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**Walking on Eggshells: Women's Processes of Monitoring
and Responding to Danger in Their Relationships
with Battering Men**

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by

David R. Langford

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I must acknowledge the women who volunteered to be interviewed for this study. Their strength and trust in me was truly an inspiration. I dedicate this volume to those women who shared their lives with me and to the many women who live under the constant threat of violence.

An undertaking such as this one is not accomplished alone even though my name is the only one that appears on the title page. This dissertation represents years of support from my friends and family and years of work with leading scholars who not only took the time to teach me the secrets and subtleties of science and scholarship but were willing to mentor a novice scholar.

I am indebted to the members of my committee who are each superb scholars and have been instrumental in helping me develop and refine my analytic skills. They have been my mentors and served as excellent role models of nurses, scholars, and human beings. Catherine Gilliss has gently guided me through the doctoral program from the beginning and helped me to avoid the common pitfalls. Her example and belief in me has been invaluable in the development of this work. Jeanne DeJoseph has challenged my thinking in ways no one else could and at the same time always made sure I was taking care of myself throughout this research on such a difficult topic. Kit Chesla has kept me focused with practical advice that has prevented many headaches. Each was

supportive, nurturing, and available to help me when I was feeling insecure about my abilities, lost in the analysis, or elated over a new discovery.

A special note of acknowledgement is due to Jacquelyn Campbell who without hesitation agreed to serve on my dissertation committee. She has always been approachable and supportive and, as a leading figure in the area of violence against women, her willingness to share her knowledge and encouragement has been very important to me.

Special recognition is due Donna Barnes and Sheighla Murphy who were members of my analysis group. Their easy nature and expert knowledge of grounded theory proved essential to the analysis. They also provided a platform to discuss the intensity of the work and laugh at our selves. Their commitment to seeing me through the completion of this document meant putting my work ahead of theirs. I certainly look forward to working with them in the future.

Of primary importance is my friend and partner, Tanya Saul, who has maintained a sense of humor through the many years my doctoral study has been in progress. Not only has her support been invaluable but she has been my counselor, problem-solver, editor of dozens of papers, and idea person.

In addition, my parents, Marilyn and Jerry Langford, and good friends Val and Wes Petterburg and Mary E. Duffy were and continue to be important influences in my education and gave me the confidence early in my career and life to reach my goals. There are also friends and classmates who deserve recognition for entertaining endless discussions of methodology and providing their unconditional support and shoulders to cry on: Karen Schumacher, Joan

**Liaschenko, Lynn Forsey, Cheryl Reily, Siriorn Sindhu, and Isabelle Melese-
d'Hospital.**

**In addition, I must recognize a few others who have also significantly
influenced my scholarship, including: Virginia Olesen, Anslem Strauss, Sally
Rankin, and Rob Slaughter. I would like to recognize Debbie Lee of the Family
Violence Prevention Fund and Angela Henderson and Daniel Sheridan from the
Nursing Network on Violence Against Women International who eagerly
welcomed me into their organizations.**

**And finally I must acknowledge the various sources of funding that
recognized the importance of this topic and supported this research, NINR
NRSA #1 F31 NRO6847-01, University of California, San Francisco Graduate
Division Research Award, and the School of Nursing Century Club Award.**

ABSTRACT

Walking on Eggshells: Women's Processes of Monitoring and Responding to Danger in Their Relationships with Battering Men

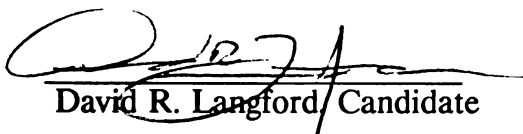
David R. Langford

Little is known of the ways women manage danger in their relationships with battering men. Women in battering relationships must be constantly alert for escalating levels of danger and respond in ways aimed at reducing the risk of harm to themselves and other family members. The goal of this study was to discover how women assessed and responded to changing levels of danger in their relationships with battering men. Using grounded theory methodology, thirty women were interviewed in small groups or individually. Women who were recruited through free neighborhood newspaper advertisements were eligible if they had been in an abusive relationship with a man during the previous five years and were over 18 years of age. Theoretical sampling was used to saturate categories.

