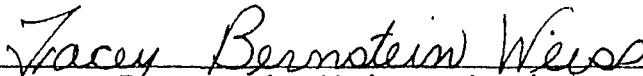
---

Howard Shapiro, Associate Professor of  
Sociology



---

Ellen Cohn, Assistant Professor of Psychology



---

Tracey Bernstein Weiss, Assistant Professor of  
Theatre and Communication

November 30, 1979

---

Date

## PREFACE

Preparation of a research report is a process like other social processes that is aided and frustrated by factors in the social environment. At this point I would like to forget the frustrations and acknowledge many sources of aid, comfort and constructive criticism.

Financial aid for this project came from the National Institute of Mental Health Grant #T32 MH15161 entitled "Family Violence Research Training." The study was carried out under the Family Violence Research Program at the University of New Hampshire.

This study would never have begun without the foresight of Mary Price, co-founder and director of the shelter during the period of the research. Her understanding of the importance of research as part of the larger endeavor to help battered women led her to provide a research site and unremitting cooperation during the process. Her input also provided valued suggestions and criticisms. Two of the interviews, with Elizabeth and Paula, were done jointly with Mary and myself. Mary also participated in the editing of Paula's transcript.

The women who were research subjects often said to me that they would talk to me with the hope that, "Maybe some other women will not have to go through what I had to go through." Their generosity with their time, and their



openness about their personal experiences was invaluable to this research.

Dr. Murray Straus contributed his knowledge and skillful supervision through the entire research process. His skill in identifying both fruitful areas to pursue and flawed or unclear analysis is outstanding. I also admire his dedication to the importance in sociology of studying areas of practical importance at the same time as areas that have theoretical importance.

Dr. Murray Straus and other Family Violence Research Program affiliates provided input and feedback to many aspects of the research. Perhaps most importantly each helped provide a stimulating and critical environment in which to work. Gerry Hotaling, Kersti Yllo, Cathy Greenblat, David Finkelhor, Ursula Dibble and Diane Coleman have all been especially helpful in this regard.

I am grateful to Murray Straus, Ellen Cohn, Arnold Linsky, Howard Shapiro and Tracey Weiss for careful scrutiny of the total manuscript. Each has made a unique contribution based on their own specialization.

The chore of final typing fell to Janet Anthony and I appreciate her perseverance and talent.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to my husband, Bill Sims, and to my children, John, Gregory and Andrea. My husband provided continual support during my efforts including: his confidence, his practical support with family matters, his nurturance both of me and of the children, and many

hours of typing. My children have provided and do provide a source of joy. I have appreciated their acceptance, understanding and encouragement despite time away, the pressure of deadlines, and the inevitable compromises.

Despite this generous assistance in preparing this volume, I accept full responsibility for flaws and shortcomings still remaining.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
ABSTRACT.....	xii
I. A SYSTEM'S APPROACH: WHY?.....	1
A System.....	8
Positive and Negative Feedback.....	11
Open vs. Closed Systems.....	12
The Threshold of Viability.....	13
Systems in a Social Environment.....	15
Systems in Transition.....	17
Summary.....	18
II. THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND TO A SYSTEM'S APPROACH TO WIFE BATTERING.....	20
System's Theory.....	20
Theoretical Basis for a General System's Approach.....	24
Studies Using a System's Approach to Conflict.....	31
Studies of Wife Battering.....	43
Linear-Causal Models of Wife Battering.....	43
Process Studies of Wife Battering.....	56
Forces That Lead to Stability of Wife Beating Patterns.....	62
Forces That Lead to Change in Patterns of Wife Beating.....	67
III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	72
Formulation of Study.....	72
Sample.....	76
Data Gathering Procedures.....	77
The First Interviews.....	78
The Second Interviews.....	81
The Taped Interviews.....	83

Choosing the Subjects.....	84
Approaching Subjects.....	84
Structuring the Interviews.....	85
Data Analysis.....	87
Analysis of Structured Interviews.....	87
Analysis of Taped Interviews.....	89
IV. PROFILE OF COUPLES AND VIOLENT INCIDENTS.....	95
Demographic Characteristics.....	95
Social Characteristics.....	100
Incidence and Frequency of Violent Acts.....	106
Circumstances Surrounding Three Incidents.....	116
Marital Status at Time of Incident.....	119
Preceding Events or Stressful Situations.....	120
Women's Guilt.....	122
Women's Anger at Themselves.....	123
Women's Anger at Man.....	123
Willing to "Forgive and Forget".....	124
Pattern of Violence or Isolated Incident.....	124
Attributions of Responsibility.....	125
Intervention.....	126
The Women Six Months Later.....	128
V. DEBBIE.....	131
Analysis of Debbie's Life History.....	162
Debbie's Early Family.....	162
Bob's Early Family.....	164
Beginning of Relationship Between Bob and Debbie.....	166
First Violent Incident.....	169
Violence as a Pattern.....	171
Most Significant Incident.....	175
Leaving: A Process Over Time.....	177
The Shelter.....	178
After She Returned.....	180
VI. ELIZABETH.....	183
Analysis of Elizabeth's Life History.....	208
Elizabeth's Early Family.....	208
The Mother-Father Relationship.....	209
The Relationship Between Elizabeth and her Father.....	210
The Relationship Between Elizabeth and her Mother.....	210

The Family as a System Within the Larger Social System.....	212
Elizabeth's First Marriage.....	214
Elizabeth's Second Marriage.....	216
Another Victimized Relationship.....	221
The Third Husband.....	222
The Shelter.....	224
After the Shelter.....	226
VII. PAULA.....	228
Analysis of Paula's Life History.....	257
Paula's Early Family Background.....	258
Ed's Early Family.....	260
Beginning of Relationship Between Ed and Paula.....	261
The First Incident of Violence.....	265
Violence as a Pattern.....	267
The Critical Incident.....	275
Leaving the System.....	275
After the Shelter.....	277
VIII. A GENERAL SYSTEM'S MODEL OF WIFE BATTERING.....	281
The Six-Stage Model of Wife Battering.....	282
Stage 1. The Beginning of the Relationship....	283
Stage 2. The First Incident of Violence.....	290
Stage 3. Stabilization of the Violence.....	293
Stage 4. The Choice Point.....	298
Stage 5. Leaving the System.....	301
Stage 6. Resolution or More of the Same.....	304
Flow Chart of Stability and Change.....	308
Conclusion.....	314
Appendix A.....	322
Appendix B.....	344
Bibliography.....	351

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1. Percent of women and men by income..... 99

TABLE 2. Percent of women and men by experience  
of violence as a child..... 101

TABLE 3. Percent citing presence of problem and  
percent citing each problem as most  
serious..... 103

TABLE 4. Comparison of men's and women's violence  
rates at time 1 and time 2..... 108

TABLE 5. Comparison of mean number of violent  
acts by men and women at time 1 and time  
2..... 112

TABLE 6. Circumstances surrounding each of three  
incidents of violence..... 117

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
FIGURE 1. Learned norms, values and responses of Individuals relating to conflict processes within marriage or a couple relationship....	283
FIGURE 2. Flow chart of stability and/or change in Patterns of wife-battering.....	310

ABSTRACT

STABILITY AND CHANGE IN PATTERNS OF  
WIFE-BEATING: A SYSTEMS  
THEORY APPROACH

by

JEAN GILES-SIMS

University of New Hampshire, December, 1979

This research is a longitudinal study of wife battering using a system's theory approach. Two types of longitudinal analyses are presented. The first is the analysis of retrospective data of histories of violent relationships. The second type of longitudinal analysis is the comparison of the number and the frequency of men's and women's violent acts at two points: in the year prior to entering a shelter for battered women and six months later.

In-depth interviews with 31 battered women who had voluntarily sought help at a shelter provide histories of violence as well as information on their own early family background, that of their spouses, and the history of their



relationship. Three life histories are presented in the form of edited transcripts of interviews with the women. In addition 24 of the women were reinterviewed six months after they came to the shelter.

This research is unique in the presentation of longitudinal data, and in the integration of quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data are presented on number of violent acts and frequency of violent acts at the two interview points; data are presented on the women's responses to three incidents of violence, the first, the most important and the most recent, and qualitative data are presented in the form of three life histories.

The quantitative and qualitative data form the basis for a six stage model of the wife battering process, and a flow chart which illustrates the system's processes that lead to stabilization and change in the patterns of wife battering.

Important findings include the following: 1) the sample of battered women differed from a random sample on number of marriages, percent cohabiting, exposure to violence as a child, incidence of alcohol abuse, and skewed marital power; 2) men were both more likely to be violent than the women, and more frequently violent; 3) over three incidents of violence the women's reaction changed from denial to seeking intervention, and the processes that led to change were governed by the systems principles of positive and negative feedback; 4) violence of both men and women was reduced

between the two interviews, but 50% of the women had been hit in the six month follow-up period; 5) the highest rates of violence in the six month follow-up period were among women who had returned to their husbands and never left again.

Finally, the most significant contribution of the research may be the development of an analytical model to explain wife battering using the concepts of system's theory. This model incorporates dynamic processes of feedback control and the cybernetic processes of system maintenance.

## CHAPTER 1

### A SYSTEM'S APPROACH: WHY?

Debbie's husband Bob abused her. Here is how Debbie described one incident of abuse:

I was sitting over there and for no reason he came up and just knocked me over in the chair. I went down. Me and the chair went down, and he started knocking me all over the kitchen and down the hall here and pushed me and I scraped my arm and he pushed me into that thing right there and I scraped my arm real bad. I asked him if I could wash my arm off 'cause it was bleeding a little bit and he said, "No." Then I went into the bedroom, and he started knocking me around in the bedroom. I was up against the door, and he slapped my face and I hit my head on the door sill and a big bump came up. I said, "Can I go wash my face?", and he said, "No." It scared me because a big bump just immediately rose, and that scared me. Then he knocked me down and he kicked me a couple of times and he finally just walked out. I had bruises all over me, on my face and on my arms, on my legs, and...I couldn't go right to my job.

Elizabeth told how her man Brad once beat her:

He hit me, and he said, "Now you are going to hit me." I said, "No, I'm not going to hit you. I don't want to hit you." I said, "Please just leave me alone." I started crying. He did it again, and I still didn't hit back. Then he just chuckled and walked off. He never slapped me across the face, though.

I wanted to kill him, but I didn't. I just said, "Why, why is this happening to me?" It was like he wanted to punish me.

There was another time when he kicked me. He just kept kicking me. I felt angry, but I couldn't show it. I was too afraid. I don't think I felt...I never felt like I could strike him. I don't know if I ever could. I just didn't know how to give it back. Just couldn't do it. I'm afraid of what I would do if I did.

Paula described the battering relationship she had with her husband Ed with the following incident:

He went down in the cellar to fix the stove and I went down to try to talk to him. He wanted me to bend over so he could have sex downstairs. I said, "I don't drop my pants every time you turn around and want sex." He said, "You do what I tell you to do."

When we went back upstairs to eat, we were sitting at the table and he was saying something-- "You're gonna" do something. I said, "No, I don't want to," and he kicked me under the table. I said, "Don't kick me." He said, "I'll kick you if I want to. I'll do anything I want to you." Then he hit me with the stick and said I'd do anything he wanted me to because I was his property.

These are just three incidents involving three women who came to a shelter for battered women. Many other incidents are more serious. Some involve severe injury, sexual assault, and threats or attempts on women's lives. What happened to Debbie, Elizabeth, and Paula is happening to at least 1.8 million American women, by most conservative estimates (Straus, 1977: 446). A large percentage of American women are physically attacked by the men with whom they live.

This work approaches the problem of battered women from their perspective. Thirty-one women who came to a shelter for battered women were interviewed in depth about their entire relationships with their men. Three detailed histories--those of Debbie, Elizabeth, and Paula--are presented in this work to illustrate the complexity of the individual histories of battered women, and to illustrate also the similarities that may exist in processes of battering relationships.

The abuse described by three different women personally demeaned them and often was extreme enough to cause serious injuries. One of the three still lives with her husband. He continues to beat her. Another of the three lives alone in an apartment with her children, struggles to pay the bills, and struggles to meet the emotional needs of her youngsters. The third divorced one abusing man and re-married yet another man who abused her.

Two basic assumptions guide this study. The first is that the women themselves are the only ones who can convey the complexity of their relationships. This study presents the battered woman's perspective about the relationship. We want to understand both the individual cases and more general processes that lead to battering behavior. Thus the second assumption guiding this study is that if we study the behavior in the context in which it takes place, we can discover general processes which relate context and behavior in battering relationships.

Let me explain each assumption more fully.

Battered women know what it is like to live with a batterer, and they know what it is like to try and leave a battering relationship. To understand their histories, we must listen to the women tell their own stories. Their stories present their perspectives on their relationships with battering males and the women's perceptions of those men. The stories are not unbiased, but the perceptions of the

women are important because those perceptions are the basis for the women's behaviors in their relationships with men who batter them. To understand why battered women respond as they do and make decisions when they do requires knowledge of their perceptions of their own situations.

On the basis of this assumption, the women in this study present their own stories in their own words, with only minor editing changes in those narratives. Such a method of presenting material does have a drawback: the women may tell their stories to favor their side of the conflict. One sees only the woman's perspective, not the man's. Letting the women tell their own stories in as much detail as possible seems defensible on two grounds, however. First, it would not be ethical or practical to witness the interactions taking place over a period of time in battering relationships; thus the recorded histories as narrated by the women involved are a special source of data. Second, a methodology based on preselection of variables can exclude factors that were important to the women who actually were battered. Preselection of variables also is guided by theoretical paradigms, and some of the dominant theoretical paradigms have been prejudicial to women. For example, women's problems have been analyzed as the result of an inability to adjust to the female role, rather than the female role being the problem (Chesler, 1971). This study thus presents the histories of battered women in their own words and in as much detail as possible.

Second this study is guided by the assumption that by studying the behaviors and contexts of battering relationships, we can discover general system processes related to battering behaviors. There are at least two possible ways to approach the study of the context(s) of battering behavior. First is a social structural viewpoint which emphasizes the discovery of statistical associations between social structural factors and battering behaviors of groups of subjects. The second is to look at the immediate context in which battering behavior takes place to see how the social structural conditions are related to an individual's behavior, and also to see how the interaction within that immediate context regulates behavior.

This study examines context from the second point of view.

As one aspect of the larger problem of family violence, wife-beating is related to structural conditions such as the patriarchal nature of society, to the class structure, to the socialization patterns of early childhood, and to the level of violence in the society as a whole (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1979). We know that wife beating is more likely to occur given some or all these structural conditions, but not all men who share such structural characteristics beat their wives or living partners. To try and explain the variation, when large groups with different structural characteristics are compared, we need to refine

our knowledge by looking at the immediate context of the battering behavior.

There is also a need to find out how the pattern of battering behavior evolved between specific men and women. If we take a cross-sectional slice of the population at one point in time, we find there are associations between social phenomena and battering. The process of development that has led to the behavioral correlation of specific groups of people has not been explained, however. To analyze process requires a framework that focuses on the dynamics of behaviors in particular contexts.

When a man and a woman create a relationship, that relationship consists of a relatively stable set of interacting patterns. We call that stable set a system. Looking at the patterns of interaction within the system shifts the focus from consideration of the isolated behaviors of individuals to a consideration of interaction, and to the effects of the individual's behavior on others, the reactions of others to the behavior, and the context in which behaviors take place.

Structural characteristics that may be related to battering behavior are part of the context in which the behavior takes place. Looking at the actions, the effects on others of those actions, and reactions to the behavior, however, adds a dynamic perspective to the study of that context.

The example of Paula and Ed can be analyzed briefly to see how certain structural characteristics affect the



ongoing behaviors which characterize that relationship. Ed assumed he had property rights over Paula. That is a structural condition of many marriages in American society. The dynamics questions include: How did the concept of property right become an acceptable part of, or a guiding rule for, Paula and Ed's relationship. How did the rule affect Paula? How did Paula respond when Ed exercised that right by demanding sex? How might the rule have been changed? By looking closely at the sequence of events between Paula and Ed, the context in which the events took place, and the responses to key behaviors, we can begin to answer some of those questions.

Events between Elizabeth and Brad provide another example. She noted the effects of Brad's behavior on her. She indicated what her responses were. Brad's hitting and kicking made her feel angry, afraid, and like she wanted to kill him, but she did not show how angry she was, how afraid she was, and she did not strike back. Brad responded by chuckling and walking away. This sequence of events raises such questions as: What effect did Elizabeth's responses (or lack of responses) have on Brad's subsequent behavior? Did this pattern of interaction lead to stabilizing violence as an ongoing pattern in the relationship? For example, we know that Elizabeth was angry and afraid. Elizabeth hypothetically could express her anger or she could suppress it. Possibly Brad's responses would be different depending on

Elizabeth's responses to his violence because her anger put a check on his violence. That is an empirical question that can be answered by looking at the dynamic sequence of events that take place between Brad and Elizabeth.

Analyzing the dynamic interaction between the people in a battering relationship can help answer many important questions that have been raised. There are several conceptual tools that make this kind of analysis easier. The conceptual tools that will be used in this study to analyze case histories of battered women who came to a shelter are based on Buckley's (1967) application of modern system's theory to sociology. First I will look at Buckley's definition of a system and concepts such as boundaries, positive and negative feedback processes, open versus closed systems, thresholds of viability within systems, smaller systems within the larger socio-cultural system, and finally systems in transition. As the concepts are defined, I will suggest the relevance of such concepts to the study of wife-battering.

#### A System

Buckley (1967: 41) defines a system as "...a complex of elements or components directly or indirectly related in a causal network, such that each component is related to at least some others in a more or less stable way within any particular period of time." This definition can be broken down into two essential ideas.

The first part states that the components of the system are not related in a simple cause-and-effect way. The response to an act may also be a cause in the ongoing pattern of interrelationships. A simple example is the husband and wife who each complain about the other. He complains that she nags him, and she complains that he withdraws. If we look at a tape of their interaction, we would see that the sequence of her nagging and his withdrawal could be divided at the point where she nags and he responds by withdrawing, or at the point where he withdraws and she nags (Watzlawick et al, 1967: 54-60). Deciding the cause and the effect depends on how one divides the sequence. Division may be a totally arbitrary act, and it may be more realistic to look at each of their responses as the precipitant to the next act of the other. The causal analysis in this example could then show the interrelatedness of both of their behaviors.

The second part of the definition indicates that the patterns of interrelating tend to become somewhat stabilized. They may be highly stabilized or they may be less stabilized and thus changing. Different systems may differ in the degree of stability and change. A particular system may go through periods of stability followed by periods of change or the reverse. An example of a relatively stable system over a period of time is the Amish culture. Their cultural patterns of work and family relationships have remained stable over long periods of time. If group members leave

the closed community, however, they are presented with many new stimuli and opportunities. When they return the group may go through a period of change and adjustment. This is one reason the Amish attempt to restrict outside contact.

Conceptualizing the battering relationship as a system means that we can look at the process of actions and reactions as a continuous causal chain, each reaction becoming in turn a precipitant. We can also look at a system to find the periods of stability and change, and identify the processes that happened during those different times to produce stability or change.

Systems have boundaries that define where the system begins and ends, and what information or behavior is an acceptable part of that system. Any behavior that deviates from the ongoing pattern of behavior or that challenges the boundaries of the system triggers a response. The nature of the response is governed by how the new behavior fits with the goals of the particular system, or the particular components of the system. An example of the processes working between couples is included in the excerpt of Paula and Ed's interaction. Ed's demand for sex and Paula's compliance had been an established part of their relationship until this episode. Ed expected Paula to go along as she had before. This time she said no, and the response was a new behavior on her part. Ed could have said, "Okay, you have a right to say no if you don't want sex," or he could do as he did and

tell her she had no right to say no because she was his property. Because Ed's apparent goal was to maintain his property rights, he responded by reasserting his authority instead of saying Paula's refusal was okay. If he had said "Okay," this would have been new behavior to which Paula could have responded according to her own goals. If Paula's response had been accepted by Ed, the stable pattern of his demanding sex as his right and Paula's compliance would have changed. The new behavior would theoretically set off a chain of reactions and adjustments because the components of the system are related in a mutually-causal way.

#### Positive and Negative Feedback

Responses to new behavior are called feedback because the response conveys information to the first member of the system about how the preceding acts, bits of information, gestures, or other communications are received. New input into a system represents deviation from the stabilized, on-going pattern. Because the new input is different, it triggers a response that may discourage or encourage new behavior.

Negative feedback tends to reduce the likelihood new behavior will occur again. In the case of Paula and Ed, Ed's actual response represented negative feedback to Paula's new behavior of saying no. His response made it less likely Paula would try to say no again than if he had said "Okay."

Positive feedback tends to support new behavior. The information conveyed (whether intentionally or not) is that the new behavior is acceptable or effective within the system. If Ed had said "Okay," Paula would have been more likely to say no again when the demand for sex did not coincide with her own desire for sex. Positive feedback to new behavior allows new behavior into the system and thus sets in motion change in other parts of the components of the system. Maybe Paula's saying no would precipitate change in Ed to be more considerate or kind in his approaches to sex.

#### Open vs. Closed Systems

Systems that have the same characteristics and the same boundaries over a long period of time remain in static equilibrium. These systems can be called closed because they do not adapt to changes in the outside environment. Boundaries exist between the system and the outside social environment. Sometimes these boundaries are natural phenomena such as the thick jungle that remained for many generations as the boundary between the isolated Tasaday tribe of the Philippines and the rest of civilization. At other times the boundaries may be created by system rules. An example is the deliberate attempt of the Amish to keep destructive influences from their young--there are no televisions and Amish children do not attend public schools.

No social systems are completely closed. All systems exist on a continuum from open to closed. At the extreme of openness, the system is entirely open to input from the outside. Most social systems are adaptive; there is gradual change and development over a period of time.

The degree of openness and closedness is related to the amount of change in a social system. In general, the more open the system, the more change and the more closed the system, the more stable the patterns of behavior--the less the system changes. This concept may help us understand change in patterns of wife-beating in a man-woman system or systems of couples. In a relatively closed system we would expect to find highly-repetitive patterns of behavior and a high degree of negative feedback to new behavior. If the system is relatively open to input from the outside social system, then the impact of social norms that discourage severe abuse may be felt sooner, and change may occur in that pattern. An important question is whether different types of systems created by couples in battering relationships produced patterns of violence of different duration or frequency. This is a question I will try to answer by studying histories of battered women and the context in which a battering took place.

#### The Threshold of Viability

Systems are interrelated networks which tend to maintain themselves by regulating the amount of stability

and change. This regulation happens through the process of positive and negative feedback. Generally individual systems maintain consistent levels of stability and change over long periods of time. When crises occur, or when there is change in the environment in which the system exists, the internal regulation of the system may be disrupted.

To remain viable, systems require some stability and some adaptive change. Individual systems may have patterns of behavior that have become stabilized, and even though patterns of behavior may be destructive to individual members --patterns of violence, for example--the system has adapted to those behaviors and is still a viable system.

To change behavior patterns that have become stabilized within the system, the system requires some new input. For example, if beatings have been happening over time on a routine basis and the woman has adapted to the beatings by withdrawal, suppression of feelings, or possibly displacement of the anger onto children or others, then the system that includes this stable pattern of interaction is unlikely to change without input from some other source that presents some new information. This new information could be some social program intervention, some new opportunity, some supportive new alliance of one of the members of the system, or the openness of one member to some new perspective.

All of the women in the present study left their abusive husbands or partners at least temporarily. Did the event of leaving reflect the reaching of a threshold of



viability in a battering-relationship system? At what point did the system no longer seem viable for the women? What made the women leave when they did? How were they able to do that? What social circumstances might have made it possible for them to leave at that time? These questions may be answered by looking at the detailed events surrounding the women's moves. From this kind of study, we may be able to discover ways to help other women make moves to change patterns of abuse in their relationships. Perhaps it will also add to our knowledge of how the family operates as a social system.

#### Systems in a Social Environment

Families exist as systems within the large socio-cultural system. The family both is influenced by larger social conditions and influences that larger social system. Impact from the larger social system can involve immediate changes--loss of a job, for example--or can involve more constant and pervasive elements--for example, socially-established sex roles, racial relations, economic or power relations within the socio-cultural system, and others. Family behavior also can influence the larger social system. For example, if families keep behavior such as violent behavior strictly private and do not reveal its existence to police, doctors, friends, neighbors, or others, then the larger social system will be largely ignorant of the problem and unequipped to deal with it satisfactorily when it is re-

vealed to them. If the behavior is not revealed, the tendency of the larger social system will be to regard it as idiosyncratic, and probably as evidence of personal disturbance. This may help explain why so many professionals have used a personal disturbance model as the basis for dealing with such cases. If violence is not revealed as a common occurrence in families, neither professionals nor others will regard it as a societal problem and look for solutions within the social structure.

Macro-level social conditions are related to patterns of wife beating. An example is the high incidence of violence among the unemployed (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1979). The question left unanswered is, how does unemployment impact on families? We presume that unemployment occurs as a result of social conditions and that unemployment affects the families. There is another possibility--that family or individual problems can lead to unemployment. Both of these possibilities can be studied by looking at histories of couples involved in a violent relationship.

The social environment can produce stress on the family, but that environment also can provide supports. Extended kin networks are associated with lower rates of violence in at least one study, and the possibility exists that other social supports can effectively reduce violence rates or keep them low or non-existent. The impact of the larger social system on the family and the family on the social

system may both be important to the understanding of wife beating.

### Systems In Transition

All of the women interviewed for this study have come to a shelter for battered women. Many have returned to their husbands or living partners after their stay at the shelter, but all of them can be considered in the process of transition or change. The only difference among the women is the amount of change or how much of a transition they are going through.

Because systems are relatively stable over a period of time, transitions require adapting to many changes. Other transitions that have been studied are: the transition to becoming married, to having a first child, to a divorce, to the empty nest stage of life, to aging, and to death. These other studies of critical periods of transition or adjustments indicate that people going through transitions are particularly vulnerable to physical and emotional problems at that time. Studies also indicate that factors such as social support and prior histories of coping with problems affect how people deal with major life transitions.

Loss of a relationship often is experienced as loss of part of one's self, and the greater the interdependence of the two people in the relationship, the greater the feelings of loss. The transition from a relationship with an abusive man may result in the woman facing many new problems.

For example, it may be that leaving an abusive husband may raise issues a woman hasn't faced before--being a single parent, getting financial support for herself and her children, or dealing with such stigmatizing labels as "divorcee", and seeking to establish a new male-female relationship. It is important to understand what the transition is like for the woman trying to leave a battering relationship.

Since many women who come to shelters do not permanently leave their husbands, it also is important to know what the transition back into a relationship is like for those who do return. This may involve returning to the same interrelated patterns of behavior that occurred before. Change in those patterns of interaction also may occur. Studying these cases may lead to insights about ways to change those patterns.

#### Summary

Two basic assumptions for this study of battered women are: 1) Battered women telling their own stories provide a special and valuable source of data, and 2) the context of the battering relationship can be analyzed as an interrelated causal network or system.

Following these two basic assumptions, histories of three battered women will be presented in this study in as much depth and with as much detail as possible. Then each history will be examined to see how the battering behavior and the context in which it happened are related.

Basic conceptual tools from modern system's theory will be used to analyze the individual case histories. Following both the histories and the individual analyses, I will extend the analysis to the general level. That analysis will include a general description of processes that occur in battering relationships within the framework of a system's model.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND TO A SYSTEM'S APPROACH TO WIFE BATTERING

This research focuses specifically on 1) battered women telling their own stories, and 2) a system's analysis of three case studies that suggests a theoretical model to explain change and stability in battering relationships. To provide the background for this research, the review of literature is divided into two sections. The first section reviews the theoretical area of system's analysis emphasizing studies of conflict, and the second reviews studies of wife battering, discussing how these empirical studies can contribute to a system's model.

#### System's Theory

There are two basic ways to approach an explanation of wife battering, a linear-causal approach and a system's approach. The difference is in the nature of the causal process.

Using the first approach, researchers have noted the occurrence of wife battering and searched for a preceding cause. Some researchers have looked for causes in constructs such as instincts, in-born biological drives, and in psychological states such as frustration. Other researchers have looked for the causes in observable conditions of the social

structure, i.e., legal institutions, sex role stereotyping, socialization patterns, and power relations between members of a couple. These attempts are based on the assumption that one behavior is a function of prior events and conditions, and that by studying the associations between violence and observable social conditions, we can answer the question, "What causes wife battering?"

Looking for the causes of wife battering within persons reflects the view that social patterns and institutionalized behaviors are the result of personal traits held by many people at the same time. Looking for the causes of wife battering in the social structure reflects the view that the social structural conditions determine behavior in a cause-effect relationship. Both of these attempts to find linear-causal relationships have recently been challenged by general system's theory. Buckley (1967) says:

It has become apparent that we must question both the view that institution structure is 'only' personal association writ large, and on the other hand, that institutional structure 'molds' the situation of action as well as personality to the extent of determining behavior beyond a minimal residue of choice and decisionmaking that is unique and innovative.

This second approach, a general system's approach, is based on the assumption that discreet cause-effect analyses cannot capture the complexity of social behavior. Instead of a linear cause-effect explanation, general system's theory focuses on the complexity of mutually causal events.

The question of how system processes control behavior reflects a different way of thinking about social behavior. The "how" question focuses on the processes that occur, and the interrelationships between events, people, or other elements of the system. The presence and level of a pattern of behavior such as wife battering occurs from ongoing patterns of interaction within the system.

Instead of a cause-effect explanation, general system's theory deals with the question of how violence develops over time to the level of wife battering, and how the wife battering becomes an ongoing pattern resistant to change. This approach focuses the attention on change and stability in patterns over a period of time. Briefly, positive feedback processes contribute to the escalation of violence, and negative feedback controls the level of violence by regulating input that would change the ongoing patterns of behavior.

Scherer, Abeles and Fischer (1975) point out that we think on the basis of "how" questions a lot of the time. For example, we ask "How does digestion occur?", rather than "What causes digestion?" (Scherer et al, 1975; 259). This example illustrates that we ask the "how" questions when we are studying a complex interrelated system--in this case, the human body. A question such as "How does digestion occur?" focuses attention on the ongoing processes, as opposed to some prior causal condition. The distinction between "How" and "Why" questions is an oversimplification, in that systems analysis also is concerned with causes.



The key to understanding this kind of thinking is to accept that social systems are complex interrelated networks of mutually-causal elements with relatively stable patterns of relationships. Instead of linear cause-effect links, system's analysis looks at cause-effect links as elements in a cycle of behavior, feedback responses, and behavioral reactions. The addition to the traditional cause-effect model is the area of responses, conceptualized as feedback. Adding the elements of feedback can potentially explain some behavior that cause-effect models cannot. For example, we know that those people who were abused as a child have higher rates of abusing their own child or their spouse than those people who were not abused as a child (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1979). A cause-effect interpretation suggests that being abused as a child causes one to abuse one's own child or one's spouse. There is an empirical problem with this explanation, however. Not all people who were abused as a child abuse their children or beat their spouses. Some that were not abused as a child do abuse their children and/or their spouses. This could be seen by looking at the variation around the correlation lines between the two kinds of abuse. The later behavior of abuse or non-abuse, therefore, is not completely determined by the earlier behavior.

To solve this empirical gap, it is important to understand the processes leading to the earlier pattern which is repeated in later generations (or is not repeated). The questions "How does violence occur in all relationships?"

and "How does violence occur in relationships where the parent was abused as a child?" shift the focus to processes over time within complex sets of relationships. This level of analysis opens up the opportunity for a more subtle and complex understanding.

If the general system's approach is useful, it will suggest new ideas about how wife battering arises and how it becomes stabilized or changes over time. Before actually using this approach to wife battering, this chapter will explore the theoretical and empirical basis for a general system's approach.

#### Theoretical Basis for a General System's Approach

When we talk of a social system, we are talking about an abstract conceptualization of interrelated parts that have boundaries and ongoing processes that structure the system, de-structure it, and restructure it. Systems are not described as stable structures that are permanently fixed, but rather as complex relationships between parts that are subject to change because of the nature of the mutually-causal relationships. Buckley (1967: 41) says,

The kind of system we are interested in may be described generally as a complex of elements or components directly or indirectly related in a causal network, such that each component is related to at least some others in a more or less stable way within any particular period of time.

The system's approach moves the level of analysis from looking at the individual components to looking at the complex organization of a whole system. The components of a

family system may be individual family members, coalitions, complex interaction patterns, or other elements which are an organized part of the family. Thus system's theory focuses on the organization of the family as a whole, on how the family evolves, and the degree of change or stability that takes place in the family as a system. Behaviors and relationships are more than the sum of individual behaviors in the family system, and while it is true that characteristics of the family system affect individual behavior, it also is true that individual behavior affects the characteristics of the family system. Dynamic interaction patterns take place on concrete and symbolic levels of conflict and exchange.

The relevance of a system's theory framework for the present research is that behavior, such as violent behavior, is seen as the outcome of the complex interaction between the parts of the system and with other parts of the larger socio-cultural system. The dynamic patterns of interaction affect the way information is processed. Structural conditions such as a pattern of socialization marked by the use of hitting, a socio-historical pattern of acceptance of wife beating, and immediately-stressful conditions such as unemployment or family arguments become information to be processed by the system. The continual structuring and restructuring that goes on within the system depends on information processing.

System's theory focuses on the complex organization of a system, how that organization evolves and changes over

time, the amount of information and the kind of information that is processed by the system, and the mechanisms that control the amount of homeostasis (stability) or morphogenesis (change). Dynamic interaction processes are studied as the key to the organization of the system. These are structuring processes. They determine out of the pool of available actions which characteristics become part of the complex organization of the system.

Positive and negative feedback processes determine the substance of behavior within the system by controlling the information available as input into the system. While negative feedback constrains behavior which deviates from an established, ongoing pattern of behavior, positive feedback encourages the development of new stable patterns of behavior.

The major contribution of this theoretical perspective is the focus on "structuring" as a process as opposed to the more static view of "social structure". This contribution provides a framework to deal with systems as complex wholes, rather than as the sum of individual parts. The major focus is on the interaction between the parts rather than on the parts themselves. Interaction is the basis for the structuring process.

Buckley (1967) provides the comprehensive basis for this viewpoint, but as Buckley himself points out, the interactionism school of sociology has always been important. He credits this school of thought with the development of the

concept of process. It was those early process models that first challenged the static models of society.

Within sociology and related fields there have been a number of other classical studies that have focused on the processes of social change and social control. Within the area of deviance there has been an emphasis on describing the processes that change and shape behavior. Erving Goffman (1961), Howard Becker (1963), Kai Erikson (1966) and Thomas Scheff (1966) have all contributed to the literature on process, change, labeling, and the stabilization of behavior patterns or careers.

This school of sociology views deviance as the product of the system, not of individual member's pathologies. Erikson (1966) criticizes the position that deviance is a sign of disorder, saying that deviance is a necessary and essential role in the community's overall structure. Because it is necessary to the definition of appropriate behavior to have recognized deviants, the structuring processes within the socio-cultural system create deviance by defining some behavior as deviant even within highly-conforming societies.

Goffman (1961) and Becker (1963) speak of the "career of the deviant" and describe in qualitative detail the processes of becoming a mental patient or an "outsider". These analyses assume that the behavior that is considered deviant is the result of a process of labeling and role fulfillment.

Scheff (1966) specifies in detail the steps in the process of labeling. Straus (1973) shows how Scheff's

theoretical model of labeling can be adapted to the study of violent behavior. He suggests the use of general system's theory to account for the presence of violence as a continuous part of the social interaction of a male-female relationship.

Researchers in family communication also have studied the processes of rule formation and structuring patterns that may produce control of member behavior. Gregory Bateson (1971), Jay Haley (1963), Don Jackson (1957), and Watzlavick et al (1967) originally based their system's ideas on the clinical experiences of schizophrenic patients. They were struck by the way in which other family members encouraged and even seemed to demand the schizophrenic behavior. What they observed led such researchers to focus less on such behavior as deviance and to look instead at the patterns involved. They assumed that the initial "deviant behavior" was the result of a combination of learning and response patterns to slightly-unusual behavior that may have occurred by random chance. They went on to describe conceptually how the family acted as a governor to control behavior that deviated from the established ongoing behavior. The homeostatic processes kept the behavior-problem member in that particular pattern of interaction. Because the observed patients already were in deviant roles, Watzlawick et al mostly observed the homeostatic processes (1967). They showed how negative feedback prevented change in behavior once a stable pattern was established.

As therapists, the observers were interested in changing the patient's behavior. They found this difficult to do without changing ongoing processes in the whole family. It is interesting to note that the need to study structuring processes rather than static structural arrangements has come from people with dual commitments to research and clinical or program development.

The early work on family systems was marked by the limitation of clinical samples. But the stimulating ideas of this early work led to other researchers looking at a cross section of "normal" families. Reiss (1971) details a theory relating a family's type of consensual experience, their basic dimensions of family interaction, and the counterparts of these family dimensions in individual experiences. Reiss uses findings from his laboratory studies of how families act when presented with different tasks to develop a typology based on the systemic nature of family interaction. In this typology, family members can be "open" and sensitive to input from each other and from the environment outside the family (environmentally-sensitive variety), closed to input from each other member of the family (interpersonally-distance sensitive variety), or "constrained" and reluctant to acknowledge input that may produce change (consensus-sensitive variety). This research illustrates the ways in which whole families can be classified on the basis of their structuring processes of communication used to control behavior.

Laboratory and clinical research both deal with families under artificial environmental circumstances. The question is whether their own home environment would produce different patterns of behavior.

Kantor and Lehr (1976) pointed out there was a lack of empirical research that studied families as complex networks of mutually-causative elements in a naturalistic setting --the family's own home. In their book Inside the Family, they illustrate a system's analysis of family relationships. They view families as purposeful, self-directing, and boundary-maintaining systems. They type families as either closed, open, or random on the basis of the boundaries of the family system. Boundaries circumscribe the areas where relationships and information are sought, accepted, and processed. Boundaries are narrow and rigidly maintained in the closed type of family. Most of the communication is regulated by constancy or negative feedback loops. There is a very small degree of change. Open families choose a mixture of equilibrium and disequilibrium, and have associated patterns of constancy and change. Random families have fluctuating patterns of interrelationships as well as boundaries.

In addition to a discussion of these types, Kantor and Lehr point out that each type is viable and is the result of the self-direction of the family's system. An important implication of this is that instead of evaluating a family system on the basis of one ideal, researchers could look at specific patterns of behavior that become stabilized in a



family that has particular structuring processes of boundary maintenance and flexibility.

#### Studies Using a System's Approach to Conflict

There are few studies which actually use a system's model to study conflict; that is, which either study 1) the process of conflict within a system, or 2) the effect of system characteristics on the nature of conflict. There have been theoretical suggestions that a system's approach to conflict is important, however, and some empirical studies stimulate thinking about "how" questions concerning conflict.

Sprey (1969) contends that conflict is inherent in couple or family relationships. He says, in fact, that harmony may be more problematic than normal. He attributes the presence of conflict to the intimate nature of family relationships. Because people are so close to each other, there is inevitable conflict. Sprey maintains that sociology has neglected the conflict aspects of marriage in favor of consensus or harmony.

When Sprey talks about the effects of the intimate nature of family relationships on family members, he seems to suggest there is a whole which is greater than the sum of the parts of the family system, and that there are processes, especially those of conflict, that are important aspects of that family system. Sprey (1971) discusses the study of family process and how conflict is managed, and he illustrates how the concepts of bonding, aggression, appease-

ment, and threat apply to the management of conflict within marriage. The push towards bonding with another person cannot be completely successful as some of the popular myths about marriage might suggest. Conflict and aggression result when two people come as close to each other as people do in marriages, because each has to confront the other person in reality. That reality may not be the ideal each, or both, pictured during courtship. According to Sprey (1969, 1971), conflict is an inherent part of intimate relationships and thus what must be studied is how conflict is managed by couples. Since a system's analysis focuses on how all parts of the family system are regulated, a system's approach would be valuable for studying how conflict is managed in intimate relationships such as marriage.

Sprey (1969) also makes the important point that each member of a family system also is part of the larger social system. The family must be studied within the context of the larger social system. These are important reasons to use a system's approach to the study of conflict and violence.

Raush et al (1974) incorporated both of Sprey's points (it is important to study how conflict is managed in families, and the family system has to be studied in context) in an empirical research project. The study investigated how couples handled and resolved marital conflicts. To study such conflicts, the researchers choose a conflict simulation technique called "Improvisations". Using this tech-

nique, husband-wife teams acted out scenes designed to produce conflict in their interactions.

The interactions were coded and analyzed to discover how couples interacted when faced with conflicts. In addition to other elements, the analysis included contextual determinants of the interaction.

The behavioral data on determinants of interaction suggest that the system's theory approach is appropriate to the study of conflict and conflict management. Researchers found that conflict behavior tended to be reciprocated, and that rejecting tended to elicit either emotional appeals or coercive tactics. The first of those findings suggest that conflict escalates because of the behavioral reciprocity couples exhibit. The second finding suggests that when one person is rejecting, and thus signalling a desire not to continue the system, the other person acts in a way to constrain the partner from leaving through emotional appeals or coercive tactics, thus maintaining the system either way.

Raush et al (1974) also found that the situational context exerted a major influence on interactions:

The data show that not only do people do different things in different situations, but also the same actions carry different meanings and evoke different responses (Raush et al, 1974: 200).

The meaning depends on the listener. Thus the situational context of the interaction is a primary determinant of meaning and behavior for both people.

Participants in the interaction can transform messages they receive and act in response to those transformations. Raush et al maintains that the context of the relationship itself determines how messages are received:

Within our analysis the marital unit was the most powerful source in determining interactive events. Couples function as units, exhibiting their own styles of conflict enactment. Both impressionistically and statistically individual couple patterns were consistent over the first two (and sometimes more) years of marriage (Raush et al, 1974: 201).

The finding that individual couples develop unique modes of interacting to handle conflict indicates the importance of looking at processes within couple relationships. When Raush et al categorized their couples as discordant or harmonious, they found that discordant couples tended to let conflict accumulate over time, thus producing longer scenes. The harmonious couples had shorter conflict scenes. They also tended to be more issue-oriented, while discordant couples had more relationship conflicts.

Interestingly, when Raush et al studied time and male-female context, they found those two variables much less important than the context of the situation and the context of the relationship. They found that, over time, there was less "brinkmanship" or rejection, but intensity of coercive tactics did not decrease. From a system's perspective, this suggests that, over time, the maintenance of the system becomes more important than other factors even in the face of conflict.

The male-female differences in the way the conflict was handled were the least important of the empirical factors considered in the management of conflict. The researchers did not find the instrumental-expressive dichotomy that has been so widely accepted. They did find, however, that early in the marriage relationship the husband reciprocated resolution efforts of the wife, and the wife reciprocated coercive acts in the face of the husband's coercion. This may indicate that, for wives, rejection is particularly threatening, and leads to coercive attempts to keep husbands in the relationship.

Overall, these findings are important because they empirically verify a system's approach to conflict in marriage. The researchers also indicated that conflict can be a creative process leading to resolution if certain conditions hold:

Creativity in this sense seems to require a) freedom to engage rather than evade the immediate conflict situation; b) sufficient freedom from the constraints set by the scene and the instructions so that the bond between the partners takes precedence over the immediate set; c) freedom from the reciprocal pull evoked by the partner's negatively toned message; and d) freedom from inflexible, anxiety-based object relations schemata (Raush et al, 1974: 208-209).

The researchers did not find, however, that those using different types of conflict management--for example, avoidance versus engagement--differed in level of stability. The system evolved a style of conflict management and, once established, one type might be as stable as another. Cuber and Harroff (1965) supported this finding. Conflict-

habituated marriages were one of the five types of stable marriages. Such findings support a system's approach--an approach which maintains that the system is self-maintaining and that processes of feedback control the level of stability and change within the system to maintain the system.

Watzlawick et al (1967) deal with human communication as a systemic process. They describe a system's theory of communication and make the link between forms of communication and manifested or potential pathologies. They view disturbed behavior as the communicative reaction to the context of the communication rather than as an individual pathology.

Specific patterns of communication become part of the actual system of interaction and relatively resistant to change. To illustrate their theoretical position, Watzlawick et al chose to analyze the play, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? They maintain that the characters in that play--especially George and Martha--can be seen as an interacting system, and those characters cannot be abstracted from the context of their behavior and cannot be characterized as types. The unit of analysis consists of "what goes on, sequentially, between them: Martha as she reacts to George and he to her" (Watzlawick et al, 1967: 153). The play chosen for analysis provides both an examination of systems in process and of systems in process of conflict.

The authors use the specific interaction in Albee's play to illustrate how George and Martha form a system, the

system rules and tactics that shape their ongoing relationship, the positive feedback processes that lead to escalation of the conflict, the negative feedback processes that bring the system back to equilibrium, and to raise the question, "Under what conditions could this system change?"

Analysis of the conflict scenes in the play demonstrate processes of feedback, in particular how the positive feedback processes encourage escalation of conflict, and how negative feedback processes counteract the movement towards change.

George and Martha (the two central characters in the play) arrive at a point of symmetrical escalation through processes of positive feedback cycles which become larger and larger. Neither side in the conflict achieves a victory, however, and there is no resolution.

The patterns of interaction George and Martha have evolved seem to operate under definite rules. For example, one of their rules is the use of the mythical son to maintain some stability in their relationship.

The primary requirement of interaction about the son is a coalition between George and Martha; they must be together on this fiction in order to maintain it for, unlike a real child who, once procreated, exists, here they must constantly unite to create their child. And, changing the focus slightly, in this one area they can get together, collaborating without competition....There is a built-in limit to their game of symmetrical escalation in the necessity to share this fiction. Their child-myth is a homeostatic mechanism (Watzlawick et al, 1967: 174).

Maintaining one important area of mutual concern in which George and Martha cooperate reestablishes equilibrium

for their marital system. In their case the area is a myth-child. We might ask "What other systems serve a similar or equivalent function?"

George and Martha face a problem when the myth threatens to explode before their guests. At that point Martha takes a one-down conciliatory position; George slaps her hand, grabs her hair, and pulls her head back. Mutual escalation stops, although the battle is not over. The two then become close to breaking their own patterns, but in the end a conciliatory move is made and the system maintains itself.

The Albee play is fiction, but it provides an exciting vehicle for the sequential analysis of system's processes. Because of the nature of the data, however--a dramatic play--the system seems relatively closed to outside input. Real systems are probably more influenced by the context of their behavior, as Rausch et al (1974) point out.

Analysis may not be so neat when we deal with real systems, but they may be more particularly informing. LaRossa (1977) provides an example of an analysis that is both theoretically based and also focused on a particular problem. The purpose of LaRossa's study was two-fold:

- 1) How does the husband-wife system work during the first pregnancy stage--during the transition to parenthood?
- 2) How does the husband-wife system work, in general? (LaRossa, 1977:2 ).



LaRossa based his research on the commitment to a phenomenological approach, rather than a deductive theoretical approach. As the analysis of marriage relationships during a first pregnancy proceeded, the conflict in his research couples became a prominent factor, and the synthesis of the researcher's analysis provides a system's model of couples in conflict.

Given that (1) marriage is not a voluntary union and parenthood is not a 'freely chosen' life career, (2) marriage is not a sanctuary from the world outside, but is in a transactional state with that world, (3) marriage is a social relationship in which the paradox of human action (separateness and connectedness) is acute, it is my (and Sprey's) belief that the husband-wife relationship is better understood as a system in conflict (LaRossa, 1977:

LaRossa maintains that the power structure is the control center of the system. There are essentially two aspects of the power structure: the environmental power and exchange structure, and the marital power and exchange structure. As in Scanzoni's work (1970), LaRossa finds that these two aspects of the power structure are intimately related. The marital symbol structure, which is the set of privately and mutually understood, agreed-upon and not agreed-upon symbols, is related to the marital exchange structure; that structure is the rewards and costs bestowed by the couple on each other in a mutually causal way.