The core phenomena of "predicting unpredictability" emerged from the analysis. Predicting Unpredictability is introduced as a theory describing women's simultaneous processes of monitoring and responding to threats of danger in the context of social and emotional chaos created by their battering

partners. Women identified specific warning signs associated with escalation of violence and aimed responses at averting or delaying violent incidents. The men in these relationships were continuously changing the rules of interaction so women never knew what to expect next. Battering men's unpredictability, sudden and extreme mood swings, manipulation, and continuous tormenting caused women to become more isolated as they focused exclusively on monitoring their partners' behaviors. Processes of Predicting Unpredictability required women to remain in close physical proximity to their batterers leaving them vulnerable to assault. Women used strategies of avoidance, engagement, leaving, and enlisting the help of others to mitigate the violence. These strategies provided temporary or fleeting relief but did not usually result in the cessation of violence.

These findings present an alternative to psychological explanations of battered women. The behaviors and processes described in this research present women's responses to violence as normative survival strategies rather than psychological disorders. These findings can be used by women to improve their own processes of monitoring and responding to danger. In addition, this study provides guidelines for clinicians in assessing danger and in developing prevention programs.


David R. Langford/Candidate

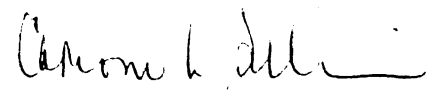

Catherine L. Gilliss, Sponsor

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Susan is 27 years old and has been married for six years. She has two children ages six and four. She married at 21 to John, a man she was introduced to through mutual friends. He was exciting to be with, spontaneous, and passionate. They quickly fell in love and were married. He first hit her on their wedding night. In the beginning, he did not hit her often. But that changed with the birth of their second child. It wasn't until a year or two later that she discovered from the very friends who had introduced them that John had beaten a previous girlfriend after she became pregnant. The battering steadily increased as hitting and pushing gave way to being beaten with chairs or lamps. He started threatening to kill her and threatening her with knives and guns. His behavior became more irrational.

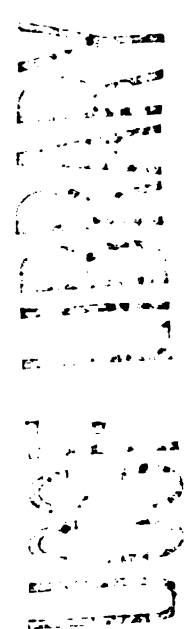
John frequently arrived home from work intoxicated. On weekends he would often get home at 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning and wake everyone in the house, gather them together in one of the bedrooms, and lecture them about how no one in the family appreciated how hard he worked or complained there

was never anything to eat when he got home. John was constantly demeaning Susan, telling her she was stupid and incapable of being a good wife or mother. His moods changed instantly from quietly eating dinner to turning the table upside down and throwing food around the kitchen. He often made Susan parade around the house naked or locked her in the bedroom for the weekend. Susan threatened to leave if his behavior continued. John responded by increasing the violence and threatening to kill her if she ever left. He started carrying a pistol with him and would play with it while watching television, pointing at Susan pretending to shoot her. Not only fearing for her own life but now for the safety of her children, Susan had John arrested and served with a restraining order.

Now, Susan frequently spots John driving by her new apartment or following her to the grocery store. He continues to call and harasses and threaten her on the telephone. He filed for custody of the children and to Susan's surprise the courts awarded him visitation rights. Because of the violence and threats John used when picking up the children, they now exchange the children at the district police station. Susan has been ordered by the court to notify her ex-husband if she moves because of his right to have contact with the kids. Susan is more afraid of him now than she was before they separated and has purchased a gun she carries with her in anticipation of him "making good" on his ongoing threats to "get her".

This drama plays itself out in the headlines of daily newspapers as women fight to survive the violence in their intimate relationships. Battering relationships are characterized by prolonged contact with the batterer and high levels of control, manipulation, and violence. Women often feel trapped in violent relationships, unable to leave because of fear resulting from the death threats against themselves or other family members, financial insecurity, social and emotional isolation, or social pressure to stay "for the sake of the children". To protect themselves and their children during the time they live in battering relationships, women must be constantly aware of the changing levels of danger. Continued survival demands that women learn to monitor their partners and try to predict episodes of impending violence.

The purpose of the research described in the following chapters was to discover a framework helpful in understanding how battered women perceive and respond to dangerousness in the relationships with their abusive intimate male partners. Discovering how battered women perceived dangerousness in their relationship could serve to identify resources and processes women use to protect themselves and their children. Chapter I introduces the aims of the study and reviews the literature on danger and assessment of danger. Chapter II outlines the study's grounded theory design and issues affecting data analysis in this study of battered women. Chapters III and IV present the findings of this research. Chapter III describes the environment of social and emotional chaos



that is created by battering partners. In order to survive the chaos, women were constantly engaging in processes of monitoring and responding to their partners' cues of impending violence. Chapter IV introduces these continual processes of monitoring and responding as a substantive theory, Predicting Unpredictability. Finally, Chapter V highlights the findings and the implications this research has for policy, education, and nursing practice.

The following chapter begins with a brief overview of the problem of woman battering and its significance as a health issue. The aims of the study are followed by a review of current definitions of danger, problems inherent in assessing danger in others, and current practices of danger assessment in battered women.

The Problem of Woman Battering and Its Significance

Battering of women by their intimate partners is a common and widespread problem affecting millions of women. An estimated 1.8 million women are severely battered each year by their partners (Straus & Gelles, 1990). Battering is a common cause of death among women. Ninety percent of women killed are killed by men, men who are most often family members, spouses, or ex-spouses (Stout, 1991). Between 1976 and 1987 more than twice as many women were shot and killed by their husbands or intimate acquaintances than were murdered by strangers (Kellermann & Mercy, 1992). Homicides involving

intimate partners are usually preceded by years of battering (Browne, 1987; Goetting, 1989a; Straus, 1986). Therefore, patterns of non-lethal intrafamily violence are an important precursor to mortality and intervention strategies.

Battering often escalates until either the battered woman or battering man are killed by the other partner. Spouses often kill one another for very different reasons. Men commonly kill their wives or girlfriends in response to their attempts to leave or end the abusive relationships (Wilson & Daly, 1993). Women on the other hand, often kill their husbands or boyfriends in self-defense or in retribution for prior acts of violence (Browne, 1987). The more frequent and severe the violence, the greater the possibility that the relationship will end with the death of one or both of the partners.

Battering takes a tremendous toll on women's health. Besides physical injuries, battered women report sleep disturbances, pain and other disturbing physical sensations, asthma, arthritis, and allergies (Kerouac, Taggart, Lescop, & Fortin, 1986). Fifty-four percent of the patients identifying themselves as battered in one emergency department were being treated for medical or psychiatric complaints (Goldberg & Tomlanovich, 1984). The more severe the violence the more symptoms women experienced. In a national survey, severely battered wives reported experiencing twice the headaches, four times the feelings of being depressed, five-and-a-half times the rate of suicide attempts, and spent twice as many days in bed due to illness than other women (Gelles & Straus,

1990). In a study of women being treated for trauma in an emergency department, battered women had five times the risk of suicide attempts than non-battered women (Stark, Flintcraft, & Frazier, 1979). Additionally women battered during pregnancy are at greater risk of abusing drugs and alcohol than non-battered pregnant women (Amaro, Fried, Cabral, & Zuckerman, 1990).

Battering often begins or increases in frequency and severity during pregnancy. As many as 17% of pregnant women reported being assaulted during their pregnancy (McFarlane, Parker, Soeken, & Bullock, 1992). Campbell, Soeken, McFarlane, and Parker (in press) found that women battered during pregnancy were at risk for more severe physical and nonphysical abuse and at higher risk for homicide than women not abused during pregnancy even when controlling for age, education, income, and ethnicity. Parker, McFarlane, Soeken, Torres, & Campbell (1993) found teens seeking prenatal care reported significantly more abuse than adults but the risk of homicide measured by the Danger Assessment Scale was significantly higher for adults than for teens. Characteristics making the abuse more dangerous in adults were forced sex, threats of being killed, partner's daily drunkenness, and partner's control over women's daily activities. These factors may reflect the fact many teens spend less time with their male partners than adult women who share housing with the batterer and have less frequent contact with peers or family members. Women who were sexually abused by their partners were more likely to have been

abused during pregnancy, suffer injuries, and have been exposed to lethal levels of partners' violence (Campbell, 1989b).