LaRossa's model of a system is much more open to the larger social structure than is Watzlawick et al's model. That model also incorporates both the symbolic interaction

and the actual exchange of resources. LaRossa's model does not extend to the analysis of system processes of feedback or to the patterns of homeostasis versus morphogenesis that characterize a system's model, but the analysis of the "how" questions of actual couples in intimate relationships makes this an important study.

The study of conflict between intimates is more advanced theoretically than empirically, but as we have seen in the preceding studies, good theory can suggest many important areas to investigate. All of the preceding works have contributed to the acceptance of system's theory as a critical theoretical model to study conflict in families.

In addition to the above research, Scherer, Abeles, and Fischer (1975) have put forth their ideas of how to study the process of conflict. They maintain that conflict is a system's process, and that the first step is to see conflict in a system context. They maintain, as did Sprey (1969, 1971), that conflict results from intimate relationships and particularly from interdependence. They view conflict as the exchange of negative outputs between members of the system.

They maintain that viewing conflict in this way leads to trying to describe the conflict through the process of recreating or capturing natural histories. They maintain that if we try to describe the natural history of conflict, sooner or later we will have to make distinctions and thus create typologies. Conflicts tend to follow the familiar

course most times they occur, and those patterns seem predictable. They might well be termed 'natural histories' (Scherer et al, 1975: 268). Possible sources of natural histories are case studies, and records of historical events.

Scherer et al (1975) maintain that the way to analyze natural histories using a system's approach is by creating stage models that describe and explain how typical conflicts proceed and what processes shape the conflict process. They present a general model of the natural history of conflict to illustrate how conflict in systems could be described. The stages include:

Stage 1. Precompetition. At this point, the parties have a cooperative relationship or are relatively independent.

Stage 2. Competition. The system changes (due to internal historical dynamics or to events in its environment) so that the parties are in a competitive relationship.

Stage 3. Conflict. The parties attack each other. What has occurred as competition and conflict have intensified as escalation. Escalation involves not only an increase in mutual punishment but also, in most systems, polarization.

Escalation is a 'positive feedback' process in which each event intensifies its own precursors. Besides these reactions, there are other changes in the system brought about by the conflict which intensify that very conflict. Positive relationships between the sides are destroyed, the damage of battle becomes grounds for further battle, the most conflict-oriented subelements become dominant in each party, and polarization occurs.

Stage 4. 'Crisis.' This is an ambiguous term and we cannot do much to clarify it, but there appears to be in many conflicts a special period when a turn is reached. It is distinguished by a new, intense, and different level of interaction, and it is when violence is most likely to occur.

Stage 5. Resolution -- or Revolution. The turning point or period usually means a resolution or a 'revolution'. The resolution can be immediate, or it can be a gradual deescalation, but in either case, it involves a return to cooperation, or, at least competition. Another possibility is revolution in the sense that the system is drastically restructured (Scherer et al, 1975: 270-274).

Scherer et al (1975) then goes on to illustrate how their stage model can be applied to historical examples of revolution. This theoretical model derives from the principles of system's theory. It focuses on the processes that shape the natural history of conflict over time. The authors maintain that if system's theory was applied to natural occurrences of conflict, a stage model such as they outline would be the outcome.

These studies of conflict are the most important uses of a system's model in ways that could be helpful in understanding wife battering processes. Together they indicate that 1) conflict is a system's process; 2) conflict has a natural history; 3) conflict is controlled by processes of negative and positive feedback; 4) the context of the conflict is an important determinant to the interaction during conflict; and 5) that family systems exist within the larger socio-cultural system. The kinds of feedback processes that characterize the couple's relationship to others outside the family system may influence the natural history of conflict and violence.

### Studies of Wife Battering

Since this study of wife battering takes a system's approach, I have chosen to organize the review of studies of wife battering around concepts that are central to the system's approach. There are four sections which review, in turn, 1) studies that have focused on the question of "why" wife battering occurs; 2) studies concerned with the process question of "how" wife battering occurs in relationships; 3) the evidence of forces in society or within families that lead to stability of wife-beating patterns, and 4) the evidence of forces in society or within families that lead to change in patterns of wife beating.

#### Linear-Causal Models of Wife Battering

The application of linear-causal models to the study of wife battering involves noting the occurrence of wife battering and searching for the causes. Some researchers have looked for the causes of wife beating within the individual participants, others in psychological states such as frustration, and the more sociological researchers have looked for the causes in observable conditions in the social structure.

The view that the cause of the violence is within the individual is consistent with the lay view. Committing an act of violence is seen by many as evidence that one is "crazy". The widespread acceptance of this view is related to the value placed on theories of personality as explana-

tions for social behavior. It also reflects a tendency to accept simple answers to something that cannot be explained easily, and the tendency to assume that our family and social structures are inherently good and therefore could not possibly create such problems.

Another problem with this view that anyone hits another because they are "crazy" is that the research evidence in favor of this view is subject to the biases of the clinical fallacy. Up until the 1970's there were no studies of wife beating that were based on samples other than clinical samples.

The tendency when a clinical sample is used is to find what the personality disturbance is that caused the abuse, rather than to see if there is a personality disturbance. Snell, Rosenwald and Robey (1964) studied twelve husbands and wives who had long histories of violent interaction. The wives in these cases were middle-class women who had filed charges of assault and battery, and the court had referred these couples to a psychiatrist for help. Snell and his associates interviewed both the husband and the wife, but the research report published from this study focuses primarily on the wife and her role in perpetuating or, essentially, causing the abuse. Snell and his associates concluded that the women were aggressive, masculine, had a need to dominate, were sexually frigid, and/or masochistic. This report asserts, at least by implication, that

these characteristics were reason enough for any man to assert himself through violence.

The Snell et al (1964) study illustrates the clinical fallacy; that is, since some women seeing a psychiatrist could be characterized as having psychiatric problems that caused the men to be violent, then by implication all women somehow bring on their own abuse. Shainess (1977) also indicates that wives almost inevitably play a part in their own assault. Shainess, however, does go on to say that the women are not to blame for it. Shainess (1977) looks at both the personality traits of battered wives and wife batterers. Wife batterers are considered to be 1) passive-aggressive; 2) obsessive-compulsive; 3) paranoid, and/or 4) sadistic. These typologies of male or female behavior are descriptions of clinical cases. They are not necessarily meant to be assertions of the causes of wife battering, but it is easy to make the leap to saying that men beat their wives because they are passive-aggressive, paranoid, or have some other quality or trait. This kind of descriptive explanation doesn't explain violence, however. The behavior of wife batterers may be described, but there is no linear-causal model, and there is no comparison to indicate if men who do not beat their wives have the same characteristics or not.

Scott (1974) also asserts that a variety of psychological conditions underlie the battering problem: immature personalities, personality disorders, in particular depend-

ency and aggressiveness, jealousy reactions, and other psychiatric illnesses. Scott maintains that certain addictions are also associated with--probably not causally--with battering.

Each of these above studies maintains that the cause of the abuse lies in the individual personalities of either the batterer or the battered wife. From a system's perspective, this type of theoretical explanation is relying on a single intra-psychic phenomenon. This focus disregards processes of interaction and ways the social structure shapes behavior.

Experimental psychologists and the pragmatic school of psychiatry have attempted to shift focus away from intra-psychic processes and to focus on observable input-output or stimulus-response relations. Watzlawick et al (1967: 43-44) state,

The impossibility of seeing the mind 'at work' has in recent years led to the adoption of the Black Box concept from the field of telecommunication. Applied originally to certain types of captured enemy electronic equipment that could not be opened for study because of the possibility of destruction charges inside, the concept is more generally applied to the fact that electronic hardware is by now so complex that it is sometimes most expedient to disregard the internal structure of a device and concentrate on the study of its specific input-output relations. While it is true that these relations may permit inferences into what 'really' goes on inside the box, this knowledge is not essential for the study of the function of the device in the greater system of which it is a part. This concept, if applied to psychological and psychiatric problems, has the heuristic advantage that no ultimately unverifiable intra-psychic hypotheses need to be invoked, and that one can limit oneself to observable



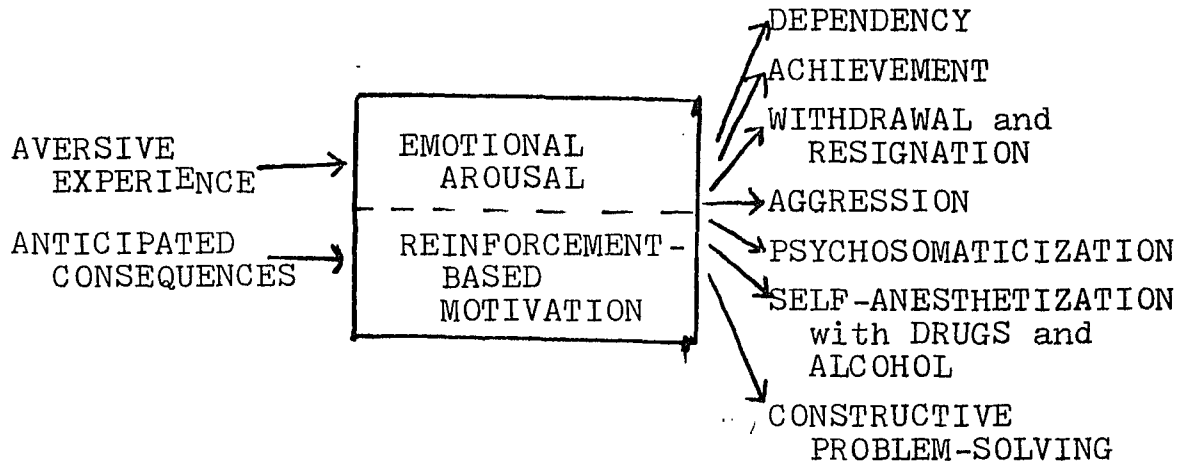
input-output relations, that is, to communication. Such an approach, we believe, characterizes an important recent trend in psychiatry toward viewing symptoms as one kind of input into the family system rather than as an expression of intrapsychic conflict.

Experimental psychologists also have rebelled against searching for what was in the Black Box when explaining violent behavior. Grounded in behaviorism and deterministic models, Dollard et al (1939) began the search for laws of relationships between cause and effect to explain violent behavior. Their famous frustration-aggression hypothesis has stimulated many other experimental research projects (Miller, 1941, and Berkowitz, 1962, for example). The format of those experiments was to induce frustration by the manipulation of the access to goals. Aggressive behavior was observed as the dependent variable. Those studies documented the strength of the relationship between frustration and aggression, but the problem of what led to aggression as the response rather than other possible responses was never answered. Gelles and Straus (1979) state,

Although the frustration-aggression theory is credible and seems intuitively valid, there are some major problems with the theory as currently stated. First, it does not explain under what conditions frustration leads to aggression (Etzioni, 1971:717). Second, in some societies frustration is followed by passive withdrawal (Mead and MacGregor, 1951:176). Lastly, the theory does not differentiate physical aggression from verbal abuse and aggression (Etzioni, 1971:717).

Gelles and Straus (1979) raise important questions. For a refined explanation of a man hitting his wife or

living partner, more is necessary than the explanation of frustration. This is best illustrated by thinking of the frustrations inherent in enduring man-woman relationships. Although frustration may precede most hitting, all frustrating circumstances do not lead to hitting. Bandura (1973) discusses the frustration-aggression hypothesis, and the instinct theory of aggressive behavior, pointing out that same criticism made by Gelles and Straus (1979). Bandura thinks that both theories are based on the Freudian assumption that aggression is an instinctual inclination and not amenable to elimination. He refutes this assumption with social learning theory (1973): "Human aggression is a learned conduct that like other forms of social behavior is under stimulus, reinforcement, and cognitive control" (Bandura, 1973: 44). He indicates that empirical research findings indicate the determinants of aggression can be found in social practices, and he puts forth a social learning model which suggests 1) conditions under which frustrations may lead to aggression; 2) the processes that encourage the learning of aggression; and 3) many possible outcomes following frustration or aversive experiences. The following diagram (based on Bandura, 1973: 54) illustrates this social learning model:



This model predicts that aversive experiences lead to emotional arousal and that the outcome of this state is governed by the anticipated consequences, which in turn depend on a history of reinforcement. Aggression would be most likely to occur under aversive circumstances to people who have been reinforced for the use of violence, either through role models or the successful achievement of desired goals.

Other empirical studies of aggression support Bandura's social learning theory. Megargee (1972) in a review of theories of aggression focuses on the question of how inhibitions to aggression are formed. He discusses factors that decrease or retard the formation of inhibitions, and outlines the principles of disinhibition theory. Goldstein, Davis and Herman (1975) report on two experiments which provide evidence for disinhibition theory of escalation of aggression. Subjects in these experiments gradually "warm up" to punishing the learner. Their aggression be-

comes increasingly disinhibited when they are told to administer shock without aversive consequences.

We know that families provide role models for violent behavior (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1979; Steinmetz, 1977; Steinmetz and Straus, 1973; Gelles, 1972). Families also provide the environment for learning that aggression and violence are effective ways of solving problems. Straus (1975) suggests that the family as an institution should be studied as one of the structural conditions affecting the use of violence. Gelles and Straus (1979: 11) suggest "...violence between family members is a special enough case to require study in its own right." They suggest that at least twelve aspects of the family are important to an explanation of intra-family violence:

1. Time at Risk. The most elementary family characteristic accounting for the high incidence of violence is the fact that so many hours of the day are spent interacting with other family members. Although this is an important factor, the ratio of intrafamily violence to violence experienced outside the family far exceeds the ratio of time spent in the family to time spent outside the family....

2. Range of Activities and Interests. ...This means that there are more 'events' over which a dispute or a failure to meet expectations can occur.

3. Intensity of Involvement. Not only is there a wider range of events over which a dispute or dissatisfaction can occur, but in addition, the degree of injury felt in such instances is likely to be much greater than if the same issue were to arise in relation to someone outside the family....

4. Impinging Activities. Conflict is structured into such things as whether Bach or Mendelson will be played on the family stereo, whether to go to a movie or bowling, or a line-up for use of the bathroom.

5. Right to Influence. Membership in a family carries with it an implicit right to influence the behavior of others.

6. Age and Sex Discrepancies. The fact that the family is composed of people of different sexes and ages (especially during the child rearing years), coupled with the existence of generational and sex differences in culture and outlook on life, makes the family an arena of culture conflict.

7. Ascribed Roles. An aspect of this which has traditionally been a focus of contention is socially structured sexual inequality, or in contemporary language, the sexist organization of the family.

8. Family Privacy. In many societies the normative kinship, and household structure, insulates the family from both social controls and assistance in coping with intra-family conflict.

9. Involuntary Membership. There is first the social expectation of marriage as a long-term commitment, as expressed in the phrase 'until death do us part'. In addition, there are emotional, material, and legal rewards and constraints which frequently make membership in the family group inescapable, socially, physically, or legally.

10. High Level of Stress. ...The nuclear family continuously undergoes changes in structure as a result of the birth of children, maturation of children, aging, and retirement. The crisis-like nature of these changes has long been recognized (LeMasters, 1957). All of this, combined with the huge emotional investment which is typical of family relationships, means that the family is likely to be the locus of more, and more serious, stresses than any other groups.

11. Normative Approval. Another aspect of the family which is important for understanding why so much violence occurs within that setting is the simple but important fact of de jure and de facto cultural norms legitimizing the use of violence between family members in situations which would make the use of physical force a serious moral or legal violation if it occurred between non-family members.

12. Socialization into Violence and its Generalization. It seems likely that an important part of the explanation for the high level of intrafamily violence lies in the fact that the family is the setting in which most people first experience physical violence, and also in the emotional context accompanying this experience.

The first of these unintended consequences is the association of love with violence. The child learns that those who love him or her the most are also those who hit and have the right to hit. The second unintended consequence is the lesson that when something is really important, it justifies the use of physical force. Finally, we suggest that these indirect lessons are not confined to providing a model for later treatment of one's own children. Rather, they become such a fundamental part of the individual's personality and world view that they are generalized to other social relationships, and especially to the relationship which is closest to that of parent and child: that of husband and wife. Therefore, it is suggested that early experiences with physical punishment lays the groundwork for the normative legitimacy of all types of violence but especially intrafamily violence.

Gelles and Straus (1979) contributed to the formulation of an explanation of intrafamily violence by isolating the aspects of families that lead to the family being a special case of violent behavior. Each of these authors separately and in collaboration with Steinmetz have also provided the soundest base of empirical findings about the incidence of intrafamily violence in America, and many empirically and theoretically relevant relationships between variables. (For a comprehensive report on those findings, see Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1979.)

Specific findings on wife beating, including incidence rates based on a national sample survey of 2,143 couples and a discussion of why it occurs, has been presented separately by Straus (1977). Straus found that "...

3.8% of the respondents reported one or more physical attacks which fall under our operational definition of wife beating. Applying this incidence rate to the approximately 47 million couples in the United States, means that in any one year, approximately 1.8 million wives are beaten by their husbands" (Straus, 1977: 4).

The yearly frequency of violent attacks in these violent families shows that the average number of attacks is eight and the median (which shows the most typical number of attacks) is 2.4. There are several reasons given by Straus to indicate that these figures are probably underestimates. These include the possibility that violence is regarded as so common and legitimate as to be unnoteworthy; the reluctance to talk about the violence because of shame or guilt; and the fact that the high incidence of violent acts as a basis for divorce has not been counted in these incidence rates because only intact couples were studied.

Straus goes on to discuss the causes of wife-beating, citing the characteristics of the family reported earlier. He emphasizes four things as being particularly related to the level of wife-beating in America. The four are 1) the high level of violence in society that can carry over to the family; 2) the family socialization in violence from the use of physical punishment of children to the role modeling of parents when they use physical force on each other; 3) the cultural norms that legitimate the use of physical force and

especially condone a man hitting his wife; and 4) the sexual inequality of society that is one of the most fundamental factors in all male-female relationships.

In another paper (1976) Straus details the effects of sexual inequality and the lower status position on patterns of wife beating. He maintains that sexism, the use of violence to maintain power positions, cultural norms legitimizing violence, and the male-oriented organization of criminal justice systems are all related. Power seems to be the common variable that underlies all of these conditions. Women in general have less power in society, and therefore less resources to prevent violence or to leave when violence occurs.

When both husband and wife--or either--have low power and status, that is, when they are unemployed, the rates of violence are higher than when both are employed or the man is employed (Carlson, 1977; Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1979). When the wives have a higher education level or higher status jobs, they seem to have increased risks of violence (Tidmarsh, 1976). These studies indicate that if men are not in positions of power they have come to expect as their role in society, they may use violence as a way to achieve power, especially power over their spouses. Allen and Straus (1975) found that the greater the husband's resources, the less likely he is to use physical violence. In a study of one hundred and fifty individuals filing for



divorce, O'Brien also found that violence was more prevalent among families where the husband was unable to maintain superior status positions.

These findings indicate that sexual inequality in society is a primary factor in the battering of wives. The work of Del Martin (1976) and of Dobash and Dobash support these findings. Dobash and Dobash have been engaged in a comprehensive study of wife abuse since 1974. The first research year was spent studying police and court records to determine the extent of the problem and how the institutional structure has dealt with the problem. The second year they spent talking with battered women informally with the goal of developing an outline of the important issues and an interview schedule that covered the essential questions. A major problem for them was the attempt to combine the structural analysis of the problem of wife battering and the personal experiences of individually battered women. Their major contribution has come as a result of this struggle. Their work focuses on the important areas of the institutionalized ideologies concerning wife battering and the interface between the institutions of social control and the women themselves. The major theme of their writings is that the patriarchal structure of society is dominated by a pattern of subservience for women that creates and perpetuates the problems of battered women. Dobash and Dobash (1977) state,

'Love, honour and obey' is the lot of women in marriage. Care for him, look up to him and do as he wishes--or else. Implied in that vow is the threat of rightful control over those who fail to obey; control may take the form of coercion. Thus, foundations of wife battering are written into the marriage contract. The church as well as the state are complicitous in this.

The struggle for battered women is not just a struggle for women who are beaten by their husbands or a struggle against the men who beat their wives; it is a struggle against the structure and ideologies which support wife beating and the oppression of women in marriage. These ideologies have developed over a long period of time and have become so much a part of the culture that it took hundreds of years before wife beating was uncovered and defined as a social problem about which something should be done (Dobash and Dobash, 1977:403).

The studies reviewed in this section provide strong evidence that social structural factors such as socialization patterns, structural inequality in the class structure as evidenced in employment status, the relative position of women in society, and the general tolerance of violence--in particular the tolerance of violence against women--are primary causal factors contributing to rates of wife beating.

#### Process Studies of Wife Battering

As stated earlier, the question of 'how' rather than 'why' reflects a different way of thinking about social behavior. This approach is based on the assumption that linear cause-effect analyses cannot capture the complexity of mutually-causal relationships. The following studies speak to the question of how violence develops over time to the level of wife battering, and how the wife battering becomes an ongoing pattern resistant to change.

As noted earlier, families have structural features that make violence more likely to occur there than between strangers. There are also processes within intimate or family relationships that influence how violence occurs. Goode (1969, 1971) presents a theoretical model that includes both social structural variables and interpersonal-process variables. Goode views the family as a social system that is relatively well-defined by rules and structured power. Goode (1971) views resources as the exchange basis for intimate relationships. Resources such as economic power, status, and prestige, as well as personal resources such as personal attractiveness, form the exchange relationship between intimates. All social systems ultimately depend on force or its threat, and the family is no exception, according to Goode. The more resources an individual has, the more force he or she can command, but the less he or she will use force. The fewer resources an individual has, the less force he or she can command, but the more he or she will use force. Goode suggests that men who lack sufficient resources to hold the socially-prescribed dominant role in the family will use physical force to compensate for the lack of resources.

Family systems do maintain a set of rules, as Goode (1971) mentions. These rules define what behavior is acceptable and what is not acceptable within the relationship. Hotaling (1979) presents a propositional inventory based on attribution theory in which he demonstrates that families

have structural features that increase the probability that rule violations will lead to attributions of aggressiveness on the part of the rule violator. Once this attribution of aggressiveness has been made, the subsequent expectation of aggressive behavior tends to increase the incidence of violence. Hotelling shows how attribution processes demonstrate how interpersonal violence leads to the perception that subsequent rule violations are aggressive, and to further interpersonal violence because the tolerance level has been lowered.

These propositions are consistent with the propositional theory of family violence put forth by Straus (1973). The Straus paper outlines a general systems approach to family violence. Violence is viewed as part of the social interaction processes within the family. Out of eight propositions included in that paper, four are particularly relevant here.

First, "Most violence is either denied or not labeled as deviance" (Straus, 1973:112). Violence occurs in most families, but the victims do not define themselves victims at first, and the family system tends not to deal with the violence as a serious problem.

Second, "Violent persons may be rewarded for violent acts if those acts produce the desired results" (Straus, 1973:112). The victims may inadvertently be reinforcing the violent behavior. Patterson et al (1972) observed parents'

reinforcement of the violence of their highly-destructive boys. Just as the parents were not aware of reinforcements for such behavior, women in a battering relationship may not be aware of how they reinforce violent behavior. As a result, violence may become a stabilized pattern in the relationship.

Third, "Use of violence, when it is contrary to family norms, creates conflict over the use of violence to settle the original conflict" (Straus, 1973:112). Once violence has occurred, the rule violation precipitates further conflict which increases the likelihood of more violence.

Fourth, Straus suggests that as violence becomes known to others outside the family, the person labeled as violent may be encouraged to play out the role through the development of a self-concept as "violent;" using the same reasoning, the person labeled as victim may be encouraged to play out that role.

Pagelow (1977) presents a process model that follows this same theoretical direction. The theoretical model includes three components: Model I explains the causative factor of woman battering, focusing primarily on the manifestation of traditional ideology in a broad range of internalized beliefs in acceptance of the "rightness" of the patriarchal-hierarchical order of the social structure. Model II explains the characteristics of the interacting male and female which determine if battering will occur. Model III explains systematic, repeated batterings as the result of

processes within the system similar to the processes that have been outlined by Lemert (1967) to explain secondary deviance.

On the basis of a study of twenty battered women who came to a shelter, Pagelow has developed four theoretical propositions to explain processes that lead to secondary battering: 1) The greater the acceptance by the weaker partner of battering as a proper response to stress and the more intense the traditional ideology, the greater the likelihood that battering will occur; 2) The greater the willingness to invest in conjugal relationships and the more intense the traditional ideology, the greater the likelihood that battering will not result in retaliation or termination of a conjugal relationship; 3) The more one partner responds to stressful situations by battering, the greater the willingness of the other to invest in conjugal relationships, and the more intense the traditional ideology of both, the more likely battering will occur, and 4) The less likely retaliation due to battering, the more likely the batterer will continue, the longer the battering continues, the more frequently it occurs and the greater its intensity.

In this theoretical model Pagelow (1977) outlines both causative factors and process variables. She shows how violence can become, over time, a patterned behavior, and also how the response of others in the family system can affect that pattern.

Walker (1977-78, 1979) makes two important contributions to the study of how wife battering occurs. The first is the description of a three-stage battering cycle, and the second is the application of the psychological concept of "learned helplessness" to the situation of battered women.

Walker's three-stage model consists of, first, the tense period of conflict escalation leading to the battering episode--the second stage--and then finally to a third stage of reconciliation marked by the man's contriteness and pleas for forgiveness and the woman's return to him. Walker maintains that this third stage provides the woman with the reinforcement to stay in the relationship.

Walker's application of "learned helplessness" also helps explain the process that lead to women staying for long periods of time in relationships in which they are being beaten. She says that women learn that their voluntary attempts to change what was happening to them had no effect, and that with such aversive stimuli the motivation to respond in an active way decreases. The subsequent passive behavior is due to a motivational deficit similar to that seen in rats whose reinforcement schedules have been arranged so that they never learn that they can control their environment through purposeful behavior.

Together these studies emphasize 1) the relationship between intimates includes exchange processes that affect violence; 2) the attribution of aggression can lead to further escalation of conflict and violence; 3) the process of

adaptation to violence over time first is marked by denial, and later by escalation and labeling; 4) secondary battering as a pattern results from primary causative factors combined with the interaction processes between the man and the woman; and 5) the pattern of long-term battering is related to a cycle that reinforces staying for the woman, and also a process that decreases individual motivation of women to respond actively because they have learned nothing that they do will help them.

The studies of how battering occurs have implications for how the battering relationships change or remain stable over time, but there are both structural and process factors that also affect change and stability. These factors will be explored in the next two sections.

#### Forces That Lead to Stability of Wife-Beating Patterns

Processes of negative feedback inhibit change in systems. In the following sections, forces within society and within family systems that tend to inhibit change will be discussed. The forces that inhibit change increase the likelihood of established wife battering patterns remaining stable.

Tracing the rise of the movement for services for battered women, Dobash and Dobash (1977) found one of the most serious obstacles to change was that the problem was defined as an individual problem and not as a problem with



the structure of the family or of society. Dobash and Dobash view wife abuse as a form of institutionalized control that is sanctioned by the structure of society. They conclude,

Men may control their wives for many reasons. The most common ones are sexual jealousy--related to her status as property, and lack of compliance with his personal and household demands--related to her status as oppressed labourer. The agencies of the state, both legal and social, do not intervene in husbands' attempts to control their wives or they do so ineffectively because the exploitation and oppression of women in the home serves the purposes of the State and the prevailing economic order. The structure of the system is such that women must be controlled. How better to achieve this than on a one-to-one basis in the privacy of the home? (Dobash and Dobash, 1977: 413).

The laws are being changed to condemn rather than condone wife battering. Behavior that is governed by long-standing cultural norms, however, does not change as quickly as the writing on the pages of statute books. Wife battering continues to be implicitly condoned by at least some segments of the general public, the law enforcement and judicial officers (Field and Field, 1973; Dobash and Dobash, 1978; Straus, 1976).

Dobash and Dobash (1978) reveal that the institutional supports of violence against women are deeply embedded in social processes, and that there is a strong interrelationship between the institutions of law, economy, and government, as well as services such as the medical and therapeutic professions. A summary of findings follows.

### Regarding Nonreporting

Although very few women maintain a veil of complete silence throughout the years that they are beaten, most of them only report an infinitesimally small number of actual assaults they receive. For example, the 100 women we interviewed reported a total of approximately 32,000 assaults throughout their collective married lives, and yet only 517 of these assaults, about 2% were ever reported to the police (Dobash and Dobash, 1979: 3).

Women do not report the violent treatment they are receiving because of factors which center on themselves, on their husbands and upon the agencies themselves. First, the woman's belief that the violence will cease makes outside help seem unnecessary and her own internalization of ideals of privacy, respectability, shame and guilt operate to inhibit reporting because of fear that she might be blamed or stigmatized. Second, the man's conceptions of privacy, respectability, shame and guilt prohibit him from seeking help for himself and he in turn prevents his wife from revealing the violence to others. Finally, the woman's willingness to approach others for help is affected by her initial perception of the ability and willingness of various individuals or agencies to give help, and later, by her experiences with them (Dobash and Dobash, 1979: 4).

### Regarding the Helping Professions

It is possible, for example, for an agency's policies to explicitly reject wife beating, and yet at the same time to actively support the type of marital relationship which reinforces the violence and forms the foundations of its continuation.

It is also possible for the policies of an agency to overtly reject any form of wife beating, and yet, for the particular practitioner involved to ignore, excuse or justify it when they have a case before them. The net results of either ignoring a beating or of excusing or justifying it are to merely set limits upon how far a man can actually go when hitting his wife and to specify the conditions under which he can get away with it. Underlying this Marquis of Queensbury approach to wife beating is a basic failure to clearly and unequivocally reject the idea that a man has a right to dominate and control his wife (Dobash and Dobash, 1979: 6).

### Regarding the Medical Profession

In our own study we found that 75% of the women who went to the doctor received only treatment for their physical injuries although most of them had either eventually told their doctor about the source of the violence or suspected that he knew. Only 25% of these women ever discussed the beatings with the doctor and on such occasions he usually took a neutral or non-committal stance and just listened. Although advice was sometimes given, referrals were seldom made (Dobash and Dobash, 1979: 8).

### Regarding the Prescription of Tranquilizers and Anti-depressants

In our study, we did not specifically ask women if they had been given drugs, but 40% of the 87 women who went to the doctor spontaneously mentioned that they had received drugs (Dobash and Dobash, 1979: 12).

### Regarding the Psychiatric Profession

Despite the rather widespread agreement among researchers in the field of family violence, including many psychiatrists, that men who beat their wives, like parents who beat their children cannot be usually characterized as pathological, there is a widespread 'common sense' explanation that people who commit such acts, and sometimes even their victims, are by definition mentally ill, inadequate, deprived or in some way incomplete and that no explanation beyond these personal inadequacies need be sought. Underlying this belief in individual inadequacy or pathology is the implicit assumption that the legal, political, cultural, family and economic institutions in our society contribute little or nothing to the violence (Dobash and Dobash, 1979: 14-15).

Dobash and Dobash go on to review the psychiatric literature that places emphasis on the mother-child relationship and the mother's responsibility for the creation of problems in the child and in the adult personality. They hypothesize that this basic psychiatric perspective leads

to the view that women are the cause of all violence, even that directed at them. As the reviewers state,

The diagnostic skills of professional helpers have been traditionally derived from Freudian psychoanalytic theory. The psychoanalytic perspective is not the only imagery brought to casework but because it reinforces conventional wisdom about the relationships between men and women it has compelling appeal. Elevated to the status of explanation, it identifies women as masochistic and/or provoking creatures who either seek or incite violence from men (Dobash and Dobash, 1979: 27).

The results of their analysis of the institutional supports for violence against women indicate that even though one man may be violent to one woman, the institutionalized patterns of societal interaction inhibit change in systems. If women who are being battered do try to change the pattern by seeking help and receive negative feedback from professionals when they do, then little change will occur.

The failure of police and social service agencies has also been documented by other researchers (Nichols, 1976; Parnas, 1977; Fields, 1976; and Bard and Zacker, 1971). These studies document the policies of police and family agencies that lead to the negative feedback women receive when they seek help. Bard and Zacker (1971), however, discuss the problem from the perspective not just of the women, but also from the police side. There are constraints on police in crisis intervention programs that make the police helpless in preventing impending violence. This suggests that the forces that lead to stable patterns of violence

both within individual families and within society are not emanating from the service sector, but rather that the service sector reflects the larger social conditions.

Cross-cultural analysis of violence in societies indicates that the level of violence is related to the technico-economic conditions and the ecological realities of the society (Straus, 1975).

These analyses suggest that stability in patterns of wife beating is maintained by the influence of social structural conditions on individual families. The processes that go on within families is mutually causally linked to the larger social structural conditions, so that families not changing also gives positive feedback to the societal practices. Neither the families nor the social structural patterns change in this situation.

#### Forces That Lead to Change in Patterns of Wife Beating

Without new input into a system that has become stabilized in a pattern of wife battering, little change is likely to occur. Let's look, therefore, at how new input can come into the system. There are basically two conditions that could bring this about: 1) change in society, or 2) change in the boundaries of the family to include new information.

Inhibitions against violence and aggression are related to social factors (Megalee, 1972). The stimulus for

inhibiting aggression can be the early learning environment in the family. As Gelles and Straus (1979) pointed out, the early learning the child now gets does not inhibit aggression, but rather teaches it. Any change in patterns of wife beating fundamentally would have to change patterns of child rearing.

Change can occur over time in learned patterns of behavior if the reinforcement schedule also changes (Bandura, 1973). Bandura indicates that there is evidence that aggression can be reduced through sanctions. Sanctions can take the form of legal restrictions or of informal norm enforcement.

The lack of sanctions for wife abuse prevents any real change. If the social structure accepts wife abuse as normal or at least tolerable (Straus, 1977-78; Dobash and Dobash, 1977; Martin, 1976), any change has to come from groups that oppose the normative structure. The women's movement has provided the ideological basis and the power that comes from collective effort to oppose the normative acceptance of wife battering.

Groups associated with the women's movement and some social service agencies have opened an increasing number of shelters in the United States. Whereas in 1973 there were fewer than five shelters in this country, there are now at least three hundred programs to provide services for battered women.

Shelters are a force that encourages change in battering relationships primarily because it changes the opportunity-structure of the woman. They illustrate how the opportunities in the social structure impact upon the family. Bell (1977), Marcovitch (1976), and Gelles (1977) look at the success of shelters in aiding women. Gelles (1977) points out that women realize they have few places to go and few resources to aid them in their flight. Gelles recommends that shelters be looked at as temporary measures, and that changes on the larger scale of the society be made. These broader scope changes include legal statutes, police training, social attitudes towards violence, and the status of women in society.

Battered women are often in a state of "learned helplessness" (Walker, 1977-78; 1979) which deprives them of the motivation to change their own situation. When women are offered help with a problem of battering, however, some do in fact leave or change their relationships in other ways. The internalized lack of motivation postulated by Walker (1977-78; 1979) is the psychological condition that has existed when no help or services are provided.

The literature on battered women includes many calls for provision of services, support groups, and shelters, but there have been no studies that focus on process within battering relationships when women are getting support.

This implies that during periods of transition supportive interpersonal relationships minimizes the negative consequences.

Change within systems may also produce negative consequences. As Straus (1973) points out, the more the violent behavior becomes acknowledged and labelled, the more violence is likely to occur. Change to bring the violence to the attention of others and seek help may, therefore, not decrease violence, but rather increase it.

Together these studies indicate that change in the social structure is linked to change in patterns of wife beating within families. Socialization that discourages the use of violence may lead to greater inhibitions to violence. Sanctions at the societal level will decrease violence. Increased opportunities for women to get help when beaten alters the power structure within the family and may thus lead to change. The presence or absence of confidantes affects the amount of change in well-being of people going through life crises.

All of these factors that affect change represent positive feedback to some new patterns of behavior. Positive feedback tends to increase the likelihood that the behavior will occur again, but positive feedback is not to be confused with positive in the evaluative sense. Positive feedback to new behavior, such as the woman seeking help, may lead to change, but that change is not necessarily positive in the evaluative sense.



The purpose of this chapter has been to review the theoretical area of system's analysis emphasizing studies of conflict, and review studies of wife battering, discussing how these studies can contribute to a system's model of stability and change. This review places the present study in a theoretical and empirical context. The next chapter discusses the research methodology used to gather data on wife battering that will be analyzed using a system's theory framework.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Process studies of wife battering are rare. One reason is that process analysis requires a longitudinal perspective. Another is that most studies have tended to use a single linear model of wife battering rather than focus on dynamic causal process. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research design for the study of 31 battered women's histories, and the in-depth analysis of process within three cases. In addition, I will present the analytical techniques used for the three in-depth cases.

#### Formulation of Study

A family is a system in which people act, react, adapt, and develop patterns of interaction that are relatively stable over time. Systems theory provides an abstract formulation of the processes of adaptation and change within systems. The problem is to use this theoretical formulation to analyze family patterns over time at the level of concrete reality.

The impetus to study families using systems theory principles as a guide came before the concrete opportunity to study the histories of battered women. For the past three years my theoretical interests have progressively been

channeled in the direction of taking a systems theory approach.

My interest in family also preceded the actual study. I had been a member of a Task Force on Family Violence, a State Coalition for Battered Women, and was involved in seminars and other research in this area.

In December of 1977 the founder and past director of a shelter in a city in the Northeast part of the country contacted the University of New Hampshire and Dr. Murray Straus. The director wanted someone to do a research project on the problem of wife beating at a shelter that was scheduled to open in approximately three weeks from the time of her call. I was asked if I was interested. The advantages of this opportunity immediately seemed obvious to me. This proposed sample could not fulfill the research criteria of being randomly chosen and representative of all women who had been beaten by their husbands or living partners, but this sample could help fill a void in the literature of wife beating. Population statistics and group characteristics and rates have been researched with a nationally representative sample (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1979). The processes of interaction that surrounded the violent acts, however, had not been adequately explored. It was clear at the time that a study which focused on the processes of interaction within the family could provide insight into the dynamic aspects of wife beating. This also was an excellent opportunity to

study how the man-woman relationship worked as a system. The sequence of acts and reactions surrounding each violent incident could provide qualitative data to analyze the feedback patterns that control behavior. Specifically, this could lead to an understanding of the relationship between those feedback patterns and further violence.

The way a family interacts at the time of significant events such as crises has been regarded as an indicator of the basic structure and dynamics of that relationship (Lewis, 1959; LeMasters, 1957; Caplan, 1960). Recently LaRossa (1977) used the interaction surrounding a first pregnancy to analyze the conflict and power within marriage. In that study of thirteen couples over a six-month period, LaRossa's analysis goes beyond how the husband-wife system works during the first pregnancy. He found evidence of ongoing patterns of conflict that marked the husband-wife system in general.

It was likely that the women who would come to the shelter had been involved in a pattern of repeated violence. This offered the opportunity to focus on how that pattern became a stable part of their interaction with the men.

These women also made an attempt to change that pattern by coming to a shelter. On the theoretical level this offered the opportunity to study how patterns do or do not change and to discover how structural conditions and interaction processes were related to change in a family system. On the concrete level this offered the opportunity to examine

many questions practitioners and policy makers wanted to know. For example: Who goes to shelters? What happens to the women as a result of going to shelters? Why do women sometimes return to the men even after making a decision to come to a shelter? What happens if they do return to the men? What happens if they go out on their own? Do they again get involved in similar relationships?

Given all of these opportunities, naturally I decided to take on this research project. At the same time I accepted that this would be an intensive study of a small number of women's histories.

I quickly went about developing the outline of an exploratory intensive study. A major concern was to develop an appropriate research tool in time to include the first women who came to the shelter.

The women in the sample had all voluntarily sought help at a shelter for abused women. The sample is therefore a clinical sample. Data from clinical samples cannot be generalized to larger populations. This sample does not represent either all women, or all women who have been abused. In addition, data from clinical samples is limited because what is to be explained (the dependent variable) does not vary, therefore, comparison is precluded. In this case all of the women had been beaten, and we cannot compare those who have and have not been beaten to distinguish the processes that lead to or do not lead to violence.

When longitudinal analysis is part of the research design, and no control group is analyzed, there is the possibility that findings at time 2 were due to factors other than the treatment (Campbell and Stanley, 1966). Age, the passage of time, and social change occurs in the period between time 1 and time 2 and each of these factors may contribute to the change seen at time 2. Social change may be particularly important in this study, because the period during which the study was done was a period in which the women's movement became more prominent than it had been, and the expected effects of the women's movement may be the same as some of the results found in this study.

The best way to prove any facts about social life is to investigate the phenomenon at different times, with different research methods. The present research is one way of looking at the processes overtime that lead to wife battering. If other researchers find the same results using other research populations and methodologies, then that will provide the validity that is needed to assert that we know what leads to wife battering.

#### Sample

Intensive studies of small numbers of subjects presents an opportunity to get qualitative information which large surveys cannot because of practical considerations. In the present research no attempt is made to provide general statements about a wider population by studying a sample.

It is impossible to say, for example, that because 45% of this sample were married to or lived with more than one man that 45% of all women that are beaten have been married to or lived with more than one man.

Other research projects have had to struggle to get agency cooperation, access to subjects, a confidential setting, and subject's approval. I was fortunate to be in a position where the agency was supportive, and the subjects presented themselves in a setting which made interviewing relaxed and confidential. In addition, subject's consent to being interviewed was enhanced by the fact that shelter staff arranged the interviews and assured them of the confidential nature of the data.

The trust that the women had in the staff easily generalized to include my work. All women who came to the shelter in the first six months it was open were interviewed with the exception of a few who were not interviewed because of timing. This means that those who stayed less than twenty-four hours or, in some cases, forty-eight hours, and two who left before a mutually-agreeable time could be arranged, were not interviewed. The women who left in a short period of time are likely to be different from the ones I did interview. They did not become involved in the actual program of shelter, services, and referral.

#### Data Gathering Procedures

The design for data gathering included: 1) struc-

tured interviews when the woman first came to the shelter, and six months after a woman left the shelter; 2) focused but unstructured interviews with three of the cases that were taped and transcribed.

### The First Interviews

After a woman had been at the shelter for two to four days, a time was arranged when she and I could be alone and free from other demands for several hours. At first I explained who I was, what I generally was trying to do, that she was free to participate or not, and that she was free to not answer any questions or stop if she wished at any time. Many women expressed some initial hesitation. Others thought I really wouldn't want to listen to their whole story, but generally the attitude was "I will do anything if it will help other women who might not have to go through what I did." Many voluntarily said I could use their names. Most, however, were concerned with confidentiality. This was partially because they were afraid some of the information might affect their A.D.C. payments. Others feared that their children might be taken from them.

All subjects were told that no information they gave me would be revealed to any state agency, and that none of the material would ever be identified by name of subject. The subjects did sign an informed consent form. Those forms have been separated from the rest of the interview material and placed in a sealed envelope. When the taped interviews



were edited for inclusion in this text, all identifying details were changed to protect confidentiality of the subjects.

Before each interview I usually spent a period of time drinking coffee and relaxing in general conversation. In many cases a closeness developed with the women based on feelings of intimacy that develop when people share aspects of their personal lives. I was often asked about myself, my past, my children, and my opinions about their situations. I did tell women about myself if they were interested. I did not give opinions about their problems during the interviews, however, because I was sensitive to the possibilities of distortion. This was awkward at times because the women were at an intense period of making assessments and decisions. If a woman did need support, feedback, or counseling, I made sure this became known to the staff.

The first interviews were divided into two sections. The complete questionnaire for the first interviews appears in Appendix A. The first section (questions 1-83, Appendix A) included background information, specifics about their home situation, their early childhood, the employment histories of the women and their men, a list of problems the couple experienced, questions about family power, marital satisfaction, presence of confidantes, duration of relationship with confidantes, and the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1979) which include a list of ways to resolve arguments. This last procedure requires subjects to indi-

cate how often events that are all possible ways of resolving or dealing with conflict were used in the preceding year. The Conflicts Tactics Scales were presented for parent-child interaction (questions 78-80, Appendix A) and for woman-partner interaction (questions 81-83, Appendix A), but only the woman-partner interaction was analyzed for this research. The specific items from the Conflict Tactics Scales that relate to violence are:

- k. Threw something at the other one
- l. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other one
- m. Slapped or spanked the other one
- n. Kicked, bit, or hit with a fist
- o. Hit or tried to hit with something
- p. Beat up the other one
- q. Threatened with a knife or gun
- r. Used a knife or gun
- s. Other (used to record any additional violent acts)

In the second part of the first interview I told the women I wanted to talk about the history of violence in the relationships. I asked them to think back to the first time there was any hitting, kicking, pushing, throwing, or anything else they considered violent. When they could recall that specific incident, I asked questions to get a complete picture of that episode (questions 88-105, Appendix A). These included: 1) an account of the incident; 2) what, if any, important events immediately preceded the incident; 3) the status of their relationship at the time; 4) questions about guilt, anger, whether they thought at the time that it was an isolated incident that would not happen

again or if it was part of a pattern of violence, and their willingness to forgive and forget; 5) who or what they thought was responsible for the incident; 6) impact of the incident on the woman, the children, and the relationship at that time; and 7) what happened immediately following the incident--that is, if anyone called was asked to help handle the situation, if they or their man left, and when things returned to normal, if they did.

After a woman finished describing the first incident in detail, I asked the same questions for two other incidents of violence--the most recent incident (questions 106-123, Appendix A), and one incident the woman remembered as being particularly important (questions 124-141, Appendix A).

All of these questions focused the interview, but many times additional information was covered in the interviews and I freely made notes of direct quotations.

### The Second Interviews

Six months after the women first came to the shelter, I contacted them and asked if we could arrange a time to get together for a follow-up interview. Most of the women were glad to hear from me and anxious to talk. I learned as I was going along that I had become quite important to many of the women. I attribute most of this to the fact that our talking was for many the first time anybody

had taken the time and interest to listen to their complete stories.

Other women posed more of a problem for the follow-up interview. Four had completely disappeared and had left no forwarding address. Two were evasive and elusive, and one was living in such terror that any attempt to meet has, so far, been too risky for her. Of the twenty-four completed follow-up interviews, several had moved--some out of state. Where I had to, I traveled to where the women were. If they could, we did the interview at the shelter.

The structure of the second interview was similarly divided into two parts. The first included questions on their present situation, changes in employment or their economic situation, questions about their children, and the details of what had happened since they left the shelter. At this time I also repeated each of the Conflict Tactics Scales. The second part of the interview included the same sets of questions as the first interview, and asked about any violent incidents that had occurred in the preceding six months. The questions from the second interview schedule that were not repeated from the first interview are presented in Appendix B.

These follow-up interviews provided data on the status of the women at the six-month follow-up period. Data from these interviews provided the basis for comparison of pre-shelter and post-shelter levels of violence for the whole sample and the follow-up portion of that sample,

and also for a comparison of those who did return to the partner and those who did not return. This is the only study of women who have come to shelters which examines both the time they came and then reexamines after a significant period of time had elapsed.

### The Taped Interviews

The two structured interviews, when they first came to the shelter and six months later, provided a complete set of data for comparison on selected factors. The structured interviews did not, however, capture the complexity of the system processes that affected the stability and change in patterns of violence between the man and woman. To get this information, I decided to collect "personal documents". Bogdan and Taylor use the phrase "personal documents" to refer "to an individual's descriptive, first-person account of the whole or a part of his or her life or an individual's reflection on a specific event or topic" (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975: 96). The "personal documents" I chose to collect were long, open-ended interviews that were recorded and transcribed verbatim. During those interviews which lasted approximately four hours, the women recounted their personal histories and the histories of their relationships. The purpose of the open-ended interviews was to collect data to construct life histories. Special techniques and procedures must be used to get this type of personal document, however.