Gelles (1988) argued that the relationship between pregnancy and battering was spurious when controlling for age. Based on cross-sectional data from a national survey of families, he asserts that younger women experience more violence and are also more likely to be pregnant; therefore, the incidence of battering does not increase because of pregnancy. However, Campbell, Poland, Waller, and Ager (1992) found that almost 29% of women assaulted during pregnancy reported an increase in the violence during pregnancy. Battering has been shown to have negative effects on pregnancy outcomes. Women experiencing violence while pregnant have more miscarriages, low birthweight infants, and premature deliveries (Bullock & McFarlane, 1989).

The impact of woman battering on health care utilization is significant. Domestic violence accounts for approximately 27,700 emergency department and 39,000 physician visits each year costing approximately \$44,393,700 (McLeer & Anwar, 1987). Twenty to thirty percent of women treated in emergency departments and twenty-three percent of the women receiving prenatal care report being in battering relationships (Goldberg & Tomlanovich, 1984; Helton, McFarlane & Anderson, 1987; McLeer & Anwar, 1989). Battered women utilized hospital services for trauma, psychiatric, gynecological, and unspecified

medical disorders significantly more than non-battered women of the same age (Bergman & Brismar, 1991).

Approximately one in ten women who are in intimate heterosexual relationships encountered in any health care setting are victims of abuse by their male partners (Sampsel, 1991). Though battering and its sequela are responsible for more visits by women to health providers than most other health conditions, there continues to be little content concerning domestic violence in the educational curriculum of health professionals (Centers for Disease Control, 1989; Hendricks-Matthews, 1991). Public awareness and education efforts aimed at specific groups of health care providers such as emergency departments and prenatal care clinics have been effective in dramatically increasing identification of battered women by health care providers (McFarlane, Christoffel, Bateman, Miller, & Bullock, 1991; Tilden & Shepherd, 1987).

Once identified as battered, the clinician's primary intervention is to assess women's safety or danger. It is the assessment of women's safety and danger that is the basis on which decisions are made whether women should return home or be encouraged to spend the night at a friend's or at the shelter. Clinicians should assist all women returning home in developing or reviewing their escape plan. Campbell and Sheridan (1989) have published a comprehensive protocol for intervention with battered women. Ultimately the women themselves must assess their own level of danger within their

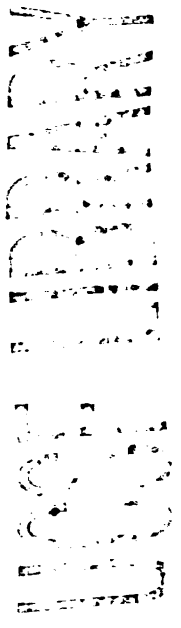
relationships and decide which course of action is best for them. Clinical use of the Danger Assessment Scale reviewed later in this chapter can assist women in accurately assessing their risk factors (Campbell, 1986).

Of final significance to clinicians in advanced practice with battered women and battering men is the dilemma of assessing dangerousness and the "duty to warn". The landmark case of *Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California* directs that,

if a therapist concludes or should have concluded that his or her patient presents a serious danger of violence to a third party, he or she incurs a duty to use reasonable care to both warn the intended victim of such danger and to protect the victim and third parties from the danger posed by the patient (Hart, 1988, p. 235).

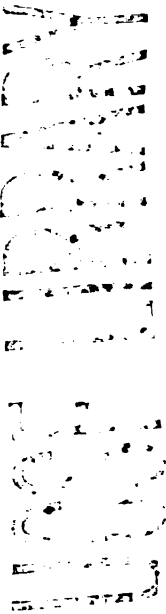
There are different interpretations whether actual threats or expressions of violence are required to invoke therapists legal "duty to warn". However, the language of many profession's ethical guidelines suggests that therapists perception of potential danger by a client, not actual threats, creates the ethical duty to protect the potential victims (Hart, 1988). This has potentially serious implications for nursing practice in settings where battered women are treated. Women who kill their abusive partners do so in self-defense thus nurses' assessment of danger may serve both to protect the batterer and the woman.