### Choosing the Subjects

The first problem was to choose the subjects to be interviewed. There were basically three criterion on which subjects were chosen. The first was the practical consideration of reaching people who would have the time and would be willing to conduct another interview. The second was an assessment of those people who could verbalize clearly both their past experiences and their feelings. The third was those people who had had the kinds of experiences of interest to readers. Some of those experiences included: 1) a history of abuse during childhood; 2) a long-term relationship with the man, a relationship in which the pattern of violence had become stabilized; 3) an attempt to leave the man; 4) possible return to the man; 5) attempts to live on her own; 6) multiple violent relationships. I had information about these experiences for all the research subjects, and in selecting for the taped interviews, I tried to choose women who together had had most of those experiences. Not all of the women had had each of the experiences, and the taped interviews are not meant to represent either typical cases or cases that demonstrate any particular typology.

### Approaching the Subjects

I approached each of three subjects again to explain that I was interested in having them tell their stories in their own words while being tape-recorded. I explained

that the material might be used either as a published article or as part of a book. I assured them their names and any details that might identify them would be changed to protect their confidentiality. None of the three women showed any resistance, partly because I had established rapport and some degree of confidence during the earlier interviews.

I also wanted each of the women to review what had been written about them and to have a veto choice if anything seemed either wrong or too revealing. Only one of the women--Paula--actually did that. I chose not to pursue the issue with Debbie because I was afraid that if I contacted her again I would endanger her. As for Elizabeth, she has not let anybody involved in the shelter program know where she is since the taped interview. Pursuing her further would require going to her social worker to get information, and I have chosen not to do that.

#### Structuring the Interviews

Two of the women were interviewed in their homes. The other was interviewed in a convent where she was staying temporarily. Because I had already heard most of their stories, I could ask about areas we had talked about after some initial small talk. After that brief review, the women recounted their history. If they skipped something important, I asked directly about it. When they recounted

details, I also asked about their feelings and the surrounding circumstances.

To begin the interview, I made a statement such as, "Let's just start with how you met Bill." When the woman began to talk, I asked her questions such as "Where was he?", "Has he worked at all?", and "Did he know you were pregnant?" to clarify specific points in the interview. When a woman touched on a subject as her early family background or on his early family background, I asked specific questions about them such as "And all this time he was drinking. Your father?" I had previous interview material in which the women had indicated specific information such as that one particular incident was most significant for them. Usually women spontaneously mentioned the details of specific incidents in the course of giving her history, but if I wished to bring an issue up I would ask her to tell me directly about that specific incident, for example, "There was one time you told me about that seemed really critical to you. The time that you ended up in the woods some place." Just mentioning an incident prompted the woman to talk about that issue.

During the interviews I watched the women carefully and listened for areas I should probe further. Always I tried to be non-evaluative. There were times, however, when I would say I agreed with their evaluation. That was to assure the women that what they were saying had validity.



All of the taped interviews were transcribed verbatim. I then read the transcript while listening to the tapes to check for accuracy and subtleties of meaning which might not come through in the actual words alone.

With the data from the two interview schedules and the tapes of three interviews, the next task was data analysis.

### Data Analysis

Data from the battered women in this sample are analyzed and presented in two formats. The material from the taped interviews is presented in autobiographical form --in the words of the women themselves. My interpretations and analysis follow their recounting of their histories.

### Analysis of Structured Interviews

Chapter IV presents demographic and social characteristic data and data on the level of violence.

The information on the incidence and frequency of violent acts at time 1 and time 2 was obtained through the use of the Conflict Tactics Scale. The scale is acceptable to respondents, reliable, and seems to have both concurrent and construct validity (Straus, 1979). Scoring is done in two ways. The first is to count the number of cases that report any act regardless of the frequency category. This provides the incidence for each of the eight violent acts. A Violence Index can be computed by scanning all items K to R to get the percent of respondents reporting

one or more acts of physical violence, and an Abuse Index can be computed by scanning all items N to R to get the percent of respondents reporting one or more acts serious enough to cause physical harm.

The second scoring technique is to compute the mean frequency of occurrence for each item. Again, these scores can be combined to get a mean frequency score for the Violence Index (items K to R) and for the Abuse Index (items N to R). Mean frequencies are computed on those actually engaged in each act, omitting those with zero scores.

Chapter IV also includes percentages of respondent's answers to questions about circumstances surrounding three incidents of violence. The questions were chosen to tap issues reported by other studies I considered pertinent. To provide a measure of change over time in those issues, I asked the same questions about each of the three incidents.

One set of questions focused on who was responsible for the abuse (woman, partner, both, environment). The answers to this set were recorded verbatim and later coded. The coding scheme was based on Janoff-Bulman's (1978, in press) work on both rape and depression victims. She coded responses to questions which asked who was responsible for the rape or depression, according to whom, and according to whether or not they were characterological or behavioral attributions. Characterological blame is when the victim blames the character or personality of the person for the

incident. Behavioral blame is when the victim blames specific behavior of the person for the incident. Behavioral attributions tend to be more situationally-determined. The final coding scheme allowed the woman to blame herself, either characterologically or behaviorally, both her and her partner in some mixed combination of character and behavior, or some outside aspect of the environment.

Another set of questions coded were responses to what happened after the incident. These responses I coded into one or more of four categories: 1) informal social control, which included friends, family, counselors, or medical professionals; 2) formal social control, which included police or lawyers; 3) leaving for longer than a brief period of time; and 4) no intervention.

The results of the quantitative and comparative analyses are presented in Chapter IV.

#### Analysis of Taped Interviews

Qualitative material can be analyzed in two basic ways. The first is to code the data according to themes or hypotheses. Another is to present the data in the form of life histories, or what many qualitative researchers call a person's "career". Bogdan and Taylor discuss the concept of career: "The concept career refers to the sequence of occupational and non-occupational positions a person fills through his or her life and the changing definitions of

self and the world he or she holds at various stages of that sequence" (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975: 121).

This latter approach is the one I chose to present the qualitative material. There were no hypotheses to be tested.

The taped transcripts were edited and reorganized in minor ways. I chose to edit out my questions, comments, and probes for the sake of brevity and continuity. I also edited out parts of the transcripts that were either repetitious or extraneous; for example, if a part of the transcript did not relate to the central processes in the life history of the subject, I removed it.

This method of presenting life histories does have a drawback: we can see only the woman's perspective, and not the man's. Letting the women tell their own stories in as much detail as possible is defensible on two grounds, however. First, we would not ethically and practically be able to witness the interactions taking place over a period of time in battering relationships; thus, the women's recorded histories are a special source of data. Second, a methodology based on preselection of variables can exclude factors that were important to the women who actually were battered. Preselection of variables also is guided by theoretical paradigms, and some of the dominant theoretical paradigms have been prejudicial to women (Chesler, 1971). This study thus presents the histories of battered women in their own words and in as much detail as possible.

In addition to the life histories, I have attempted in my own interpretations and analyses following each history to describe how the patterns of battering behavior evolved between the specific man and woman. To analyze the processes of development that led to the pattern of wife beating requires a framework that focuses on the dynamics of behavior in particular contexts. Looking at the patterns of interaction shifts the focus from consideration of the isolated behaviors of individuals to the effect of the individual's behavior on others, the reactions of others to the behavior, and the context in which behaviors take place.

The conceptual tools that were used to analyze the case histories of battered women are based on Buckley's (1967) application of general systems theory to sociology. Concepts of systems, system boundaries, positive and negative feedback processes, open versus closed systems, thresholds of viability within systems, smaller systems within larger socio-cultural systems, and finally, systems in transitions, were explained in Chapter I along with suggestions of the relevance of such concepts to the study of wife battering.

By looking at the entire life history, including the history of the relationship between the particular man and woman, we can see how the patterns of relating between the two people evolved into a system in which they are not related in a simple cause-effect way, but rather in a system

that structures the patterns of behavior and behavioral responses.

The analyses presented after each of the life histories focuses on how typical patterns of interaction between the man and woman became stabilized or changed over time. Systems theory principles of positive and negative feedback explain how new behavior is either rejected or supported. These concepts, therefore, are particularly important to the analysis of stability and change in patterns of wife beating.

It was helpful to organize the interpretation of the histories according to a sequence of events or status changes that clearly altered the structure of the family system. Thus, the interpretations are organized around the early family life of each woman, the beginning of the relationship with a partner, the first incident of violence, the period of time when the violence became stabilized, the point at which there was an awareness of the serious impact of the violence, and the periods of transition during which the woman was preparing to leave and actually leaving the relationship.

Categorizing the description of the life histories into periods or stages provides the basis for the development of a system's model of wife battering that is presented in Chapter VIII.

The development of the model in Chapter VIII is based on both the quantitative, comparative analyses and

the qualitative analyses. A strong case can be made for the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods in single research projects (Campbell and Fiske, 1959; Whyte, 1976; Sieber, 1973). Whyte (1976) cites examples from his own research in which the quantitative and qualitative parts have both been necessary for a complete understanding. He suggests we not regard qualitative methods as simply a way to do exploratory studies, but that qualitative methods be an integral part of more of our sociological studies aimed at empirical and theoretical understanding.

In addition to the validation from Campbell and Fiske, Whyte, and Seiber for the integration of different methods in theory development, I also have relied on Scherer, Abeles, and Fischer's (1975) discussion of a general model of the process of conflict. In their discussion, they describe a general model of a natural history of conflict including five stages: Stage 1, Precompetition; Stage 2, Competition; Stage 3, Conflict; Stage 4, Crisis; and Stage 5, Resolution--or Revolution. Their analysis of this five-stage model emphasizes the dynamic processes of positive and negative feedback within systems over time. They maintain that the way to develop a general system's theory of conflict is to gather many accounts of real-life conflict to develop "models" of social conflict.

In Chapter VIII I present a model specifically to describe the processes within systems that affect patterns of wife battering. In the next four chapters, the quanti-

tative and qualitative data on which the model is based will be presented.



## CHAPTER IV

### PROFILE OF COUPLES AND VIOLENT INCIDENTS

The purpose of this chapter is 1) to describe the demographic and social characteristics of the battered wives and the batterers; 2) present information on the incidence and frequency of violent acts by both men and women at the time 1, the year prior to the women coming to the shelter, and at the time 2, six months after the women came to the shelter; 3) compare data on the events and feelings surrounding three incidents of violence that preceded the women's coming to the shelter; and 4) to present data on the women from the interviews six months after they came to the shelter.

This study is one of several studies of women who have come to shelters, but it is the only study I know of that includes follow-up interviews.

#### Demographic Characteristics

Thirty-one women were interviewed when they first came to the shelter. At that time 61% were married, 26% were cohabiting, 6.5% were legally separated, and 6.5% were divorced from their partners. The percent of the sample cohabiting is considerably higher than the 1.9% estimated for a national sample (Yllo and Straus, 1980). This is

consistent with Yllo and Straus' (1980) finding that cohabiting couples had violence rates as much as twice as high as married couples. The percent of the sample that were legally separated or divorced indicates that these legal proceedings do not protect women from being abused. This also will be shown later when we look at the data on violence from the follow-up interviews.

The average length of marriages or cohabiting relationships was 5.7 years, and the range was from four months to twenty-nine years. The overwhelming majority (68%) had been married five years or less. Among the women in the sample, 55% had only one marriage or cohabiting relationship, 35% were in the second relationship, and 10% were in a third relationship. Among the men, for 45% it was the first relationship, for 35% it was the second, and for 20% it was the third. Duberman (1975) indicates that approximately one out of six marriages includes at least one spouse who had been previously married. Compared to that figure, the sample represents the high end of the continuum. Over half (55%) included at least one member who had been married before.

Almost all of the women in the sample (94%) had children. Thirty-five percent of the women and 46% of the men had children from prior relationships. The average number of children was 2.5. The women ranged in age from eighteen to forty-seven, with a mean of 29.1, and the men ranged in age from nineteen to forty-eight, with a mean of

32.7. The men averaged 3.6 years older. The range in age differences was large. Seven of the women were older than the man from one to eleven years, in one couple they were the same age, and in twenty-four of the couples the man was older, from one to twenty-two years. The range of age differences then was from the women being eleven years older than the man to the man being twenty-two years older than the woman.

The racial and ethnic background of the couples was as follows: women, 61% Anglo-American or Eastern European, 3% Oriental, 3% full Indian, 19% partial Indian, 3% German, and 10% French Canadian; men, 48% Anglo-American or Eastern European, 3% Oriental, 3% full Indian, 13% partial Indian, 3% Portugese, 6% Italian, 3% Puerto Rican, 16% French Canadian, and 3% Russian. The religious identification of the women was 58% Protestant, 29% Roman Catholic, and 13% none.

Socio-economic data includes information separately for the men and women on education, employment, and income. Of the women, 6% were eighth-grade graduates, 23% had some high school, 39% completed high school or the equivalency examination, 6% completed high school plus technical training, 19% had some college, 3% completed college, and 3% had education from an Oriental society that does not compare to the American system. Of the men, 16% were eighth-grade graduates, 32% had some high school, 26% completed high school or an equivalency examination, 3% completed high school plus some technical training, 10% had some college,

6% completed college, 3% had a graduate degree, and 3% was from an Oriental educational system not comparable.

Thirty-five percent of the women were employed at least part-time outside the home. The types of employment included 16% technical managerial, 16% skilled worker, 8% student, and 60% unskilled workers. Of the men, 65% were employed at the time of the first interview. The types of employment included 3% professional, 13% technical managerial, 33% skilled worker, 3% student, 43% unskilled workers, and 3% had underworld connections of an unspecified type. The type of employment of most recent job was used for classification. As noted, 35% of the men were currently unemployed. In addition, 19% had been unemployed once during the relationship between the couple, 3% a few times, 6% several times, and 29% many times. This last 29% were chronically unemployed. The relationship between unemployment and violence is unclear. Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1979) found higher rates of violence among the unemployed, but the question has not been answered yet as to the direction of the causal relationship, if indeed there is one.

The types of employment represented among the men and women is reflected in the income data. Table 1 indicates the percent of the men and women in each of the income categories.

The income reported for women includes A.D.C. payments, if any. Forty-two percent of the women received A.D.C. payments or participated in the food stamp program.

Table 1. Percent of women and men by income.

Income	Women	Men
0	23%	3%
Less than \$1000	16%	3%
\$1000 - 2,499	10%	6%
\$2500 - 3,999	16%	3%
\$4000 - 5,999	19%	19%
\$6000 - 7,999	13%	13%
\$8000 - 9,999	3%	10%
\$10,000 - 11,999		3%
\$12,000 - 14,999		19%
\$15,000 - 19,000		6%
\$20,000 - 24,999		3%
Don't know		10%

The demographic characteristics of the men and women in the sample indicate that this sample is predominantly blue-collar or lower-class, with over half falling below the \$10,000 level for income. This does not mean that wife battering is predominantly a blue-collar to lower-class phenomenon. Walker (1979: 18-19) maintains "Most battered women are from middle-class and higher-income homes where the power of their wealth is in the hands of their husbands." Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1979) report that in a national survey, violence rates were higher in blue-collar and lower classes, but not to the degree that has been suspected from studies that used samples from shelters or other community agencies. Working and lower-class families have higher rates of use of community public agencies, thus

leading to a clinical fallacy when rates of violence are compared to class data.

For this sample, however, the relatively low income is important. The low income itself may produce problems that then could lead to violence. On the other hand, not all people with relatively low income engage in violent acts to the extent of these couples, so the income problems alone are not enough to explain the violence.

### Social Characteristics

Forty-five percent of the women and 41% of the men had lived with their parents all the time they were growing up. Among the reasons for not living with parents includes both deaths of one or both parents or divorce of parents. Another reason was being institutionalized.

There was violence in the family background of 71% of the men and 48% of the women. Table 2 indicates the percent of men and women who either observed their parents fighting or were abused by their parents.

Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1979) report that 11.5% of the national sample respondents had observed violence between their parents, and that 14% of the respondents had been abused as a child when hitting with an object is included in the abuse index, and 3 to 4% when that item is dropped from the index. Comparing these figures to the sample figures indicates that both men and women had been exposed to more violence as a child than would be expected

Table 2. Percent of men and women by experience of violence as a child.

Experience of violence*	Percent of:	
	Women	Men
Observed parental violence	19%	23%
Reported beatings beyond "normal" spankings	29%	48%
No violence reported	52%	19%
Don't know	3%	19%
Total	103%	109%**

\*This was asked on an open-ended question, and answers were coded.

\*\*The percentage totals add to greater than 100% because some answers were coded as both observing and being beaten.

from a random sample. This was particularly true for the men. The experience of violence in the early family provides a role model for the use of violence later, as well as the legitimization of violence as a way of relating to those we love. In addition, the experience of being exposed to parents fighting or being hit oneself may lead to anger and bitterness that makes later love relationships problematic and possibly leading to higher rates of violence.

Alcohol or alcoholism has been considered a cause of wife battering, or at least a concurrent phenomenon (see Coleman and Straus, 1979, for a complete discussion of this issue.) In the sample, alcohol was cited as one of a list

of problems by 10% of the women, and by the women for the men in 72% of the cases. I asked about the amount of alcohol used, the length of time alcohol had been used, and the ability to go for long periods of time without alcohol. These are not totally accepted indicators to discriminate between alcoholics and other categories of drinkers, but on the basis of this informal questioning, I estimated that 6% of the women and 35% of the men in the sample could be considered alcoholic. I do not have complete information on the presence or absence of alcohol for specific incidents of violence, but informally even those considered alcoholic were reported to be violent at times when they had not been drinking as well as times when they had been drinking. Wives of alcoholics did consider the alcohol to be related to the violence, however. Table 3 indicates that 38% of the women considered the man's drinking to be their most serious problem.

Table 3 reports the percent of the sample that answered yes to a question asking if each of the items was a problem for the two people in the relationship. Table 3 also indicates the percent of the sample considering each problem to be the most serious.

There is no data for a random sample on this problem checklist with which to compare these results, but overall the sample appears to be largely multi-problem families. Large numbers of problems do not necessarily lead to violence, however. In fact, the presence of violence is quite



Table 3. Percent citing presence of problem and percent citing each problem as most serious

List of problems*	% citing presence	% most serious
Arguments over money	86%	0%
Man jealous	90%	7%
Woman jealous	55%	7%
Man's use of alcohol or drugs	72%	38%
Things about the children	90%	21%
Sex and affection	83%	7%
Household tasks	76%	
Pregnancy or birth control	24%	
Woman's use of alcohol or drugs	10%	
Man's income or employment	59%	
Woman's income or employment	69%	
Other	79%	21%

\*Respondents could list as many of these problems as appropriate, but only one was to be listed as most serious.

likely to lead to problems in other areas--for example, sex and affection, or to the reinterpretation of some aspect of the others behavior or of interaction as problematic, that is, either's income or employment situation,

Given all of these problems and the presence of violence, it is not surprising that the marital satisfaction scores are low. Sixty-one percent reported that they were very unhappy, 3% unhappy, 13% not too happy, 3% just about average, 19% reported their feelings about their marriage were mixed, good sometimes and bad other times--some to the extreme ends of the continuum.

To get a crude measure of marital power, respondents were asked, "Overall, who do you think has the most say in important decisions in your household, e.g., who actually has the most responsibility for making decisions or the most influence about what decisions are made?" Fifty-two percent of the respondents reported "husband always", 19% "husband more than wife", 10% "husband and wife exactly the same", 6% "wife more than husband", and 13% "wife always". Compare these findings with the Blood and Wolfe (1960) finding that 25% of their families were husband-dominant, and only 3% were wife-dominant. On the basis of this comparison, it appears that the sample couples were much less equal in power distribution than would normally be expected. Both the "husband always" category and "wife always" category are greater than the Blood and Wolfe findings.

One explanation for the "husband always" finding may be that the use of violence acts as a way of gaining power for the men. This is consistent with the "ultimate resource theory" (Allen and Straus, 1979; Goode, 1971): the threat or use of force as a means of inducing women to grant their men more power.

The woman having the most say in 13% of the cases may also be partially explained by resource theory. Because many of the men did not work, the A.D.C. check of the women was sometimes the only family income. By being in a position of providing the only income, and also by being able to leave the man without loss of income, the woman may gain

more power in the relationship than would normally be expected.

An additional explanation offered by some of the women in the sample was that, because they had children from prior relationships, they made many decisions, particularly those involving housing and the children's expenses, without consulting the men. I suspect the higher-than-normal group of women-dominant households in the sample is the result of some combination of the two explanations. It is interesting to note, however, that even though the sample percent was higher than normal, it was still only 13%, while the male-dominant percent was 52%. The majority of the women in this sample were living in households that were dominated almost entirely by the men.

When asked if they had anyone they could talk to when they felt low or depressed, 71% of the women responded "yes." Thirty-five percent also indicated they thought their men had someone they could talk to. Twenty-nine percent responded that they did not know if their husband had someone he could talk to. I asked this question because I was interested in sources of support and the effects of having intimate friends on the violent situation. I therefore asked how long they had been close to that other person, and they responded this way: 3% "all their life", 19% "several years", 10% "about a year", 23% "several months", 6% "several weeks", and 6% "a very short time." The fact that 65% of the women had been close to this other

person a year or less, and 55% several months or less, became an important consideration because many women were spontaneously mentioning that this person also had been beaten, or that the person had helped them by talking about the beatings or by being involved in the woman leaving the man. (This finding will be discussed in Chapter VIII as a bridging relationship.) The presence of a confidante may be an important source of support for women trying to leave a battering husband. This would not be surprising in light of the Lowenthal and Havens (1968) findings on the positive impact that the presence of a confidante had on adaptation to major life changes.

Together these findings on the social characteristics of the men and women in the sample indicate that they are multi-problem families, with alcohol being a problem for 72% of the men and the most serious problem for 38% of the sample. Forty-eight percent of the women and 71% of the men were exposed to family violence as children. The women tend to be very unhappy or have mixed feelings about their marriages. The marriages tend to be skewed in the distribution of power, with male-dominant households in the majority of cases. Finally, more women than men have intimate friends, and they tend to have made those friends relatively recently.

#### Incidence and Frequency of Violent Acts

The Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1979) were

administered both in the interviews when the women first came to the shelter and in the follow-up interviews. This scale is designed to measure the percent of the sample that is violent, reported as a violence rate and mean number of violent acts actually carried out. In addition, two summative indexes can be computed to indicate the percent reporting any of the violent acts--the Violence Index--and also the percent reporting acts violent enough to cause serious injury--the Abuse Index. These indexes do not include information on the extent of an injury or any other impact the violence may have had.

The findings from the Conflict Tactics Scales administered at both time 1 and time 2 are presented here. Table 4 presents the comparison of violence rates of men and women reported during each interview.

Keep in mind that the time 1 scores represent twelve months and the time 2 scores represent six months. The two sets of scores are, therefore, not comparable, but a rough comparison can be made simply by doubling the time 2 scores.

Table 4 documents the high percent of both men and women who were violent in the year before the women came to the shelter. Just comparing the Violence Index scores and the Abuse Index scores reported here with those reported in Straus (1977) indicates that this sample is much more violent than a random sample population. Straus (1977) reports that 12.1% of the men in the American population

Table 4. Comparison of men's and woman's violence rates at time 1 and time 2.

CRT Violence Item	Men		Women	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Violence Index (K to R)	100.0	50.0	77.4	41.7
Abuse Index (N to R)	96.8	33.3	58.1	16.7
K. Threw something at spouse	80.6	12.5	35.5	12.5
L. Pushed, grabbed, shoved spouse	96.8	41.7	51.6	12.5
M. Slapped spouse	90.3	25.0	42.2	33.3
N. Kicked, bit, or hit with fist	77.4	25.0	35.5	12.5
O. Hit or treid to hit with something	67.7	20.8	41.9	4.2
P. Beat up spouse	83.9	29.2	12.9	8.3
Q. Threatened with a knife or gun	54.8	4.2	29.0	0.0
R. Used a knife or gun	25.0	0.0	16.7	0.0

committed at least one violent act in the year 1975, compared to 100% of the men in this sample. The men in the national sample had a 3.8% score on the Abuse Index (which was called the Wife-Beating Index) compared to 96.8% of the men in the shelter sample.

Comparison of the women in the two samples also indicates that the shelter sample of women was also much more violent. In the national sample survey, 11.6% of the women fell into the Violence Index, compared to 77.4% of the women in the shelter sample. In addition, while 4.6% of the women in the national sample fell into the Abuse Index, or the Husband-Beating Index, 58.1% of the shelter sample did.

Another dramatic comparison with the national sample is on the item listed "beat up spouse". Whereas in the national sample 1.1% of the male population beat up their spouses or living partners in the preceding year, 83.9% of the males in the shelter sample did. Again, in the national sample .6% of the women beat up their partners, and in the shelter sample 12.9% beat up their partners.

Comparing men and women in the shelter sample for the year preceding the women coming to the shelter--Time 1 --indicates that on every item the men had much higher incidence rates. In most cases the rates were approximately twice as high.

Comparing Time 1 and Time 2, both men and women show dramatically lower rates of violent acts at Time 2, even when Time 2 rates are doubled to account for time-span differences. The differences in the rates are the greatest when we look at the most serious acts of violence--beating up the spouse, threatening with a knife or gun, and using a knife or gun. In the six months following the stay at the shelter, 29.2% of the women were beaten up by their men, compared to 83.9% for the year preceding arrival at the shelter. Threatening with a knife or gun by the men was reduced from 54.8% to only 4.2%, and the use of a knife or gun by the men dropped from 25% to zero.

Table 4 also indicates that the rates of violence of the women was reduced following a stay at the shelter. The

reduction is not as dramatic because the original rates were approximately half of the male rates, but women threatening or using a knife or gun dropped to zero.

Violence rates were reduced in the sample from Time 1 to Time 2. We cannot, however, automatically assume that the change over time was due to the intervening stay at the shelter (Campbell and Stanley, 1966). Changes in the people themselves could have caused the reduction. As people age, there is a tendency for the violence levels to be reduced. It is not intuitively reasonable that a six month period of time in the aging process could have caused these changes, but the research design cannot prove that the change from Time 1 to Time 2 was not accounted for by age. Changes in society could also theoretically account for the change over time. Because this study was done during a period in which the woman's movement was coming to a level of general awareness, and there was also considerable attention given to the topic of family violence by the media, changes in the norms of society could have led to the reduction in violence.

As Table 4 indicates, a large percentage of the women both at Time 1 and Time 2 reported they had been violent to the man. I want to emphasize, however, that in the face of violence and almost 100% abuse rates, many women never were violent at all. Some said they did not dare hit the man because they would only be beaten worse; others indicated they would never hit anyone. This category of women who live with violent men but are not violent them-



selves may be interesting theoretically. It would be interesting to compare the levels of violence in couples where both were violent to those where only the men were violent. The case studies presented in chapters 5, 6, and 7 may provide at least some insight into this comparison. Paula and Debbie both reported they had been violent at least once, although neither of them had high rates of violence; but Elizabeth never hit back--and this becomes quite important in her story.

These violence rates reported in the text and in Table 4 indicate the percent of the sample that reported any of the listed acts of violence. The data on how frequently such acts occurred is presented in Table 5, which compares the mean number of violent acts of men and women at Time 1 and Time 2.

Table 5 indicates that in addition to a high percent of the sample being violent, the mean number of violent acts is also high. The data on the mean number of violent acts are, like the violence rate data, underestimates particularly for the men because the original scale's highest category was "more than 20 times". In many cases the violent acts occurred weekly or even more often and these reports were coded as 25 when the mean frequencies were calculated.

Comparing the data on mean number of times that acts in the Violence Index and in the Abuse Index occurred in

Table 5. Comparison of mean number\* of violent acts by men and women at Time 1 and Time 2.

CRT Violence Item	Men		Women	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Violence Index (K to R)	68.7	4.83	19.25	3.6
Abuse Index (N to R)	32.2	2.62	9.85	3.0
K. Threw something at spouse	10.1	2.30	2.70	2.0
L. Pushed, grabbed, shoved spouse	15.1	1.80	6.40	3.3
M. Slapped spouse	13.6	1.30	5.70	2.1
N. Kicked, bit or hit with fist	11.4	1.30	9.70	1.0
O. Hit or tried to hit with something	8.4	1.60	4.40	8.0**
P. Beat up spouse	9.8	1.30	6.25	1.0
Q. Threatened with a knife or gun	10.7	1.00	1.80	0.0
R. Used a knife or gun	3.5	0.00	1.20	0.0

\*Mean of those engaged in each act. Omits those with zero scores.

\*\* (N=1)

this sample with those reported by Straus (1977) indicates that this sample used violence much more frequently than did the random sample. Straus (1977) reports that the violent men in the national sample were violent to their wives or living partners "only" an average of 8.8 times in the preceding year, compared to 68.7 times for the men in the shelter sample. The men in the national sample were abusive as measured by the Wife-Beating Index 8.0 times in the preceding year, compared to 32.2 times for the men in the shelter sample.

Comparing the women in the two samples, the results indicate that the violent women in the shelter sample were violent to their men more frequently than the random sample. On the Violence Index, women in the random sample engaged in the acts included in the Violence Index an average of 10.2 times compared to 19.2 times for the shelter sample. The differences for the two samples of women are not as large as the differences when men are compared. This is even more obvious when we look at the Abuse Index. While the women in the national sample reported a mean of 8.9 abusive acts, the shelter sample reported 9.9. What is most striking here is how similar these figures are. The women in the shelter sample do not appear to abuse their husbands any more than women in the national sample. On the other hand, the men in the sample abuse their wives much more frequently.

When we look at specific Violence Items, the differences in frequencies is not quite as dramatic, but for both men and women they are still there. Table 5 shows that the men at Time 1 "beat up spouse" an average of 9.8 times. Straus (1977) reports a frequency of 5.5 for the random sample men on this item. For the item "threatened with knife or gun" the male sample reported in Table 5 had a frequency of 10.7 compared to 4.5 for the national sample (Straus, 1977). The actual use of a knife or gun is interestingly, reversed when we compare the two samples. Straus (1977) reports that a knife or gun was used--by those who

ever did this--5.3 times in the preceding year by the males, and Table 5 indicates that the males in this shelter sample used a gun 3.5 times in the preceding year.

For the women, the frequency of beating up the spouse in the national survey was 3.9 times, and for the shelter sample 6.25 times, or almost twice as large. The frequencies for "threatened with a knife or gun" and "used a knife or gun" are larger in the random sample--3.1 in the random sample compared to 1.8 in the shelter sample for "threatened" and 1.6 compared to 1.2 for "used". At least on some measures, the women in the shelter sample are less violent than women in the general population are estimated to be.

Comparing men and women in the shelter sample for the year preceding the arrival of the women at the shelter (Time 1) indicates that on four of the items, the last and most dangerous items, the men were reported to have higher frequencies than the women, but on the first four items the women--if they ever did such acts--did them more frequently. These figures could be misleading since they could be read to indicate that the men and women in the shelter sample were equally violent. That is not the case when we look at the percent who were ever violent, as reported in Table 4. We must remember that the frequencies reported in Table 5 are the mean of those engaged in each act, omitting those with scores of zero.

Comparing Time 1 and Time 2 for both men and women indicates that at Time 2 the men were reported to be much

less frequently violent than at Time 1, but the women--if they were ever violent--did not show the same reduction in frequency of violence. If the Time 2 frequencies are doubled for the women and then compared, in at least two categories the Time 2 mean is higher. On at least two of the violence items, the women's Time 2 scores are higher than scores of the men. This leaves out the Time 2 score for women on "hit or tried to hit with something" because the N of 1 makes it an unreliable representation of a sample. As mentioned earlier, these changes may not be completely explained by the interviewing stay at the shelter. Age and changes in society may account for at least some of the change.

As Table 5 indicates, women were violent to the men at Time 2 about the same number of times on the average. Again, I want to emphasize that many women were never violent at all, and the frequency scores omit all of those with zero scores. Those with zero scores are a larger percentage of women than of the men. In addition, the violent acts of men were more likely to result in injury to the women than the reverse because of size and strength differences found generally between men and women. The women in this sample were victimized by the violence of their men partners, many to the point of serious injury or attempts on their life. When we look at the impact of the acts rather than the acts alone, the victimization of the women is more obvious.

The statistics on violence rates and frequencies at Time 1 and Time 2 indicate that there have been changes over time in the violence. Later I will return to this point and try to explain some of those changes. Now, however, I want to examine another set of questions that indicate there was change over time in the circumstances surrounding three incidents of violence.

#### Circumstances Surrounding Three Incidents

The women in the shelter sample were asked a series of questions three times, one for each of three incidents of violence: 1) the very first incident; 2) one incident that stood out as important; 3) the most recent incident.

Topics discussed in this section will include: 1) status of the relationship at the time; 2) preceding incidents or stressful situations; 3) whether the women felt guilty about what happened; 4) whether the women were angry at themselves; 5) whether the women felt angry at their partners; 6) whether the women were willing to "forgive and forget" at the time; 7) whether the women thought at the time the violence was a pattern or an isolated incident; 8) attributions of responsibility for each incident, and 9) whether there was any intervention at the time.

The results of questions on these topics are presented in Table 6 for each of the three incidents. The topics will be discussed separately, emphasizing the change over the three incidents.

Table 6. Circumstances surrounding each of three incidents of violence.

Topic	% at First Incident	% at Important Incident	% at Most Recent Incident
1. Marital status			
single	13	0	0
living together	35	27	21
married	48	58	58
separated or divorced	3	16	19
2. Preceding events or Stressful Situations			
loss of job by man	10	16	17
new job of woman	13	13	3
pregnancy or birth	32	16	0
illness in family	13	10	7
problems with children	0	3	7
problems with extended family	10	3	10
move	39	16	7
woman making new friends	6	6	17
man making new friends	3	0	0
recent separation or divorce of one from another partner	19	0	0
business or job stress	0	3	10
reconciliation	0	0	3
none	0	16	24
3. Women's guilt: % yes			
	41	22	26
4. Women angry at selves: % yes			
	86	92	90

5. Women angry at partner: % yes	86	92	90
6. Willing to "Forgive and forget"? % yes	93	29	18
7. Part of pattern or isolated incident			
isolated incident	90	0	0
part of pattern	10	100	100
8. Attributions of Responsibility			
Self-behaviorally	16	10	10
Self-characterologically	3	0	7
Partner-behaviorally	16	17	14
Partner-characterologically	45	55	55
Both	6	14	3
Outside stress or external	10	3	7



## 9. Intervention

Informal social control (Family, friends, counselors, or medical help)	13	30	55	55
Formal social control (police or lawyers)	23	20	35	35
Leaving house for longer than brief period of time	3	10		58
No intervention	64	40		3

---

Marital Status at Time of Incident

When the first incident occurred, 13% of the women were neither married to, nor living with, the man. In each case, however, they later made that move. This indicates that for these women, one incident of violence did not scare them off. In addition, 10% of those who were living together when the first incidents occurred later married the man. In all, a minimum of 23% of the women increased their commitment to the man after the first incident.

Over the three incidents there is a small increase in the percent married. There is also an increase in the percent separated and divorced. This provides an indicator that separation and divorce do not insure that the woman will not be involved in violent incidents with the man.

#### Preceding Events or Stressful Situations

The events or stressful situations that occurred just prior to the violent incidents is interesting. First, the number of incidents reported decreases over time. Since people could indicate more than one incident, this is difficult to see from the table, but a total of 161 events were listed for the first incident, 99 for the second, and 95 for the third. This suggests that stress may be more important for precipitating the first incidents, but may not be as necessary to precipitate a second incident. Once violence occurs, it may be easier for it to occur again.

For the first incident, the most frequently-cited category was a move. A move could be simply to a new apartment or to a different town or state. A high incidence of moves reported here is probably related to the fact that in most cases the first incidents of violence occurred shortly after the man and woman moved in together or were married. The second most frequent category cited is a

pregnancy or birth of a child. Again, this may be related to stage of marriage, because many of the women were pregnant when they were married. Gelles (1977) and Van Stolk (1976) found that pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to abuse. Gelles outlines five major factors that may be responsible for violence during pregnancy: 1) The sexual frustration of the man; 2) the impact of the family transition and the associated stress and strain; 3) the biochemical changes in the wife; 4) prenatal child abuse; and 5) the defenselessness and dependency of the wife.

The third most frequently cited preceding situation was the recent separation or divorce of one of them from another partner. Separations and divorces are inherently stressful life changes, and the one who is coming from such a recent event may bring additional stress to the interaction in the new relationship. In addition, the previous partner may cause stress by making demands or in other ways frustrating the person trying to make a new relationship.

Preceding events for the second incident presented a pattern with fewer high frequencies for any category. Loss of a job by the husband, pregnancy or birth, a move, a woman wanting to leave the relationship, and the category "none" all were reported by 16% of the women. Loss of a job by the husband may precipitate financial problems, a loss of status, loss of self-esteem by the man, and a loss of respect from the woman. All of these may lead to

increased conflict and possibly violence. Pregnancy again was a high frequency category and was discussed above, as was "a move". The woman wanting to leave the relationship was mentioned as a precipitating incident by 14% to 16% of the women for each of the three incidents. This indicates that if a woman makes her intention to leave known, that may precipitate violence, coercive attempts to keep her in the relationship, and/or attempts to punish her.

The category "none" was not reported for the first incident, but it was reported by 16% of the women at the second incident and 24% of the women at the third incident. Over time more women could think of no preceding events or stressful situations associated with the violent incident. Over time, the violence may become a way of relating rather than the behavioral response to stress and frustration.

#### Women's Guilt

Women have been reported to feel guilty about their abuse (Martin, 1976; Gelles, 1976; Walker, 1979). In this sample, the percent of women who said they felt guilty about what had happened is not as high as I had been led to expect. Forty-one percent felt guilt at the time of the first incident, 22% at the second, and 26% at the third. In addition, the guilt they did experience seems to be related to specific things they did--going out with another man was mentioned as the reason precipitating the first incident in one case, for example. Other reasons for guilt

included guilt for staying so long, especially when children were being harmed, and also guilt for leaving when they finally did. Guilt for the actual violence did not appear to be a factor of considerable concern.

The women's guilt declines over the three incidents. I think women define their behavior as at fault less over a period of time and thus feel less guilty.

#### Women's Anger at Themselves

The women's anger at themselves did not change significantly over the three incidents. A little less than a third of the women felt some anger at themselves at the time of the incidents.

The reasons for the women's felt anger was not systematically recorded, but informal mention indicated the reasons varied from legitimate anger for some precipitating incident to anger that they were in the situation at all-- that they had not left it before.

#### Women's Anger at Man

Approximately 90% of the women felt anger at the man for the violence, and again this does not change significantly over time. I asked this question directly to get women to say if they felt anger. The direct question was necessary because so often women do not show anger. When I looked at what the women did following these incidents, I found that often, although they felt anger, they did not do angry, retaliatory acts. This could be seen in the per-

cent over time that sought help or intervention. Since the percent seeking help or intervention increases over the three incidents, this may indicate that over time women become more capable of exercising their anger.

#### Willing to "Forgive and Forget"?

This is one of the questions in which there is a sharp decline in yes responses over the three incidents (from 93 to 29 to 18). One incident was accepted and forgiven by almost all of the women, but by the time of the "particularly important" incident, which was usually after a pattern had become established, the percent who were willing to forgive and forget had been reduced to 29%. By the final incident, less than one-fifth were willing to do so. The fact that almost 20% were still willing to forgive and forget may be the surprising revelation of these figures.

#### Pattern of Violence or Isolated Incident

Almost all of the women thought that the first violent incident was an isolated incident that probably wouldn't happen again. The three cases that indicated they thought right away the violence was a pattern are interesting. One woman said she takes violence totally for granted. In her words, "Violence to me was like getting up and brushing your teeth. It would happen every day, all day." This woman had been severely physically and sexually abused by her father and also by a man in a prior relationship. Another woman who said it was a pattern also was abused as

as a child and in a prior relationship. The third woman had not been abused as a child, but she firmly believed that hitting was like eating one chip--once you start, you can't stop.

Over the three incidents, the women changed their assessment almost totally. By the second or "particularly important" incident (which was not the second that occurred) almost all of the women realized the violence was part of a pattern. None thought it would never happen again. The women reported the third incident exactly the same way. Some time before the women left the relationship they were sure violence was an ongoing pattern that probably would not change. This contradicts some of Walker's (1979) findings that after each incident the man becomes contrite and remorseful and convinces the woman it will never happen again.

#### Attributions of Responsibility

The answers to the question "Who or what do you think was responsible for this happening?" were recorded verbatim. They were later coded using an attribution theory framework that had been used in a study of rape victims (Janoff-Bulman, 1978). Overall, the women did tend to think that the man was responsible for what happened, and over time this tendency increased. In addition, the distinction between behaviorally and characterologically indicates that when they hold themselves responsible, they

were more apt to mention some aspect of their behavior that was responsible for the incident happening rather than some aspect of their characterological makeup--that is, personality or character.

On the other hand, when they did hold the partner responsible, they were much more likely to mention some aspect of his character or personality that was responsible for the incident happening than some aspect of his behavior. An example of this was when a woman said it happened because "he is sick" rather than "he just came in and belted me."

It is quite possible that the attributions of responsibility that find the man responsible--especially the man characterologically responsible--for the violent incidents may be the outcome of the attempts of the women to rationalize their leaving by blaming the man for all of the violence. To guard against this kind of problem, I asked very specifically who they had thought was responsible for the violence at the time it had happened. Reconstructing incidents detail by detail reduces the possibility of a general negative evaluation being reported for each incident.

### Intervention

After the first incident, 64% of the women reported they had not sought any intervention. This decreased dramatically over time to 40% after the second incident and to only 3% after the last incident. It is interesting to see



what kind of intervention the women report most frequently. For the first incident, 23% called the police or sought a lawyer to get some formal social control. Thirteen percent went to friends, family, counselors, or medical help, and 3% left the house for longer than brief periods of time.

Looking at the intervention after the second and last incident shows that use of formal social controls increases, but not at the rate that use of informal social controls and leaving do. Over time, the use of police and lawyers does not increase much, and this may be because of the responses (or lack of responses) the women got when they did seek help from those sources (Dobash and Dobash, 1977; Fields, 1976; Straus, 1977).

In contrast, women increasingly chose to seek help from informal sources, and also to leave the house. Because informal social control agents tend to be supportive primarily, rather than punitive, the support of those sought by women after the second and final incidents may be related to the women's decision after the last incident to leave. The possibility of this relationship will be discussed later, in Chapter 8.

The data presented on the circumstances surrounding the three incidents of violence together indicate that change takes place over time: 1) in the marital status of respondents; 2) the preceding events or stressful situations mentioned; 3) the women's guilt; 4) the women's willingness to "forgive and forget"; 5) the evaluation of the

violence as part of a pattern versus being an isolated incident; 6) the attributions of responsibility, and 7) the patterns of seeking interventions.

#### The Women Six Months Later

Twenty-four of the thirty-one women in the original sample were able to be reached and interviewed a second time. Of those women, 33% were still married to the men, 8% were still in a cohabiting relationship with the men, 25% were separated, and 33% were divorced from the men. Over half of the women (58%) had returned to the man, at least temporarily, after leaving the shelter. Sixteen percent reconciled with the man and then left again. Forty-two percent lived with the man at the time of the follow-up interviews.

Sixty-two percent of the women were employed or full-time students at the time of the second interviews, compared with 35% at the time of the first interviews. Many had gotten help finding jobs from staff at the shelter; some had gotten involved in school programs as a result of referrals made by shelter staff. Of those who had separated or had been divorced, 85% were receiving benefits from A.D.C. and/or from the food stamp program.

Of those who had separated or divorced, the mean income for the six-month period was \$2,261. Surprisingly, only 50% reported that it had been financially difficult. The fact that the other 50% was equally constrained finan-

cially and did not report it as difficult may indicate, as one woman said, "After what I took nothing could be that bad."

All but one of the women had their children, if they had any, with them. In one case the children were in foster care on a temporary basis at the six-month follow-up interview.

As indicated earlier, each woman was asked about violent incidents in the preceding six months. In 54% of the couples, there had been at least one incident. Among those who returned to the partner, 57% reported at least one incident. Of those who returned and later left, 50% reported at least one violent incident. Those who returned and did not later leave reported the highest percent of violent incidents: 62%.

Not returning, however, does not insure that one will not be involved in violent incidents. Indeed, of the women who never returned to the man, 44% reported at least one violent incident. Physical distance, separate residences, and legal restraining orders did very little to prevent further violence. In one case, the man broke into two different apartments the woman moved to, and one time raped her. The rape resulted in an unwanted pregnancy.

Overall, however, these violence rates need to be compared to the rate of women reporting 100% of violent incidents in the year prior to coming to the shelter. The

reduction in percentage of the sample reporting violent incidents does indicate that the intervention of the shelter may contribute to reducing levels of violence against women.

The shelter provides both temporary safety and supportive help from experienced staff. The shelter may also serve to equalize the power relationship between the men and the women. If the woman is in a violent relationship and does not have the resources, either by having a place to go or by having enough money or a job to finance a move, the man may have the power advantage. The provision of a place for women to go helps to reduce that power advantage.

Many of the women who returned held the option of a return to the shelter as a kind of trump card, saying to the man, in effect, "If you hit me, I am going to leave, and I also have a place to go now." This resource may be enough to change the system--in particular, the pattern of violence.

## CHAPTER 5

### DEBBIE

Debbie is 26. Her long brown hair is thick and straight. Her voice is quick and lively. She was a client at the shelter for battered women. She stole away while her husband was playing rugby. The arrangements were made very carefully, because he had previously snatched their son when she tried to leave one other time.

Debbie stayed at the shelter with her son Jessie the three-week limit, filed for divorce, got a job as a waitress, and made child care arrangements. Her ability to reorient herself suggested she was self-reliant. She did not struggle as other women often did with fear, indecision, ambivalence and pain.

When she left the shelter she moved in with another woman and her children, but this did not last. She went back to her husband.

I reinterviewed her six months later in the kitchen of her small house in the outskirts of the city under strained conditions. We started at 10:30 a.m. At 4:00 p.m. she fidgeted and reminded me that her husband would be home from work soon. I left wishing I could freely come back or call her, but I knew I couldn't. It was too dangerous.

The description that follows is Debbie's life history

told in her own words with only minor changes that would protect her identity.

### Debbie's Life History

Bob had just flown in from Cincinnati. I had gone down to the airport to pick him up. I was going with this boy, and this boy was friends with Bob's brother. They asked me one evening if I wanted to go down to the airport to pick him up, and I said yes, I'd go. That's how I met Bob. I was still in high school.

After that Bob would come to pick his brother up at school in his Datsun 240Z, which was really neat. I saw that one day and I decided to myself, "Well, I'm going to get a ride in that car." You know how impressionable you are at that age. By and by I did. I met Bob and got a ride in his Z and he liked me right away. I didn't much care for him at the time, but he was very strong-willed and he asked me out, and we started dating.

He was about 20 or 21 at that time. He had just come back here to live with his mother. His wife had just --he was married--his wife had just had a baby. He was still married when I met him, but it didn't make...it didn't seem to make any difference to me. She had just had a baby in February and he had left at the end of February that year. I think more or less just to escape from an unhappy marriage, you know, 'cause his wife was pretty dominating, and they fought too.

So school ended and I told Bob, I said, "I'm going out to Colorado," because I had a boy friend out in Colorado that had been writing to me all year long and I wanted to go out and see him. He said, "Well, I'm going out to Colorado, too, so why don't we go together?" I said, "Oh, okay, fine with me." So we went, and he convinced me to stay with him for a while, and so I did. I did the whole summer.

We spent the whole summer...neither of us worked. We just lived off more or less what he had--what his mother had given him. I didn't know what was going on, but I got pregnant and had a miscarriage in August--end of the summer. After I had the miscarriage, I packed up all my stuff and went down to see my father 'cause he had hit me, twice I think.

The first time he hit me was in Colorado...when we were...that summer he had. I don't remember the reason he did...he just....

All I remember that first time he hit me was a strong slap to the face and seeing stars, and I don't remember why it happened or anything. It just happened. I was awed. I just couldn't believe it, you know. And I don't remember the circumstances at all.

I think he had an idea I was pregnant. He knew more about that stuff than I did, because he already had a wife and a baby. I didn't really know if I was or not. I just

didn't really know. I thought maybe I was, and then again I thought, maybe I've just gained weight or something. Then one morning...early one morning I started having pain and I went to the bathroom and I had my miscarriage in the bathroom.

I decided to go down to see my father. I went down to see my father. He was in pretty bad shape, 'cause he was an alcoholic. He basically raised us all through our childhood, so he was the main influence in my life as I was growing up. He was the main parent. My mother and father were divorced and then married again and then divorced again. The first time was when I was about five and my father took us to live with my aunt and then to my grandmother who took care of us with my father. And then several years later my mom came back and they married again and stayed married for three or four years. I remember something like that, and then the divorce again and I remember feeling very grateful that they had divorced 'cause it just wasn't working out. He was...he had always been a drinker, I guess. In fact, I think that's one reason my mother was fed up with him, and I think he had a temper, too. I don't remember too much about that. I don't remember too much about my mother and father fighting, really. There were a couple of incidents I remember.

My father was strict, and we got spankings once in a while, but not often. Just normal, like any other normal child, you know. Not especially bad. From being an



alcoholic, you know, and having to accept the responsibility for three kids, I think he did a pretty wonderful job.

My last year of high school, my mother and her husband had been stationed here and they asked us if me and my sister wanted to come up here and stay for a while. Me and my sister have always wanted to travel and so we decided, ya, we will go up there and finish the next year of high school there.

When I left Bob in Colorado, he was asleep, and I had the pain and everything was gone and I just packed my bag and took my suitcases out on the freeway and got a ride.

It was an opportunity, you know, I had the miscarriage and there was nothing holding me and I wanted to go down and see my father and Bob was becoming more and more possessive as the days went by, and I just wanted to leave. I don't know why. I wanted to get away and so....

Me and my father went to see my grandmother and about a week later I see Bob getting out of the car. I had talked about my grandmother and being raised by her, and he just guessed and came out there and convinced me to come back to Colorado with him. I said, "No, I don't want to." I didn't want to but he finally talked me into it. I being so stupid and immature like I was. He said the things that he...I don't remember. He just did. I was very impressionable and....

Well, we had a lot of good times together, you know, like we uh...he taught me how to rebuild an engine on the

car, and we did a lot of fun things together. I just wanted to go see my father and just get away, you know, and then he came after me and I thought, oh boy, this is just like true love. This is really neat. He was coming after me and all this and he told me that he loved me and that he wanted to live together. For a couple of years we moved around a lot. Stayed in this one place for a while, and then I...we met some people and they impressed me and they ....It was during that time when drugs were really, you know, popular, and I was, you know, right in the middle of all that, a lot of drugs, not a lot of sex. Bob was the first and stayed the first for a long, long time. And so I just got involved in a lot of drugs and things. Weird things and different things.

I got rid of Bob and because of that he took all my clothes away from me. Then I was all by myself and didn't have any clothes, nothing, and I called my mother up and asked her if...if I could have some money and come back to live with her. I didn't have any clothes. I didn't have nothing. I had to come back here 'cause I didn't have any money or anything. So Bob, when I came back here, he was here, too, and I absolutely told him I didn't ever want to see him again...didn't want to have anything to do with him, because he took my clothes away and I was very angry with him for that. All my clothes.

When I came back up here, you know, I didn't want nothing to do with Bob, but he always pressured me. Finally

we got back together again, then we...where'd we go? I think out West again. We travelled around a lot.

We did have a lot of fun together, but you know, there were times we did break up, and then get back together, things were okay. He never...never did hit me or anything like that. Then when we finally did get married and Jessie was born, I think he became a little jealous of Jessie. I don't know. Shortly after Jessie was born, we started having troubles. That's when they really basically began. Except for that one time back in Colorado.

We decided to get married because of support for me. And boy, wasn't I mad later.

Now I was hooked.

I had never wanted to get married. Even when we did get married, we didn't want to get married. It was just circumstances.

Things went well for a while and he got this real good job. He got a real good job as a salesman, and I think that put a lot of pressure on him, because he had to be away for like five days at a time, or three days at a time or whatever and then come home and be on call still.

Whenever Bob and I were together, I've always spent a lot of time by myself. He'd always go out and do what he wanted to do and I always stayed in the apartment. Took care of the house, or worked, or something. And he very seldom worked. It should have told me something back then.

He had this salesman's job for quite a while, though. He did get laid off for nine months, and then he got called back to work. We really had a lot of plans. He was gonna make a lot of money and he would bring home checks like \$500 income a week, and we had a lot of money.

I think the job put a lot of pressure on him, and he was jealous of Jessie a little bit. At the time he was born, one thing that struck me as really odd was that I got flowers from my mother-in-law and brother-in-law, but I got no flowers from Bob, which I felt was pretty weird. Bob wasn't very attentive to me during that time either. He was always mostly concerned about himself, and what he wanted.

Then things just started getting worse and worse and worse, and he would come home from his job and start yelling at me and accusing me and....

He always has this big sexual hangup that I'm not adequate enough and I'm not aggressive enough, and I'm not feminine enough. I do realize that I'm not a very feminine woman because I was raised by my father, you know, and when you're raised by a man you just don't have, you know, he just can't contribute to your femininity at all. I do realize that. I think my father did have a lot to do with that.

I've learned to become more feminine, but my father ...he had us doing jobs that boys would be doing. We would

lift refrigerators and take them out to his truck and move stuff for him, and do all the things boys would do. He had two strong girls so he used us. We've got the strength, and we thought it was great.

It's damn good training. He taught us responsibility, and that you don't have to have a lot of money to get along. We never did have a lot of money and the clothes were never a big thing with us in our life because our father never bought us....Sometimes he would come home with a sweater or something for us, you know, and every time he did it was so...it was such a big deal for us, so I think my father contributed a lot to, you know, my not being a very feminine person. Though I did try with Bob. I did try. I read books and tried different things...suggestions that books would come up with, you know, and did try to teach myself to be more of an appealing wife in different ways, but it never satisfied him. Always wrong. The yelling came first and then knocking me up against walls and then striking and then, you know, it always got more and more abusive. I finally got fed up with it a few years ago...and went for a divorce, but I didn't stay long and that's 'cause I wasn't prepared and I didn't have any money.

I can remember the first time I was hit after Jessie was born. It was close to his second birthday. It was after Bob had been called back off his lay-off. I think he grabbed my face and slapped me and pushed me around a little bit, and I don't remember the reason at all. It's really

never any real reason for him to behave like that. He just built up anger and before I knew it, he was taking his anger out on me, you know? That's always the way it seemed to work. He just started little by little, you know, and got madder and madder and madder and before you know it, he was pushing me around and striking me or something.

I was very confused. When it really first started happening, I didn't know what was going on. I couldn't figure it out. I stayed with him quite a while when he was doing this, because I like figured out well, maybe he'll come home this time, and I'll do something different. Maybe that might please him and he'll stay off my back. I would always try to do things that...that wouldn't make him angry. He was never satisfied. He'd get mad for some stupid reason and take it out on me.

I think it relates a lot to when he was young and his parents not making him do the things that he should have been doing. I understood that Bob was always the one who got attention from the father. It was always, here's a new gun for you or a new fishing pole for you, and his brother was always in the background. The attention was always drawn towards Bob. Bob was a very exceptional child, as I understand. He could have been a major league ball player. He could have been...he could have been anything. He was intelligent. He was...he had a lot of dexterity... had a lot of things going for him, but somehow or other, I think through a divorce, and....

He was maybe eight or so when his parents were divorced. His mother worked a lot so the boys were left a lot of the time by themselves. Being raised in a big city, I'm sure that had a lot of influence with the way they turned out, too. They lived with their mother but both parents were there. The father would like take them on fishing trips or take them to the zoo, or you know, something. He did...I understand he tried.

Bob was sort of strong-willed, like about going to school. I remember him telling me they'd have to like beat him to get him out of bed to go to school, or she'd have to go in and turn the mattress upside down, you know, to get him out of bed, you know, or beat him all the way to school to get him to go to school...always somehow was...always had a lot to do with school. He just didn't want..I think he was born with it a lot, you know. Didn't have enough directional guidance...enough to stimulate him to thinking, 'cause he was very intelligent, as I understand, as a child.

It was funny. Me and him took an IQ test a couple of weeks ago and we came out with the same IQ. 135. I was surprised. I understand when I was a child I had an IQ test and it was 135. As I understand, it's not bad. So it makes me so mad, you know, 'cause neither one of us have put this intelligence thing to any really creative thing, you know. I don't have any specific training and neither does Bob, but we're both very capable of doing just about any-

thing we want to do and here we are in low middle class income...still not having any direction with our life because it's always been a battle more or less between me and Bob.

You know, there are times when things go so good, and then they get bad and I'll leave, you know, and then I'll come back to him and it'll go fine again, and then it will get bad again and I'll leave. Been this way for eight years.

When Jessie was about two I got ahold of one of my friends and asked her if I could come and stay with her. I took Jessie with me and I didn't have any money..didn't have any car...didn't have anything, really. I stayed I think a week, and then decided to go back to Bob, 'cause he convinced me to go back with him too, and I decided to do that because I just really wasn't prepared for the whole ordeal. So I went back and planned it all out. I got ahold of a car and saved my money, bought extra groceries, and prepared myself for it. So about Mother's Day, Bob left to go out on the road and I went back to the house and packed up all my stuff, got my money and got all the extra food and got in contact with the girl that was gonna sell me the car and everything...went back over to the same girl's house and really made an effort to get a divorce and ...tried to get what I wanted. You know?

That backfired on me because when Bob came back several weeks later, he had an operation on his eye. He asked



me if he could have Jessie for a couple of weeks. I thought, "This is really nice of him," 'cause, you know, it gave me the chance to get myself all situated with a job and babysitting for Jessie and everything. I thought, "This is really nice of him." The day of the divorce he didn't show up in court and that was the day he was supposed to bring Jessie back to me, and he wasn't in court and the lawyer said, "Where's he at?" I said, "I don't know." I went back to the apartment and everything was gone including Jessie.

He came up here with Jessie. I remember him saying he was going to leave, gonna go someplace. He didn't say where, but he was gonna leave. He didn't say, "I'm taking Jessie with me." He did not say that. He tells me he did say that, but he didn't, 'cause if he did say that to me, I would have become very panicky and tried to get Jessie at that time and the whole bit. I wouldn't have just sat there. He didn't. He said he did tell, but he didn't tell me. He told me in a round-about way, you know, beating around the bush, he did tell....

I waited a whole month, and I called up here and I called up here, and his mother would say, "I do not know where they are. I have not seen them. I do not know where they're at." What was I supposed to say? Okay. Fine. I called up again the next week. "They're not here. I haven't seen or heard from them." I got suspicious, you know. I thought, "They've got to be up there." I quit my

job and came up here and they were there. He made a promise to me, you know, again, that he would bring Jessie back to me in August...uh, no, in September...so I went back, got another job, saved money, got a nice duplex with a yard for us, nice floors and the whole thing...bought furniture, stove and refrigerator, table and chairs, waited until November. Finally got fed up with waiting, packed up all my stuff, quit my job, took my money out of the bank and came up here. And boy wasn't that hell. Finally ended up at the beach and got a job down there. It became too much of a hassle the way he treated me when I tried to come over to see Jessie, and usually Jessie wasn't there. I ended up having a fight with his mother one evening.

I just got fed up with the whole thing 'cause nobody would let me see him. Nobody would...they were always telling me lies, you know, and nobody would compromise with me, and I just got fed up so I thought I would use the same things. I'll steal Jessie like he stole Jessie from me. So I went over...I found out Bob was playing tennis that night and obviously Jessie was over at my mother-in-law's so I went over there, and got inside and tried to talk very rationally to her. I tried to tell her, "You've got to understand, Bob has not been treating me good." I didn't go into a lot of detail 'cause I was trying to get Jessie away from her at the same time, and she got very pissed off at me, and she started yelling at me, "Don't ever call me anything. Don't call me Hester. Don't call me Mom. Don't

call me anything. My name is Mrs. Moore." To this day I don't call her anything but Mrs. Moore because of that night. And so she started...she got up and started...she's very tall and she was just all over. She struck me a couple of times, and I tried to get out the door with Jessie. It was a struggle on account of the door and finally she just...I didn't want to hit her. I didn't want to do anything to her even though she was abusing me. I just didn't want to do that. It's not my nature to be that, but she was just all over, and I had gotten fed up and I pushed her away from me and she went up against the door and broke the storm door and glass went flying everywhere.

It was my opportunity, and I grabbed Jessie and ran out the door and she came out after me, and we got into a big bear hug. She just enclosed me with her arms and it was like...like a tug of war with Jessie and Jessie was just screaming and carrying on and I tried to get my knee up into her crotch a couple of times, but she was just so much taller than me I couldn't reach. Finally Jessie was just getting so upset and I let go. She ran back into the house with Jessie, and I sat in the car and smoked for a few minutes and cried a little bit and went back up to the door. She wouldn't answer the door. She had the doors locked. And I thought I had better get out of there before she called the police.

I tried twice to take Jessie and it didn't work, so I finally decided to use a lawyer which I should have done

the minute I got up there, but I didn't. We proceeded with the divorce papers and all that. Then Bob got ahold of me one night, and he told me he was leaving again with Jessie. I panicked. I came back to him a couple of days later. I said, "Okay, Bob, we'll make an agreement and I'll stay here." So we did and that's...after that, that was the worst. That was the worst it had ever gotten, after I came back to live with Bob. The first time after I came back was immediately after I got a job and Bob was...Bob's mom was supporting him basically, 'cause he was not working, or he had been working off and on. I got a job and I got food stamps so his mom wouldn't have to support us. I was very vindictive toward her 'cause she had lied to me. She had hit me and everything, and she accused me of being a tramp and all kinds of things. So I didn't want to have nothing to do with her. Didn't want her supporting us. Didn't want her feeding us or anything. "Course I'm that way anyway. You know, my father taught us to be very independent.

I worked for seven months and all through this time he didn't trust me, and he thought I had been running around with other men.

It took him two weeks after I came back before he hit me, and it was really bad. I was sitting over there and for no reason he came up and just knocked me over in the chair. I went down. Me and the chair went down, and he started knocking me all over the kitchen and down the hall here and pushed me and I scraped my arm and he pushed me

into that thing right there and I scraped my arm real bad. I asked him if I could wash my arm off 'cause it was bleeding a little bit and he said, "No." Then I went into the bedroom, and he started knocking me around in the bedroom. I was up against the door, and he slapped my face and I hit my head on the door sill and a big bump came up. I said, "Can I go wash my face?", and he said, "No." It scared me because a big bump just immediately rose, and that scared me. Then he knocked me down and he kicked me a couple of times and finally he just walked out. I had bruises all over me, on my face and on my arms, on my legs, and...I couldn't go right to work.

I remember one day I had a split shift, and they wanted me to stay and fix up the banquet room, and I said okay, and I called up Bob and I said, "You don't have to pick me up 'cause they want me to stay and fix up the banquet room," and then after I called him, two other girls had come in that were working the banquet to set it up, so then I called him back to say, "Well, you got to pick me up," but I couldn't get ahold of him, 'cause he was out playing tennis or something. I called his mother and told her what was going on. So I thought he wasn't going to come and pick me up, and this girl that I was working with asked if I wanted to go to her house and have a drink and just wait for two hours and then come back for the second shift. I said, "Why not?"

Well, he had come to pick me up and he waited the two hours for me to come back from this girl's house, 'cause he thought I was out doing something else. When I came back for my second shift, he was just so angry. Just so angry at me. He was yelling at me, "Get into the Jeep," and I didn't want to get into the Jeep, 'cause I knew what would happen. It was a big scene. Great big scene. So we came back here. I didn't want to get out of the Jeep, I was hanging on to the bar that we have inside. The neighbors ended up calling the cops. He was trying to get me out of the Jeep, my neighbors saw this. He was pulling my hair and hitting me and trying to get me out of the Jeep, and I just didn't want to get out. I knew the minute we got inside, it would be worse.

When the cops drove into the yard, Bob went back and talked to them. When he came back, he said, "Oh, one of them was my friend." Therefore, they did not come up and ask me how I was. They did not ask me if I wanted any help. They just talked to Bob and left.

All my neighbors were very upset. They were so mad. They wanted to see Bob get into trouble, 'cause they had seen several things. Sometimes I would run out of the house and go stand over there on that porch, because it was wide open. I thought sure he can't do nothing out in the open. I would stand there, and he could yell at me and things like that, but I thought I was safe over there.

He wanted me to work, because he didn't trust me enough to stay here and take care of Jessie by myself while he worked. So I had to work while he stayed home and did nothing. I worked plus took care of Jessie in the evenings and the housework and all. I mean everything. I had to live like that, because it was either that or him take Jessie away from me. I had to go along with it. I had to, 'cause I didn't want him taking Jessie away from me.

One time, it was really strange. I don't remember what brought it on. We went to pick up Jessie in the evening about five o'clock. I think we had been fighting before that, too. So we went and picked up Jessie and then flew past the house. I said, "Where're you going?" He said, "Well, I'm going to take you out to...I'm gonna take you somewhere and I'm gonna teach you a lesson." I said, "But Bob, Jessie's in the back seat." He turned around and he said to Jessie, "Well, you know, Jessie, your mother is nothing but a lying bitch--a lying cold bitch." I couldn't believe this. He was telling Jessie this, you know, about me and 'course I couldn't do nothing about it. Jessie was starting to get upset. He drove us to the next town out on this kind of, like, deserted road. He stopped and I got out of the Jeep, and he got out of the Jeep, and he raised his fist to me a couple of times and each time I'd duck. One thing I would do a lot is if he raised his fist, I would just roll up into a ball, you know, to protect my head or whatever. I crouched down on the ground and covered myself

up. Jessie was getting hysterical, I was barefooted, too, and he was gonna leave me there to talk and to think things over--like I really had been doing something bad and he was punishing me. He left me there a couple of times, but he came back each time. Each time he'd start yelling at me and calling me names, and telling Jessie what a bad mother I was and everything. Finally he said, "Well, you just get in the Jeep and we'll go home and settle this." Then he turned around and he got a flat tire, so we had to hitchhike back to town. Then when we got to town his mother was at MacDonalds and he said, "Okay, let's just call this quits. It's fine. It's over with." So I said, "Okay, it's over and finished with." You know, I thought it was over and finished with. He had to go to his mother's to get his spare tire 'cause it was in her garage. After all that was taken care of, he started in on me again, "We're gonna finish this up." I don't remember the rest of the evening. I'm sure it was just yelling and screaming and maybe a few, you know, pushing around....

Telling my son what a lousy mother I am and I'm nothing but a lying cold bitch really bothered me. He always exaggerated things, you know. I did lie to him a couple of times, just more or less for self-preservation. There was no great big lies that made a great big difference in our whole life. Like writing letters to my mother. He'd ask me, "Are you telling your mother about stuff like this?"



and I'd say, "No, I don't write her about things like that," but I did. I wrote to her and said I'm not too happy and I'm having a little bit of problems, and she'd write back to me. I'd told her, "Don't say nothing about this in your letter," you know, but a couple of times she did and Bob would read it and he'd get very upset. I just wanted her to give me a couple of words of encouragement or an unbiased opinion or something. He didn't want me having nothing to do with my mother.

I was not allowed to have friends either. Not allowed to go anywhere with Jessie by myself. This was why it was so bad, 'cause he told me he didn't trust me, therefore I couldn't go places with Jessie by myself, or I couldn't go to the store with Jessie, or I couldn't spend time with Jessie, or I couldn't go out and have any kind of relationship with any girls, or I couldn't do anything. Not unless he gave me permission, and so forth and so on. After seven months of living with me, he finally let me go out with the girls drinking after work. We went to the beach, which is really about half an hour, forty-five minutes drive from here, and I didn't get back until three o'clock in the morning, which is all perfectly innocent. Nothing happened.

I came back at three o'clock in the morning. All my clothes were out on the porch, and the door was locked. I had to go spend the night with somebody else. Then I went to work that next day and he came to get me at work and brought me back here. I said, "I'm not working any more.

You go to work. I'm fed up. You just keep embarrassing me at my job." So I quit my job, 'cause I just had had it. He had embarrassed me too many times. Five or six times I had walked into work with bruises on me, and they'd ask, "How did you do that?" I said, "I fell down the steps," you know, or something.

One girl knew about it, though. I had to confide in somebody, you know. I felt the need to. In November, I went to see Cynthia, my social worker, 'cause I was just, you know, being very depressed. I'd sit here at the table and cry for no reason and I was always very depressed, 'cause things still weren't normal. So I went to see Cynthia and I saw her two times and she advised me to get out for my own benefit, which was so surprising to me. I just couldn't believe it, you know. I think she had mentioned it, or somebody had mentioned that there was a new program out, and it was for a place to go for women. I don't remember how I got all the information, but somehow I had. My friend was helping me, and I'd go up to her house and make phone calls. I was really doing it through her so there would be nothing coming through here, you know, that he would become suspicious of. They asked me a few questions, and I answered them, and they said, "Yes, you're eligible to come to the shelter," and I said, "Okay," I said, "I don't know when I can or anything like that. I'll just have to let you know." So during the time when I was waiting, I packed up a few things. I hid them over there,

and once again, tried to take care of some loose ends, so that when I got ready to go, I could just pick it all up and go.

One Sunday Bob went to play rugby, and I decided that was it. That was the night I called them and they said, "Yes, we have room for you," and I called a taxi to come pick me up here. God, it took an eternity. The taxi took half an hour to get here and Diane was waiting for me. The taxi took me there, and we unloaded all my stuff into her car and she took me to the shelter. As I understand, I just missed Bob by the skin of my teeth, because he had felt something was happening, so he just left the rugby game in the middle of the whole thing--and went over to his mom's and got his mom and came back over here. I guess I had just missed him. He went into the bathroom and saw the toothbrushes gone, and he knew something was...we had left again.

During the time I was at the shelter I didn't tell him where I was--not until the last week or so, 'cause I didn't...I just knew the minute I got in contact with him, a lot of confusion would come about and a lot of, you know, weird things would happen. I just didn't want him to know. I didn't contact him for a while, and as I understand it, everyone was going into nervous fits. So I was peaceful a little while, you know. His mother was having a nervous breakdown, which I didn't care. He was having a nervous breakdown, which I didn't care. I just really didn't care.

In fact, I thought, well, he deserved it in a way, for all the things he did to me.

While I was at the shelter I had divorce papers drawn up. After he had got the divorce papers, I called him, because then he knew I was in the city. I figured I might as well call him, you know, so I knew he was alright and everything. We arranged a couple of meetings with each other. Cynthia wanted us to do that to build up some trust between us, you know.

One time, I did see him with Cynthia. It was on a Monday, I think. I was very tired, really tired, 'cause I had been doing a lot, you know, trying to get everything organized. Working and everything at the same time. We went to see her at her office, and I was so tired I just... Anything Bob would say I just cried, you know, and we couldn't come up on an agreement of, like, letting Jessie come here for three days, but I let him come.

On Wednesday, I came here to visit him, and I had to be back at work at eight o'clock. This is when the whole thing turned around on me, more or less.

If I could have stayed there at the shelter a year. No--if I could have stayed there long enough to go through the divorce, you know what I mean? So that I would have that protection, 'cause once I got out of there I didn't have that protection that I think a lot of women need to get over that divorce period.

Getting an apartment took away that protection that I had, where Bob couldn't come after me and he couldn't come into my house and scream at me and try to talk me out of it and all this kind of stuff. I really wish that I could have stayed there until the divorce was final, because I was very vulnerable at that point, you know. I was very vulnerable towards Bob. If I could have just stayed there until the divorce was final that would really have impressed upon Bob what I was really after. But he knew he could get me if he could just get me away from...like down...like that Wednesday night.

It was getting time to go. I said, "Well, I've got to go. I've got to get back and get ready for work." He wasn't going to let me go. It started getting closer and closer to eight o'clock and finally I picked up and started to walk out, and he wouldn't let me out of the house. Physically he wouldn't let me out of the house. It became more or less of wrestling match. Finally I knew I couldn't get out of there so I called up work and said, "I can't make it in there tonight." I was very upset.

Thursday, the next day, was my birthday, and I went into work and the boss told me, "If you ever do that again, you're going to lose your job. You know you've got to make arrangements." I said, "I know that. I'm sorry, but you have to understand." I tried to explain it to him--as little as I could--tried to give him what was basically happening.

That night Bob showed up. It was my birthday. He wanted to take me out for breakfast. I agreed just to pacify him. He was there at closing, and he went out to the Jeep to wait for me. He was getting mad. He was slowly getting mad. I couldn't figure out why. There was really no reason for him to be getting agitated, but he was. So we went around the corner and parked the Jeep, got out, and these two drunks came walking by us. One of the drunks said something to Bob. Bob was getting so agitated, he said something, and before I knew it, the three of them were in a big fight. I was just so dumbfounded and so paranoid, you know, at two o'clock in the morning on the waterfront, three guys are fighting. I turned around and went back to work and knocked on the doors to let me in and I tried to explain to my boss. I said, "We've got to call the police." He started giving me a lecture, "you obviously care very much about this man," and I was getting mad. I listened to him for a while, then I just walked out--went back to the restaurant and nobody was there.

So I went and called a taxi and went back to my apartment and looked first for the Jeep. It wasn't there, and I thought, "Well, I'm safe, I'll go in and go to sleep, and maybe it will be better tomorrow."

So I go into...we had like a hall...and there he was sitting on the bench, and I knew he was just so mad at me. He was furious, because he had gotten into a fight with those two drunks, and they had done a lot of damage to the

Jeep. Of course, he blamed it all on me. He was just at the peak of his anger. He started spitting at me and threw a pack of cigarettes at me, telling me, "You've got to make up your mind right now. If you don't come with me right now, you're going to regret it." Just like before, threatening me with Jessie. If I don't do what he wants me to do he will make me pay by taking Jessie away from me. I stood my ground for as long as I could, you know. I didn't want to go back. I tried to be as willful as I could. But, I gave in. I couldn't take it. He kept telling me, "You've got to make up your mind right now, because if you don't make up your mind right now, if you don't come back with me right now, you're going to be very sorry." 'Course I always take those threats from what he says because he did do it. He has done it. So, I did. I gave in. I felt so bad because it was not what I wanted. I tried to explain to Bob that it would be better if he just waited until...if we could just see each other and then when things got better maybe we'd go back to living with each other, but he had to give me time, you know, to get over me being afraid of him, and he had to build up some trust in me. He wouldn't accept it. He didn't want it that way. He wanted me there...here. So I gave in to him.

I am his security. I am what keeps him together. He's basically very insecure. He wants very much to have a family and have a wife...and have the normal things that people do. He wants it very badly and he loves me a lot.

When I came back here, we had an agreement. It would be around six months on a trial basis. I knew it was like talking out the window, 'cause I knew it wouldn't really, you know, he wouldn't stick to an agreement that he's made. The agreement was that if he didn't prove to me that he could control his temper and not threaten me and keep a job and keep his responsibilities, that he would pack up his bags and leave. That was the agreement.

Of course I had to go along with it, because he had put me in the position. I really felt he put me in a bind over at my apartment. So he agreed to it, and I agreed to it...and here it is almost four months later, and he has kept basically his agreement. So I guess here I am.

He has not directed his anger at me but one time. He started slapping Jessie around, and he was wet 'cause he had been swimming. Bob was pretty drunk. His mother lit into him just really heavy because he was slapping Jessie around while he was wet. This was one of the times she got to see how erratic he becomes over nothing. He got madder and madder and madder. Pretty soon it was a big fight--all three of us. Then I was sitting in the chair. I told him, "I'm not going home until you settle down, you know," so he come over to me and he raised--drew back his fist and I started to become very hysterical. I just started crying to become very hysterical. I just started crying a lot and sobbing and the whole thing. She got in between us. Then he again came at me, walked over to the chair and he kicked



the chair. I was in a recliner...and he kicked the chair, but at the same moment I thought he was going to kick me and I raised my leg and kicked him, very, you know, adolescent stuff. After I kicked him, he was furious, so he hit me on the leg. So I became very hysterical. He touched me once again and I went all out of control. She had to give me a valium to settle down.

Whenever he doesn't get his way he becomes very irrational, and also the alcohol aggravates the whole situation too. It seems to be more often when he's drinking. Drinking seems to touch it off more--more intensity. But that time he took me out of town and left me he hadn't had a drink, and that time he knocked me all around the house, he had not been drinking.

After work he buys himself a six-pack, drinks it throughout the night, maybe goes out to buy another one, and maybe drinks two or three out of that. One week, I think it was after that episode at her house, he told me that he could stop drinking. He stopped drinking for a whole week, and I was really impressed that he was able to do that. But, you know, he started drinking a little bit more. Then he was telling me the other day, he thinks he has figured it out--his point where too much drinking will make him violent. He said something like, "Eight beers on an empty stomach is about all I think I can handle, and if I eat and drink, I can drink all day long." He's been trying to rationalize it out a little bit in his own mind, that point

between rationality and irrationality. He's trying, but I think he still needs help.

I said to him one day something about getting help, and he said, "I ain't never going to do that again. I ain't going to see nobody." I think he feels embarrassed, or ashamed or something.

It'll go smooth for a while and things will work out for a while and then progressively they'll start, maybe he'll start, you know, he's started already by losing his temper--not at me--but he still lost his temper very badly. So it's like a ladder to me. It starts with this, then it goes to the next step, then to the next, then pretty soon, it's right back where it was. I've been through this three times to try to get him divorced--get him away from me, try to settle the thing out. I come right back, and it will start out okay for a couple of weeks, then it will start right back again. Okay, this time it's taken him a little bit longer, 'cause I think he had a little bit more understanding of what has happened to himself. But I think eventually it will just be like it was before, though he knows, because I told him before and I really seriously mean it, if he does really hurt me, I will file assault charges. It may take me twenty-four hours to get to it, but I will. That day he hit me on the leg at his house, or his mother's house, I didn't really consider that because I hit him first. I mean I struck out at him first. It was just like an automatic thing for him, so I don't really consider that

an abuse, more or less, you know, it's just that a lot of things were happening. But if he ever did come at me, and I told him...He knows that I will. He almost expects it ...to come. I can take Bob. I mean, I could live with him just as long as he doesn't lash out at me. I can play the game. I can play the role. I can do it. Just as long as he doesn't attack me or....

The shelter is impressed upon Bob's mind. It really made a big impression on Bob's mind that there are people out there that want to help people--help women in this situation, and there is a place that I can go, that if it ever got too bad, that I don't have to stay here. And that's a threat to him, or that holds him in his place in a way.

The shelter gave me a little peace of mind for a while, which I really needed at the time, because like I said, I was very depressed. It gave me time to sort of get myself out of that. I think if I could have got what I wanted, I would have been very very very grateful. I am still very grateful, even though I did mess it up.

If I could have stayed there long enough to go through the divorce...That's an awful long time to say, "Protect me for three months until my divorce is over." And then again you sound like a child or like you're not capable of handling your own situation, really. But sometimes it is hard to handle a situation like that. I really did want what I had after I left the shelter. I thought I had it. I was starting really well. We found a fairly

decent place to live and the bus gave me the opportunity to get a good job, and sharing expenses with Lee and everything. I felt that I was put in the position that just didn't really give me any choice.

### Analysis of Debbie's Life History

Debbie is probably sitting alone in her kitchen today, smoking. Her son will be in and out from friends to the T.V. She is sometimes depressed, but almost never cries; sometimes is terrorized but doesn't get help, and she knows eventually things will get bad enough again so that she will have to leave. She will probably come back, however, if the pattern she has described continues. What is that pattern? How did it come about? What keeps it going? What prevents change or what might facilitate change? These are the important questions I would like to address in this analysis.

To do this I want to look first at the information on Debbie's and Bob's early family backgrounds. Next I will trace the development of their relationship from the time of their first meeting to the present.

#### Debbie's Early Family

Debbie's father is an alcoholic, and her parents were divorced, remarried, and divorced again. She thinks her mother may have left because of the father's drinking, but she is not sure, and the mother left the children, two

girls, with the father. Debbie can remember a couple of incidents of their fighting, but not much.

During the discussion of her parents' relationship, she only mentions one emotional reaction--relief. She was relieved that they had divorced again. The tensions must have been very high.

I am reminded of the Nye (1957) study which showed that children were better adjusted from homes where parents divorced than from homes where there was on-going serious conflict, but no divorce. Her relief is a very realistic reaction, but I wonder if that relief didn't block out some of the other emotions that typically occur when parents divorce.

She does not mention missing her mother, feeling abandoned by her mother, or any anger at her father, which are all typical emotional reactions to parents divorcing (Salk, 1978). Their suffered emotions may relate to the way that Debbie responds in her marriage. She doesn't mention anger at her husband, love for either her husband or her son, and she doesn't mention feelings of rejection.

Her father had made her very independent by having them do things girls don't usually do. In her marriage, Debbie has been the sole person working for long periods of time. She takes on much of the role usually played by the man, and she doesn't seem to know much about the role played by women. She credits her father with the fact that

she is not very feminine, that she was not taught that kind of behavior.

Debbie is quite physically attractive in her facial features. She did not, however, elicit strong emotional reactions of warmth from other women at the shelter, or from the staff. The emotional side of her life has not been developed. This may relate to her early family background, and also relate to some of the problems of her own marriage.

She accepts her father as an alcoholic. She accepts her husband's drinking. She thinks her father did a good job bringing up the kids. She does not mention problems, or things she wishes he had done. There is a defensive quality about her description of her father. Not being able to see some problems that existed in her early family life again may relate to her not being able to see problems in her own marriage.

#### Bob's Early Family

Bob's parents were also divorced, apparently when he was about eight or nine. Debbie indicates that they did beat him, and also that he was the one who got the most attention or received more material things. He resisted going to school, and they had to beat him or tipped the mattress over to get him out to go to school. He stayed close to home, and did not develop his full potential according to Debbie. Later in life he also had problems with work. He often did not work. His mother or Debbie sup-

ported him. When he did work, however, things seemed to be better between them. They planned to do things and set up a nice home.

Bob maintained a relationship with his father for a while after the divorce. The father took the two sons to the zoo. Both parents lived in the same city at that time. Later the mother moved out of state. There is no mention after that of the father.

Bob's mother continued to provide financial support for Bob after he was married and separated the first time. She gave him money while he and Debbie were traveling around the country, and after he returned with his son. She also took a great deal of parental responsibility for the son. She had her son and grandson living in her house after Bob returned. She refused to admit to Debbie that they were there at that time. She lied and said that they weren't and that she did not know where they were.

Bob, his mother, and his son formed a family system that excluded Debbie. She and Bob refused to let Debbie have access to her own son, even to the point of physical fighting. Debbie never explained why Bob's mother was so resistant to letting Debbie have the child. The questions that come up are: Does the family unit of son and grandson fulfill some important need of her own? What is the goal of that particular system? There is almost no mention of a goal of doing what was best for the development of the child. The child often was used to achieve other goals.

If Debbie and Bob ever seek help for their marriage, an important area to look at may be the role of Bob's mother. Her support comes when their marital unit separates, not when it is together. The relationship of Debbie, Bob, and Bob's mother is a system itself, a triad. Simmel (1950) has pointed out that triads are inherently unstable. In this triad there is competition, resentment, attraction, and jealousy. The strong emotional responses Debbie spontaneously mentioned were towards Bob's mother. This emotional expression is inconsistent with the rest of her descriptions of important events or relationships, which are reported with little emotional description.

#### Beginning of Relationship Between Bob and Debbie

Debbie was impressed by the flashiness of Bob's car. She didn't much care for him, but when he persisted she did go out with him. His married status was not important. Debbie reports that she thought that he left his first wife because "His wife was pretty dominating and they fought, too." The responsibility for that earlier violent marriage and subsequent breakup was attributed to a dominating wife. Debbie did not take the fact of that earlier experience as a warning sign for her own relationship with him.

Debbie reports that she didn't care much for him, and that going to Colorado together was almost incidental, rather than a choice to be together. This first significant move to be together occurred without explicit choice, nego-



tiation, or commitment. It just sort of happened, according to her interpretation.

I think the lack of choice and commitment is an important fact. Alone, it may seem insignificant or not atypical of the way a lot of couples get together. In the context of their ongoing relationship, it takes on more significance. It is the first of many moves that occur without clear choice, commitment, or negotiation.

When their family system was established, it was built on the premise of ambiguous commitment, uncertainty about each other's commitment, and a high degree of separation when decisions had to be made.

In the beginning Debbie says each was going to Colorado and so they went together. There was no expression that they wanted to be together, or of what traveling together meant.

The pattern of not talking about being together and what that meant continued. I have a strong sense that Debbie and Bob have never made explicit choices to be together. They grew to be quite dependent on each other, and he clearly chose to have her with him, but it was not a mutual decision. This was evident when he followed her to her grandmother's and talked her into coming back to live with him. She reports that she didn't want to but that she was very impressionable at that time, and that his pleas seemed "just like true love."

Given the American emphasis on romantic love, many young females probably accept romantic gestures as the basis for relationships that they feel they don't really personally want. The fairy-tales and romantic movies show the male pursuing the female and the female accepting the romantic offerings and living happily ever after. There has been no strong presentation of the realities of married life, and of preparation for that significant move. Playing a role, however, without consciously mapping that role onto one's own personal system and modifying it to serve personal needs can lead to a feeling of separation or self-alienation.

Debbie continually talks about doing things she didn't want to do. There is a confusion between how much she was actually coerced and how much she accepted things she didn't want because they were expected, desirable, or more comfortable than the alternatives.

She indicates they did not share the first crisis they experienced while together, her miscarriage. She reports no emotional feelings about the miscarriage, and she didn't tell Bob about it. It was over and she just got her bags and took off for her father's. Her explanation for leaving was that she just wanted to leave. There is no sense that a system that has been mutually established was breaking up. It doesn't seem that the relationship was important to her.

### First Violent Incident

When Bob first hit Debbie, she was pregnant. She thinks he probably knew, but she is not sure. She doesn't know why it happened; it just happened. Her reaction was, "I just couldn't believe it." She was stunned. She does not say that she was angry, and there was no angry retaliatory behavior.

One explanation for the violence is that the responsibility of bringing a baby into the system may have produced stress on Bob. (See Gelles, 1977 for a discussion of the relationship between pregnancy and violence.) A pregnancy could disrupt their ongoing relationship that had been established. That relationship included a lot of distance, and no responsibilities to the other person. Debbie seems to know very little about what was going on with Bob. Not knowing is part of the rules of their mutual relationship, an acceptable part to both of them.

When Debbie went back to live with Bob after he found her at her grandmother's, the first incident of violence was not an important consideration in that decision. That is partly because she didn't make a decision explicitly. Debbie says they had had good times together, but she never says she loves him. Being with him is something he decides, and persuades her of. Her motivation is not mentioned very often. Debbie does not feel powerful enough to decide and act on her own decisions. By not deciding, however, she does in fact decide and play out the rules of

the system which allow Bob to make the decisions and act. This is not a personal anomaly on Debbie's part. It is one example of the influence of the larger social system that expects women to agree to the decisions their husbands make and to go along even if they do not agree. Walker (1977-78) also found that battered women do not make assertive decisions and carry them through. Walker discusses this lack of motivation as the result of a process of "learned helplessness" which results from a history of having attempts to control their environment frustrated by the men who are in the more powerful position." In Debbie's case this pattern may have been learned in her early family situation before she met Bob. The pattern existed in their relationship from the beginning rather than developing over time as a result of the battering.

When Debbie and Bob got involved in the hippie scene, she "got rid of Bob." She stayed with him until she got interested in doing something else. This is another incident in which the nature of their particular system of shared separateness is evident. Bob's attachment to her is evident in his angry reaction of taking her clothes away from her. This also shows his attempt to reestablish the system as it had been. This represents negative feedback to new input into the system. Looking at a system as a self-regulating complex relationship, we can interpret his response to her leaving as an attempt at coercing her to come

back. Taking or keeping her clothes and being sure she had no money made the option of leaving him unrealistic.

Without her clothes and money she returned to her mother's. He was also there, and he "pressured" her to get back together. She didn't want anything to do with him, but she did return. His coercion and the lack of supportive alternatives are important in this move.

### Violence as a Pattern

Debbie says that Bob did not hit her again until she had Jessie. There was a period of approximately two years between that first incident in Colorado and the next incident. During this time they traveled around, had various jobs, split up, and got back together. She had never wanted to get married. This is another example of her making significant decisions against the trend of what she says she wanted. She felt mad and trapped.

She says jealousy set in when her son was born. I looked carefully at the behavior she was describing at that time. I question whether it was jealousy. Neglectful, unresponsive, unsupportive behavior rather than jealousy is actually what she reports. I think she was hurt by this lack of support when she had the baby, but she doesn't say she was hurt. After the baby was born she also mentions that he accused her of not being responsive sexually.

She has a sense of inadequacy. Bob says that she is not warm and responsive enough. Debbie tried to teach her-

self how to be more feminine. She thinks she is not a feminine woman because she was raised by her father and he did not encourage her to become feminine. She did not have a feminine role model. Some people grow up without mothers and develop strong feminine personalities and enjoy a strong sense of their own sexuality. Debbie did not. She never mentioned her own sexuality or any recognition of her own sexual needs.

Bob's physical abuse got worse after Jessie was born. The abuse started with him screaming, then knocking her around, and then striking her. The cycle was escalating steadily at this point. She blamed his built-up anger, but doesn't know or indicate knowing what that anger was based on.

She was confused. She didn't understand it, and tried to do different things to stop it. She tried to do things that wouldn't make him angry. She didn't see a connection between her own behavior and that of her husband-- another example of the rule of separation between them.

After Jessie was born, Bob had a good job for a while, but he lost that job. He never worked consistently after that. She thinks the battle between them is responsible for the lack of direction in their life and the fact that neither of them has developed their potential skills. This is understandable from a system's perspective. All energy is directed to maintain a system that has pressure towards crises and dissolution. For eight years they have been in

a cycle of escalating problems and violence and attempts to reestablish equilibrium. Beyond a certain threshold, Debbie leaves. Bob then reacts with pleas or with more coercive means to get her back. She comes back, things go well for a while, and then it gradually starts again.

Despite the surface instability the relationship between Debbie and Bob is a stable, self-correcting system. One goal state is to remain together, without closeness. There is a threshold level of violence which triggers the corrective mechanisms. When things get too bad, she leaves. He becomes contrite and she comes back, or he threatens to take Jessie, and this brings her back (see Walker, 1979, for a discussion of "The Cycle Theory of Violence").

The system was disrupted for a considerable period of time when they were separated and Bob had Jessie with his mother. Debbie was on the outside both physically and emotionally. When Bob was part of an established system with his mother and son, he didn't try to get her back. She was trying to get her son back. Lawyers could help her get a divorce and custody, but Bob threatened again to take the boy and run. Debbie panicked and went back to him right after that.

When they did go back together, she agreed to stay there. They agreed to be together, with little trust of each other and without any clear commitment to each other.

Each time they reestablish their relationship, the goal around which they agree is to remain together, while

at the same time distrusting the other and not getting emotionally close to each other. He didn't trust her when she was working. When she had gotten a good job, she tried to leave him. The distrust also comes from knowing that there was no solid commitment between them. When she was working and he was not, he was physically abusive and possessive in attempts to control her activities. When the traditional basis for a man's power in marriage, his income, was not present, he may have become violent to compensate (Allen and Straus, 1975).

His restrictions on what she could do increased when she worked. He wouldn't let her have friends, go out with other women she worked with, or have any outside interests. Threats or actual violence controlled her. He also wouldn't let her get help when she was hurt with a big lump on her head. She didn't say she ever called police, even though neighbors were alarmed enough to do so.

The neighbors were very angry, Debbie says. She doesn't say anything about her anger. When I asked her directly, she could say she felt angry, but she did not express anger at the time. Asserting anger when she was treated unfairly would be an attempt to get what she wanted. Debbie did not express anger in this way. She may have learned that she was powerless to get what she wanted, and therefore may deal with others in a powerless way.

In this case, the social norm--for women not to show anger and not to be assertive to get what they want--may



interact with Debbie's early family history. She is quite capable of working and maintaining her own apartment, but quite powerless in the relationship with Bob, powerless to withstand his coercive violent behavior.

Bob's behavior, unless it gets too extreme, is also a culturally legitimate behavior within the family system. The larger socio-cultural acceptance of violence, particularly that of men against women, contributes to Debbie's acceptance. The normative support for violence is also evident when Debbie attempted to talk to some people about the feelings she did have, that Bob shouldn't be doing what he did. In one case her boss responded only with the threat she might lose her job. The police did not respond at all. Her mother-in-law threw her out of the house. The early attempts Debbie did make to get support did not receive strong positive feedback.

#### Most Significant Incident

The most significant incident for Debbie was when Bob let their son Jessie see her being beaten. Bob tried to tell Jessie that Debbie was a bitch. While he did this, Debbie was trapped in a moving car and taken out into the woods away from any source of help.

He yelled at her, told their son she was a "lying cold bitch", threatened her physically, went off and left her there in the woods, came back a couple of times, badgered her more, and swung at her.

She crouched, ducked, rolled up in a ball to defend herself when he started swinging. There is a sense that he wants her to fight back. She doesn't, and he becomes even more furious and violent.

Debbie had developed a set way of dealing with his violence--protection and non-response. This is the way some animals, such as the armadillo, protect themselves from their enemies. After a while the enemy gets tired and goes away. This does not happen with human beings, however, especially between spouses or living partners.

What is an effective way to deal with violence from a spouse? Leaving may be effective, but the interdependent structure of marriage makes leaving very difficult.

In the interaction between Bob and Debbie that she described, Bob took her out into the woods against her will, left her there, told their son she was a "lying cold bitch", swung at her, and when they saw his mother, he decided to act as if it were all over. The power relationship between them is transparent at that point. He exercised the stronger power position, and that power became at times almost total power over Debbie and her fate. His violence gives him power, and her lack of alternatives gives him the feedback to make the exercise of violence as a pattern more likely.

During that incident, he was totally controlling her. Debbie didn't accept his control completely; however, when he is violent, he has control. At other times she tries to

exercise some control over her own life. This usually means going out with friends or doing something by herself. They don't directly negotiate. There is no process of cooperating to achieve a more equal relationship.

Debbie was very upset that Bob told their son that she was a lousy mother and a "lying cold bitch." That made an impact on her that was qualitatively different than the incidents that had just involved the two of them. She was angry and afraid that he would again get the son away from her and she would be on the outside. That particular incident motivated her to act. That was approximately three months before she came to the shelter.

During the three months, there had been other incidents. One time he let her go out with friends, and when she came home her clothes were on the porch and she was locked out. She spent the night at a friends and went to work the next day. He came to work after her and embarrassed her. She says she was sick of being embarrassed at work and told him to get a job; she wasn't going to work anymore.

#### Leaving: A Process Over Time

After Debbie quit work, Bob did get a job. Debbie sat home and became depressed. She didn't have many friends. The only extended family around was Bob's family where she didn't have support, and Bob would not let her take Jessie and go anyplace during the day. She sat in her kitchen.

She did tell one friend what had been happening between her and Bob. She says she just couldn't keep it to herself anymore. She also contacted her social worker and told her what was happening. These were the first times she reached out to people who could help her.

The social worker encouraged her to leave Bob. Debbie said this was "so surprising to me." The tone of her voice emphasized her surprise and disbelief. She couldn't believe there was a program to help people like her.

The social worker and the friend both gave positive feedback to Debbie's weak impulses to leave. The social worker gave her the information on the shelter, and the friend let her make the telephone calls from her house so that Bob wouldn't know. Those first calls came six weeks before she actually came to the shelter.

The escape was planned carefully, to the minutest detail. Bob was playing rugby, and Debbie called a taxi and waited anxiously. She had been taking a few things at a time out of the house over a period of weeks so that she and Jessie could leave in a hurry. The taxi took a long time to arrive, but when it did, they escaped. That escape has the quality of suspense and high drama. Debbie's fear of being caught was intense, and Bob sensed something was happening, and dashed home. She had narrowly escaped.