Assessing danger may provide important information to women who are at increased risk of being killed by their partners. Understanding danger must begin from the perspective of women and how they determine the level of



danger present in various situations. Better understanding of danger, its correlates and attributes, and how danger affects women's interactions with others can help women, nurses, and other clinicians respond appropriately to the needs of battered women and to their protection and safety.

More importantly, the significance of research exploring danger assessment lies in the information it provides women to empower themselves. In effect, the findings can be used by battered women to improve how they monitor and respond to changing levels of danger. Studying danger provides information that can be used to help women recognize potentially violent behaviors before entering new relationships or to refine their assessment and monitoring practices while they remain in battering relationships. Women entering new relationships have difficulty identifying potentially violent behaviors because they have no context in which to determine the meaning of men's behaviors. Research on danger may discover new ways of preventing woman battering. This study extends Campbell's (1986) work on assessing danger of homicide by focusing on women's interpretations of danger associated with non-lethal assaults and by examining behavioral manifestations of danger. The goal of this research was to provide a framework for understanding how women assess and respond to threats of danger from their battering partners.



Research Aims

Grounded theory methodology was used to develop a framework explaining women's assessment of danger. In the foreground of domestic violence is the interaction between the battering man and the battered woman. In the background are the interactions battered women have with their children, friends, relatives, and people in other settings such as the legal or health care systems. These interactions may profoundly affect a woman's interpretation of danger or subsequent exposure to danger.

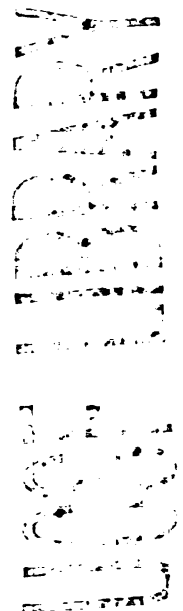
I investigated how battered women assessed the changing levels of danger in their relationships. The central questions guiding development of this study were:

1. How do battered women perceive danger?
2. What characteristics, if any, do women use as indicators of the degree of danger presented by their battering partners and the setting?
3. How do women in battering relationships monitor and respond to increasing levels of danger?

In conceptualizing this study, "danger" was used to refer to women's perceptions of the risk or threat of violence in their relationships. In the context of domestic violence "danger" generally referred to physical harm specifically directed at women by their intimate male partner. "Battering partner" refers to

a woman's intimate adult male partner whether she was married, dating, or living with the man. Because the process of leaving battering relationships often involves prolonged voluntary or involuntary contact with ex-husbands or boyfriends, references to "battering partners" include former partners. Only women's relationships with battering men were explored because of potential differences in power dynamics, social support, acceptance, and the use of violence in lesbian and gay relationships. Battering was defined as a physical assault with or without injury that occurred more than once and which was initiated by an intimate partner. The dyad consisting of the battered woman and battering man was the focus of this study, using women as informants on dyadic processes.

Most of the literature concerned with danger or dangerousness has focused on the dilemmas criminal justice and mental health systems have releasing violent or potentially violent offenders and patients back to their communities. In contrast, this study focused on danger in the context of ongoing relationships with repeated exposure to the same potentially dangerous individuals such as occurs in institutionalized patients or families. The following literature review explores definitional issues in danger, assessment of danger in institutional settings, and current practices of assessing danger in battered women.



Overview of Relevant Literature

Defining Danger and Dangerousness

The meaning of danger is embedded in the relationship one has with a setting and the persons within the setting (Prins, 1991). Therefore, it is situationally defined. The word "dangerousness" refers to an amount, degree, or quantity of danger. Dangerousness is often used throughout the literature to simply mean "risk" or "threat" of violence. Scott (1977) described dangerousness as (a) unpredictability, (b) the tendency to inflict or risk irreversible injury or destruction or to induce others to do so, and most importantly (c) the risk of repetition in the face of measures to reduce it. Dangerousness can also be directed inward toward the self as well as toward others. Only when dangerousness is placed within a situational context does it take on real and often dramatic meaning.