### The Shelter

Debbie says she was peaceful while she was at the

shelter. She started divorce proceedings quickly and with no apparent ambivalence or hesitancy. She got a job and began to look for an apartment. She didn't contact Bob until he got the divorce papers. Then she found out that he and his mother had been nervous. She says she didn't care and that it served them right for what they did to her. She shows some sense of power when she sees they were so nervous.

Debbie left the shelter after three weeks to set up an apartment with another woman and that woman's three children. The two women worked opposite shifts and so could help each other out with child care.

Debbie says her social worker wanted her and Bob to meet, and so they did meet once at the social worker's office. No matter what Bob said, Debbie cried. She attributes this to being tired, but it is the only time in the transcript she talks about crying. The social worker's office may have been a safe environment where Bob probably would not become violent, and that safe environment may have allowed Debbie to cry and show how emotionally upset she had been.

Bob wanted to take Jessie for a few days. They could not come to an agreement about that, but Debbie let Jessie go with Bob anyhow. Again, this is an incident where the two of them did not agree, or decide, what to do. She went along with him.

When Debbie went to get Jessie or visit him, she reentered the old system and the rules seemed to be reactivated. She was in the lesser power position. He prevented her from taking their son, and she couldn't get in to work and almost lost her job.

Debbie wished she could have stayed at the shelter longer. She used the time at the shelter to get a job, get an apartment, and get divorce papers. She was efficient at establishing the social structure she needed. She was, however, one woman who did not go through the emotional process of fear, anger, helplessness, and eventual resolution. That emotional process may be as important as the structural supports of a job, an income, and a social support system. Debbie knew she needed something more at that time. She knew she was vulnerable to Bob. He kept after her, and he threatened again to take their son if she didn't come back immediately. She gave in.

They replayed the same patterns of the system that had been established. When the violence or tension exceeds a threshold level, she moves to get out. He then makes a more powerful move to coerce her physically or threatens to take their son, so she returns under coercion. This pattern is rigidly set between them.

#### After She Returned

When she returned to him, he promised they could have a six-month trial period, and if at the end of six

months she still wanted to separate, he would move out.

Debbie says that she knew his promise was worthless.

Bob has been working and has not directed his violence at her, with one exception. Whenever he gets angry, however, the threat of violence terrifies her. She got hysterical when he threatened her, and she thinks her hysteria is related to the number of times he has beaten her in the past. Her hysteria suggests she may be less able now to maintain the cold, calm, protective exterior. Clinicians who advocate that people be "in touch" with their feelings may regard this as a positive sign. From a system's perspective, it may mean there will be some change on her part in response to violence that could change the whole system.

It is interesting to note that when Debbie became hysterical, Bob's mother gave her valium to calm her down. This represents negative feedback to the new response that Debbie showed. The negative feedback to Debbie's behavior is a system process that inhibits change. The system between Debbie and Bob and Jessie was being maintained by mechanisms of control from others, particularly Bob's mother.

Debbie says she can "take him", can "play the game", play the role as long as he does not attack her. The criteria for viability of the system is that he not attack her.

If the goal is that he not attack her, the mechanisms that are used to achieve that goal are important. Bob is figuring out how much he can drink on an empty stomach or

on a full stomach and not become violent. She is trying not to do things to make him angry. The threat of the shelter "holds him in his place in a way."

Now she sits in her kitchen, doesn't work, and has few social contacts. The system is presently in a state of equilibrium. Debbie feels she has no other choice than to live like that. At some point the violence will probably escalate again and she will leave again temporarily. This system pattern has not changed. Debbie knows her future, but she feels powerless to change it.



## CHAPTER 6

### ELIZABETH

Elizabeth is 30. She is a gay, fun-loving folk dancer. She entertained other women at the shelter during her first stay many nights. Elizabeth also thinks about committing suicide. At these times, her dancing becomes that of a little girl, and this woman who is approximately 5'9" curls herself over her body.

Elizabeth is in the process of sorting out a series of sexually and physically victimizing relationships that date back to her childhood. Her repeated relationships with men who were abusive would lead some to label Elizabeth masochistic. She did not enjoy the abuse, however, and she did not seek it out. Elizabeth learned early in life not to respond when she was hurt.

Elizabeth has three children. The oldest, born when Elizabeth was a teenager, is being raised by her mother. Elizabeth put the others in temporary foster care because she was worried about her ability to cope during those periods when she is overcome with feelings of worthlessness, fear, and anger.

What follows is Elizabeth's life history in her own words starting with her description of her father. Editing changes have been made to protect her identity.

Elizabeth's Life History

He unloaded cargo off the boats and then loaded stuff back on, fish or whatever. He mostly worked with the fishermen. He used to drink a lot. We would watch for him, coming down over the hill. Whoever could get to the phone first, you know, would get a nickel to call the cops on our father. We'd race to the phone, see who could call first. We would get the nickel to call the cops on our own father. That's the way it was, because my mother would be ascarded when he came home drinking.

Automatically they would take him, you know, and arrest him unless he was passed out or something and not doing anything then. They couldn't do anything about it once he was in the house when he was passed out or something like that.

One time my father came down over the hill, and he was laughing 'cause he had called the cops on himself. They knew him so well from him going there all the time, you know, from being drunk. He just called them up and said, "This is Tommy. I'm drunk again. Come and get me." He came down over the hill laughing and said, "Well, you don't get the nickel today. I called them on the phone." He was dancing down over the hill, you know.

My father never really hit my mother that I ever knew unless it happened way back before I was born. I haven't any knowledge that my father had ever hit her. Maybe just once. It was more foul language, you know.

There were certain things I just didn't do when he was drinking, though. I don't remember offhand him hitting the kids, no. My father used a razor belt as far as discipline goes. He always used to do things like talk to us, more or less sit down and rave at you for about an hour or so, and you had to sit there and listen, you know. You didn't get up and go until you could go. He'd say, "You listen to me." Maybe in an hour or two you could go off.

My mother never interfered. Me and my mother are... don't have much of a relationship. I can't explain it. I never felt like you could talk to my mother. I don't know whether it was having so many children or what it was, but I never remember her hugging us, or telling me she loved me. No, I didn't feel it.

I felt my father loved me and cared about me. You could feel in a sense that he cared. Once in a while he would hug you or fool with you or take you someplace which would show love. My mother more or less kept alone, off to herself. I can remember her crying a lot.

As I got older, my father and I grew a very good closeness. He saw two of his brothers die from alcoholism. Then one time my mother was in the hospital having a baby, and she almost died. The doctor told him she was dying. He made a promise to her then that if she would live, he wouldn't drink anymore. He left the hospital, and when he came back, she was better, and they said she would live.

He didn't drink from that time on. There was not a drink in the house, and he wouldn't touch nothing to drink.

I always felt worried about not feeling loved by my mother, and how much I wanted to be. Just before I came here, I talked to my mother on the phone. I felt I could talk to her on the phone, but in person I can't talk to her at all. Over the phone I was talking to her, and I said, "I don't know how to say this, but, I love you, and I felt strange at times when I wanted to go to you and hug you and everything, but I thought you would send me off to school or out to play or something." I told my mother this, "Maybe you feel the same way. I don't know." I said, "Maybe you feel like you want to do this too, but you're afraid to."

She said, "Ya, sometimes I felt that way." I said, "Well, I can remember that you said that your mother never told you that she loved you, that you never felt love from her. You didn't say that much about it towards me or some of the others. Maybe it's because you just didn't know how." I was trying to tell her there was a terrible feeling I had, and she came right over and she hugged me and she told me she loved me. That was a good feeling, having her arms around me. That was really nice.

I've always felt like she was cold. I've always felt like she didn't really care about me, because I never felt her. I could never talk to her or I never...She never took me aside to talk to her. I never heard her say, "I love you."

I think she was unhappy for a lot of years. I think because her first child died. He was stillborn.

Having someone to talk to about it might have stopped her from dreaming about it. But he (the father) was gone all the time. He went to the hospital for a while. Mostly he would just come home for supper, and then he'd leave again. I remember her saying, "I wish you'd stay home more often."

She didn't feel a need to reach out. I didn't feel her reaching out to us. I think I wanted that. I didn't know how the rest felt. I know I wanted to touch her but I was scared to touch her. I was afraid she might reject me. I was waiting for her, you know, to show some sign that it was alright.

My father, he was lively. He would sing and dance and used to always play the harmonica. He was playful singing to us. He showed love in some ways.

I don't remember my mother doing that. I don't. I think she wanted to. She was left with the house and all the responsibility. Now I think she regrets the fact that she didn't do more.

I was more or less on my own--that kind of girl. There was a couple of girls that I used to chum with, not for too long, though. For a while I tried to be friends with them, but, I don't know, I more or less stuck around just with my family. That's what this family does. I think most of us never really knew how to play.

I used to go out, go down to the playground, swing on the swings, way up high and sing as loud as I could sing. I was into singing more than I was anything else. I would swing, singing way up high in the air. Ya. Swing way up high and sing that song, "When the world hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that's amora." You know, stuff like that. It was funny. Other kids would come down and try to sing. They would try to sing with me. I'd race down and try to get the first swing where I wanted to swing. My usual swing you know, and I'd swing up high and they'd start swinging up high with me, and before you know it, I had everybody on the whole swing screaming.

One day I had to leave the playground and leave everybody. I went home with awful pains in my side. You know, like an appendix attack. I got down and started walking off. I could barely walk. I was doubled over all the way home. I was twelve I think. Twelve or thirteen. I got home, and I went in on the bed, and I was crying out loud. My mother said, "If you don't stop your crying, I'm gonna take you to the doctor." Now I didn't want to go to the doctor's. I did not want to go. You know, the stories I heard about doctors scared me to death about the doctor. I didn't want to go no matter how much it hurt, but I kept hollering and hollering, 'cause it hurt more and more and more, and getting worse. Finally at the end of the day my mother said, "I'm gonna take you to the doctor's." So I got up and I got dressed, and when I got up there, all I remem-

ber is the doctor saying, "You're very lucky you brought her in now. Her appendix is just about ready to burst." I guess when I went to the hospital it did burst. My mother said she almost lost me in that hospital.

My mother was a funny woman. She'd take me to the doctor's when something was wrong, or something like that, but she would seem like she thought that you didn't know what you were saying. She'd wave at you to go away, you know, but if anything was wrong, she'd get you to the doctor. Most of the time you'd cover up and say nothing's wrong with you. But then, there were a lot of kids, too. But it was kind of like they [parents] don't believe you.

It didn't help when I was younger, either. My older brother used to come home drinking. I was still living at home, and one night he came home drinking, I guess, and came upstairs into my room. I was sleeping, and he ripped the covers off me and had his hands on me where they should not be. He was undressed and when I came to and saw him, I was just shocked. You know, I wanted to scream out, but I didn't dare to. Finally he went out of the room, and said, "Please don't tell Mama. Please don't tell Mama. I didn't mean to do it. Please don't tell." And all the time I wanted to go downstairs and tell my mother or father, but I was scared to death of my own brother who was trying to harm me and not say anything. He might try to kill me or hurt me. I couldn't say anything, and so I'm lying there wide awake waiting for him to go to sleep, hoping,

you know, that people are sleeping when I do make my move to get downstairs and see my mother and father. So eventually I did get out and went downstairs and told them.

I went in and told my mother and father. They said, "Oh, no. That's awful," or something. They said, "We'll talk to Jimmy in the morning. We'll have a long talk with him in the morning." They said, "Don't say anything to him. We'll talk to him. Now go back to bed and try to get some sleep." I didn't dare to go back upstairs, so I slept down on the couch.

I don't know for sure if they did talk to him, because I wasn't there, and they never told me if they did talk to him, and I didn't bother to ask him or nothing afterwards. But I used to see my brother, right, every morning like I say. We used to do these things together, but from then on I carried an awful feeling towards my brother when I saw him. Everytime for years, I'd try to talk to him, and I couldn't.

One night we were all at a club, and I finally blurted it out. Got feeling good, you know, and I told him I hated him. I said, "I hate you for what you've done to me," and I went home--got a ride home with my sister, but on the way home I felt bad for what I said. The thing I couldn't understand, either, is that my brother degraded me badly. He degraded me for quite a few years after that thing happened. Even today that bothers me.



My mother didn't know about the thing with those guys either.

When I was younger these boys picked me up and were going to give me a ride home. They took me for a ride and made me do all kinds of things. They didn't take my virginity. They didn't touch me in that way, but they made me do all kinds of weird things to them while the others watched. They shut the car door and made me do all kinds of things. This was before I was even married.

My mother used to send me over to my sister's every night and this was when that thing happened, when I was coming home, at night time.

They dropped me off afterwards, but I was so petrified, I didn't feel I could tell anybody. I was so scared and so ashamed about what happened. I figured they wouldn't tell nobody, and I didn't tell nobody either.

I held it inside for a long time. I didn't dare tell nobody, especially my mother and father. I was afraid they would blame me.

I know that I knew one of them guys, but I cannot place him in my mind. I know at that time I knew one of those guys. I just can't...but I know that one of them I knew. Maybe it was someone I really cared about, and I probably don't want to remember anyway. I don't know, but I know that I recognized one of those people. The other ones I didn't know. I can't even remember their faces.

This is what bothers me about the different guys that I see hanging around on the corners. This is probably why I'm scared in public. Afraid in public. This could be why I feel so uneasy in public. I think I really would rather have known who they were than not know, because at least I would know when I see them, and I wouldn't feel.... Sometimes I wish I could remember. I think about that a lot of times. It took me fifteen years to tell anybody about that. I did tell the man I am married to now, but I didn't tell either of my other husbands.

I was married when I was seventeen. I don't even remember how I met him. I'm confused. Oh, I guess it was at a new year's eve celebration. I kind of liked him, but I don't know if it was love or not. Even today I don't know what love is. Back then I think it was more like infatuation.

When I married him I thought that if I didn't marry him, I wouldn't be able to keep my child. I had ended up getting pregnant. My mother had never talked to me. I thought I would lose the baby, that I couldn't keep the baby if I didn't marry him. So this is why I married him. My mother thought it was absolutely right that I did marry him, because I was gonna have his child.

Donny's parents told him that he should marry me. This I remember. They did tell me, whether he married me or not, that he would support the baby.

When I knew I was pregnant, I couldn't tell her. I stayed away from the house for a whole week. I went to my older sister. I told her. My older sister went and told my mother. I didn't dare go home.

When I did go home, my father raved at me, "How could you do this to your mother?" I went into the other room and my mother was crying, and I guess she had been upset since I had been gone. One thing led to another and she said, "How come you had to go and tell Eileen of all people instead of telling me yourself?" It seemed there was a conflict between my mother's children and my sister Eileen's children. She was the first child, and she had nine, too. My mother's children and her children fight all the time. My mother would tell Eileen how bad her children were, and she would say how she didn't like us taking it out on her kids.

My mother would say how bad they were, and we were not to hang around with them. Eileen would tell her kids this and her kids would resent us for that.

When we got married I really never knew where he was. I mean he would tell me he was gonna go to the store to pick up something for supper or something. He'd go, but he'd never return. The cupboard would be bare and the baby would be crying. There would be no milk or nothing, and it would be getting late, around eight or nine o'clock, and there would be nothing there. This would happen often. On pay days he would just disappear. One time some woman told

me that she knew where he was, and if I wanted her to go with me, she'd go with me, and we walked down to this place called Billy's Bar. I looked in the window, and I saw him dancing with a woman with blond hair. He was rubbing her neck and stuff like that. I opened up the door quickly and said, "Donny", to let him know I saw him, and I started going out up the street. He started coming after me. "It's not what you think. It's not...she's a friend of my father's. She's a friend of my father's." I said, "Ya."

All the times he'd go, he was going out and getting drunk. He would come home sometimes two or three in the morning. One time he came home, and his shirt was off and there was a shoe missing and everything. You know. And so after that happened, the next couple of times he went out, I wouldn't let him in. I locked the door, and he banged on that door. I remember one time he was standing in the hallway, half froze to death, and I wouldn't let him in 'cause he used to come in and hit me. I didn't believe it. I didn't believe it. So anyway, finally about a year or so later I left him.

I ended up living with my mother, and my mother ended taking over my son. She used to tell me to go and do this and do that, and that I was too young to raise a child. She still has my son today. He's eleven. He lives with her.

We just started being close just this year. He's reaching out to me, because he would come over and kiss me

good-bye and give me a hug.

My mother won't. I always resented the fact that she took him. I didn't like myself too well at first, but I felt this is what my mother wanted. She would love me more, you know, and care about me. So when she said something about the baby, I would let her, thinking she would care more about me.

I was always trying to do things...If I did something she thought I should do, I thought she would care more about me.

I did different odd jobs [after she was divorced the first time] They [social workers helped her get into work programs] put me in a training program, and then they had me work with crippled children. That job I think I enjoyed the most of all, working with those kids. I knew that they didn't have very long to live like other children do, so I kind of enjoyed being around them and making them laugh. I worked there I think almost a year. I was around twenty at that time.

Then I met Brad. He was a dancer. He taught me how to dance, and I just loved that. We even performed in night clubs together. I loved being up there in front of those people.

I think I really loved Brad, but after we got married I think jealousy set in. I think he was jealous. He stopped me from my dancing. He wanted me to stay home. That was fine for a while. I stayed home. He got so he wasn't

coming home, though. We ended up fighting after a while. He made me so I feared him. I felt, I had feelings...I mean, he made me shake so much after a while that I just didn't dare stay with him. I wanted to stay with him, but I didn't dare to stay with him. I was afraid.

The first time I think we were on our honeymoon. He just grabbed me, you know, put me up against the wall, and just started slapping me. I just shut right up. Didn't say nothing. Didn't do nothing. I was afraid of what he would do.

There was one time when Carol [her daughter] was crying and he got so mad that he just pushed her head into the counter. I got mad and I screamed at him, you know, "Leave her alone." He said, "She never shuts up."

Then there was another incident when she was eating her cereal. I was feeding her cereal. She was only about nine months old. She was in her high chair, and I was feeding her cereal. I had to go to the bathroom, something like that, and I asked him to finish feeding her. When I came out of the bathroom, he got mad at her from something, and he pushed the bowl of cereal right in her hair. I don't know why he got mad at her. I don't know what made him do that at that instant, but he did do that, unless he was trying to make me mad or something.

There was a few times that she was just walking and he picked her up and heaved her from one side of the room to another.

That used to scare me when he did that, but I couldn't understand it. I couldn't understand it. I didn't like staying there, and I didn't know how or why I did it.

There was another time when he had taken me into the kitchen and said, "Now I'm gonna hit you." He wanted me to strike back. I never would strike back at him. I was too afraid. Afraid he would break my wrist. So, I wouldn't strike back for nothing. I didn't want to hit him. I couldn't understand why he wanted to hit me, but I didn't want to hit him.

At the time I felt numb, in shock. He hit me, and he said, "Now you are going to hit me." I said, "No, I'm not going to hit you. I don't want to hit you." I said, "Please just leave me alone." I started crying. He did it again, and I still didn't hit back. Then he just chuckled and walked off. He never slapped me across the face, though.

I wanted to kill him, but I didn't. I just said, "Why, why is this happening to me?" It was like he wanted to punish me.

There was another time when he kicked me. He just kept kicking me. I felt angry, but I couldn't show it. I was too afraid. I don't think I felt...I never felt like I could strike him. I don't know if I ever could. I just didn't know how to give it back. Just couldn't do it.

I'm afraid of what I would do if I did. Even like when I got mad at the children and I found myself pushing them aside because of what was going on with me. I was

afraid to ever spank them because I might strike them, and take it out on them for what I was going through. It wasn't their fault, I know, but at the time if I was that mad at him, and they did something, I wouldn't dare go to spank them. I'd send them to their room or something. I wouldn't dare go to spank them. I'd send them to their room or something. I wouldn't spank them because I was afraid I would overdo it.

I thought one time that he was trying to smother Carol with a pillow. I thought he was trying to kill her. Really kill her. You know, stop her from breathing. I thought if he would have killed her, I would have screamed or done something. And I did start doing something, or trying to do something about the way he was reacting with her. I think that afterwards was when he started hitting me. He didn't hit me before that. When I started standing up for my children, when I thought he was abusing Carol, he started hitting me. Carol is not really his, you know.

He's the only father she has ever known. She won't call him father because of what's happened, but it's the only man that she ever knew.

Since I left him, he comes around and tries to see the kids. He doesn't harm her physically like he did.

When I left him I was staying at my brother's house, and I didn't have any family doctor, and I called up Doctor Griffin. When I got there, I was sitting in a chair, and the nurse came in and asked if I could get up and walk



around for a couple of minutes, and I told her that I felt dizzy. The last thing I remember is that I stood up and I passed out or something. When I came to, there was nurses around me and I went out again. Then when I came to again, nobody was in the room except the girl in the next bed. She said to me, "You've been out for a long time." Doctor Griffin told me that I was mentally exhausted.

When Brad found out that I was in the hospital, he was trying to get into the hospital, and I didn't want to see him at all. Doctor Griffin left orders that if he tried to come into the hospital, that they wouldn't let him, because he was trying to. He was searching for me everywhere. Everytime I left, he would search for me and find me. So I'd try it a different way. Then he would try to get me back. I think I felt awful sorry for him. Then when I went back, I felt uneasy. He would be extra good to me for two weeks or a few days. As a matter of fact, sometimes he would wait on me hand and foot. If I didn't feel well or something, he would cook some supper. Then the baby would start fussing, and then he would start in again, and end up doing something like staying away from the house or not come home 'til late hours of the morning. The minute I'd say something to him, he'd get angry and start pushing things around and slamming things down. At that point I'd shake like a leaf, and I'd just wish there was a way out.

Sometimes I'd wait until he'd go to sleep to make

sure that he was sleeping before I'd dare do anything. I knew I had to leave.

One time when I lived in the village I called the police. He was outside the house when they came. They took him for a walk around the block. That was the only time that I called the police.

Doctor Griffin gave me some kind of pills. I don't know what they were, but I figure it was some kind of tranquilizer. The day after I took a couple of them pills was when I went into the hospital. I thought I was going cripple. I felt like I couldn't get up and walk. I felt like I didn't have any legs to walk on.

I took valium back then for quite a while I think, about eight or nine months.

After I got out of the hospital, I went to my mother's house. I don't remember if I went back to Brad another time after that or not. I was back and forth so much at that time.

I went and had my tubes cut and tied, right after I had my mental, what I call my mental exhaustion, but the reason for me to have my tubes cut and tied in the first place was I didn't know whether I was gonna stay with Brad or not, and if I was, I didn't want...I wanted to make sure that I could never have any more children to bring into the kind of life I was living with him.

Sometimes he was forcing me to do things I didn't want to do. And I thought that...All I could think of when

he tried to force sex on me or certain things that he would try to force me to do, and bothered me in bed was....I can picture him laughing at me when he was trying to make me do these stupid things, and I'd look at him like he was this ...this type of thing, you know. It was like with them guys. Even today if I go out on the street, it bothers me to go out on the street, especially if I see a gang of guys hanging around. I try not to go in that direction. I go the long way around. I'm afraid that..., you know, sometimes I think one of them guys could be one of them guys that were there, because I don't remember who they were, and I'm always thinking that one of them guys could be in that gang or they're laughing at me. I go the other way.

I don't remember exactly, but I don't think that I ever told Brad about those guys. No, I don't think so. No. No, this husband I'm married to now, I did tell him, and he still keeps after me about some things he wants me to do, that I don't want to do. He keeps asking me to do it and do it and do it. I wish I could tell him, "Just leave me alone, and don't ask me to do that." I don't think that I can have a normal relationship with a man, no matter how they are, because of this type of thing that has happened to me, because when I can, because no matter how much I care about it, I can seriously feel hatred towards them if they try to get me to do certain things that I don't want to do. At that time I hate them.

Really, they're better off leaving me alone. Even if they ask me nicely. Especially if they know I don't want to. And especially if they keep asking me every night or something, and they keep at me and keep at me, and then they make me feel that...well, I'm not good enough for them. I'm not woman enough for them. Then I say to myself, "Well, if you're not content with me the way I am, just go find somebody else," you know. This is what I'm feeling inside. Or I tell them sometimes, you know, if you're not content with me, this is what I told my husband that I'm married to now, find something else, because I can not do this kind of thing, and I wish you'd stop asking me to.

I know that I knew one of them guys that happened to me years ago, but I cannot place him in my mind, but I know at that time I knew one of those guys.

Today, I mean like right now, I can talk about it. I mean I feel a little bit uneasy down inside talking about it, but it's okay.

I felt I could talk to Bruce [the third husband] a little bit. I had to get it out. Now it's him. I told him about the guys, but I couldn't say what happened to me when I was a child. How could you say that to a man that you're married to? No, I couldn't say anything.

Bruce has been pretty good to the children. That's one thing I can say for him. I don't know why. But Brad was different. I would think he was molesting Carol.

There was another man in my life, but my mother and father didn't want me to go with him. They stopped me from seeing him. Brad and I had been separated or divorced. I had been on my own, and Timmy was my old friend. I thought all my life that I really wanted to be with him, but my mother...parents said I shouldn't be with him, but he was one guy I thought I could spend the rest of my life with and be with and love him, because he didn't want me to do things.

I didn't want to go against my parents wishes. They were old-fashioned. You see, Timmy, he was crooked. This is why they didn't like him. But he never hit me, never tried to make me....

Then my father died, and after my father died, I moved up on a lake in a cottage with Timmy. Timmy had got into trouble, I guess. After I had moved all my stuff up there, Timmy hadn't showed up at the cottage. I had no food. I had no phone, no sense of direction around there. I couldn't get around town with no car. My family had never been up there. They didn't try to get me. I didn't know how to get a hold of anybody, and I just set up there right outside my door waiting and wondering where he was, and if he's coming back. So finally one day this woman came out and got me to a phone and I reached somebody and gave some directions for them to come and get me. By the time I got back up there to get my stuff, the place was in a shambles, and all my stuff had been taken out of there. My

dishes and food and stuff, gone. Girl's nightgowns were all over like they were having a party.

After that I didn't see Timmy again. I don't know what happened to him or where he went or nothing.

Then Bruce came along. He seemed more mature, or older, and I don't know, he made me feel....I needed some type of security. He wanted to get married too.

I thought a lot of Bruce, but I don't think I really loved him. I knew that he had a lot of feelings for me at times. I thought that he really loved me, but I don't... I think I just wanted a family for my children, and I thought that he would be good for that. Where if I married someone that loved me and not someone that I knew would hurt me more, I thought that maybe I could lead some type of normal life with him.

After we got married...well, when we got married, well...I didn't spend our wedding day together. For three days I wandered around the streets crying. It all started the day I got married. It didn't happen before. Everything was just so nice and the children were there and everything. It all started the day I got married. The day of our wedding he got drunk. When we got married, he was drunk. He was hollering it out loud while the minister was performing the services. I kept thinking I'm being made a fool of.

I couldn't speak back. Maybe because I couldn't speak back to my brother when he took advantage of me like that. I couldn't speak back at the time, because I didn't

know how. When I speak back I don't want to hurt nobody else. I know at the time that I'd hurt myself first, before I'd hurt somebody else. This is why I've gone through a lot of hurt, because I hurt myself before I hurt others. Just like the kids being in a home. I don't want to hurt them, but at the same I'm hurting myself, but at the same time I'm trying to help them the best way I know how. I can't explain that.

And I don't know to this time whether it really...I mean, I think it's the right thing, but then sometimes I wonder if it really is or what? I don't want them to....I never want them to think that I don't care. I never believed anybody really cared, that's why.

I have only been with Bruce for about what? Eight, nine months or so? He hasn't really, really hit me. He's shoved me around, pushed me a little bit, shoved me, but that's all he has to do. I'd feel the reaction to when I was beaten before, or think he was going to...I start shaking real bad like I did before when I was getting hit. I think it's worse than when they hit you. When you think they're going to, and when they really do it. I think I'd rather have them hauling off and hit you than act like he was going to, not know what he was gonna do.

The first time I came to the shelter I was referred to the shelter by an extension worker at the state office. That was on Monday. The state office was closed, and I was ready to just...I didn't want to go back home. I wanted to

do something with the kids, so I called my state worker, and asked her. They referred me to the shelter. When I was first there, I was in a daze. I was scared all the time. I felt helpless. I don't know what was happening to me. At the time, I just couldn't stand my kids with me. I loved them, but I just couldn't cope with them around me at the time. I felt like putting my fist through something or jumping out a window or...quitting. So many times up there ...and eventually after talking to someone or trying to do something, I find that my feelings have changed quickly to so much better that I don't do anything to myself. But there are moments when I do feel that it keeps coming back. At the time I think that I just need someone to talk with, and then I feel alright.

Then I started feeling like, I can't give up. I don't want to leave my home again. I've lost it so many times before, and this is the first time I have left Bruce. Maybe by my staying away like I have been so many days [at the shelter], maybe if I go back he'll realize that things are getting better. You know, and I'll give it a second try and this is what I did.

We kept having a lot of fights that we never had before, because of the way he was trying to keep at me about sexual things, and I got back there the second time.

I found that I had to leave again. I stayed there for almost a week after I decided to leave again, and then



one day the children left for school, and I said when they come home from school, I'll pack up the children and go.

I think that so many pressures came upon me between coming back and finding out that he had been with his ex-wife when I was gone. I felt I couldn't stay there because she was around there all the time when I was gone.

I called the shelter and somebody answered, but I can't remember who it was, and I said I used to be in the shelter before, and would it be alright if I came down. She said, "Sure, come on down." So I went.

When I first came to the shelter I felt happy. When I came up those stairs, and it was like a big reunion, I was so happy, because it was like a good feeling. And when I sat down, I really didn't have any feeling of trying to do this, or trying to do that. I guess I just wanted someone to talk to. You know? I hurt, but then after I got finished talking I felt better.

I really don't know what I'm gonna do now, or what's gonna happen. I know I want to try to get relief somehow. I know I need someone to talk to. I can feel real good at night and then it can change so completely. When the night-fall comes, I am gone. I can't stand it. Even sometimes during the day, when I'm here I feel it, but I'm trying to deal with it. I just call myself an ordinary individual person.

Analysis of Elizabeth's  
Life History

Elizabeth could be a presenting case to a physician, a lawyer, a social worker, a psychiatrist, or any number of other professions. Based on their training and specific professional obligations, each would probably focus on specific aspects of Elizabeth's history or presenting problems. She might get labeled a nervous wreck, a chronic divorcee, an inadequate mother, or a masochist. Each of these labels reflects the focus on a specific individual characteristic.

What I want to focus on in this analysis are the social processes that have shaped the overall direction of Elizabeth's life, and the social structural conditions within which those processes took place. I will first discuss her early family relationships and then the succession of marriages and relationships Elizabeth has had.

Elizabeth's Early Family

The individual characteristics of each parent, and possibly the siblings, may be quite important, but taking a structural, systemic perspective, I want to focus on the relationships between family members. In this case there are three critical relationships to look at within Elizabeth's early family system: The mother-father relationship, and Elizabeth's relationship with each parent. In addition, the family as a system in the larger social system is important.

### The Mother-Father Relationship

Elizabeth's mother and father had a stable, committed relationship. Her mother was largely responsible for children and all household tasks. The father worked at low-paying manual labor jobs and drank after work most of the time when Elizabeth was young. Her mother was afraid of him when he was drinking, and controlled him by calling the police or having the children call the police to come get him when he was drunk. The distinct image of him coming up over the hill drunk and the children rushing to the telephone to call the police indicates the mother didn't let him get too close to home, or to her and the children before she took the step of calling the police. As he threatened to disrupt the home, she made a move to prevent or control it.

This relationship was fixed and stable. At times Elizabeth was aware that her mother was unhappy with it, and that she cried a lot, but on the whole there was no pressure to change the relationship until the mother might possibly die. At that point the father made a contract with God that he would not drink any more if his wife would only live, and when she seemingly had a miraculous recovery, he kept to the contract. Some change had taken place in the relationship, but I know little about the relationship after that. For Elizabeth, the important aspects of the mother-father relationship were early characteristics of interaction.

### The Relationship Between Elizabeth and Her Father

Elizabeth's face lights up as she describes her father. She laughed when she told the story of her father calling the police on himself. She apparently found the playfulness in that appealing. She also describes scenes in which he played harmonica and delighted the children with music and games. At those times, she clearly felt his love and affection, and that feeling was more salient for her than any indication that he was irresponsible or that he had hurt her mother.

There is a sense of intimacy between Elizabeth and her father. This is in contrast to the relationship to her mother or the relationship between her and the parents together. When Elizabeth had to deal with both parents together, the intimacy with her father did not come through. The dominant aspect of that triad was of a mother-child relationship.

### The Relationship Between Elizabeth and Her Mother

Elizabeth's mother was both highly responsible and submissive to her husband. This may seem contradictory. I think it is the result of a schism between the parents. The mother didn't interfere with the father when he disciplined the children. One senses the mother was the system stabilizer of the family and showed little emotional feelings. Elizabeth never felt love from her mother. She repeats this

many, many times and it is still a salient issue for her. The elusiveness of the mother's love kept Elizabeth wanting it and constantly being frustrated in her efforts to get it. She tried hard to please her mother, and she still does-- to the point of denying her own desire to have her first child with her. Elizabeth has unfulfilled personal needs for love and approval.

When Elizabeth did express herself, she received clear feedback indicating she was doing something unacceptable. She received disconfirmation from her mother. There are two clear incidents of this. The first was when she had an appendicitis attack and her mother did not want to accept she was in pain and take her to the doctor. The other case was when her brother approached her sexually. Her brother had sexually threatened her. He had come into her bedroom, exposed himself, and had taken the covers off her while she slept. When she awakened, she was terrified, especially because that happened right after the incident with the boys in the car. Her brother begged her not to tell their parents, but after he was asleep she crept downstairs and told them. She was reaching out for support. The parents told her they would talk to the brother, but she never knew if they did. Not knowing was as much a disconfirmation of her feelings as not responding at all.

A lack of trust and confidence also was evident when she first became pregnant. She could not tell her mother. Instead, she left, went to her sister's, and her sister

later told Elizabeth's mother of the pregnancy. At that crisis point, Elizabeth felt little personal concern from her mother. Rather, the focus was on "the proper thing to do." This focus is typical, and the needs of the pregnant teenager for support often become less important than the anger of the parents and the emphasis on "doing the right thing," or getting the girl married.

#### The Family as a System Within the Larger Social System

The family as a unit "stuck around" together. "Stuck" is an interesting use of words. It indicates that the system was relatively closed to outside influence. The family celebrated holidays and visited each other with the exception of the fights with the oldest daughter and her nine children. The only references in the transcript to others outside the original family are references to police who were used to constrain the father, doctors who weren't trusted, and the few other children on the swings. They were not Elizabeth's friends. She says that her friendships did not last long. She says one reason was that she never knew how to play. She could swing way up high on the swings and sing as loud as she could and the others would follow her, but there was no reference to playing cooperatively with other children. Her swinging and singing has the quality of joy and fun that reminded me of her father, but that was not allowed in the home.

Only on the swings could Elizabeth feel wonderful. She was playful and smiling when she described this, and it was in sharp contrast to the way she talked about having to look to what others wanted to try and please them. She was afraid of rejection.

As an adult she was able to say that maybe the mother had been unhappy, and that her father had not been home much. The adult can understand why the mother was so cold, but as a child Elizabeth felt she wasn't loved. She watched carefully to see what would please others. This included covering up when she was sick or in pain because that was easier, or less painful, than the disconfirmation she felt when she did say something.

The encounter with the boys that picked her up when she was returning from her sister's house, drove her around, and made her "do things" was a poignant experience. It was her first sexual experience, and it also was her most salient experience with boys. Being coerced into sexual acts with one boy while others watched made her feel ashamed. She couldn't tell anybody. She was afraid her mother, and father would blame her. Such fear was based on their behavior in other situations. She suppressed that experience and didn't talk to anybody about it for fifteen years. Not being able to talk about it to anybody led to feelings of confusion, self-consciousness in public, and constant feelings of exposure and vulnerability. She was

left without support and confirmation that she was not to blame for what had happened.

When Elizabeth goes out in public, she fantasizes that those "guys in the car" are possibly the men on the bus or on the corner. She thinks she did recognize one of those "guys" at the time, but can't remember now who he was. Not being able to remember bothered Elizabeth a lot. There seems to be a pressing need to get closure on that experience.

She relates to others in the world through a mental screen dividing her from them. That behavior is similar to the way her mother related to the world (e.g. in the case of doctors), but the confusion and suspicion is even stronger because of that experience with the "guys in the car". Her lack of supports to cope with that experience seems to have intensified the confusion and suspicion.

#### Elizabeth's First Marriage

It was hard for Elizabeth to remember how she met her first husband. She didn't know if she loved him. She did become pregnant by him, however. She did not know him very well when they did get married, and her description of the events around that first marriage suggest that the marriage was arranged by both sets of parents because of a pregnancy, rather than chosen by either of the people involved.

Not knowing him continued when they married. This husband left her and their baby without food, and went out



drinking and dancing. Another woman told her she could show Elizabeth where he was. Elizabeth was shocked when she saw him in a bar with someone else. She apparently had not tried to find out where he was before this other woman told her, however. The pattern of waiting for the husband to come home, quite possibly drunk, was similar to the pattern of her original family. She felt hurt by such behavior from her husband, but did not have a normative basis for saying it was not acceptable. Elizabeth seemed to act to please others--or was acted upon--and violence and drinking were not considered problems in that first marriage.

After Elizabeth left her first husband, her mother told her she was too young to raise a child. The mother then took over the son, and Elizabeth allowed this to happen because she thought that if her mother wanted that and she, Elizabeth, did what her mother wanted, her mother would love her more. Elizabeth's priority on getting love --in this case from her mother--took precedence over her own needs and desires concerning her son. In effect she gave up love from her son to try and win her mother's love. At the same time, the mother's actions suggest a strong need to control in much the same ways she controlled the original family--with negative, rather than positive, mechanisms: denial, aloofness, emotional coldness, disconfirmation, and the like. Elizabeth never expressed resentment that her mother had taken over the son. The desire for a mother's love controlled her behavior.

Elizabeth's Second Marriage

After her first divorce, Elizabeth had a job working with crippled children. The children were not "going to live long," and she enjoyed making them laugh. Her recollection reminds me both of her father singing with the children and of Elizabeth herself leading all the other children on the swings. The mother did not support the father's fun-loving behavior, however, and Elizabeth had an appendicitis attack and had to come home from the swings. Since the children were going to die, that put the fun-loving behavior within similar boundaries: the fun-loving behavior could not go on too long.

This pattern of boundaries continued as Elizabeth got involved with her second husband. He was a dancer, and Elizabeth was fond of him. He taught her to dance and she began to dance in clubs with him. She loved the attention, and although she is extremely self-conscious in everyday activities, when she dances she is entirely different. Her voice is confident. Her face lights up. Her body becomes lively and sexual. She says she loved being up performing before people. She got a lot of attention, and her second husband encouraged and supported her. Then he married her.

When he married her, she had a few-weeks-old baby that was another man's biological child. I do not know the details of the relationship that led to her becoming pregnant the second time; whatever that relationship was, it

seems to have no significance for her. She did not discuss it. Nor did she deny it.

Elizabeth's sexual dimension is based on fear. Pregnancies seem to have "happened" to her, and her story reveals almost nothing about how those pregnancies occurred, with whom, why, or what relationships produced them. When she talks about sex, Elizabeth almost always frames it with fear: "Them guys" forcing her to do things, or men trying to force her to "do things" she does not want to do sexually. She simply wants men not to ask her to "do things."

Her second husband always knew the child was not his, but he married Elizabeth anyhow. He became the only father the daughter has ever known.

When they got married, the husband made Elizabeth quit dancing. She thinks he was probably jealous of the attention other men gave her while she performed. She says he was "very jealous." When they got married, their relationship changed immediately; he said it was her role to stay at home.

He first hit her on their honeymoon. She made no response at that time, and she says it was because she was afraid. This lack of response continues an earlier pattern of not being able to respond when something bad happened to her. The two early sexual incidents--with the "guys" in the car, and the one with her brother--set a pattern for powerlessness in the face of abuse. She could not respond or,

if she did respond, she did not get the support she needed to overcome feelings of powerlessness.

Elizabeth says she was scared, but the most dominant feeling response she reports is confusion. The confusion came from not being able to understand what was happening to her. She doesn't understand her own behavior either, e.g. why she stays in an abusive relationship.

The second husband was frustrated by her lack of response. He wanted her to hit back. She says she was afraid of what would happen if she did strike back. Her anger frightened her. She was afraid of the power of her own impulses. This is evident when she talks about her fear that she would hurt the children, that her anger at her husband would be directed at them.

She indicates an overwhelming sense of her own powerlessness. I think her powerlessness is the result of a learning process in which her own attempts to assert herself were disconfirmed, thwarted, and denied. This led to her not asserting herself at all. While she sees herself as powerless, she also fears the powerless, ~~she also fears the~~ power of her anger, and those feelings have got to be confusing and perhaps self-perpetuating.

Her lack of power and self-assertion are dramatically clear in the passage in which she talks about the time she thought her husband might kill her daughter. She says that if he did, she thinks she would have done something (emphasis mine). Seeing the husband throw her daughter against

the wall made her think she had to leave. She mentally screens out the impulse to act where action clearly is demanded, she is unable or unwilling to act even in the face of events compelling action of some sort. Although she stayed in abusive relationships, none of the history indicates she enjoyed the abuse in the masochistic sense. When the husband yelled, she shook in fear. She ran away several times, but he pursued her and got her back. She felt sorry for him, and he was contrite when she went back--contrite enough to be good to her for a short period of time (see again Walker's, 1979, discussion of this "cycle of violence").

Once she did call the police. The police walked him around the block. Her attempt to get help was again thwarted. Another time she saw a doctor. He gave her pills. Eventually she broke down from mental and physical exhaustion and went into the hospital. The staff tried to keep her husband away from her, and when she left the hospital she went to her mother's. She left many times and had gone back many times.

The intervention of the hospital staff, her family, and social workers did help break the pattern of leaving and returning that had been repeated many times. Her two children were placed in foster care temporarily at that time, but what help Elizabeth did receive in coping with her problems came only after she was mentally and physically exhausted. She could not take care of herself or the children well, so the next step was to place the children in foster care and

hospitalize her. This further crystallized feelings of powerlessness and Elizabeth's doubts about her ability to cope with her own life.

When she does act, she acts only on herself as a way of trying to effect change. For example, she has her tubes cut and tied so she will be unable to bring any more children into the same situation. Such a move seems like an attempt to deal with part of the problem, but it's not directly a move to change the situation. It does show Elizabeth exercising some degree of control, however.

The embarrassment and fear of people laughing at her began to surface more. Her second husband forced sex on her, laughed at her, and made fun of her. This reminded her of the "guys" in the car. Remembering that experience was a critical association for her. The sexual demands of her husband threatened the system. Those demands represented threats to her personal boundaries. The violence towards the children--especially her daughter--also challenged the boundaries. As long as the violence between Elizabeth and her second husband did not extend to sexual harrassment, the system remained viable. The most salient issue for Elizabeth was when men made her "do things." The demands for her to "do things" may be a much more significant kind of violence for her than physical blows themselves. The threat that she will be sexually violated is strongly related to the episode with the "guys" in the car and to the episode

with her brother. Thus the violence of sexual demands and sexual violation is a significant threshold for Elizabeth.

Elizabeth was afraid she could no longer control her own anger and would lash out at the kids. Her impulses to hit the children finally broke the system apart. In this case, interaction within the family system had spiralled to a point where corrective mechanisms no longer worked to keep behavior within viable limits. When that happened, the system could not be sustained.

#### Another Victimized Relationship

Other than her three husbands, there was another important man in Elizabeth's life. She liked him and felt she could love him and stay with him for the rest of her life. Her family did not like him, however. He was "crooked."

Elizabeth does not indicate this man made sexual demands on her. His behavior may have been acceptable for that reason, and she may have liked him because he made no such demands. In fact, she refers to the two of them as friends, not as lovers, and she specifically states, "He didn't want me to do things." That relationship may have fulfilled Elizabeth's critical need to avoid sexual demands.

After her father died, she moved to a cottage on a lake with the "crooked" man. He left and did not come back. Elizabeth has never seen him again. She was abandoned, with no food and no way to get out of the cottage. She had

accepted a relationship based on the absence of sexual demands, and other concerns had not been important. Such a lack of attention to other aspects of the relationship may have contributed to her getting into yet another victimizing relationship.

At this point Elizabeth referred to the apparent abandonment by her own family. They were not concerned about her. Such abandonment probably contributed to further feelings of powerlessness, fear, and confusion.

### The Third Husband

Elizabeth said she wanted someone who would not hurt her more. That was the criterion for marrying again. The goal was not to be hurt, and the selection of a marriage partner was made on the basis of someone she thought would not hurt her. Her third husband was older and more mature, and she thought that his love for her and the fact he wanted to get married meant he would not hurt her.

Feeling hurt, or fearing being hurt, has been a pre-dominant state for Elizabeth. While the goal has been not to be hurt, the system has become so closed around that particular focus, Elizabeth has lost her perspective on other components in a relationship besides hurting or not hurting. Focusing on one dominant goal to the exclusion of other goals means that other aspects of a relationship--aspects necessary for the relationship to remain viable--are disregarded. Elizabeth would only see other aspects when she



was forced to look at them--for instance, at her third wedding. The husband-to-be showed up late and drunk. He was loud, and Elizabeth felt "humiliated." She thought, 'I'm being made a fool of.' She did not say, 'He is being an asshole' or in some other way objectify what was happening. A direct angry response to such a situation would have been legitimate, but her personal needs were so great that even a legitimate response was not possible for her. Legitimate angry responses have never been reinforced for Elizabeth. When she was a child, disconfirmation and the physical and emotional abuse almost completely eliminated legitimate angry responses for Elizabeth. The only response she was capable of was running. She walked the streets for three days, until the third husband finally found her.

The two were married only six months before Elizabeth came to the shelter. The breakdown of her whole way of dealing with life intensified at this point. She says she couldn't speak back. Elizabeth knows she is hurting herself. Her explanation is that she "never really believed anybody cared." She does not want to be hurt. Her family system gave negative feedback to her attempts to get help when she hurt. She never learned, therefore, a pattern of behavior to protect herself from being hurt.

When her third husband pushes and shoves, she starts "shaking real bad." She remembers being hit before, but she prefers him to hit her rather than threaten to do so. He

also asks her to "do things" sexually that she does not want to do. She prefers for him to "find it somewhere else."

Elizabeth is trying to pull the boundaries ever-closer about herself. Folding into herself is so evident that when she talks about her problems, she curls her body into a ball, much as an armadillo might do in the presence of an enemy. The times when she makes contact with other people are becoming fewer.

### The Shelter

Elizabeth contacted her social worker because she wanted to do something with the children; for her closing-in to continue, someone else had to take the children. The social worker referred Elizabeth to the shelter, and she came. The first time she was there, she opened up to other women. People responded, and Elizabeth's face was bright and alive. Others in the shelter commented on how talented Elizabeth was, and of how unfortunate it was she had given up her dancing. The next afternoon, she lay curled into a ball. She was sobbing and desperate, wanted to jump out the window, felt nobody cared and that she could do nothing useful; she blamed herself for being unable to cope with her children. During this crisis period the director of the shelter sat with Elizabeth, held her, and listened to her. For the first time Elizabeth talked about her family, her brother and sister, her mother and father, and the experience with the "guys" in the car. Her emotional floodgates

had opened and she talked for hours, until she was exhausted.

The next day she was quiet and thoughtful, and the day after that she disappeared from the shelter without saying anything. Elizabeth was in a bind, she was feeling extreme pain from a long history of sexual and physical abuse, but the only way she knew how to cope was to run away from it. The pain demanded attention. It produced thoughts of suicide and feelings of extreme worthlessness. When Elizabeth felt such feelings, her impulse was to run away--a negative feedback response that kept her system in a state of equilibrium.

Three months after she left, Elizabeth called the shelter again. She explained she had been there before and asked if she could come back. She did. She says walking up the stairs of the shelter was like "coming home", and indicates she had an idealistic picture of "home" despite her own early home life. Elizabeth explained she had left before because she was afraid of losing her home again. Her present husband had been good to the children, and he had not really hit her.

Elizabeth felt good in the warm, loving "home" of the shelter, but she is also afraid of losing the structure of a marital "home". She can't achieve a synthesis of both "homes", and neither alone is sufficient for her.

There had been more fights when she had gone "home" (to her third husband). During the time she had been away,

the husband had been seeing his ex-wife. Small things led to bickering, and Elizabeth finally knew she could not stay any longer. When she came back to the shelter, she felt she needed some time to herself. Her children went into foster care and she went to a retreat that has opened its doors to women from the shelter. While there, Elizabeth reached out emotionally to her mother. The mother responded in a supportive way, but had just gotten remarried and could not really take Elizabeth in. Thus the mother's support was bounded and conditional. Elizabeth was quite alone, struggling with her entire life. She needed a totally supportive social structure that would involve her in life again.

In her last words to me she said that she is "just an ordinary individual." She does not seem ordinary. Elizabeth is a person who needed more than protection and short-term housing and support. She needed a long-term program of resocialization aimed at reintegration with the social system, including reconnecting her with all her children. Taking over for her continues the pattern of disconfirmation of her abilities that began with the early experiences of being victimized.

#### After the Shelter

Shortly after this interview, Elizabeth left the retreat, went to the town where her second husband lived, and began to see him again. She is now living with him. Her two younger children are still in foster care at this time.

Elizabeth may be involved in yet another victimizing relationship. Does this make her a masochist? Evidence suggests not. Her life history suggests she was a victim of sexual and physical abuse as a child. The history also indicates her family and others gave no support in learning how to avoid or cope with painful experiences. That pattern of not knowing how to respond continued into her marriages. Not responding with negative feedback to abuse and violence contributed to the stabilization of violence in her marriages.

## CHAPTER 7

### PAULA

At 31 Paula also fled from her home with her two children. For ten years she had been abused. She had headaches every day and almost constant colitis.

Paula had tried other ways out before--family, other men, sickness, valium, and fantasies of murder. None of these other ways had worked. She is now living alone with her children. She has a job and is free from the routine of drugs prescribed for her problems.

Paula's story was told to Mary Price and I in the sparsely furnished apartment where she lives. Again, details have been slightly changed to protect her and her family.

#### Paula's Life History

I was living in the city and going out with another guy when I met Ed. I had a date with this other guy 'cause we were going to go apartment-hunting. He stood me up, so I decided I was gonna go eat. That's always been my thing --when I'm upset, I eat. So I went down to a pizza house. That's where I met him, at the pizza house. I was around twenty-one, and he was eighteen.

We moved in together right away. He was playing around, and I didn't know I was pregnant, but right afterwards I started hemorrhaging. I started bleeding and I went to a doctor and he gave me some pills, and then I really started. He was always being rough, very rough. He was just very rough, and I guess that's what did it 'cause he was always picking me up and putting me on his shoulders. You know, with my stomach on his shoulders.

We were going down to my parents. They had wanted to make everything legal. But the state wouldn't let us get married because Ed was only eighteen. Ed's father didn't want to sign the papers. His father put the threat behind him that I was going to jail, because he was only eighteen and at that time the legal age for marriage was twenty-one.

Ed threatened his father that he would run away if he didn't sign the papers, so he did, but he didn't even come to our wedding.

After the miscarriage I panicked, because I thought, "Oh, I can never have another child." Felt so depressed, so very down. And I think he married me out of feeling sorry because I was so depressed.

I think my mother had a lot to do with it too. When I was twenty, my mother told me that "after you've been with every Tom, Dick, and Harry, nobody's going to have you anyway." I know the first one that said anything about getting married, I was all for it, because she said no one would want me.

I don't think I really loved him, because I only knew him three months. I think it's just because he said let's get married. You know, and I said, ah, this is an answer, "Somebody wants me."

We fought the whole three months that we were married. He was calling me names and downing me, and I was kind of in a panic situation without knowing what to do about it.

He hadn't been in the service yet, and he was worried about getting drafted, so I called up the draft board and said more or less "Come and get him." I called the Marine Corps, and I said, "My husband is interested in joining the Marine Corps; would you come and talk to him?" I felt he was going to get drafted anyway.

We were only married three months and then he went off, first to boot camp, then he went for special weapons training. Meanwhile I got pregnant again. In fact, the day he was leaving for Vietnam I had Denise.

He called me on the phone. He used to call me every Sunday when I was pregnant. I lived with his parents for about six months after I got pregnant and then there was a big fight and I left and went to live with my girlfriend.

His family didn't speak English. Oh, the two brothers did speak English, but they wouldn't translate for me. I felt isolated and...with nothing to do.

His sister had also started threatening she was going to kill me and cut my throat and the whole bit. The



whole family is very violent. When she got mad, the first thing she could think of was kill. So I said, "I'm not going to stay here and have her walk up beside me sometime and belt me beside the head with a crowbar or something." It don't bother them any to shoot anybody. So that's when I went to live with my girlfriend. He used to call me every Sunday and one Sunday, he called and I wasn't there. I was in the hospital. I was in the delivery room. He called the hospital and said that he was on his way to Vietnam. And I said, "Well, you have a daughter." He was very excited about it.

I felt very depressed, very lonely, having a baby by myself. To me, the husband is supposed to be there. I was very scared knowing he wasn't going to be there. I'd never had a baby before.

After I got out of the hospital I went back to my girlfriend's but it was just too crowded. Then I went to live with my mother. I didn't stay very long, though. I discovered that the reason that I went into the service before was that my mother and I didn't get along. So after I got on my feet, I started looking for a job and an apartment and I got both.

I was out working, and the other people used to go out drinking and having a good time, and they finally talked me into going out with them. So I started drinking and the first thing you want to do when you start drinking is go out looking for men, and that's what I did. I met this one man

who was a truck driver and he was very nice. He wanted to take me out, show me a good time, spend money on me. Who could say no? I didn't.

Then for about a month before Ed returned I got really scared. I was dreading Ed coming home. It scared me to think that somebody had seen me out and would recognize me and come over and say "Hi" to me because he was very jealous. Very possessive.

I had written Ed how dull life was--how I was staying home every night and working very hard and all that situation there. When he wrote back he told me nothing about Vietnam in his letters. He was very depressed, I think, but he would never come out and say it.

We did not know anything about each other. The first three months of marriage--or the first six months 'cause we were living together three months and the next three months we spent in bed. Seven, eight times a day. That's all he wanted to do. We didn't have time to eat. We didn't have time to do nothing. His whole life was sex. He just couldn't get enough. He was possessed by it. It was really dominant in his life.

The first night he came back I expected all this loving and kissing and everything, right, you know, but it wasn't. He came back and he stuck a knife up to my throat, he threatened to kill me.

I was going across the hall to a next door neighbor's when I saw him down at the bottom of the stairs. I knew he

was coming home from Vietnam, but I didn't know when. He ran up the stairs and kissed me, and hugged me. We went in the house and he said, "What were you going next door for?" I said, "I was just going over there to talk to the neighbors." This was what started it...walking across the hall to talk to the neighbors.

He was talking and all of a sudden he walloped me. "Who you been out with?" I said, "Nobody." He said, "Don't lie to me," and I said I hadn't been out with anybody. He just kept going on and on. "Yes you have. I know you have." He didn't believe me. He was really crazy.

He threatened to kill me. I should have known right then and there--you've got to get out of here. He was really evil looking and crazy. That's when he started unpacking and he whipped out this knife. He just went berserk. He was like you see on TV--these guys with the knives. They throw the knives back and forth from hand to hand. He was doing that. All this time he was screaming at me, and hollering at me, and threatening me.

I really got so upset I was shaking. He found out that I was scared. I finally admitted that I had gone out with one guy, and only one. Then he kind of sat down and talked about it. He calmed down.

The next day he was taking a shower and he wanted to take Denise in with him. She was only 15 months old. He took her and put her face right up to the shower head. He swore, "Whose kid is this anyway?" He didn't even believe

she was his. She looks just like him.

He thought it was funny. He said, "I'm just playing with her." He doesn't know half the time the things he's doing. Like when he did something to one of the kids, and I said, "Ed, don't do that." He'd say, "I didn't do anything." Sometimes it makes me wonder whether he has memory lapses or something like that.

He had seen alot of people get killed in Vietnam and he saw some kids get killed. He saw alot of kids get... what I could get out of it, he had seen alot of kids that were used by the Vietnamese to trap the soldiers. Hand grenades under their arms, that type of thing.

And he loves children, at least I think he does. I really don't know what...I can't tell what's inside him. Sometimes he can be violent and other times he can be very loving and kind.

He told me nothing about Vietnam. Even to this day, he has told me nothing. Just that it was very rough. It was very bad. As far as going into detail, he's told me nothing. He was very depressed I think. I think he lost a friend or two while he was there, but he never could come out and say it.

We had about six or eight apartments right after he came back. They were all within walking distance of his friends. He was working for the state. He's always worked. He's never been two weeks without a job. He's never worked

at anything that has any good money, you know, but fairly decent jobs.

It was alright for a while, but he fought alot with his family. At one time, we lived in the same apartment house as his sister. She lived downstairs, we lived upstairs, and he had a fist fight with his sister. In fact, for a while he didn't even talk to his parents after this fist fight with his sister. It was four years. We lived in the same city, right around the block, and he never once spoke to his parents or his sister for four years.

I really don't know how long it was after he came home from Vietnam before we got into another thing. My sister came to stay with us. Ed had lost his temper about something and he started to hit me. My sister tried to defend me, tried to help me, and he belted her. And then he just kept hitting me, over and over and over and over. He slapped me in the face as hard as he could. He never used his fist, but he slapped me in the face. He was very strong and, to me, it felt like his fist.

I kicked him out and I called the cops. They came in and they walked around and said, "Well, he's not here." I said, "No, of course not. He ran away when he heard me calling the cops." They looked around and saw all his Marine Corps things on the walls and they said, "Well, if he's a Marine, he can't be all that bad." And out they walked. They said, "We'll keep an eye out for him and if

we see him, we'll grab him." And that was all that was done. Back at the time, if I had gone down and signed a restraining order...but it cost \$25 and I didn't have any money, so he was out for two weeks, and then he came back crawling, you know, every day, "I'm sorry." How it would never happen again.

Then when I was seven or eight months pregnant with Danny, he beat me up again. I say beat me when he just slaps me with his hand. He makes my face all swell up black and blue, but he doesn't punch me. He kept slapping me, and slapping me, and slapping me, so I went down to the state hospital after he went to work to find out whether there was anything I could do. This man keeps beating me up, you know, what can I do about it?

The place wouldn't do anything about it. They said it took three psychiatrists to commit him. I said, "He has to be crazy if he keeps beating up on a pregnant woman." They wouldn't do anything. They said, "Well, you could come in for counseling." So we went--twice I think it was, and he wouldn't go back again. He wouldn't go back again. I kept telling him, "You know, there's got to be something wrong with you if you have to keep slappin me around." "Well," he says, "I'll go get help if you want me to, but these guys don't know anything."

So he went down to the military hospital. They asked him to stay and get treatment. He said, "F--- you," and out he went.

He doesn't drink. He doesn't take drugs either. He doesn't do any of that. He just keeps having this uncontrollable temper. He can't control it. He said, "They wanted to keep me and they ain't keeping me. I ain't gonna be locked up in no hospital."

Nobody's willing to help us. If you're not on welfare and you haven't got the money, they're not gonna help.

He was away alot after work, but most of the time he said he was visiting with his boyfriends there and all those men he liked to hang around with. He would spend all his time with them. Whether he had another girl, I don't know.

It was mostly the beating of the head or mouth that really tore me apart. When he called me names and said how stupid I was and how ugly I looked. So much fat. How he'd tell me how I couldn't do anything with my life cause I was too stupid. He did alot of that. He called me a bitch. I don't know why. It makes me angry. It really bothered me. But you know, five minutes later, after being called all these names, telling me how stupid, fat and ugly I was, he'd want me to get into bed with him. That's what messed up my mind the worst. How he could get over it so fast and here I would dwell on it for six months.

I wouldn't feel anything. I would say, out of ten years of our marriage, I would feel it like maybe a week's worth. I just wouldn't feel like it, you know, cause like after somebody telling you off and hollering and screaming at you and telling...and then want you to make love with

him. I'd fake it just so that he wouldn't continue screaming, continue hollering. I'd just go to bed with him and fake it. It got so I didn't know whether I was faking or what. I didn't know what I was feeling or when I was feeling or what. It would go on like months and months and months when I'd be depressed.

I'd keep low. I didn't want to do anything and I didn't want to go anywhere. I didn't want to visit anybody. Especially when he was around I was more depressed than ever. I didn't want to do anything that would make him angry. I was like a robot. I didn't feel anything. I didn't want to feel anything.

I didn't believe half the things he told me, like when he said he loved me. Because to me, anybody that pounds somebody one minute and then says "I love you" the next is not telling the truth. I mean, how can anyone love somebody and still beat on them? Or even call them dirty names and swear at them. It's not my idea of a relationship that you have to be browbeaten--having someone say "I love you" to make it all better.

We lived in the city for a year, and he discovered that he couldn't handle the financial load and he wanted me to go to work. Danny was just three. I didn't want to go to work until Danny went to school full time because I would just be working to pay the babysitter. I told him that. I said, "I'm not going to work until Danny goes to school full time," and we had a big scene. You know,



swearing and hollering, the whole bit. "You lazy bitch. You're going to work whether you want to or not," and "You're gonna do what I want you to do." There was this whole big scene about I'd go to work or I'd be dead. There was no way out of it. I had to do what he told me to do.

I had my own car at the time. It was the family car, but it was in my name. One day I packed up the car with the Christmas presents and everything--the cat, the dog, the kids, and took off. I went to my mother's. We spent Christmas there, but I had...I had a rough time.

On Christmas Day I called Ed because I thought he could come over for Christmas time. Plus living with my mother is enough to drive anybody back to...she was hassling me about Danny, always downing him to me. I felt protective because she was always downing him. I think that has alot to do with Danny taking to look so much like Ed and acting like him. He's working his way out of this now, but still he gets in an argument on the street and he comes home screaming and hollering and stamping his feet. Slamming doors, telling how he's going to beat up on some kid. He's got a very violent temper and he loses it very easily.

Anyway, I called Ed from my mother's at Christmas and tried to get him to talk to the kids. They started in to crying how he said he had been bad, how I wouldn't have to go to work, you know. All these promises, promises. I said, "Well, maybe one more time, We'll do it."

I had Christmas dinner at my sister's. I had, well I'd say, a little bit of a nervous upset. We were sitting at the table and my sister, my little sister, my baby sister joked around. Really comical, and I laughed so much that I couldn't stop laughing. I turned blue cause I couldn't catch my breath. I really scared my mother. Really panicked her so she said I had to go have my heart checked. It was just nerves.

I would never tell anybody that he was hitting me. Well, like I talked to some of my friends once in a while, but....My parents did know because they'd seen a couple of times. In fact, he slapped me before we even got married, so they knew. Even though I didn't tell at first, when I started running home every year or so, they began to....

See, this is my biggest problem. I suppress everything. And I just can't...I can't express any feelings no matter how hard I try. I can't do it. It's all inside. I don't know how I feel. And I have alot now, like that gnawed feeling type situation. Even now I can't cry.

I've had that feeling as long as I can remember. I was abused as a child too. Not alot. But my father, when he spanked me, he did so severely. I didn't remember it myself, but my mother told me that the beatings were so bad that I was black and blue. She didn't want us kids around, because they fought constantly. He drank. He was an alcoholic, and she didn't have the use for us at that time. I can remember it in my head that all our lives she told us

how she hated kids. How we were all mistakes and we always were in her way, and she could never go to work and get a job. She could have never left my father because she had three kids. That has a lot to do with my problems today. I feel like I've never really ever, ever loved Ed because I don't know if I can give love. It has a lot to do with me not being able to show love. I can't do it. Sure, I can hug and kiss my kids, but I really don't--you know, I just don't feel like it. It doesn't come easy. I have to force myself to do it. And I do it because of them.

Ed was badly abused as a child, but he won't talk about it. He won't even...he had a very bad childhood. It's just what his mother did, so he's going on the way his mother beat. He's just repeating it, doing it to his own child.

He was always telling Denise, "You fat pig! Cow! Horse!!", because she's awkward. You know, she's not graceful like a little girl's supposed to be. She's awkward and she's tomboyish. He said to me lately, when we've been able to talk to each other without any arguments getting into it, that there's something about Denise that irritates him. He doesn't know whether she reminds him of somebody.

It's very possible that she reminds him of his sister. There's something that--it's almost like it rubs

on him. He just...he tries. He comes down and hugs and kisses her but he...you know. She can't respond to him and he expects her to. He expects her to want to kiss him, but she don't want to.

I used to leave them alone a lot so they could develop their own relationship, and later things would come out that he'd thrown her up against the wall or he'd--he was always taking his knuckles and hitting them. Cracking them in the head with them. You know? "Shut up. Don't do that." He would not allow them to talk when they were watching TV. They were not allowed to talk when they were eating. There was no friendliness. To me, when you sit down at the table, everybody talks and has a good time. But to him, you got to be quiet. You're not allowed to talk. You're not allowed to do nothing. You got to eat fast....

He was away a lot after work. He waid he was visit-  
ing with his boy friends there--all those men he like to  
hang around with. He would spend all his time with them.

When he was home, something would go wrong and he'd lose his temper and he'd just belt me. Shut me out. It wasn't regular so I can't remember any time in particular. I mean, he would slap me in the face, but it was mostly the beating of the head or mouth that really tore me apart. He called me a bitch, and to me that's the worst

word in the book. He called me a bitch. I don't know why. It makes me angry.

Once I tried to commit suicide, but....It would go on like months and months and months and months when I'd be depressed. If I didn't want to go visiting his friends or I didn't want to go shopping, he would drag me into the car--make me go shopping. That type of thing.

I had to learn not to feel. All these things that I would watch him do, or all these things he would do to me....I would have to kind of get inside myself and just not feel anything. You know? I tried to talk to him about hitting the kids in the head and he promised he wouldn't do it again, and he would do it again the next time he got angry. He'd come home angry. He'd wake up angry. It was just like my mother used to say, "He had a 24-hour mad-on." All the time he was angry. He was mad all the time.

He went to a doctor after one of the times he hit me. He didn't want to, but I said, "Either go and get help or this is it. This is the end of it. I'm gonna leave and I'm not gonna come back." So he went to the doctor and had all

kinds of tests, and he went to a specialist, and they said he had muscle tension headaches.

We moved to the country after that Christmas. Ed's friend talked him into building a house, saying how low farmer's home interest loans were and how you can get a house for \$100 a month. I thought it would be a nice idea to go out into the country. The kids would have a nice place to play. But what I didn't realize was I never liked living in the country as a kid myself. I just didn't stop to think of that. Oh good, brand new house, you know? Who would want to pass this up? Well, I mean, I just went along with it. I thought it would be neat--a change of scenery, kids would have a place to quiet down, and go to school on the bus. I didn't stop to think there wouldn't be any kids in the area, in the neighborhood, to play with.

Oh, I was isolated. Oh--it was terrible. Like being caged. He was going to work every day and he'd come home.... He started coming home right after work at 4:30. Then it got later, 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock. Sometimes he wouldn't come home until 7:00. I said, "Well, what were you doing?" He said, "I had things to do, people to see." And I was alone. No car, no way to get anywhere except my bicycle. Two miles to the nearest store. No entertainment. Nothing.

There was one girlfriend down the road from me, Sheila, that started me going to church. I went to her alot because she was...would be around. She had three children. She had been an abused wife, and I talked to her alot be-

cause we could communicate with the things that had happened to her. Of course, worse things happened to her than to me. He would actually not feed her. Not buy her groceries or anything. That kind of situation. She is the one that really helped me alot--being able to talk to somebody that it had happened to, too. And she would always say, "I don't know why you stay." I didn't, you know, but I didn't have a way out. At least I thought I didn't. I stayed for something else, but I would go to her and tell her. Talk to her about it. And I would involve myself with the church so that I could keep my mind off what was going on at home. I had more things to do. Sometimes I would be going out three or four times a week to the church.

At first Ed didn't like it. He would come home and call me a "holy roller" and say how I was gone all the time. For a while he refused to let me have the car. So I'd go down to the end of the road and wait for one of the ladies going to the church to pick me up. I said, "I don't need your car. There's plenty of people who'll pick me up." After a while, when we were leaving him alone on Sunday morning, he got...he didn't like being alone on Sunday morning. Finally he started going and then everybody--oh, they said, oh, they were so happy to see him that they would just fall all over him. And he loved that. He loved all the attention. And it just fell into place. Course he wasn't behaving like he should at home even though he was going to

church on Sunday, and he just wouldn't, you know, commit himself.

I couldn't understand how he could go to church every week and come home and beat me up. It was...it was too much for my head. I just couldn't comprehend how somebody could say one thing and do something else all in the same breath practically. Then when he got swearing at me, and hollering at me, I said, "And you're supposed to be a Christian? You know, you've really messed up my life as far as Christianity was concerned." I'd committed my life, and I wanted to live a good life, and he would come home and start screaming and hollering. Often we'd have a fight before we'd go to church.

That's why it was so hard for me to make the decision to do more. A husband and wife should work things out and make things out. Christ is supposed to give you the love that you need for each other. Something to pray about and work at. That's why it was so hard for me to make the break when we finally decided divorce was the only way. But talking to Sheila made me think. Why would Christ want anybody to live in such terror and such fear. Hell on earth really. She had alot of insight as far as what Christ said. She reads the Bible supposedly every day. I haven't for a long time. Maybe that's part of my depression problem, because I don't read it. And I don't get out of these depressions.

Ed is reading every day. He says he's completely different from the way he was before, but as I said to the



pastor and I said to my new pastor here, I don't think even if he grows wings and has a halo, it will be enough. I mean he could be a preacher. He could be a new person, but I don't think he could make up for all the things he's done. No matter what he does. I think maybe I should try to make it work, but I don't feel it inside. This is why I don't want to go back--because I can't guarantee that I'm gonna stay. I just have the feeling that I'm a free person and I don't have to stay where I'm...where I don't want to be. And I don't think any man has the right to make me afraid. I never had that feeling until I went to the shelter. I thought I had to take it. I thought I had to sit there and take it because the church says you have to work things out.

I went into the hospital a few months before I came to the shelter. I was sick, physically sick. I had aches and pains in my joints which I thought was arthritis. I had colitis, which is a nervous problem with the bowels. I had headaches every single day. I went into the hospital to get help for my colitis. I was supposed to be out within a week, but they took all these tests and found nothing wrong with me. They kept taking more tests--they took every test in the book. At the end of two weeks they said, "There's nothing wrong with you. Physically and mentally, you're just worn out." So they kept me in two extra weeks for the rest. Then they put me on the valium. They said it was my nerves. I was so nervous that it was causing all these other problems.

When I got out, Ed was still abusing me mentally and I got that attitude that I just didn't care. I think the valium had alot to do with it. Nothing seemed to bother me. He would sit there and scream at me. I timed it. "Are you done now?" I'd ask him. It just didn't faze me a bit. It was just like I was watching somebody else.

Then one night he came home very ugly. He had been coming home ugly for a week so I stayed away from him. He made me and the kids kiss him. Then he noticed something on the floor. He hit Denise in the head with his fist. He was shouting at her and she tried to avoid him.

He went down in the cellar to fix the stove and I went down to try to talk to him. He wanted me to bend over so he could have sex downstairs. I said, "I don't drop my pants every time you turn around and want sex." He said, "You do what I tell you to do." But I didn't! He wanted it always when the kids were around or, you know, that type of situation. I figured the place for such things was in the bedroom after the kids had gone to bed, and were asleep, not when they're off playing around, running in and out of the house. It didn't matter to him what time of day it was. I tried to open the stove and I opened it the wrong way. It was supposed to be a specially opened stove. I opened it the wrong way and he took his belt to me.

When we went back upstairs to eat, we were sitting at the table and he was saying something. "You're gonna..." do something. I said, "No, I don't want to," and he kicked

me in the leg under the table. I said, "Don't kick me." He said, "I'll kick you if I want to. I'll do anything I want to you." Then he hit me with the stick and said I'd do anything he wanted me to because I was his property. That's when I decided I'm nobody's property. Just like I didn't care, you know. Who was he to tell me that I was his property?

I called my sister--Connie. She is the battered wife. Her husband used to drink. When he drank, he'd go crazy and beat her up. She was really beaten. I mean, she'd been beaten bad. But he's been off alcohol for a couple of years and they're both very...very much involved in their church. But he would go off church and go onto alcohol--beat her up, and then go back to church. Then he'd be the nice guy again. So I called her up and said, "Connie, what am I gonna do? I cannot take this mental abuse." It was mental abuse. It was mentally that he was abusing me, not physically. I just couldn't take all this...me feeling so numb inside and this feeling of panic. And this feeling of being caged--all at the same time. Panicked and caged, and not being able to go anywhere and do anything. It was like he was an animal trainer, coming and beating on the bars of the cage with a stick--only he was outside the bars so he couldn't get hurt.

Connie told me to call the police and ask them, cause she had seen something about battered women. I had too, but I thought it was out West. I didn't know there was anything

here. That didn't enter my head. I said, "Okay," and hung up. I thought, no, I'll call Human Services because they would know more than the police would. I used the name "battered wife" because that's what they use on TV. Battered wives. In fact, when I saw it, I had told Ed, "Come in and watch this with me. That's you and me on TV there." He just laughed about it. He thought it was funny. But it was true, you know.

When I came to the shelter, my first impression was safety. Nobody can hurt me here, nobody can get me. I went through a lot of phases in there. After feeling the safety, then there was having to get the kids back and forth to school. You know--wearing disguises. I was afraid to be out on the street because Ed worked in the city.

I guess there was a lot of fear involved in it. He could have been anywhere. Even though he wasn't out looking for me, and he had no idea where I was, to me there was just fear, still being afraid. Being seen by one of his friends that I didn't even know.

After the fear I went through the stage of being mad because he had made me afraid. You know, more like revengeful fearing. I wanted to get back at him for making me afraid. Who was he to have the right to make me afraid? After that I realized that I was angry, I was mad, because he made me afraid and made my children afraid. They were just as scared, if not more, than I was. Being out, going back and forth to school, you know. And to think that he

could do this to them, make them afraid of him, their own father, really made me even more angry. To the point that I'd have cut his throat if I'd got the chance. I don't know whether I'd have actually gone through with it, but I wanted to because he'd done this to all of us.

Then came the feeling of panic. I'm going to have to be on my own, look for an apartment, look for a job. I think that's mostly why...I was getting to the end of my three weeks of being at the shelter and I hadn't made a decision about whether I wanted to go home or not. I felt guilty for leaving, guilty for being angry, guilty for taking the kids away from their father, and on and on and on. Big long list of guilts. Why I should go back, why I should try it again. Not knowing what was right, what was wrong--still really not knowing now.

Starting the divorce, separation, whatever--I don't know. I'm just doing what I feel. And then the pastor and Ed keep saying, "You can't live by feelings alone." If you don't live by feelings, what do you live by? I feel what I'm doing is right and that's the only way I can see it. I can't go any further than that.

Ed hadn't been coming around much until this past week, when I called him and decided to give it one more shot. I don't know. I asked him to come over for supper--it changes so quick. He wants...he's been begging me. Even when he came on the weekends, just to spend the day. He would whine, and cry, and he'd fuss and say how much he

loved me, how much he wanted me back. How all this is gonna be different. He's gonna build a room down cellar for the kids, you know, and on and on and on. He's gonna buy me a car, which he promised me when I left the shelter. All these things he's gonna do for me.

And then I started thinking, well, after all this he's been telling me, I'm not gonna get that out of any other man, any strange man, you know. That's what kind of made me think if he is sincere, it would be worth it going back. But I can't be sure he's sincere. He'd promise me the world, and then get me back there and there'd be no world left.

Then I thought...he's always preaching to me too. How I sinned, how I've done this and this is bad and that's bad...you know. He says, "You've really sinned; you have to ask for God's forgiveness."

And I asked him, I said, "If I came back would I be ...have to do...would everything be 50-50?" As far as doing what I want to do, when I want, and whatever--have my own freedoms? "Well," he says, "You're supposed to be submissive to your husband." So I said okay, that's all I wanted to hear. That's just what he wants. I want to be my own boss. If I fall on my face, I fall on my face. I was kind of teetering on whether to go back because I'm afraid of being alone, afraid of raising the kids by myself. I was really scared. I thought maybe it would be better to go back...but I kind of like being alone. Because, you know,

I can go out of the house and I don't have to tell anybody where I'm going. And I don't have to worry about coming back if I don't want to come back.

I know one thing. I'm not even divorced yet and I've got the name "divorced person". "Divorced woman." From my family, you know. "Keep your husbands away from her." That's another reason. They're all giving me this flack about being divorced, without a man, this type of thing. Watch out for your husbands and all this. They're already starting this and they're not joking.

It's such a hassle and it's part of why I was thinking last week of just going home. Another thing that really brought me down low was I went to the furniture store and applied for credit so I could get a living room set and a washing machine. One hundred dollars for a washing machine, right? And the store said, no, you haven't been working long enough. It really bothered me. This winter I can't walk to the laundramat, and it's going to be hard getting to the grocery store too. I figured if I could establish credit at the furniture store, then maybe I could get credit for a car.

When I discovered all these things not happening, the nearest thing I could think of was, you know, run. Run back. I even had dreams of...running. All night long. It's almost like I was running around the streets. I had gone to bed that night thinking I can't take this. I have to think about it and make a decision. I went to bed, and

I cried myself to sleep, prayed all night, cried all night. I finally said, "That's enough." I can't take no more. So I went to sleep. And I dreamed about running, which is just what I would be doing--running back to him because I couldn't take the pressure outside. That's when I decided I can't do that; I've got to stop running. If I fall on my face, I fall on my face. If I live without a living room set for the rest of my life, at least I'll do it by myself. I'm not depending on him for anything.

Another thing. He went out and bought the kids shoes, which he hasn't done for months. Oh, he's getting more generous. Every little thing was working on me to go back, to go back, to go back. All the things were falling apart, plus Denise was sick...this all happened the same week and I was about ready to scream.

But I think--alot of the reason I made the decision to stay was because I'd be giving up an apartment, a job, a chance to go to school. Why give up everything? Give up school and the chance to get paid for it while I'm doing it? I couldn't do that being back with Ed. He said he'd get a loan out to send me to school. Big deal. I don't want him to send me to school. I want to do it on my own.

Of course, I haven't told him this yet. I talk brave when I'm not around him, but when I'm around him, it's just like I'm a mouse again. I fall right back into the old pattern of "Yes, sir"--that type of thing. Don't do anything to get him angry...don't stand up to him or he'll get angry.



When he came here this weekend, I wasn't expecting him. I was going along doing my own thing, the kids were out playing. All of a sudden he appears. And he runs over and kisses me and hugs me, and I want to say "Bluuuugh". Yet I don't fight it! I go along with it so there won't be any hassle. Even though I don't want him pawing me and hanging all over me, I just go along with it and let it happen.

It all boils down to if I'm not going to be nice to him, he's not going to be nice. Or he's going to be nasty. If he was so super religious as he says he is, he wouldn't be throwing these threats around. He wouldn't be saying, "If you don't mind me, you're gonna be punished." He's got to know that I ain't gonna mind him.

It's strange. I feel so secure and so brave when he's not around, but the minute he comes back around again, you know. With him out of the way I was alright, but the minute he started coming and staying, even though I wasn't having sex with him, it was still that he was all over me all the time. I didn't have to do it but he was still all over me, pawing me. It was almost like I wanted to say go ahead and get it over with and leave me alone. Just like before. If I'd say no, he'd just paw me. And still...he hasn't given up any of those feelings or attitudes as far as sex is concerned. To him, it's his privilege. When he wants it, as he said, I'm supposed to be submissive.

The kids enjoy seeing him. He does spend more time with me than he does with them, though, and I have to speak to him about it. His main reason to be up here is to see the kids. He always says, "Go out and play," and takes me in the bedroom. And he says we'll talk for a while. We end up talking for 4-5 hours, and the kids are still out playing. I tell him that the reason he's here is to visit with his children, and he says "Oh, I visited with them." So it isn't really a concern...he just wants to straighten out our relationship. He doesn't want...the kids are in his way, really.

I'm hoping that I can get a restraint on him about visitation for when I'm not around. So he won't take them. I'm worried that he might take them. He says he never would because he'd ruin the kids. I said that's right--they would end up hating him. But he's threatened it so many times that it's always in the back of my head.

I'm definitely going through with the divorce. Just this last week I've had doubts, but I'm doing it.

I don't want a new relationship right away. I hope eventually I find another man. But I'm going to be very careful. I would like to go out, have a good time, meet... alot of people. I don't want to fall right into another relationship. I don't want to be...I've always been attracted to the men that take over, you know. Do things for me and run my life--the whole bit. I don't want to do that any

more. I'd like to have alot of friends, just people to talk to besides the kids. I spend all my time with the kids.

I'm lonely--very lonely. And I think that's why it looked so good, going back home. I wouldn't be alone. But once I thought about last winter, and how trapped I was, how isolated and caged and...no way would I ever go back there. I took an awful lot of drugs to get out of that cage and I never did. I never got out of it until I stopped the drugs. And stopped staying with him. And now the door is open a little bit. Not completely, because I don't feel I'm a total person yet. But it's open a little bit. And I can almost see the light at the end of the tunnel.

#### Analysis of Paula's Life History

Paula's history illustrates many of the research findings on the social structural characteristics of battered women. Both she and her husband come from abusive homes. Their marital relationship was male-dominated. The wife was isolated from other sources of financial and emotional support, and neither of them had strong social support systems, especially from family networks.

When Paula came to the shelter, she talked about her fantasies of murdering her husband. Some battered women eventually do murder their husbands, so Paula's fantasies of murder were taken seriously.

Paula did not murder her husband, however. This analysis may be able to show what brought Paula to the

point of thinking she might kill her husband Ed, and also what may have stopped the pattern of escalating violence that could have led her to kill him.

This analysis also will show how many of the structural characteristics associated with battered women interact to produce patterns that remain stable over a long period of time, and the changes in basic structural factors and in interaction patterns that may lead to changes in those patterns.

Again I want to start from the early family relationships and trace some patterns that have originally been part of that family system, and trace how some patterns in that system influenced patterns in later relationships.

#### Paula's Early Family Background

Paula went to work right after graduating from high school. She did this to get away from her family. They had never gotten along.

Paula now thinks that one of her biggest problems is that she suppresses everything. She says, "Even now I can't cry," and immediately follows that statement with:

I've had that feeling as long as I can remember. I was abused as a child too. Not a lot. But my father, when he spanked me, he did so severely. I don't remember it myself, but my mother told me that the beatings were so bad that I was black and blue. She didn't want us kids around, because they fought, constantly.

I think this passage may help explain the inter-generational link in the violence cycle. The original abuse

from her father and her mother not wanting the children around was painful, I am sure, but Paula learned not to cry and not to feel anything when abuse happened. This is related to her inability to feel and respond to abuse in later relationships. She either learned that not crying was the appropriate or acceptable response to pain, or she had developed a pattern of psychological defense against feeling that pain. This pattern meant that when violence happened again in her life she had strong defenses against letting herself feel the pain and cry.

Her parents "fought, constantly." From this she may have internalized constant fighting as the way married people related to each other. Both the role-modeling and the defensiveness against feeling and getting resolution on the feelings of pain that came from the abuse and rejection are important in the explanation of inter-generational patterns of violence.

Paula's father was an alcoholic. The mother indicated to Paula and her sisters that, because of them, she was trapped. The mother told them she hated children, how they were all mistakes, and that they were always in her way so that she could never have left their father to go to work and get away. The mother directly blamed the children for the fact of her own abuse. When the mother was victimized, she blamed the children and rejected them to the point of saying they were mistakes. Such statements must have strong

impacts on children. Paula could not respond by crying or by taking on the responsibility for her mother's abuse. She could leave as soon as she was old enough, and she did.

Later in life Paula tried to return to her mother. The transcript shows two reports of this. The first was after Paula had a baby and her husband was in Vietnam, and the second was at Christmas when she left Ed for the longest period of time. Both times she found she could not stay with her mother. At other times she had asked for her mother's support, but the mother had not been helpful.

#### Ed's Early Family

Ed also had been abused as a child. Paula talks about the family as extremely violent, even to the extent of not being bothered if they shot somebody. Paula knows Ed's mother beat him when he was a child, but he will not talk about it. Now Paula sees Ed doing to his own child exactly what his mother did to him.

Ed's treatment of the child, Denise, may be related to specific early family relationships. Denise may remind Ed of his sister. Paula said that when she and Ed have been able to talk without fighting, he can say that Denise reminds him of somebody, and that something about her irritated him.

In the larger interview schedule I have a record of one incident Paula described to me when she first came to the shelter. Ed's sister had destroyed his trains when they

were children. Since they were from a poor family, the trains probably were extremely important to Ed. Now, as a parent, Ed won't let his own children have toys. Paula hid toys in the woods outside their house so the children could have them when Ed went to work.

Paula says Ed is beating his children the way "his mother beat." He resists talking about it, however. Both Paula and Ed were abused as children, and they have not developed new patterns to deal with their own children. They may not have had opportunities to learn new patterns. Also, they may be so filled with anger and resentment that they are not open to learning new ways that are more appropriate for dealing with children. Most socialization takes place in the early childhood family. Adult socialization can take place, and there is evidence to indicate we continue to be socialized and to develop over a life-time (Brim, 1958) but the degree to which socialization takes place after childhood is related to the degree of openness to new possibilities.

Being married young, and having relatively few experiences where they could learn new behavior as a basis for family life, Paula and Ed had to fall back on the learning from their early families.

#### Beginning of Relationship Between Ed and Paula

Paula had been going out with another man when she met Ed. In fact, she had planned to move in with someone else,

but he stood her up. To console herself, she went to get a pizza and met Ed at the pizza house.

Almost immediately they began living together. A strong basis for their relationship was sex. Sex took precedence over getting to know each other in other ways. Ed wanted sex six or seven times a day, and Paula says they did not have time for anything else.

She became pregnant quickly, and because of the pregnancy they planned to get married. Ed's father was enraged. He threatened to have Paula put in jail because she was twenty-one and Ed was only eighteen. Paula's parents were going to take them to get married, but Ed was too young and his father did not want to sign papers for him. Under threat from Ed, the father finally did sign the papers, but he would not go to the wedding.

During this time Ed was rough with Paula, putting her up on his shoulders and throwing her around. She is not sure now if he meant to be playful or seriously rough, but at the time she thought it was playful. She did not think of it as a warning sign for later violence, and she did not consider his family background--a violent one--to be a warning sign.

About the time they were planning to marry, Paula had a miscarriage. She now thinks it may have been because of Ed's rough treatment. After the miscarriage, Paula panicked and thought she would never be able to have another child. She thinks this was part of her reason for marrying Ed--



at least she would have a husband even if she could not have children.

Another reason was the message her mother had given her: nobody would want her once she had been with "every Tom, Dick, and Harry." So she married the first man who mentioned marriage to her.

She married Ed without really knowing him and without knowing if she really loved him. He also had been "very rough" with her. Given the societal value on marriage and the then-prevalent cultural prescription for a woman to be a virgin when she married, the decision to marry Ed is not surprising. Paula was not warned by his early violence, perhaps because of violence in her early home, and she did not think about waiting to get to know him better.

The pattern of marrying young, without really knowing the other person, probably is quite common. I think it is related to wife-beating patterns because young women may go into marriage without thinking about what they would do if a husband hit them, and with expectations for marital bliss that are unrealistically created by romantic myths about marriage and family life. Couples who marry at a later age may have more realistic expectations and know themselves and their partner better.

Paula says she and Ed fought during the three months they were married before he went into the service. In fact, Paula manipulated his enlistment as a way of dealing with what was happening between them. She actually called up the

service and said, in effect, "Come and get him." This suggests she was not going to neglect completely what was happening. Her response is manipulative--seeking to change the situation in a round-about way rather than directly confronting it. This pattern of control by women is probably common given the lack of power women generally have for direct negotiation through confrontation.

After Paula and Ed got married, Paula became pregnant again. She does not discuss the pregnancy as a decision to have a baby. It was a decision by default.

Paula described the loneliness of having a baby alone; she had expected the man to be there when she had a baby. She and Ed were far apart at the time. He was not involved in their growing family system. Paula describes her decisions and moves during that time in ways which indicate she was acting more as a single woman with a child than as a married woman whose husband was away. The system did not seem to include him while he was away; they did not share their experiences through letters, and Paula broke off contact with his family. The break with Ed's family came after a period in which Paula stayed with them and felt both isolated and physically threatened.

Paula went out with at least one other man during the time Ed was away. Her fear of being found out when he returned indicates she expected to have a traditional marital arrangement. What she wanted to do and what she actually did were distinctly different. She seemed to want what she

thought Ed expected of her, but her behavior suggests that is not what she wanted at all. Both Ed and Paula had assumptions about each other, but what the rules would be while they were apart had not been discussed. She knew, from his previous demonstrations of sex desire, that he probably would not go without sex in Vietnam. She also knew he was extremely possessive, and that meant she was supposed to remain faithful to him while he was away. Afraid of his return, afraid of his jealousy and possessiveness, the only thing Paula had as a basis for expectations of what it would be like when he returned was the sexual part of their earlier relationship. She expected loving, kissing, and sex. What she got was violence.

#### The First Incident of Violence

Paula talks about Ed being rough before he left for Vietnam. At another point she mentions that her family had even seen him slap her before they were married, so the incident when he came home from Vietnam is not the first time there had been violence in their relationship; but the slapping incident had occurred early in the relationship and was not considered important by Paula. She did consider the incident after he came home highly important, however.

She did not expect him to pull a knife on her and threaten to kill her if she did not tell him who she had been out with. Her own behavior did not seem to precipitate the incident either, unless he knew or suspected she had been

out with someone else. Paula's response to the incident was to shake and be terrified. When Ed realized she had responded in those ways, he calmed down some. She admitted she had gone out with one other man, and they did talk about it. Ed's rage seemed to ebb when she said she had gone out. He had asserted his place of dominance in the relationship when he had demanded to know, at knife point, what she had done, but he did not reciprocate by revealing his experiences in Vietnam.

Next he challenged the actuality of Denise being his daughter. He again did this in a threatening way--by holding Denises' face up under the shower. He did not know his daughter at all. She was fifteen months old but he had not seen her the entire time since her birth. In effect, Paula and Denise had established a family system of which Ed had not been a part and of which he was not immediately a part on his return. As he entered that system, he immediately asserted his authority in a dramatic way.

Paula thinks maybe his experiences of seeing friends and children killed in Veitnam had something to do with his behavior when he returned. She is still trying to understand, but she does not have a way of checking to find out if her explanation is correct because he will not talk about his experiences in Vietnam. By attributing some of his violent behavior to his Vietnam experiences, Paula found it easier to accept Ed back and to re-establish the marital

system even though that meant she had to give up some decision-making power and some authority.

### Violence as a Pattern

Ed is a steady worker. He doesn't drink and he does not take drugs. Other research on family violence has found strong relationships between unemployment and violence (Straus et al, 1979) and between alcohol abuse and violence (Coleman and Straus, 1979). In these respects Ed does not fit one stereotypical pattern of an abusive husband. He does fit others. Paula describes him as a Dr. Jeckle and Mr. Hyde personality, a characteristic which has been mentioned of battering husbands. Ed does assert his authority as the dominant figure in the family system, and he does keep his wife from becoming involved with friends or others who might give her support.

After the home-coming incident, when Ed hit Paula the next time Paula's sister tried to defend her. Ed continued hitting Paula. The sister called the police, but when he heard the police being called he left. The police arrived, walked around the apartment, saw his Marine Corps memorabilia, and said, "If he's a Marine, he can't be all that bad." They then left, saying they would keep an eye out for him. Paula says she could have signed a complaint and have gotten a restraining order, but that the order would have cost her \$25.00 and she did not have the money. A lack of

financial resources trapped her, and her attempt to get help from the police was futile.

Soon Ed returned, said he was sorry, and promised such an incident would never happen again. It did, however --when Paula was seven months pregnant. Ed slapped her face. She tried to get help from the Veteran Administration Hospital, but the hospital personnel told her it would take three psychiatrists to commit him and that basically there was not anything they could do unless she and Ed wanted to come in for counseling. Paula did get Ed to go for counseling; they went twice, and he would not go back.

Paula's frustration as a member of the working class comes out here. She thinks that if they had been on welfare, help would have come from the state. If they had had money, they could have afforded individual counseling or other kinds of help. They were in the middle, however--too much money for Medicaid programs and too little money for other sources of help. Such a situation illustrates how lack of financial resources can contribute to continuation of a pattern of violence.

Paula's resources for help were further reduced when they moved to the country. She accepted the move based on an idealistic picture of country life--a new home and good, clean air for the children. She temporarily dismissed her own dislike of country living based on her having grown up there. After the move to the country, Ed began to come home immediately after work. Gradually he arrived home later and

later, and Paula became more isolated. She had no car, and the children had no friends with whom to play. Ed maintained his right to be with his friends after work and to go where ever he pleased. He also asserted a dominant position in the relationship by telling Paula when she had to go to work.

Paula became depressed. Ed's physical abuse affected her less than his verbal abuse. What disturbed her most was that, after an abusive session or incident, he would want Paula to get into bed. She did not feel sexual desire or want to feel pleasure, but she faked it to satisfy Ed. She would not talk to him about how she felt, but she became confused and depressed.

She did try seriously to leave one time. She packed and went to her mother's. This was an effort to get support from her mother, but the mother put Paula in a bind by having to defend the behavior of her son--he was so much like Ed. The mother criticized the grandson, and Paula became protective. This situation was similar to those Paula reported about her early family life. If she went along with her mother's assessment, that demanded rejection of part of herself or rejection of something with which she identified. For example, Paula's mother had said the children kept her from leaving an alcoholic and abusive father and husband. Accepting such a statement meant Paula had to think of herself as responsible for her mother's abuse.

On Christmas day Paula called Ed so the children could talk to him. The children mediated between Ed and Paula, conveying messages between them. He promised that their mother would not have to work and that everything would be alright. Paula decided "maybe one more time."

Then Paula went to her sister's for Christmas dinner and had her "nervous upset." She started laughing at her sister's jokes and could not stop. Apparently the strong emotional pressure she had been under for a long time had not been expressed, the release of some of the pressure through laughter triggered an uncontrollable release of the emotional tension. A similar release might have happened if she had started crying about something not related to her situation.

Paula's mother was worried about Paula's reaction, but defined it as a physical problem. She had Paula go have her heart checked. The doctor said it was "just nerves." When a diagnosis is "just nerves," the prescription often is nothing or a dose of valium. Many battered women are seen as "just a case of nerves", rather than as victims of an intollerable relationship.

Paula herself tried to explain Ed's behavior on the basis of physiological antecedents. She did get Ed to go to the doctor about his headaches after Ed told her he had headaches that made him lose his temper easily. The doctor gave him every test possible to check for physiological problems. Ed's headaches were from muscle tension. The



doctor may have known Ed was being abusive. Family physicians in many cases are the first contact for battered women and their spouses. In this and in many other cases, the attempt to get help through a physician was unsuccessful (Dobash and Dobash, 1977).

While Paula was living in the country she still made some attempts to get help and to reach out to other people. She is not a woman who became so isolated and helpless that she could not take care of herself. But she was quite isolated in the country with the children and without a car. She refers to the situation as that of being "caged."

She had one girlfriend with whom she could communicate about what was happening to her. Paula went to her friend and used her as a confidante: "She is the only one who really helped me a lot." A confidante role is extremely important in the process of change for battered women; it is a factor which may eventually lead them to leave the man. Feedback from a confidante is positive. Such feedback reinforces the feelings of battered women that they "don't have to take it." Thus positive feedback strengthens the response of not wanting to accept abuse, and this can lead to a critical branching in the histories of battered women. Leaving is, after all, a process, not a single act (See discussion in Chapter 8).

To keep her mind off what was going on at home, Paula involved herself in a church. She went to church activities three or four times a week. Her identification with, and

involvement in, the church reduced her isolation and helped build part of the bridge she needed to the world outside the home. The church served the role of a temporary support system, and that role probably was more important for Paula than any religious teachings.

Ed tried to stop Paula from going to church by not allowing her to have the car. His behavior represented negative feedback to new behavior on her part. In an earlier section negative feedback was discussed as behavior or conditions that tend to maintain the established patterns of structure and interaction. This negative feedback probably would have made it less likely she would have continued to go to church if Paula had not already established a strong support system which gave her positive feedback when she did go.

After a while Ed, who did not like being left alone on Sunday morning, began to go to church himself. He got strong positive feedback--people "fell all over him." Positive feedback encourages new behavior. Ed began to attend church regularly. All this confused Paula because she could not understand how Ed could go to church and then come home and beat her up. She wanted to believe that Christian teachings and training could help people have a good life, and she thought he wasn't "behaving like he should at home" because he wasn't a committed Christian. (She also says that Christian thinkings confused her when she was making the decision to move.) Paula was in a dilemma: involvement

in the church offered one source of strength which could contribute to her leaving an abusive relationship, but that same source also mitigated against leaving because of church doctrines concerning husband-wife relationships and marriages. Church doctrine held that marriages existed until "death do us part." If Paula left the church, she lost an important support system. If she stayed involved in the church, that support system negated her doing what she would have to do--leave the abusive relationship.

Paula's confidante solved the dilemma by appealing to a higher source, the Bible. The confidante said, "Why would Christ want anybody to live in such terror and such fear?" That question, with its implicit validation of Paula's impulses, functioned as critical feedback from the confidante.

Paula had begun her process of leaving, but she was in a constant state of ambivalence and confusion. The church said she should work things out, but her own responses were hatred of her husband and a desire to get out. This was when Paula had the strongest fantasies of murder; when she felt caged; when she felt trapped with no way out.

She felt almost-overwhelming tension within herself: constant colitis, headaches, and other physical symptoms. Finally she physically collapsed and went into the hospital, but the doctors could find no physiological basis for her symptoms and so said she was "physically and mentally exhausted." Paula stayed in the hospital for two extra weeks,

which gave her temporary time out of the abusive relationship, but no long-term basis for change in the patterns of that relationship took place. When she left the hospital, Paula had a prescription of four valiums a day--yet another case of "nervous exhaustion."

Christmas had always been a problem for Ed and Paula, so it is interesting that her collapse occurred at that time. He would not let her buy toys for the children, and the process of observing Christmas seemed to intensify some of the patterns in the relationship. At Christmas time another year she had tried to get help from her mother, but that effort had been unsuccessful. The Christmas of her "exhaustion", Paula had had nowhere else to go. Home was intolerable. She had no family support system to turn to. Physical and mental breakdown led to her hospital 'escape.' This is not surprising.

After Paula came home from the hospital, she reports she had a different perspective on things: "It was just like I was watching somebody else." Verbal and physical abuse had less impact on her. Perhaps the valium made her slightly-less-prone to withdraw and protect herself, but from a system's perspective she was no longer part of the old system. Her psychological detachment was part of the process of leaving the system.

In the last few months before Paula left her home, she could see what was happening from another's perspective. She was not responding in the same ways as before. The

pattern had become different for her. She was not hurt by Ed's verbal abuse, and emotional detachment allowed her to see the relationship differently. She was no longer bound up in the process of trying to suppress her feelings, or of worrying about not being able to feel.

### The Critical Incident

One night Ed came home in an ugly mood. He hit Denise in the head because something had been left on the floor. When Paula tried to talk to him, he demanded that she bend over so he could have sex. When she said no, he told her she would do anything he wanted her to do because "she was his property."

That's when Paula decided "I'm nobody's property." The decision was critical because the incident crystallized her thinking and gave her the extra push she needed to leave. Ed's demands were not unusual; he had made the same demands before, and the system had been governed by those demands from the beginning, but this time Paula underwent a fundamental change of goals and a change in her willingness to accept Ed's goals.

### Leaving the System

Paula's process of leaving had begun before the critical incident. The key to her actually leaving was the experience of opportunities outside the system of the abusive relationship for involvement and support.

It is interesting that Paula tried to get Ed to watch the TV program on battered women, and that she tried to get him to accept the definition of their relationship as a battering relationship. When she did, he laughed. His laughter was negative feedback, but she rejected his feedback and contended she was right. Her behavior in this situation is another indication of the degree to which she had already begun to leave the system.

Paula got to the shelter easily. Her sister helped. When she first came to the shelter, her impression was that she was safe; then she began to be afraid--afraid Ed would find her, afraid he would see the children on the street when they went back and forth to school, afraid he would find them. She disguised the children when they were outside. His threats and her fear still controlled Paula's behavior and feelings.

Soon she experienced strong feelings of anger. She felt angry that Ed made her afraid; angry that he made his own children afraid of him; angry they weren't free to go out in public freely. This series of feelings was part of the process of gaining a perspective on all that had happened to her. It may be a crucial process for battered women to go through before they can make a move to separate from a man in a battering relationship.

After Paula went through her angry feelings, she made moves to find her own apartment and get AFDC support. Then

came a feeling of panic. Paula panicked when she realized what being away from Ed would mean in their lives. Panic probably was a realistic response. She had been married ten years. She had not worked for several years. She had not had her own apartment. All these new responsibilities challenged Paula's sense of her own competence. The response was appropriate for the situation in which she found herself, because her competence to set up her own home and support children had not been tested for several years.

#### After the Shelter

Paula felt guilty. She never felt guilty for the violence, but she felt guilty for leaving her husband when the church did not support such a move. She felt guilty for being angry. Guilt is not an emotion which girls and women are trained to accept in themselves and to express. Paula also felt guilty for taking the children away from their father; this involved conflict in light of his abuse of the children. Also, under our cultural and legal system men have most of the property rights, and such rights often extend, implicitly or explicitly, to the children. Each of these guilts reflects the fact Paula was violating strong social and cultural norms. The norms of society were translated into personal "shoulds". Such "shoulds" produce stress when people make decisions, for some compelling reason, that force them to violate such norms. Stress is com-

pounded by the fact that Paula did not have a strong support system to protect her from the impact of social alienation.

Social alienation occurred when her family branded her a "divorced woman" and the women were warned to keep their husbands away from her. Her pastor and her husband gave her negative feedback because she was living by her own feelings; they put pressure on her to return. Paula's mother also was nonsupportive. Paula did not have a car, and her mother would pass the house to go shopping and would not stop to pick Paula up.

All the obstacles Paula faces to maintaining her position represent negative feedback. Theoretically it seems unlikely Paula would be able to strengthen those new necessary behaviors given this negative feedback. She does, however, have her own apartment and a job. She also has a woman upstairs who helps her out with babysitting. These are positive feedback for her new behavior.

Paula responds both to negative feedback and positive feedback in her present situation and she experiences ambivalence. One of her responses to ambivalence is the desire to run. She dreams about running. Those dreams reflect Paula's ambivalent struggle with her situation. She has a strong personal conviction that what she is doing is the right thing, but personal conviction is not all that is necessary. Paula needs strong positive feedback from a structural support system. She is missing critical social



supports--money, friends, and her family's support. Without these social supports, the stresses of normal family problems can tip the balance scales towards her going back to a situation where she had at least some structural support.

It is easy for Paula to say she will not go back, when Ed is not around, but when he is around, they return to the same patterns of the earlier family system. She says "Yes, sir," and she does not refuse him sex even if it makes her feel "bluuuch!" Paula understands the patterns that have led her to an abusive relationship and which kept her in it. That insight doesn't help, however, when she has to get to the laundry or pay grocery bills. The role of single parent is structurally difficult.

Paula says, "I can almost see the light at the end of the tunnel," revealing how far she is from her own goals. She will need more positive feedback and structural support for the role she has chosen if she is not to backslide into a battering relationship. Ed continues to make promises, and to say that he had changed. He wants her with him, but she does not know if anything would be different; yet without other social supports, Paula is vulnerable to his pleas.

The last time I saw Paula was six months after she came to the shelter. She was lonely, but also proud of herself and her accomplishments. The realities of her finan-

cial situation and her stigmatized role as a divorcee caused discomfort. Paula was both strong and fragile.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A GENERAL SYSTEMS MODEL OF WIFE BATTERING

Thus far I have presented quantitative data from a study of thirty-one battered women, and qualitative data in the form of three autobiographical life histories. The purpose of this chapter is to weave the two types of data together.<sup>1</sup> The goal is to develop a process model of stability and change in wife-battering relationships using general systems theory.

This theoretical position provides a conceptual framework to describe the processes within systems that govern the patterning of behavior. These processes can be schematically illustrated, also. The first part of this chapter describes a six-stage model of wife battering. Scherer, Abeles and Fischer described a similar five-stage model of conflict "...to suggest the kind of theory to which a systems approach would lead us" (1975: 278). The second part of this chapter presents a flow chart to illustrate the cybernetic and morphogenic processes that are the primary contribution of systems analysis to the understanding of wife

---

<sup>1</sup>Traditionally, qualitative data have been used to generate rather than test hypotheses. In this case the qualitative material was used to generate a process model. The qualitative data of the three cases also provides a test of system's theory processes.

battering. Flow charts "help us keep all the diverse elements in mind at one time" and "specify the alternative causal flows which are possible and the nature of the feedback loops which serve to either maintain the operation of the system or set in motion deviation producing sequences" (Straus, 1973: 115).

Despite many references to the need for a more comprehensive and dynamic framework to capture the complexity of family systems (Broderick, 1971; Hoffman, 1971; Hill, 1971; Speer, 1970) there have been only a very few (for example, Straus, 1973; Kantor and Lehr, 1975; Raush et al, 1974). This chapter provides an example of how the abstract concepts of systems theory can be used to describe and illustrate stability and change in behavior patterns within family systems over time.

#### The Six-Stage Model of Wife Battering

The six-stage model of wife battering which follows employs the conceptual tools based on Buckley's (1967) work on general systems theory which were outlined in Chapter I.

The systems processes that affect how violence becomes stabilized and how it changes over time will be emphasized in these stages. The stages are not meant to be sequentially dependent, that is, hierarchically arranged so that one must necessarily precede or follow another. At best they represent somewhat arbitrary punctuation of a process of adaptive change over the life history of a system.

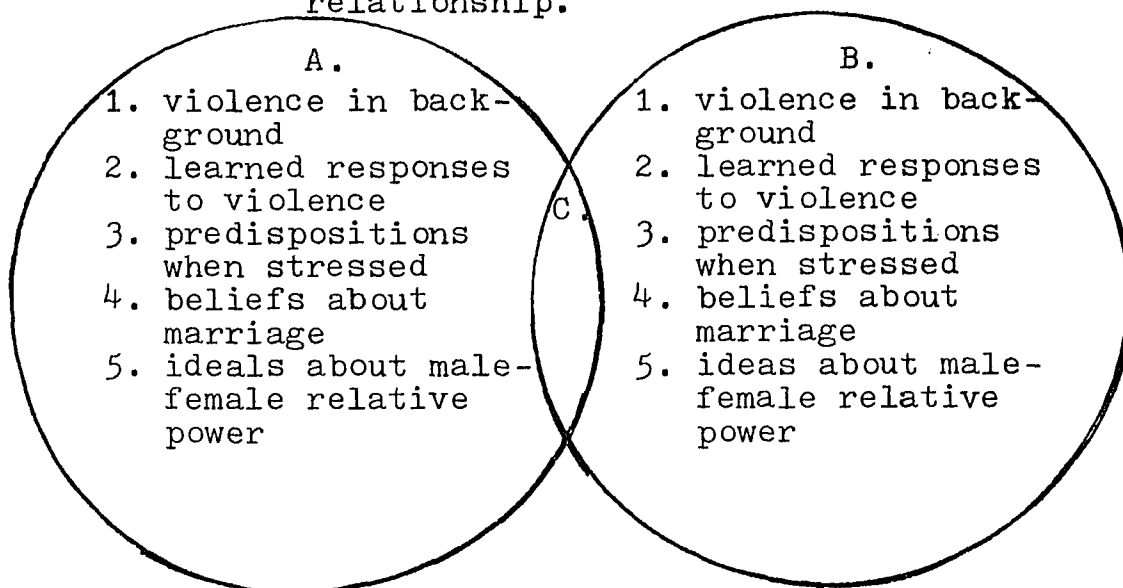
The description of the stages will provide substantive material to aid understanding of the flow chart which follows in the second part of this chapter.

### Stage 1. The Beginning of the Relationship

At the beginning of any couple relationship, each person has already acquired many historically determined characteristics and behavioral predispositions. They have learned norms, values, and responses relating to conflict processes. A person's history of conflict and violent experiences affects the patterns of conflict and violence in subsequent relationships.

Figure 1. presents an illustration of two individuals, represented by A and B, who come together in a relationship which is represented by C. Each of the five factors listed within the circles labeled A and B can affect the processes of conflict that become part of the relationship C.

Figure 1. Learned norms, values, and responses of individuals relating to conflict processes within marriage or a couple relationship.



A relatively high percent of both the men and the women in this sample had experienced violence in their background. Table 2 in Chapter IV indicates that 19% of the women had observed parental violence, and 29% reported beatings beyond "normal" spankings. Of the men, 23% had observed parental violence and 48% had received beatings. Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1979) found that if one was physically beaten by parents, or observed violence between parents, then as an adult they were many times more likely to be physically violent to a child and/or to a spouse.

In addition, to the active role, the responses to violence as a child may become patterned and affect violence in later relationships. For example, Elizabeth and Paula had both developed a passive and dissociative response to violence as children and later maintained the same pattern of response to the violence of their husbands.

Just as responses to violence become patterned, dealing with stress also can be patterned. These patterns, learned early, can affect how one deals with stress within marriage. Megaree (1972) and Geen (1972) discuss how the frustration-aggression link is mediated by social learning. Inhibitions to aggression can be learned as well as the aggressive response when frustration is present; therefore, the histories of each of the individuals that make up the relationship contains a schedule of social learning that may affect the way in which people later deal with stress.

Since family relationships are inherently stressful (Gelles and Straus, 1979) and characterized by conflict (Sprey, 1969, 1971), the learned responses to stress and frustration are important.

In general people are ignorant of the actual, as opposed to the expected or mythical, realities of marriage. Gagnon and Greenblat (1978) state that this is a source of difficulty early in marriage. What the actual expectations of each of the people are for marriage affects the experiences they have after they are married. One particular area of expectations for marriage that may affect conflict processes is the area of ideas about relative male-female power. As reported in Chapter IV, the couples in this sample have higher-than-normal rates of both male-dominated relationships and female-dominated relationships. I do not know what their expectations were when they first got married, but the skewed relationships may have been the result of ideas about the relative male-female power relationship that they brought into the relationship at the beginning.

These issues that can affect conflict processes within marriage are significant in any relationship. They may be particularly significant in these sample couples because the women seemed to know so little about the men when they made a commitment to them. For example, Paula said,

We did not know anything about each other. The first three months of marriage, or the first six months because we were living together three months, we spent in bed. That's all he wanted to do. We didn't have time to do anything.

When the women reported about the history of violence in the man's past, many spontaneously said they had not known about the violence when they first got involved. Many of the women currently feel there may be a relationship between the violence in the man's early life and the present patterns of violence, but they report that at the time they were getting involved they did not consider it something to be worried about. Generally women were sympathetic, rather than wary, in response to revelations of this kind. For example,

He got picked on. His mother picked him up by the ears and he told me he had broomsticks broken over his back and everything.

This response also applies to revelations of violence in a man's previous marriage or relationship. The women in these cases did not consider, at first, that prior violent behavior might have any influence on their relationships. At first the women accepted the man's explanation--for example, "She always was nagging me."

This pattern of dismissal or sympathy means the women did not focus on past violence as a warning signal for future violence. The overlooking of possible warning signals even extended to the case where the man had hit them before they married or started living together. In 13% of the cases, the first incident of violence preceded marriage or living together. In an additional 10% of the cases, the women were living with the men when the first incident hap-



pened, yet they later married the men. One woman said,

It took me two or three weeks to believe it, but during that time he was fine. He was just like nothing had ever happened the next day. A few weeks later I asked him why he got so upset. He said something else had happened.

In this case the incident appeared to the woman to be totally out of character. She had other ongoing interaction that was encouraging her to make a commitment to the man. Her reactions of fear and disbelief received negative feedback because of the return to normal activity. Thus the response of disbelief and shock tended to diminish, and other factors influencing her to make a commitment became dominant.

Sprey (1969) discusses how marriage in American society may be the result of coercive influences of the social structure. Social expectations, emotional, legal, and material rewards, and the lack of acceptable alternative roles, especially for women, tend to make marriage an almost-universal commitment. This coercive influence may outweigh the impact of incidents of violence that occur prior to the marriage or living-together commitment.

Positive feedback responses from friends, parents, relatives, and others in the social environment encourage commitment. This is generally true, but it may be particularly true for the woman who is pregnant by the man, has a child by the man, or is divorced and has children. The role of single parent or divorced woman is heavily stigmatized in American society. Positive feedback from others encourages women in these situations to make a choice of commitment.

This may result in women committing themselves to relationships that the women suspect may have problems later. In one case, a woman was about to get married and had invited her mother to meet the man. As she says,

Mother came up and met Fred. It was not good. They fought and she left. Fred got drunk and had gone to bed and broken a lamp. He accused me of breaking the lamp, then he went at me, threw me down on the bed and started choking me. I tried to rationalize it. He had put up with a lot from my mother. He had blacked out. It was not really him. It frightened me, but I tried to forget; but it would flash. It made me a little less open until I was able to convince myself that it was all in my head. I kept having these nightmarish daydreams, however. It made it difficult to greet him like nothing was wrong.

The woman's mother in this case did not like the man, but she did not pressure her daughter not to marry him. In America we view marriage as the goal and most valued state for adults. In addition, women are taught to "get a husband" from the time they are little, rather than to think about whether they want to get married and carefully evaluate the person they may marry. These larger social system influences have an impact on the patterns of interaction within systems.

In general, systems have cybernetic properties that maintain the system. Some of the couples showed signs of these processes even at the early stages. In two of the cases in which violence preceded the marriage or living together commitment, the man's behavior was a response to the woman's attempts to break off the relationship. The following quotation from one of the cases illustrates what

happened:

I broke off with him. I didn't want to see him. He came and he threw snowballs at the windows of the room where my sister's baby was sleeping. I was afraid he would hurt the baby. I called the police and he was taken. After he was released, he came to the hospital where I was working. He cornered me, and put a knife to my throat and threatened me. He was mad because of what the police had done to him.

The woman went back with this man right after the incident. Later she married him. To understand why she did so, we must understand her perspective. I asked her who she thought was responsible for this incident. She said, "maybe I was, because I didn't want to go with him, but he was responsible for his own actions." She is confused, but she did associate some aspects of her own behavior with the violence. Based on this association, she may have thought that if she could change her behavior (not leave again, for example), then the violence would not occur again. One hypothesis suggested by these cases is that when a woman does blame herself for the violence, she is more likely to stay with the man than she is if she definitively can blame the man.

Overall, the beginnings of these relationships reflect the influence of a complex of factors: histories of violence in the background of either the man or the woman or both, their learned responses to violence, learned behavioral responses to stress and frustration, and beliefs about marriage, especially the male-female power dimension. Additionally, the women did not generally pay attention to

possible warning signals of future violence, and some men coerced the women to have a relationship with them even when the women wanted to separate. Even though the beginning of these relationships is somewhat analogous to the Scherer et al (1975) stage of "Precompetition", the most striking aspect of this stage may be the presence of and/or potential for both conflict and violence.

### Stage 2. The First Incident of Violence

The beginning of the relationship and the first incident of violence overlap in some cases, as suggested by previous discussion. When the first incident of violence occurred, 13% of the women were neither married to, nor living with, the man; 35% were living together, 48% were married, and 3% were separated. All of the women in this sample stayed with the man after the first incident. None of the women who came to the shelter had been physically battered only once.

There are two primary questions to focus the discussion of how the first incident occurred. The first question concerns precipitating events. This was covered in chapter IV. The second involves feedback to the first incident.

Feedback can be internal to the actor. This is the case with satisfaction of expressive or instrumental goals (see Gelles and Straus, 1979, for a discussion of expressive and instrumental goals of violent behavior). If the violent

person's personal goals are satisfied, that satisfaction is positive feedback to the new behavior.

In addition to the actor's goals, system maintenance goals also act as governors of behavior. The case of coercive violence which followed the women's attempts to leave the relationship (discussed in Stage 1) illustrates how violence can be a way of achieving system maintenance goals.

The third area to look at for feedback is the woman's responses immediately following the violence. Although all but one of the women reported that the incident had a strong impact on them at the time, they overwhelmingly reported (28 out of 31 cases) that they thought it was an isolated incident that probably would not happen again. Two of the three who did express doubt about it happening again were women who had experienced violence before, one from parents and one from both parents and a previous partner. Almost all of the women (93%) were willing after that first incident to forgive and forget--or at least to forgive.

A high percent (86%) of the women reported that they felt angry at their men at the time of the first incident, but their behavioral responses did not tend to reflect angry, retaliatory, or rejecting responses. Well over half (64%) sought no intervention after the incident, and they did not leave the man; 23% did report seeking formal social control in the form of help from police or lawyers; 13% sought informal social control through family, friends, counselors, or medical help, and only 3% left the house for

longer than a brief period of time. This pattern of seeking little, if any, help or social control after the first incident of violence represents feedback to the new behavior, violence. Overwhelmingly, the feedback reported by the women to the first incident of violence is positive feedback.

Why did the women not report angry, retaliatory, or rejecting responses? They would be outraged if assaulted by a stranger. Within a family, however, one incident of violence may be tolerated on the basis of norms that lead to the marriage license being, in effect, a hitting license (Straus, 1977). Dobash and Dobash (1978) also discuss how the patriarchal structure of society has legitimized the use of physical coercion by the man on his wife. The norms, values, and legitimate authorization of violence within the larger social system for use against a wife impacts on the interaction within the family system. The most surprising fact may be that at least some women do resist violence from their men and seek help or social control. Seeking help is probably a stronger norm violation than the actual incident of violence.

The structural legitimization of a man hitting his wife leads to her lack of response when violence first happens. This is consistent with Straus's proposition (1973) that "most violence is either denied or not labeled as deviance."

The lack of angry, retaliatory responses from the women, and the return to normal activity after the first

incident of violence, represents positive feedback to the violence. Given the positive feedback, violence is encouraged. There is a greater likelihood it will happen again.

Overall, this stage is characterized by relatively high levels of frustration and stress that has been found in other studies to be associated with aggressive behavior or psychological problems. Once the first incident happens, the feedback to the actual behavior is crucial. If the behavior satisfied the expressive or instrumental goals of the actor, or the system maintenance goals, the satisfaction itself represents positive feedback to the new behavior. In addition, if the women do not respond in a way that discourages the new behavior, it is likely to occur again.

### Stage 3. Stabilization of the Violence

During this stage, the conflict and levels of violence increase. Both escalation and processes of challenging system boundaries take place.

System's theory predicts that behavior which receives positive feedback will become an established part of the ongoing interaction patterns within the system. As we saw earlier, the first acts of violence often received positive feedback, making it likely they would happen again.

Over time the levels of violence escalated. Ninety percent of the women interviewed had experienced violence at regular intervals such as once a week or a couple of times a month (see Chapter IV, Table 5). Escalation occurs

as conflict intensifies. Usually this involves patterns of mutual violence.

Comparison of male and female rates of violence and abuse, and the frequency of violence and abuse shows that even though the women were involved in the escalation of violence, they were clearly the less active party and the party more likely to be victimized and injured.

Escalation is a positive feedback process. One act of violence brings about changes in the system which intensify the conflict itself and further increase the likelihood of violence. This process has been referred to within systems theory as a "run-away" (Haley, 1963). Each act of violence is grounds for anger and further conflict. This is similar to the pattern of feuding between families. After a while each forgets where it really started, and they become concerned only with getting revenge for the last acts of the other party.

Many of the women did not fight back, however. They tended to give in to the man to stop the violence. One woman said,

As long as I went along with him it was alright. His mother made us go to his sister's for Thanksgiving. I objected. He knocked me around and put his fist through the wall. I went so he wouldn't hit me anymore.

The woman's objections received negative feedback from her husband. She was less likely to object again. He achieved his objective goals by the use of violence, thus



receiving internal positive feedback. When she gave in, she gave positive feedback to the violence. The violence soon became an established pattern.

Escalation usually involves mutual punishment and polarization. During polarization, relatives and friends of bickering couples take sides in the argument. Scherer et al (1975) illustrate the sociometry of polarization. But in their figure the two separate nexes of polarization appear to have equal numbers of alliances. In reality, when a man and woman are in a battering relationship, the polarization that leads to others taking sides is affected by conditions in the social structure. Dobash and Dobash (1978) documented the reactions of police, medical personnel and legal professionals to women when they sought help. Dobash and Dobash also discuss how family and friends reacted when a woman sought help. The title of their article well illustrates the thesis of Dobash and Dobash's paper: "With Friends Like These Who Needs Enemies: Institutional Supports for the Patriarchy and Violence Against Women".

Field and Field (1973) described how marital violence was handled by the criminal justice system. Often women's complaints were not answered, and they were not taken seriously. Paula's experience illustrates what could happen when the police actually did come:

I kicked him out and I called the cops. They came in and they walked around the house and said, 'Well, he's not here.' I said, 'No, of course not. He ran away when he heard me calling the cops.' They

looked around and saw all his Marine Corps things on the walls and they said, 'Well, if he's a Marine, he can't be all that bad.' And out they walked. They said, 'We'll keep an eye out for him and if we see him, we'll grab him. And that was all that was done.'

Negative feedback to new behavior such as seeking help makes the response less likely to happen again. Over time women did not increase their attempts to get help from formal social control agencies very much (23% for the first incident, 20% for the most significant incident, and 35% for the last incident). This is not surprising considering the responses the women received when they did seek help.

Extreme isolation was another reason the women's angry feelings and frustrations did not lead to any action. The stigma associated with family problems in general and family violence in particular led the women to not tell others about their situations. They existed in closed systems. As Paula said, "I would never tell anybody that he was hitting me." Paula's words echoed again and again in accounts by the other women. As the violence became Paula's dominant concern, she became more isolated and could not involve herself in other things. She said,

I'd keep low. I didn't want to do anything and I didn't want to go anywhere. I didn't want to visit anybody.

Whereas the women's feelings and attempts to get help were often neglected and criticized, the men seemed to have an alliance with police and others--an implicit alliance. This was illustrated by Debbie when she described how the

police came into the yard, talked with her husband, and left. The nature of the implicit alliance was clear when Bob came in the house and said one of the police was his friend. (It is this kind of biased treatment of women that raises enormous amounts of feminist anger.)

Polarization did take place between the couples in this sample, but not in the symmetrical way suggested by Scherer et al (1975). Generally, when the boundaries of the family system were passed to get help from the larger social system, the man's position received positive feedback and the woman's position received negative feedback.

Periods when the family interaction was consistent with "normal" family patterns also acted to continue the system. Most of the women wanted relationships to last. One woman said, "Everything I have is invested in that marriage." Even when the women came to the shelter, 23% said they wanted to go back to the relationship if new terms could be worked out. We know from learning theory that an intermittently-reinforced schedule is the hardest to extinguish. The man's "normal" periods or his contrite periods (Walker, 1979) encouraged the women to stay in the system even after the pattern of violence had become well-stabilized.

Overall, during this stage physical violence of both men and women increased. The process itself became positive feedback which encouraged more violence. Polarization did take place, but the orientation of available help gave the man more powerful alliances than the women. The women's

angry feelings received negative feedback, and so became less likely to occur again. Men often had periods of "normal" behavior which encouraged the women's hopes that things would change. All these complex factors contributed to the stabilization of the violence.

#### Stage 4. The Choice Point

When I began this research, I expected that the most recent incident would have been the most violent and would have precipitated the move. Generally that was not the case. The incident that stood out in the women's minds as most important and most critical in their decisions to move occurred a few weeks to several months prior to their coming to the shelter. In one case, the most critical incident occurred eight years prior to arrival at the shelter.

Scherer et al (1975: 273) state, "...there appears to be in many conflicts a special period (which may be quite brief in terms of time) when a turn is reached. It is distinguished by a new, intense and different level of interaction." In their model they call this stage "Crisis", but they admit the term is ambiguous and that they cannot do much to clarify it. The information given by the women in this sample may help clarify this concept of crisis in conflict processes over time, particularly information about the incident which stood out in the minds of the women as being most important.

How does a system characterized by stabilized patterns of violence reach a crisis point? Systems theory suggests that for change to occur, new input has to be processed by the system. There were three types of new input which women reported considering at the crisis point:

1. Fear the children would be hurt;
2. Resentment at the husband for letting the children see their mother beaten;
3. The exposure of the violent pattern to people outside the family.

The first factor, fear the children would be hurt, was a critical new input Elizabeth talked about as the critical point. For Debbie, it was when Bob took her out in the woods and told their son she was a "lying bitch", then assaulted her in front of him. Another of the thirty-one women described this scene:

Brian (their son) had come home from college, and he wanted money. He (the husband) wanted me to go borrow money at the bank. I said, 'Go get it yourself.' Brian said, 'You two are always fighting about money. I'm sick of it.' He (the husband) got Brian down on the floor. I said, 'Leave him alone.' That's when he came at me, pounded me, and threw me down on the bed. He ripped all my clothes. I was so badly bruised and bloody that my two daughters had to carry me into the bedroom and wash me off. One of the girls went to the neighbors and told her, 'He is killing my mother.' She came over and said, 'You leave her alone.' He whipped around and put his fist through the double doors. He told her, 'This is my house.'

I was ashamed to have my girlfriend see me in that condition. I think he would have killed me if she hadn't come in. I was also ashamed that my children had to see my body unclothed.

The woman who told this story never forgave him for that incident. She could not forget the shame she had experienced. This was a critical psychological point for her, but she did not move. As she said, "I went to the bank, I'll tell ya." The system was still intact at this point, but new input had become a part of the pattern of violence. This included psychological impact and/or the input from outside the family system that altered the boundaries that had formerly been drawn around the violence.

From a system's theory perspective, if the family is relatively closed to outside input, the impact of societal norms and constraints is less. As the violence becomes stabilized, it also becomes legitimized on the basis of custom or tradition. Many of the women seemed to have lost contact with the social evaluation of the extreme acts of violence. As outsiders became aware of the violent incidents, the women had new input evaluating the violence. A process of reevaluation began at this point, but the women did not move immediately.

In summary, the crisis incident became a critical choice point because of new input into the system after violence had been accepted as a stabilized pattern. The new input represented psychological shock and an opening in the generally-closed boundaries of the system to include other people and their perspectives on the violence.

### Stage 5. Leaving the System

The time lag reported between the most critical incident and coming to the shelter indicates that for most of the women leaving was a process that occurred gradually over time.

The turning point that occurs during the crisis stage usually means a "resolution or revolution" (Scherer et al, 1975). This stage of revolution or resolution can happen immediately or can be a gradual deescalation.

At the choice point, the women made a psychological move in the direction of leaving the system, but what made them leave when they actually did? Part of the answer is positive feedback to the new state of readiness the women had after the choice point. They found areas of social support and opportunities available they had not known of before.

When I asked the women if they had someone they could talk to about their problems, 71% of the women said they did. When I asked them how long they had been close with the other person, they responded this way: 3% "all their life", 19% "several years", 10% "about a year", 23% "several months", 6% "several weeks", and 6% "a very short time." It is important that 65% of the women had been close to another person a year or less and that 55% had been close for a few months or less. Many of the women spontaneously mentioned that the other person also had been beaten or that the person helped them by talking about the beatings. The presence

of a confidante was found by Lowenthal and Haven (1968) to significantly help people going through psychological and physical stress. The confidantes of the women in this study helped the women leave the man. They formed a bridging relationship for the women.

As I talked with the women, I became convinced of the importance of this bridging relationship. Leaving the family system that had been their total involvement for so long required a support system--a supportive person or group to act in the bridging role between the family system and the larger social system. As Paula said,

She (a confidante) was an abused wife, and I talked to her a lot because we could communicate with the things that had happened to her. She is the one that really helped me a lot...being able to talk to somebody that it had happened to, too. And she would always say, 'I don't know why you stay.' I didn't, you know, but I didn't have any way out. At least I thought I didn't.

This excerpt illustrates that staying with or leaving the abusive man is not a calculated, rational decision women make. Paula did not think she had control of her behavior of staying with an abusive man. She behaved according to the patterns that had gradually become stabilized within the system. This is similar to conceptualization of family rules that govern behavior (Haley, 1963; Hotaling, 1979).

As the boundaries of the system opened, women became more aware of outside input and new opportunities. Public educational programs and media coverage reached some women at this point. Paula said,



I use the name 'battered wife' because that's what they use on TV. 'Battered wives.' In fact, when I saw it, I had told Ed, 'Come in and watch this with me. That's you and me on TV there.' He just laughed about it. He thought it was funny. But it was true, you know.

When others define the women as victims, this may lead the women to seek protection against victimization. The opportunity for help also has to be there, however. Most of the women had made attempts to leave before the time they came to the shelter. Some went to family; some stayed out in the woods or on the street all night, like Elizabeth; some went to friends as Debbie did; others went elsewhere. Such arrangements tended to be unsatisfactory. Friends and family were not able to provide the housing and support for the women and their children. Women who have had the same experiences were the best source of support.

Family--and professionals, in some cases--turned women away when they asked for help. A family doctor responded to a woman he had just patched up in this way:

You took a vow when you got married to love and to cherish for better or worse 'til death do you part. Now go home with him. You are never going to change him. This is the way he shows his love.

Later the same woman was hospitalized with serious back injuries. Another doctor told her at that time her body would not take any more abuse. The next time she would be dead. This was the first time in twenty-eight years anybody had supported her leaving. She came to the shelter directly from the hospital. Her injuries from years of abuse are so extensive, she will never again be completely healthy.

Having made a decision to move, and getting the necessary support, does not mean the women will not be beaten again. Once the violent behavior comes to the attention of others, the behavior may tend to increase because of the effects of the labelling process (Straus, 1977). Violence may also increase at this point as a cybernetic function of system maintenance goals. The incidents preceding both the most significant incident and the most recent (or third) incident (see Chapter IV, Table 6) included making new friends or wanting to leave the relationship as the highest or next-highest category reported. When a woman said she was leaving, made new outside friends on her own, or did leave, there were cases of attempted shootings, child snatching as a way of getting the woman to return, forced sex (37% of the women spontaneously mentioned it), or many threats on the woman's life or the lives of the children.

In summary, women at this stage go through a gradual process of leaving the man. The process is helped by the presence of a source of social support and the opportunity to go someplace else. Leaving, however, sets off system-correcting mechanisms of negative feedback to the act of leaving. The negative feedback takes the form of violent, destructive acts, and/or marital rape.

#### Stage 6. Resolution or More of the Same

How does the conflict process of men and women involved in a pattern of wife beating continue or change after

women have come to a shelter for battered women? This question has not been explored in the literature on battered women except to cite statistics on how many women who leave shelters go directly home.

Resolution generally follows the crisis period, and that this may involve a return to an earlier stage in the conflict process--possibly cooperation or conflict (Scherer et al 1975). Another possibility is complete restructuring of the system. This is rare.

Twenty-four of the thirty-one women in the original sample were reinterviewed six months after they came to the shelter. Of those reinterviewed, 58% had returned to the man after leaving the shelter at least temporarily. Sixteen percent had reconciled and later left. Forty-two percent were married to and/or living with the man at the time of the second interview.

Of all the follow-up couples, 54% reported at least one incident of violence in that interim period. Of those who returned to the man 57% reported violence. Of those who returned and later left, 50% reported at least one violent incident. Those who returned and did not later leave reported a 62% violence rate. The women in the last category--those who returned and never left--reported the highest percent of violent incidents. This finding indicates that returning to a violent relationship gives positive feedback to the violence.

Overall, the amount and seriousness of violence in the six months after the shelter was lessened. However, this may be a return to an earlier stage of conflict (Scherer et al, 1975). Many of the women who returned to the man reported at least one incident of violence. The pattern of violence may escalate again through the same set of stages. This is why many women return to shelters. Six of the women in the original sample did in fact return to the shelter during the six months between the two interviews. A few of the six-month follow-up interviews were done when women returned.

There are two other options in addition to returning to an earlier stage of conflict. The first is to never return; the second is to return with some restructuring of the patterns in the system. As Scherer et al (1975) suggested, the latter is probably rare.

Of those who never returned to the man after they left the shelter, 44% reported at least one violent incident with the man. Not returning, therefore, does not insure that one will not be involved in violent incidents. Those violent incidents were coercive attempts by the man to get the woman to return to the system. In some cases the coercive attempts worked. Debbie returned to Bob under those conditions.

Other women did not return when coercion happened, but suffered the consequences. This was illustrated by the man who broke into two different apartments the woman moved

to, and once raped her. This case illustrates that physical distance, separate residences, and legal restraining orders did little to prevent violence. The man had been under a restraining order when the rape incident happened. Authorities would not pursue the rape charge on the grounds the woman previously had lived with the man. When he appeared in court, his case was continued for several months and he was told to stay away from the woman. The legal system has not been able to provide protection for the rights of these women.

The other option--of returning home with some change --is possible. On the basis of an informal assessment of change in the cases for this study, eight of the fourteen women who did return to the man had been able to change some fundamental aspects of their relationships. Usually this involved: getting the man to accept going to counseling together; the man getting help for alcoholism; or letting the woman have some outside interests. Of the eight cases, however, four later left the man. That left four cases in which I thought there had been some fundamental change in the patterns of interaction between the couples. Fundamental restructuring of systems is rare (Scherer et al, 1975).

The case in which the violence is most likely to occur again as a regular pattern is where the women returned and there was no change. This is the strongest positive feedback to the violent behavior.

Theoretically the shelter provided opportunity for restructuring the system. Some women used the shelter time to negotiate change in the basic pattern in exchange for the woman's return. The shelter offered the women a place to go and safety during this negotiation process. This tended to equalize the power relationship between the man and the woman. Women have traditionally been unable to do this because they had no place to go and were, therefore, in a poor position to negotiate.

In summary, this stage in the process of wife battering over time included three different options. The women could return to the men, with no change in the relationships, and not leave again. The women could return with change--and of those who actually did, half left again--or they could not ever return. Those who did not return had the lowest rates of reported violence (44%), and those who returned and never left again had the highest (62%). Overall, the levels of violence were reduced, but the rates of violence are still very high. Some of the women had returned to earlier stages in the process and simply progressed again through the stages. Others had been able to effect some changes in their own situation or in the situation of the system.

#### Flow Chart of Stability and Change

Flow charts are a way of summarizing a theory of process over time, such as that presented in the six-stage

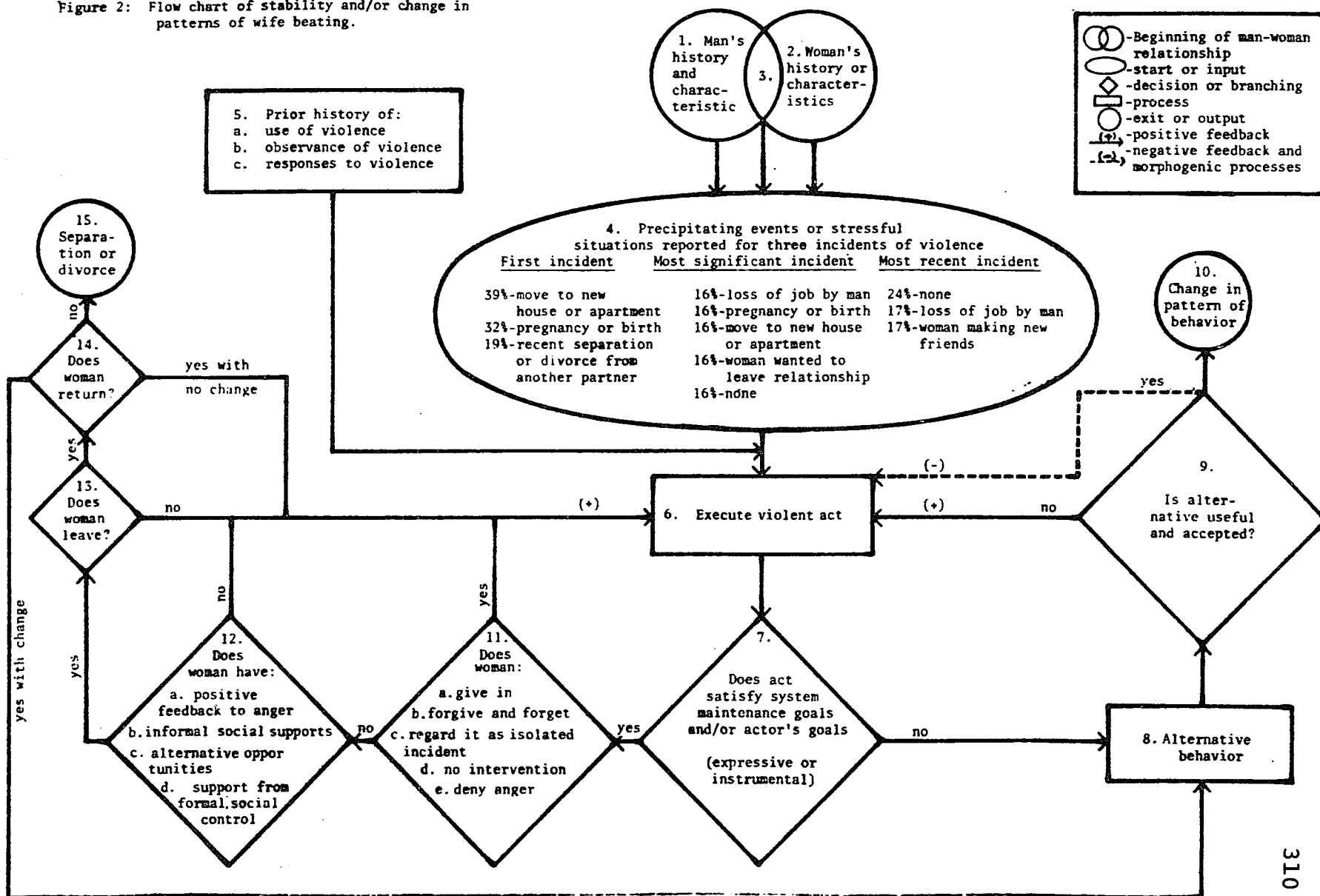
model, a flow chart can also make clear the "wholeness" of the system and the complexity of the processes that lead to stability and change in system patterns.

Figure 2 specifies the processes that move the system, over time, through the six stages of wife battering. Each of the symbols numbered 1 through 15 represent steps or processes in the patterns of wife battering over time.

Numbers 1, 2, and 3 represent the beginning of the relationship between the two people. The factors that are important here were illustrated in Figure 1 (presented earlier in this chapter). They are the learned norms, values, and response options that each member in the relationship brings to the new relationship and that affect the conflict processes within the marriage or couple relationship. The area in the figure, labeled 3, is purposely small to reflect the finding that the women in this sample seemed to know little about the men when they became involved.

The precipitative events, symbol 4 in Figure 2, follow the beginning of the relationship. Many of the women reported that these two stages actually overlapped. The most frequently-cited precipitating incidents for three incidents of violence were listed here to summarize the change that occurs over time in precipitating events. More frequently cited were events which threatened the boundaries of the system, and over time "none" became the most frequent category.

Figure 2: Flow chart of stability and/or change in patterns of wife beating.





Symbol 5 indicates a process that constantly intervenes between stressful events and the execution of a violent act. The prior history of using violence, observation of violence, and prior responses to violence affect subsequent use of violence. Social learning has occurred as the result of a schedule of reinforcement for specific acts.

In this sample, all the men had been violent, as indicated by symbol 6. This is not a diagram that illustrates what causes violence; rather, it illustrates how violence happens. The preceding events are part of that process, but in system's analysis the most significant factors are the cybernetic qualities which process any new input--such as violence--in terms of goal states, either the actor's goals or the goals of the system to maintain itself (represented in symbol 7).

If the appropriate goal states are not satisfied by the violent act, this leads to trying of some alternative behavior to satisfy that goal state (symbol 8). If the new alternative behavior is accepted and satisfies the goal (symbol 9), this represents negative feedback to the violence in the sense that violence had not worked but some alternative had. In this case the new behavior is likely to become a variation in the pattern of ongoing behavior (symbol 10). If, however, the new alternative behavior (symbol 8) is not useful to the attainment of goals and/or is not accepted by the system, the violent behavior may receive

positive feedback. People may return to an earlier pattern of violence if alternatives don't work. This is more likely after violence has become stabilized as a pattern than it is after the first use of violence.

To return to symbol 7, if the violence does satisfy the actor's goals or the system maintenance goals, the satisfaction itself may be positive feedback to the violence. The next step is to look at the women's responses to the violent act. Does the woman a) give in? b) forgive and forget? c) regard the violent act as an isolated incident? d) seek no intervention, and/or deny her anger (symbol 11)? If she does, these represent positive feedback to the violence. If she does not, however, the next step is to look at the conditions listed in symbol 12. Does the woman have a) positive feedback to her anger? b) informal social supports? c) alternative opportunities? d) support from formal social control? If these social conditions are not available to her, her attempts to get help or seek change are thwarted, and this represents strong positive feedback to the violence. Essentially the woman is trapped. If these social conditions are available to her, however, the next decision (symbol 13) is whether to stay or leave the man. If she chooses not to leave despite having conditions available for doing so, that may represent positive feedback to the violence. If she does choose to leave, as all the women in this sample did, she next faces the decision of whether to return or not (symbol 14).

At this point there are three options. The woman may return with no change, which may be the strongest feedback to the pattern of violence and lead to a recycling through the same stages. She may return with change, which leads to rerouting through alternative behavior (symbol 8). This restructuring is rare, but the shelter can provide an equalizing force in the negotiation process at this point. The third alternative is for the woman to leave, separate, and/or divorce. As found in these cases, this does not mean the woman will not be beaten again, but totally resisting coercive attempts does eventually lead to a complete ending of the pattern of violence.

There are several limitations to this schematic illustration of stability and change in patterns of wife battering. Some of the most important limitations are:

- 1) The empirical basis for this illustration is a clinical sample which, by definition, excludes processes and decisions that occurred in couples who never developed a stabilized pattern of wife battering.

- 2) The specific effects of prior history with violence and specific impacts of preceding conditions cannot be captured. They are included as having influence, but what that influence is exactly is not explained. More detailed empirical investigations with other types of samples are needed to fill those gaps.

- 3) Transactions with systems outside the family system are included only as they seemed to directly affect a

decision (for example, symbol 12). The significant impact of the patriarchal structure of society, and the inequality of opportunities for women, is much more pervasive an influence on the wife battering process than indicated by this particular illustration.

4) Overall, the processes have been simplified into a model to allow for breadth of understanding. The depth of understanding of individual cases is better understood by the women's histories in their own words (the case in Chapters V, VI, and VII).

#### Conclusion

This research is a longitudinal study of wife battering using a system's theory approach. Two types of longitudinal analyses are presented. The first is the analysis of retrospective data from thirty-one women on three incidents of violence, the first, the most significant, and the most recent, and the qualitative analysis of retrospective life histories. The second type of longitudinal analysis is the comparison of the number and the frequency of men's and women's violent acts at two points: in the year prior to entering a shelter for battered women and six months later. Together this material forms the basis for a system's model of stability and change in patterns of wife beating.

This research is unique in the presentation of longitudinal data, and in the integration of quantitative and

qualitative data. It is also one of a very few applications of system's theory to a particular aspect of the family.

The limitations of this study include the fact that the data came from a group of women who voluntarily sought help for the abuse from their husbands. Data from clinical samples such as this one cannot be used to develop a complete theory of wife beating for two reasons. The first is that many women never seek help for patterns of wife beating and the women in this sample probably differ from those who do not seek help. The second reason is that in a clinical sample, the factor to be explained, the violence in this case, is common to all of the women. This sample then precludes comparison of social characteristics and social processes between groups, some that are violent and some that are not.

Including material from only the women's perspective also represents a limitation of the present research. Data from the women cannot provide an accurate representation of the whole family system. A comprehensive system's analysis of families who are violent would have to use a method of gathering data on the entire system. In this research the system's model represented in Figure 2 is based on data from one individual in the system, not on observation or other data from the system as a whole. The ideal methodology of observing the whole system in process over time during which there was violence was impossible. In addition to the technical problems, ethical questions arise in this situation. If a researcher observed violence, there would be an

ethical obligation to intervene. In light of these problems, a choice must be made either to give up the system's theory approach or give up pure methodological restrictions on what is required for system's theory analysis. I chose to do the second. The system's theory framework conceptualizes the importance of dynamic processes within the family. This framework can be a useful device for uncovering important aspects of what goes on in families. I chose to keep the system's theory approach despite the fact that the source of data reflects the operation of the system as experienced by one of its members rather than the operation of the system itself.

Because of these methodological limitations, this research must be seen as part of a more comprehensive effort that includes many different research designs. The best way to develop or test any theory is through the use of different methodologies and independent replication (Campbell and Fiske, 1959).

In addition to the methodological limitations, there are some questions that concern the application of system's theory to the issue of wife battering. First, a system's approach to wife battering leads to an explanation of the violence as the result of system processes. There are two possible problems with this approach. The first is that the structural patterns of the larger social system are not adequately emphasized in system's analysis that focuses on the family. Social structural conditions such as the status of

women in society, the patterns of economic distribution of resources, the acceptance of violence in society, and the norms for the use of violence in the family exist as social environmental conditions for the families in this study. A system's theory approach that focuses primarily on internal family processes can provide concrete examples of what goes on in families affected by some of these structural conditions and family violence. The focus on family processes is therefore not meant to negate the importance of research on the structural level. Other researchers have focused primarily on the larger social structural issues. This research is meant to compliment that research.

The second question that concerns the application of system's theory to the issues of wife beating concerns responsibility. An analysis of wife battering that focuses on family processes as the explanation for the violence, implies that the system processes are responsible for the violence happening. Does this explanation relieve individuals of their moral responsibility for destructive acts? A system's theory explanation is not a uni-causal explanation based on any individual characteristics. In that sense the answer is yes. System's theory explains violence as the product of interdependent causal processes including the pre-existing behavior patterns of system members and the system processes that lead to stability or change in patterns of behavior over time. This does not remove any individual from responsibility for their own behavior. What it

does is to provide new and important insights for steps to deal with the problem. For example, this research found that support from those outside the family system was a determinant of change or stability in the patterns of wife beating. For example, if police downplay the man's violence the impact is to provide positive feedback that escalates the violence. This suggests that police reactions to violence affect the patterns of violence and can be altered in directions that could lead to de-escalation. Another example is that positive feedback to the attempt by a woman to get help can encourage her behavior and thus increase the likelihood of change in the pattern of violence. Women approach medical professionals, mental health professionals, friends and family to get help, and the response they receive affects the pattern of violence within the family.

These examples suggest how system's theory can be used as a device for uncovering important aspects of what goes on in families or between family members and those outside the family.

The stage model presented in this research uses system's theory principles to explain change over time. The stage model itself can facilitate organizing and understanding the reality of everyday experiences of being a battered wife. It also contributes to the understanding of the flow chart presented in Figure 2 by focusing attention on process over time, rather than on analyses of cross-sectional differences in groups at one point in time.



Bearing all of these considerations in mind, there are several important findings of this research that I wish to emphasize. They can be summarized in the following points:

1) Several characteristics of the sample differed from what would be expected from a random sample: a higher percent of cohabiting couples; a higher percent of couples in second or third relationships; both men and women had been exposed to more violence as a child; a higher incidence of alcohol abuse by men cited as a problem; and more husband dominated and wife dominated relationships.

2) The data on violent acts indicate that: 97% of the men had been abusive to the women; 58% of the women had been abusive to the men at least once; men had much higher frequencies of violent acts than women; and many women were never violent either before or in retaliation to the men's violence.

3) Analysis of data on three incidents of violence indicate that over time: women increased commitment to the men despite at least one act of violence; number of stressful preceding incidents decreased over the three incidents; most women do not feel guilty for the violence; and this decreased over three incidents; 90% of the women felt angry about the violence from the initial incident, but 93% were willing to "forgive and forget" after the first incident and most women sought no intervention; the willingness to "forgive and forget" decreases over time and the seeking of

intervention increases over time; and the sources of seeking help are increasingly informal sources such as friends while seeking help from formal social control agents remains low over the three incidents.

4) The comparison of violence rates prior to coming to the shelter and six months after the shelter reveal: the levels of the men's violence were greatly reduced; women's violence is also reduced although the percent reduction is less because the women's rates were initially low; and the highest levels of violence at the six month follow-up were in the group of women who returned to the man and did not later leave.

5) Finally, the most significant contribution of this research may be the application of a system's model to organize the complexity of family processes that lead to the stabilization and change in patterns of wife beating over time. Based on quantitative and qualitative material, both a stage model and a flow chart to describe the system processes were presented. The stage model can be used as a descriptive device to aid understanding of the patterns of escalation over time, and the ways in which some women manage to escape those relationships. The flow chart can conceptually illustrate both the complexity of mutually causal interrelationships of parts of the system, and the cybernetic operation of the system to control what kinds of behaviors become part of the interaction within the family system.

This research led to the development of an analytical model to explain wife battering using the concepts of system's theory. The model incorporates the dynamic processes of positive and negative feedback, and the cybernetic processes of system maintenance, to explain how wife battering becomes an established pattern in families, and how that pattern may be changed.

APPENDIX A

code # \_\_\_\_\_

First, I'd like to ask you some general questions about yourself and other family members.

1. Your age on your last birthday \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your partner's age on his last birthday \_\_\_\_\_
3. Marital status
  1. single
  2. married
  3. living with partner of opposite sex
  4. separated
  5. divorced
  6. widowed
4. How long have you been married or living together? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months
5. Have you been married or lived with someone else before? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no
6. How long did that relationship last? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months
7. If so how did that relationship end?
  1. separation
  2. divorce
  3. death
  4. desertion
  5. other: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Were there any children from this relationship? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no # \_\_\_\_\_
9. Tell me the ages of these children. Do they live with you?

age	live with you (yes or no)
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
10. Has your partner/husband been married or lived with someone else before?  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no
11. If so how long did that relationship last? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months
12. If so how did that relationship end?
  1. separation
  2. divorce
  3. death
  4. desertion
  5. other: \_\_\_\_\_
13. Were there any children from this relationship? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no # \_\_\_\_\_
14. What are the ages of these children. Do they live with you?

age	live with you (yes or no)
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

15. Do you and your present partner/husband have any children of your own?

1. yes
2. no

16. What are their ages? Do they live with you?

age	live with you (yes or no)
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

17. What is your religious preference?

1. Roman Catholic
2. Eastern Orthodox
3. Protestant
4. Jewish
5. None
6. Other \_\_\_\_\_

18. What is the highest grade or year you completed in school?

	RESPONDENT	PARTNER/HUSBAND
Some grade school	1	1
Completed grade school (8th grade)	2	2
Some high school	3	3
Completed high school	4	4
Completed high school and also had other training but not college	5	5
Some college	6	6
Completed college	7	7
Some graduate work	8	8
Graduate degree	9	9
Don't know	x	x

19. How about your partner/husband? What is the highest grade or year he completed?

20. What is the predominant ethnic background of yourself and your partner?

	RESPONDENT	PARTNER/HUSBAND
Indian	1	1
Irish	2	2
Italian	3	3
French-Canadian	4	4
Eastern European	5	5
Greek	6	6
Black	7	7
Spanish	8	8
English	9	9
American	10	10
Other _____	11	11
Don't know	x	x

21. Are you presently employed?
1. full time
  2. part time
  3. student
  4. unemployed, looking for a job
  5. housewife
  6. unemployed not looking for a job
  7. disabled
  8. retired
22. What is your occupation or job title? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
23. What do you do at this job? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
24. How long have you worked at this job? \_\_\_\_\_
25. Did you work before this job?    1. yes        2. no
26. At what point in your marital relationship did you work?
1. at the beginning, but not after children
  2. not when children were under 3 years
  3. not when children were under 6 years
  4. not when children were under 12 years
  5. not when children were living at home
  6. not at all in the marriage
  7. during the entire marriage
  8. other    EXPLAIN \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
27. Taking all things together, how do you feel about your work?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied
28. How satisfied are you with your earnings?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied
29. Taking all things together, how did your partner feel about your work when you first began?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied
30. How does your partner feel about your work now?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied

31. Can you think of any changes in your relationship with your partner that came about as a result of your working, or at the approximately same time as your working? i.e. decreased time together, more pressure due to household demands plus work demands, increase in sharing of work related concerns, increase enjoyment of leisure due to increased income, decrease in economic strain due to increased income?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
32. Is your husband/partner currently employed?
1. full time
  2. part time
  3. student
  4. unemployed, looking for a job
  5. househusband
  6. unemployed not looking for a job
  7. disabled
  8. retired
  9. other EXPLAIN \_\_\_\_\_
33. What is his occupation or job title? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
34. What does he do at this job? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
35. How long has he worked at this job? \_\_\_\_\_
36. Were there any times during your marital relationship that he was not employed?
1. once
  2. a few times
  3. several times
  4. many times
37. Taking all things together, how do you think he feels about his work?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied
38. How satisfied do you think he is with his earnings?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied
39. How satisfied are you with your husband's earnings?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied

40. Which of the following groups comes closest to your income, and your partner's income in the last year?

	RESPONDENT	PARTNER/HUSBAND
NONE	1	1
Less than \$1000	2	2
\$1,000 to \$2,499	3	3
\$2,500 to \$3,999	4	4
\$4,000 to \$5,999	5	5
\$6,000 to \$7,999	6	6
\$8,000 to \$9,999	7	7
\$10,000 to \$11,999	8	8
\$12,000 to \$14,999	9	9
\$15,000 to \$19,999	10	10
\$20,000 to \$24,999	11	11
\$25,000 to \$29,999	12	12
\$30,000 to \$34,999	13	13
\$35,000 and over	14	14
Don't know	x	x
Sources other than work _____		

41. Do you \_\_\_\_\_?
1. own your own home
  2. rent a house
  3. rent an apartment
  4. live with relatives
  5. live with friends
42. Where did you live before you were married or lived with partner?
1. with parents
  2. with other relatives
  3. with friends
  4. own house or apartment
  5. other \_\_\_\_\_
43. What did you do before you were married?
1. worked part time
  2. worked full time
  3. student
  4. did not work
  5. other \_\_\_\_\_
44. If you were married or lived with someone before, how long a time was there between relationships? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months
45. What did you do during this time?
1. worked part time
  2. worked full time
  3. student
  4. did not work
  5. other \_\_\_\_\_
46. Where did you live during this time?
1. with parents
  2. with other relatives
  3. with friends
  4. own house or apartment
  5. other \_\_\_\_\_



47. Did you live with your mother and father all the time you were growing up?  
 1. yes  
 2. no EXPLAIN (Was there any abuse in this situation?)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
48. Did your partner/husband live with his parents all the time he was growing up?  
 1. yes  
 2. no EXPLAIN (Was there any abuse in this situation?)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
49. Do any of your parents or in-laws live with you?  
 1. yes EXPLAIN \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. no
50. How far away from you do they live? (approximate miles) \_\_\_\_\_
51. How often do you see them?  
 1. every day  
 2. twice a week  
 3. once a week  
 4. twice a month  
 5. once a month  
 6. a few times a year  
 7. once a year or less
52. What is their marital status?  
 1. single  
 2. married  
 3. living with partner of opposite sex  
 4. separated  
 5. divorced  
 6. widowed  
 7. deceased

Chart 1 for questions 50, 51, and 52.

	<u>50</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>52</u>
Mother	_____	_____	_____
Father	_____	_____	_____
Mother in law	_____	_____	_____
Father in law	_____	_____	_____

ANY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

53. During the time you were growing up, how much does each of these statements describe your mother's and your father's treatment of you?

	MOTHER				FATHER					
a. I could talk with him or her about everything	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
b. Comforted me and helped me when I had troubles	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
c. Taught me things which I wanted to learn	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
d. Helped me with things when I didn't understand	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
e. When punishing me, explained why	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
f. Demanded that I behave as they wanted me to	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
g. Scolded and yelled at me	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
h. Hit or slapped me	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4

0-never 1-sometimes 2-frequently 3-usually 4-always or almost always

54. When you last lived with your mother, how close did you feel to her?

1. very close
2. close
3. somewhat close
4. not close
5. distant

55. When you last lived with your father, how close did you feel to him?

1. very close
2. close
3. somewhat close
4. not close
5. distant

56. Do you have anyone you can talk to when you have problems or are feeling low or depressed?

1. yes
2. no

57. Is this person:

1. partner/husband
2. one of your children
3. mother
4. father
5. mother-in-law
6. father-in-law
7. other family member, who \_\_\_\_\_?
8. close friend
9. clergy
10. social worker
11. doctor
12. counselor
13. other \_\_\_\_\_

58. How long have you and this person been close?
1. all my life
  2. several years
  3. about a year
  4. several months
  5. several weeks
  6. a very short time
59. How important is this relationship to you?
1. not very important
  2. somewhat important
  3. important
  4. very important
60. Does your partner/husband have anyone he can talk to when he has problems or is feeling low or depressed?
1. yes
  2. no
  3. don't know
61. Is this person:
1. respondent
  2. one of his children
  3. mother
  4. father
  5. mother-in-law
  6. father-in-law
  7. other family member, who \_\_\_\_\_?
  8. close friend
  9. clergy
  10. social worker
  11. doctor
  12. counselor
  13. other \_\_\_\_\_
62. How long have he and this person been close?
1. all his life
  2. several years
  3. about a year
  4. several months
  5. several weeks
  6. a very short time
63. How important do you think this relationship is to him?
1. not very important
  2. somewhat important
  3. important
  4. very important
64. How often can you discuss personal things that bother you with your partner?
1. never
  2. sometimes
  3. half the time
  4. usually
  5. always

65. How important is it to you to be able to discuss things that bother you with your partner/husband?
1. not very important
  2. somewhat important
  3. important
  4. very important
66. If you and your husband were separated, who do you think would loose the most?
- a. emotionally
    1. husband
    2. wife
    3. both the same
  - b. financially
    1. husband
    2. wife
    3. both the same
67. If you and your husband separated who would be able to most easily replace the relationship?
- a. emotionally
    1. husband
    2. wife
    3. both the same
  - b. financially
    1. husband
    2. wife
    3. both the same
68. How difficult would it be for you to find new sources of emotional involvement?
1. impossible
  2. very difficult
  3. somewhat difficult
  4. not very difficult
  5. easy
69. How difficult would it be for you to find new sources of financial support?
1. impossible
  2. very difficult
  3. somewhat difficult
  4. not very difficult
  5. easy
70. During the past year how would you describe the degree of happiness of your marriage?
1. very unhappy
  2. unhappy
  3. not too happy
  4. just about average
  5. a little happier than average
  6. very happy
  7. extremely happy

71. What would you like to have happen in your relationship with your partner?
1. reconciled as it had been during the past year?
  2. reconciled on new terms
  3. separate
  4. divorce
  5. other \_\_\_\_\_
72. What do you think is most likely to happen in your relationship taking all things into consideration?
1. reconciled as it has been during the past year
  2. reconciled on new terms
  3. separate
  4. divorce
  5. other \_\_\_\_\_
73. Why do you think this will happen? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
74. I would like to ask how similar or different you and your partner are in three things:
- What about being warm and affectionate? Who is more like that, you or your partner/husband?
1. respondent is more like this
  2. both the same
  3. partner is more like this
  - x don't know
75. Now, what about "smart and intelligent?" Who is more like that?
1. respondent is more like this
  2. both the same
  3. partner is more like this
  - x don't know
76. And the last one - being "physically attractive?"
1. respondent is more like this
  2. both the same
  3. partner is more like this
  - x don't know
77. Overall, who do you think has the most say in important decisions in your household, i.e. who actually has the most responsibility for making decisions, or the most influence about what decisions are made?
1. husband always
  2. husband more than wife
  3. husband and wife exactly the same
  4. wife more than husband
  5. wife always

78. Parents and children use many different ways of trying to settle differences between them. I'm going to read a list of some things you and (child) might have done when you had a dispute. I would like you to tell me how often you did it with (child) in the last year.

	RESPONDENT								EVER HAPPENED			Partner							
	NEVER	ONCE	THICE	3-5 TIMES	6-10 TIMES	11-20 TIMES	MORE THAN 20 TIMES	DON'T KNOW	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	NEVER	ONCE	THICE	3-5 TIMES	6-10 TIMES	11-20 TIMES	MORE THAN 20 TIMES	DON'T KNOW
a. Discussed the issue calmly	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
b. Got information to back up (your/his or her) side of things	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
c. Brought in or tried to bring in someone to help settle things	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
d. Insulted or swore at the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
e. Suiked and/or refused to talk about it	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
f. Stomped out of the room or house (or yard)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
g. Cried	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
h. Did or said something to spite the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
i. Threatened to hit or throw something at the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
j. Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
k. Threw something at the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
l. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
m. Slapped or spanked the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
n. Kicked, bit, or hit with a fist	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
o. Hit or tried to hit with something	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
p. Beat up the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
q. Threatened with a knife or gun	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
r. Used a knife or gun	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
s. Other (PROBE): _____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X

79. When you and (child) have had a disagreement, have you ever (ITEM)?

80. Now I would like you to tell me how often your partner did each thing with the child or children.

81. No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree on major decisions, get annoyed about something the other person does, or just have spats or fights because they're in a bad mood or tired or for some other reason. They also use many different ways of trying to settle their differences. I'm going to read a list of some things that you and your (wife/partner) might have done when you had a dispute, and would first like you to tell me for each one how often you did it in the past year.

	RESPONDENT-IN PAST YEAR								WIFE/PARTNER-IN PAST YEAR								EVER HAPPENED		
	NEVER	ONCE	TWICE	3-5 TIMES	6-10 TIMES	11-20 TIMES	MORE THAN 20 TIMES	DON'T KNOW	NEVER	ONCE	TWICE	3-5 TIMES	6-10 TIMES	11-20 TIMES	MORE THAN 20 TIMES	DON'T KNOW	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
a. Discussed the issue calmly	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
b. Got information to back up (your/her) side of things	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
c. Brought in or tried to bring in someone to help settle things	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
d. Insulted or swore at the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
e. Sulked and/or refused to talk about it	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
f. Stamped out of the room or house (or yard)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
g. Cried	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
h. Did or said something to spite the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
i. Threatened to hit or throw something at the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
j. Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
k. Threw something at the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
l. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
m. Slapped the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
n. Kicked, bit, or hit with a fist	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
o. Hit or tried to hit with something	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
p. Beat up the other one	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
q. Threatened with a knife or gun	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
r. Used a knife or gun	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X
s. Other (PROBE): _____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	1	2	X

82. And what about you (husband/partner)? Tell me how often he (ITEM) in the past year?

83. (For items circled "never" or "don't know" for BOTH people) Did you or your partner/husband ever (ITEM)?

84. I am going to read a list of things that couples do not always agree on. First, I would like you to tell me if this has ever been a problem, and then rank order those items that have been a problem giving 1 to the problem that has been of most concern etc, until you get to 3.

	EVER A PROBLEM ( yes or no)	RANK (1=high, etc.)
a. arguments over money	_____	_____
b. husband jealous over wife's involvements	_____	_____
c. wife jealous over husband's involvements	_____	_____
d. husband's use of alcohol or other drugs	_____	_____
e. things about the children	_____	_____
f. sex and expressions of affection	_____	_____
g. household tasks	_____	_____
h. pregnancy or birth control	_____	_____
i. wife's use of alcohol or other drugs	_____	_____
j. husband's income or employment situation	_____	_____
k. wife's income or employment situation	_____	_____
l. other(specify) _____	_____	_____

85. Every couple has their ups and downs, and surveys have shown most people wonder at some time or other whether they should continue their marriage/relationship. What about in your case? Have you ever thought about this?

1. yes
2. no

86. If you have, how much have you thought about it?

1. once
2. a few times
3. a lot

87. When you thought about it, did you ever actually separate?

1. yes
2. no

CIRCUMSTANCES \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Now I would like to talk specifically about the history of violence in your relationship with your partner.

Recall if you can the very first time in your relationship that there was any violence.

88. When was that? Month Year

89. Were you

1. married at the time
2. living together
3. neither

90. What actually happened during the incident? \_\_\_\_\_

---



---



---

91. Were there any important events that happened to anyone in the family immediately preceding the incident such as

- a. loss of job of husband
- b. loss of job of wife
- c. new job of husband
- d. new job of wife
- e. birth of a child
- f. discovery of a pregnancy
- g. death in the family
- h. illness in the family or injury
- i. move to a different house or apartment
- j. move to a different town
- k. complaints by wife
- l. complaints by husband
- m. husband made or lost a good friend
- n. wife made or lost a good friend
- o. problems with extended family members
- p. problems with children
- q. other \_\_\_\_\_

92. At the immediate time that it happened, were you

1. not at all upset
2. slightly upset
3. quite upset
4. very upset

93. Did you feel guilty about what had happened?

1. yes
2. no

94. Did you feel angry at yourself?

1. yes
2. no

95. Were you angry at your husband?

1. yes
2. no

96. Were you angry at other things or people?

1. yes
2. no

97. Were you willing to "forgive and forget"?

1. yes
2. no

98. Who or what do you think was responsible for this incident? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- (Attribution)
1. internal to respondent
  2. internal to partner
  3. internal to the relationship
  4. external to respondent
  5. external to partner
  6. external to the relationship

99. The very first time, did you think the incident was

1. a normal reaction
2. good
3. necessary
4. bad
5. didn't think much about it

EXPLAIN \_\_\_\_\_

100. What impact did the incident have on you at that time? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Now I would like to talk specifically about the incident that happened just before you came here.

106. When did that happen? Day \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

107. Were you

1. married at the time
2. living together
3. neither

108. What actually happened during the incident? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

109. Were there any important events that happened to anyone in the family immediately preceding the incident such as

- a. loss of job of husband
- b. loss of job of wife
- c. new job of husband
- d. new job of wife
- e. birth of a child
- f. discovery of a pregnancy
- g. death in the family
- h. illness in the family or injury
- i. move to a different house or apartment
- j. move to a different town
- k. complaints by wife
- l. complaints by husband
- m. husband made or lost a good friend
- n. wife made or lost a good friend
- o. problems with extended family members
- p. problems with children
- q. other \_\_\_\_\_

110. At the immediate time that it happened, were you

1. not at all upset
2. slightly upset
3. quite upset
4. very upset

111. Did you feel guilty about what had happened?

1. yes
2. no

112. Did you feel angry at yourself?

1. yes
2. no

113. Were you angry at your husband?

1. yes
2. no

114. Were you angry at other things or people?

1. yes
2. no

115. Were you willing to "forgive and forget?"

1. yes
2. no

116. Who or what do you think was responsible for this incident? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- (Attribution)
1. internal to respondent
  2. internal to partner
  3. internal to the relationship
  4. external to respondent
  5. external to partner
  6. external to the relationship

117. This time, did you think the incident was

1. a normal reaction
2. good
3. necessary
4. bad
5. didn't think much about it

EXPLAIN \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

118. What impact did this most recent incident have on you? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

119. What impact do you think this incident had on the children \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

120. What impact do you think it had on your relationship with your partner?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

121. At the time that this happened, did you think that this was  
1. an isolated incident that probably wouldn't happen again?  
2. part of a pattern of violence?

122. What happened immediately after the incident?  
a. partner left the house  
b. respondent left the house  
c. partner asks forgiveness  
d. respondent asks forgiveness  
e. partner became more violent  
f. respondent became more violent  
g. police called  
h. partner sought help or support from other sources  
i. respondent sought help or support from other sources  
j. someone outside family intervenes  
k. someone inside family intervenes  
l. return to normal routine  
m. other \_\_\_\_\_

123. If someone's help was sought after this incident, tell me what happened,  
i.e. who did you ask for help, and what did they do about the problem?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now I would like to talk about one other incident between those two we just talked about that sticks out in your mind as being important.

124. When did that happen? Day \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

125. Were you

1. married at the time
2. living together
3. neither

126. What actually happened during the incident? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

127. Were there any important events that happened to anyone in the family immediately preceding the incident such as

- a. loss of job of husband
- b. loss of job of wife
- c. new job of husband
- d. new job of wife
- e. birth of a child
- f. discovery of a pregnancy
- g. death in the family
- h. illness in the family or injury
- i. move to a different house or apartment
- j. move to a different town
- k. complaints by wife
- l. complaints by husband
- m. husband made or lost a good friend
- n. wife made or lost a good friend
- o. problems with extended family members
- p. problems with children
- q. other \_\_\_\_\_

128. At the immediate time that it happened, were you

1. not at all upset
2. slightly upset
3. quite upset
4. very upset

129. Did you feel guilty about what had happened?

1. yes
2. no

130. Did you feel angry at yourself?

1. yes
2. no

131. Were you angry at your husband?

1. yes
2. no

132. Were you angry at other things or people?

1. yes
2. no

133. Were you willing to "forgive and forget?"

1. yes
2. no

134. Who or what do you think was responsible for this incident? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

- (Attribution)
1. internal to respondent
  2. internal to partner
  3. internal to the relationship
  4. external to respondent
  5. external to partner
  6. external to the relationship

135. This time, did you think the incident was

1. a normal reaction
2. good
3. necessary
4. bad
5. didn't think much about it

EXPLAIN \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

136. What impact did this incident have on you? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---



137. What impact do you think this incident had on the children \_\_\_\_\_

---

138. What impact do you think it had on your relationship with your partner?

---

---

139. At the time that this happened, did you think that this was

1. an isolated incident that probably wouldn't happen again?
2. part of a pattern of violence?

140. What happened immediately after the incident?

- a. partner left the house
- b. respondent left the house
- c. partner asks forgiveness
- d. respondent asks forgiveness
- e. partner became more violent
- f. respondent became more violent
- g. police called
- h. partner sought help or support from other sources
- i. respondent sought help or support from other sources
- j. someone outside family intervenes
- k. someone inside family intervenes
- l. return to normal routine
- m. other \_\_\_\_\_

141. If someone's help was sought after this incident, tell me what happened, i.e. who did you ask for help, and what did they do about the problem?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

APPENDIX B

code # \_\_\_\_\_

First I'd like to ask some general questions about your situation since you left the shelter.

1. Where are you living now?
  1. same house or apartment
  2. different house
  3. different apartment
  4. other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Are you currently living with:
  1. husband previous to coming to shelter
  2. partner previous to coming to shelter
  3. another partner
  4. relatives \_\_\_\_\_
  5. friends \_\_\_\_\_
  6. alone with children
  7. alone without children
  8. other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Marital status
  1. single
  2. married
  3. living with partner of opposite sex
  4. separated
  5. divorced
  6. widowed
  
4. If you have been separated or divorced since leaving the shelter how long has it been? \_\_\_\_\_ months \_\_\_\_\_ weeks \_\_\_\_\_ days
  
5. How far away from you does your (former) partner live from you?  
\_\_\_\_\_ miles
  
6. How often do you see him?
  1. every day
  2. twice a week
  3. once a week
  4. twice a month
  5. once a month
  6. a few times in past six months
  7. once in past six months
  8. not at all in past six months
  
7. Does your (former) partner do any of the following?

	Check if yes
1. provide financial support	_____
2. full time child care	_____
3. part time child care	_____
4. help with transportation	_____
5. help with household tasks	_____
6. provide emotional support	_____
7. other _____	_____

8. Have you sought his help in any of these areas in the past six months?
1. yes
  2. no
- Which? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What happened when and if you asked for help? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Taking all things together, how do you feel about the status of your relationship with your (former) partner?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied
11. At the time that you left the shelter what did you want to have happen in your relationship with your partner?
1. reconciled as it had been during the previous year
  2. reconciled on new terms
  3. separated
  4. divorced
  5. other \_\_\_\_\_
12. What do you want to have happen in your relationship with your partner now?
1. reconciled as it had been during the previous year?
  2. reconciled on new terms
  3. separated
  4. divorced
  5. other \_\_\_\_\_
13. Why do you want this to happen? \_\_\_\_\_
14. If you reconciled with your partner, at the time that you did so, how likely did you think it was that it would work out?
1. very likely
  2. somewhat likely
  3. unlikely
  4. very unlikely
15. How hopeful were you that it would work out?
1. very hopeful
  2. somewhat hopeful
  3. not very hopeful
  4. didn't think it would work out

16. Did you experience pressure from any of the following to reconcile or not to?

	reconcile	not to
1. extended family	_____	_____
2. friends (mutual)	_____	_____
3. personal friends	_____	_____
4. children	_____	_____
5. church or clergy	_____	_____
6. counselors or therapists	_____	_____
7. shelter personnel	_____	_____
8. societal expectations	_____	_____
9. partner	_____	_____
10. other _____	_____	_____

17. If you did reconcile once and then left again, how did that decision come about? \_\_\_\_\_

18. Was there any one or most important thing that made you leave again? \_\_\_\_\_

19. Was there any one most important thing that made you reconcile? \_\_\_\_\_

20. If you have gotten back together, how would you describe the degree of happiness in your relationship now?

1. very unhappy
2. unhappy
3. not too happy
4. just about average
5. a little happier than average
6. very happy
7. extremely happy

21. If you have gotten back together, overall who has the most say in important decisions in your household? i.e. who actually has the most responsibility for making decisions, or the most influence about what decisions are made?

1. husband always
2. husband more than wife
3. husband and wife exactly the same
4. wife more than husband
5. wife always

22. Are you presently employed or in job training?

1. full time employed
2. part time employed
3. student
4. unemployed, looking for a job
5. housewife
6. unemployed not looking for a job
7. disabled
8. retired
9. job training program \_\_\_\_\_

23. What is your occupation, job title or training title? \_\_\_\_\_
24. What do you do at this job? \_\_\_\_\_
25. How long have you worked at this job? \_\_\_\_\_
26. Have you had other jobs or training since you left the shelter?  
\_\_\_\_\_
27. Taking all things together, how do you feel about your work?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied
28. How satisfied are you with your earnings?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied
29. Taking all things together, how does your partner feel about your work?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied
  5. not applicable because not involved with previous partner
30. Is your former partner currently employed
1. full time
  2. part time
  3. student
  4. unemployed, looking for a job
  5. househusband
  6. unemployed not looking for a job
  7. disabled
  8. retired
31. What is his occupation or job title? \_\_\_\_\_
32. What does he do at this job? \_\_\_\_\_
33. How long has he worked at this job? \_\_\_\_\_
34. Were there any times during the past six months that he was not employed?
1. once
  2. twice or more
  3. not employed at all
  4. none

35. Taking all things together how do you think he feels about his work?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied
  5. don't know
36. How satisfied do you think he is with his earnings?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied
  5. don't know
37. How satisfied are you with your partner's earnings?
1. very unsatisfied
  2. unsatisfied
  3. satisfied
  4. very satisfied
  5. doesn't apply
38. Which of the following groups comes closest to your income, and your (former) partner's income in the last six months?

	RESPONDENT	PARTNER/HUSBAND
NONE	1	1
Less than \$1000	2	2
\$1,000 to \$2,499	3	3
\$2,500 to \$3,999	4	4
\$4,000 to \$5,999	5	5
\$6,000 to \$7,999	6	6
\$8,000 to \$9,999	7	7
\$10,000 to \$11,999	8	8
\$12,000 to \$14,999	9	9
\$15,000 to \$19,999	10	10
\$20,000 to \$24,999	11	11
\$25,000 to \$29,999	12	12
\$30,000 to \$34,999	13	13
\$35,000 and over	14	14
Don't know	x	x
Sources other than work		

39. Are your children
1. living with your and your partner
  2. living with you alone
  3. living with father
  4. living with other relative
  5. in other living situations

Explain \_\_\_\_\_

---

40. How difficult has it been for you with the children in the past six months?

- 1. impossible
- 2. very difficult
- 3. somewhat difficult
- 4. not very difficult
- 5. easy

41. How difficult has it been for you financially in the past 6 months?

- 1. impossible
- 2. very difficult
- 3. somewhat difficult
- 4. not very difficult
- 5. easy

42. In the past six months, have you had contact with any of the following people or groups?

- 1. yes (answer in chart below)
- 2. no

43. How often do you see each of the following?

- 1. every day
- 2. twice a week
- 3. once a week (answer in chart below)
- 4. twice a month
- 5. once a month
- 6. a few times in 6 months
- 7. once in six months
- 8. not at all in six months

44. How important is each of these to you?

- 1. very important
- 2. important
- 3. slightly important (answer in chart below)
- 4. not at all important

	42.	43.	44.
extended family	_____	_____	_____
close friends	_____	_____	_____
people at work	_____	_____	_____
a counselor	_____	_____	_____
support group	_____	_____	_____
former residents of shelter	_____	_____	_____
shelter staff	_____	_____	_____
church groups	_____	_____	_____
AA, alanon or other alcoholism services	_____	_____	_____
men friends or dates	_____	_____	_____
men partners in relationships	_____	_____	_____
other groups or organizations	_____	_____	_____
other people or activities	_____	_____	_____

45. If you have gotten involved in a new relationship with a partner how long has it been? \_\_\_\_\_ months \_\_\_\_\_ weeks \_\_\_\_\_ days
46. If you have a new relationship, have you also been involved or lived with anyone else since leaving the shelter?  
Explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
47. How difficult has it been for you to find new sources of emotional involvement?
1. impossible
  2. very difficult
  3. somewhat difficult
  4. not very difficult
  5. easy
48. What are you looking for in a new relationship? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
49. Why is this important? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
50. Has there been any violence at all in this relationship? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## REFERENCES

- Allen, C. and M.A. Straus  
1979 "Resources, power, and husband-wife violence."  
Paper presented at the 1975 National Council on  
Family Relations Meetings. Also in M.A. Straus  
and G. Hotaling (eds.) Social Causes of Husband-  
Wife Violence. Minneapolis: University of  
Minnesota Press.
- Bandura, Albert  
1973 Aggression--A Social Learning Analysis. Engle-  
wood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Bard, Morton and Joseph Zacker  
1971 "The prevention of family violence: dilemma of  
community intervention." Journal of Marriage  
and the Family 33:677-682.
- Bard, Morton and Joseph Zacker  
1974 "Assaultiveness and alcohol use in family dis-  
putes--police perceptions." Criminology 12:  
281-292.
- Bateson, Gregory  
1972 Steps to an Ecology of Mind. New York: Ballan-  
tine Books.
- Becker, Howard  
1963 Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance.  
New York: Free Press.
- Bell, Joseph N.  
1977 "Rescuing the battered wife." Human Behavior,  
June:16-23.
- Berkowitz, Leonard  
1962 Aggression: A Social Psychological Analysis.  
New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Blood, R.O. and D.M. Wolfe  
1960 Husbands and Wives: The Dynamics of Married Liv-  
ing. New York: Free Press.
- Bogdan, R. and S.J. Taylor  
1975 Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods.  
New York: John Wiley & Sons.

- Brim, O.G.  
1959 "Family structure and sex role learning by children." *Sociometry* 21.
- Broderick, C.B.  
1971 "Beyond the five conceptual frameworks: a decade of development in family theory." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 33:139-159.
- Buckley, Walter  
1967 *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Campbell, D.T. and Fiske, D.W.  
1959 "Convergent and discriminant validation by the multitrait-multimethod matrix." *Psychological Bulletin*: 56: 81-105.
- Campbell, D.T. and J. C. Stanley  
1966 *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Caplan, Gerald  
1960 "Patterns of parental response to the crisis of premature birth: a preliminary approach to modifying mental health outcome." *Psychiatry* 23: 365-374.
- Carlson, B.E.  
1977 "Battered women and their assailants." *Social Work* 2:61:455-460.
- Chesler, Phyllis  
1971 "Women as psychiatric and psychotherapeutic patients." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 33:4:746-759.
- Coleman, D.H. and M.A. Straus  
1979 "Alcohol abuse and family violence." Paper presented at American Sociological Association meetings, August.
- Cuber, J. and P. Harroff  
1965 *The Significant Americans: A Study of Sexual Behavior Among the Affluent*. New York: Appleton.
- Dobash, R. Emerson and Russell P. Dobash  
1977 "Love, honour and obey: institutional ideologies and the struggle for battered women." *Contemporary Crisis* 1:403-415.

- Dobash, R. Emerson and Russell P. Dobash  
1978 "With friends like these who needs enemies:  
institutional supports for the patriarchy and  
violence against women." Paper presented at the  
IX World Congress of Sociology, Uppsala, Sweden.
- Dollard, John, Leonard W. Doob, Neil E. Miller, O. Herbert  
Mowrer, and Robert R. Sears  
1939 Frustration and Aggression. New Haven: Yale  
University Press.
- Duberman, Lucille  
1975 Reconstituted Families. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Etzioni, Amitai  
1971 "Violence." Chapter 14 in Robert K. Merton and  
Robert A. Nisbet (eds.) Contemporary Social Prob-  
lems, Third Edition. New York: Harcourt Brace  
Jovanovich.
- Erikson, K.T.  
1966 The Wayward Puritans. New York: John Wiley &  
Sons.
- Farrington, K.  
1979 "A general stress theory of intra-family violence."  
Paper read at the 1975 Annual Meeting of the  
National Council on Family Relations. Also in  
M.A. Straus and G. Hotaling (eds.) Social Causes  
of Husband-Wife Violence. Minneapolis: Univer-  
sity of Minnesota Press.
- Field, Martha H. and Henry F. Field  
1973 "Marital violence and the criminal process:  
neither justice nor peace." Social Service Re-  
view 47:2.
- Fields, M.D.  
1976 "Wife beating: the hidden offense." New York  
Law Journal 175:83:1-7.
- Freud, Sigmund  
1958 Civilization and Its Discontents. Originally  
published 1930, London: The Hogarth Press. Later  
edition translated by Joan Riviere.
- Gagnon, J.H. and C.S. Greenblat  
1978 Life Designs: Individuals, Marriages, and Fami-  
lies. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and  
Company.

- Gaquin, D.A.  
1977-78 "Spouse abuse--data from the national crime survey." *Victimology* 2:3:632-643.
- Geen, R.G.  
1971 "Aggression." Paper printed by General Learning Press, Morristown, New Jersey.
- Gelles, Richard J.  
1972 *The Violent Home: A Study of Physical Aggression Between Husbands and Wives.* Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications.
- Gelles, Richard J.  
1976 "Abused wives: why do they stay?" *Journal of Marriage and the Family* November:659-668.
- Gelles, Richard J.  
1977a "Violence and pregnancy: a note on the extent of the problem and needed services." *Family Coordinator* 26:81-86.
- Gelles, Richard J.  
1977b "No place to go--the social dynamics of marital violence." In Roy, M. (ed.) *Battered Women--A Psychosociological Study of Domestic Violence.* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Gelles, Richard J. and M.A. Straus  
1979 "Determinants of violence in the family: toward a theoretical integration." In Burr, Wesley R., Reuben Hill, F. Ivan Nye, and Ira L. Reiss (eds.) *Contemporary Theories About The Family.* New York: Free Press.
- Goffman, Erving  
1961 *Asylums.* New York: Anchor Press.
- Goldstein, J.H., R.W. Davis, and D. Herman  
1975 "Escalation of aggression: experimental studies." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 31: 1:162-170.
- Goode, William  
1971 "Force and violence in the family." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 33:624-636.
- Haley, Jay  
1963 *Strategies of Psychotherapy.* New York: Grune & Stratton.

- Hanks, Susan E. and C. Peter Rosenbaum  
1977 "Battered women: a study of women who live with violent alcohol-abusing men." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 47:2:291-306.
- Hill, R.  
1971 "Modern systems theory and the family: a confrontation." *Social Science Information* 10:7-26.
- Hoffman, Lynn  
1971 "Deviation-amplifying processes in natural groups." In Haley, J., *Changing Families*. New York: Grove and Stratton.
- Holmes, R.H. and R.H. Rahe  
1967 "The social readjustment rating scale." *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* 11:213-218.
- Hotaling, G.T.  
1979 "Facilitating violence--why intimates attribute aggression." Paper presented at The 1975 National Council on Family Relations Meetings, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Also in M.A. Straus and G. Hotaling (eds.) *Social Causes of Husband-Wife Violence*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Jackson, Don  
1957 "The question of family homeostasis." *Psychiatric Quarterly* 31:79-90.
- Janoff-Bulman, R.  
1978 "Self-blame in rape victims: control-maintenance strategy." Paper presented as part of symposium, *New Directions for Control Research*, American Psychological Association meeting, Toronto, Canada.
- Kantor, David and William Lehr  
1975 *Inside the Family*. San Francisco: Jossey-Boss.
- LaRossa, Ralph  
1977 *Conflict and Power in Marriage: Expecting the First Child*. Beverly Hills: Sage Press.
- LeMasters, E.E.  
1957 "Parenthood as crisis." *Marriage and Family Living* 19:352-355.
- Lemert, E.M.  
1967 *Human Deviance; Social Problems and Social Control*. New York: Prentice-Hall.

- Lewis, Oscar  
1959 Five Families. New York: Basic Books.
- Lowenthal, M.F. and C. Haven  
1968 "Interaction and adaptation: intimacy as a critical variable." American Sociological Review 33: 20-30.
- Lystad, Mary Hanemann  
1975 "Violence at home: a review of the literature." American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 45:3:328-345.
- Marcovitch, Anne  
1976 "Refuges for battered women." Social Work Today 7:2:34-35.
- Martin, Del  
1976 Battered Wives. San Francisco: Glide.
- Marx, E.  
1976 Social Content of Violent Behavior--A Social Anthropological Study in an Israeli Immigrant Town. London, England: Routledge and Degan Paul Ltd.
- Mead, Margaret and Francis Cooke MacGregor  
1951 Growth and Culture: A Photographic Study of Balinese Children. New York: C.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Megargee, E.I.  
1972 "The psychology of violence and aggression." Reprint by General Learning Corporation, Morristown, New Jersey.
- Miller, Neal E.  
1941 "The frustration-aggression hypothesis." Psychological Review 48:337-342. Reprinted in Berkowitz, Leonard (ed.) Roots of Aggression. New York: Atherton.
- Nichols, Beverly  
1976 "The abused wife problem." Social Casework 57: 27-32.
- Nye, F. Ivan  
1957 "Child adjustment in broken and in unhappy unbroken homes." Marriage and Family Living 19: 356-361.
- O'Brien, John E.  
1971 "Violence in divorce-prone families." Journal of Marriage and the Family 33:692-698.

- Owens, David J. and M.A. Straus  
1975 "The structure of violence in childhood and approval of violence as an adult." *Aggressive Behavior* 1:193-211.
- Pagelow, M.D.  
1977 *Battered Women--A New Perspective*. Unpublished manuscript, University of California.
- Parnas, Raymond  
1977 "The police response to domestic disturbance." *Wisconsin Law Review* 914:914-960.
- Patterson, Gerald R., J.A. Cobb, and R.S. Ray  
1972 "A social engineering technology for retraining families of aggressive boys." In Adams, H.E. and I.P. Unikel (eds.) *Issues and Trends in Behavior Therapy*. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas.
- Pizzey, E.  
1974 *Scream Quietly or the Neighbors Will Hear*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Raush, H.L., W.A. Berry, R.K. Hertel and M.A. Swain  
1974 "Varieties of consensual experience: a theory for relating family interaction to individual thinking." *Family Process* 10:1-28.
- Salk, Lee  
1978 *What Every Child Would Like Parents to Know About Divorce*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Saunders, Daniel  
1977 "Marital violence: dimensions of the problem and modes of intervention." *Journal of Marriage and Family Counseling* 39:43-52.
- Scheff, Thomas J.  
1966 *Being Mentally Ill*. Chicago, Illinois: Aldine.
- Scherer, K.R., R.P. Abeles and C.S. Fischer  
1975 *Human Aggression and Conflict*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Scott, P.D.  
1974 "Battered wives." *British Journal of Psychiatry* 125:11:433.
- Shainess, N.  
1977 "Psychological aspects of wifebeating." In Roy, N. (ed.) *Battered Women--A Psychosociological Study of Domestic Violence*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

- Sieber, S.D.  
1973 "The Integration of fieldwork and survey methods."  
American Journal of Sociology 78:1335-1359.
- Simmel, G.  
1950 The Sociology of Georg Simmel. Edited by K. Wolf.  
New York: Free Press.
- Snell, John E., Richard J. Rosenwald and Ames Robey  
1964 "The wifebeater's wife: a study of family inter-  
action." Archives of General Psychiatry 11:107-  
113.
- Speer, D.C.  
1970 "Family systems: morphogenesis, or is homeostasis  
enough?" Family Process 9:259.
- Sprey, Jetse  
1969 "The family as a system in conflict." Journal of  
Marriage and the Family 31:699-706.
- Sprey, Jetse  
1971 "On the management of conflict in families."  
Journal of Marriage and the Family 33:722-731.
- Steinmetz, S.K. and M.A. Straus  
1973 "Family as a cradle of violence." Society 10:6:  
50-56.
- Steinmetz, S.K.  
1977 Cycle of Violence--Assertive, Aggressive, and  
Abusive Family Interaction. New York: Praiger  
Publishers.
- Straus, M.A.  
1973 "A general systems theory approach to a theory of  
violence between family members." Social Science  
Information 12:105-125.
- Straus, M.A.  
1974 "Leveling, civility and violence in the family."  
Journal of Marriage and the Family 36:13-29.
- Straus, M.A.  
1976 "Sexual inequality, cultural norms, and wife-  
beating." Victimology 1:54-70.
- Straus, M.A.  
1977a "Wife beating: how common and why?" Victimology  
2:443-458.



- Straus, M.A.  
1977b "Sociological perspective on the prevention and treatment of wifebeating." In Roy, M. (ed.) Battered Women--A Psychosociological Study of Domestic Violence. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Straus, M.A.  
1979a "Measuring intrafamily conflict and violence: the conflict tactics (CT) scales." Journal of Marriage and the Family 41:75-98.
- Straus, M.A.  
1979b "A sociological perspective on the causes of family violence." Paper presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Houston, Texas: January 6.
- Straus, M.A., Richard Gelles and Suzanne K. Steinmetz  
1979 Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family. Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday/Anchor.
- Tidmarsh, Mannes  
1976 "Violence in marriage: the relevance of structural factors." Social Work Today 7:2:36-38.
- Van Stolk, Mary  
1976 "Battered women, battered children." Children Today. March-April:8-12.
- Walker, Lenore E.  
1978-79 "Battered women and learned helplessness." Victimology 2:525-534.
- Walker, L.E.  
1979 The Battered Woman. New York: Harper & Row.
- Watzlawick, Paul, Janet Helmick and Don D. Jackson  
1967 Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Whyte, William F.  
1976 "Research methods for the study of conflict and cooperation." The American Sociologist 11:208-216.
- Yilo, K. and M.A. Straus  
1980 "Interpersonal violence among married and cohabiting couples." Family Coordinator, in press.