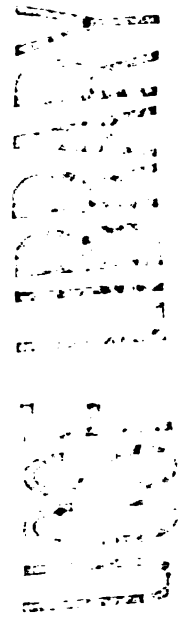
Determinations of dangerousness are a matter of judgement or opinion that results from assessing the combination of characteristics present in individuals and settings. Evaluation of dangerousness implies a subjective assessment of one's relationship to identified or known risk factors such as a partner's past use of violence or drug abuse. Potentially dangerous situations are everywhere. Yet, it is only certain situations, actions, or activities that raise the possibility of serious harm to a level that those situations or activity are considered dangerous (Walker, 1983). For example, it is not necessarily

dangerous to have a firearm in the home; however, during a heated argument or when a curious child is present, the presence of firearms becomes dangerous.

The problem in assessing danger is that danger is dynamic and constantly changing so its assessment must also be dynamic and constantly changing.

Garbarino, Kotelny and Debrow (1991) make the distinction between acute and chronic exposure to danger. Acute exposure to danger is situational which requires one to make substantial temporary adjustments but things quickly return to normal or "safe again". On the other hand, chronic exposure to danger such as living in a housing project plagued by violence or living with a battering partner is very different. Chronic exposure to danger comes with the awareness that one is living in a situation with the ever-present potential for danger. In chronic danger a high level of tension is always present. Chronic danger requires "developmental adjustment", that is, changes which likely include alterations in personality, major changes in patterns of behavior, and ideological changes in how one interprets and makes sense of the world in the presence of ongoing danger.

Interest in dangerousness stems from a practical need to predict individual behavior. "The notion of dangerousness implies prediction - a concern with future conduct" (Prins, 1991, p. 26). Predicting dangerousness has been of key importance to those who must decide if it is safe to release potentially violent mental patients or criminals back to the community. Because of the



numerous situational and contextual elements of violence, research in the prediction of violence has met with little success (Monahan, 1981). The following equation illustrates the three conditional elements essential in enabling a violent interaction (Scott, 1977, p. 130):

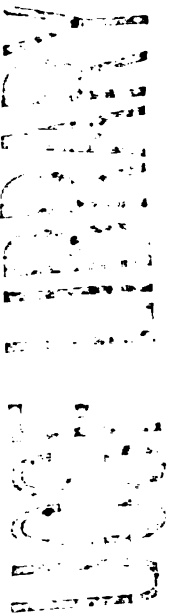
offender + available/potential victim + conditions = offense

Social norms that devalue groups such as women, children, or the elderly are responsible for condoning the use of violence against members of those groups. By understanding the offender, potential victim, and conditions enabling violence to occur, short-term prediction may be possible.

Short-term prediction of dangerousness has met with limited success on a case by case basis (Monahan, 1981). Present guidelines for assessing dangerousness in violent mentally ill individuals focus on obtaining detailed histories of the individual's previous violence and the situational conditions within which the previous violent incidents occurred (Prins, 1991). These situational categories include knowledge of previous offenses, characteristics of the immediate environment, and the patients attitude of "unfinished business" or revenge.

Predicting Dangerousness in the Mentally Ill

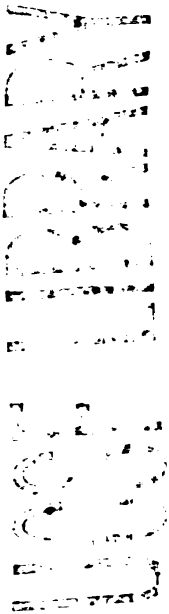
The mental health literature reflects a similar interest in predicting short- and long-term violence potential in the mentally and criminally ill as well as in identifying the characteristics of potentially violent individuals (Monahan, 1981,



Prins, 1991, Scott, 1977). Clinicians have few guidelines for assessing the potential dangerousness of mentally ill patients (Pfohl, 1978; Warren, 1979). After reviewing the research on violence prediction, Monahan (1981) concluded that the behaviors people label as dangerous or having the potential for violence, were a joint function of personal characteristics and the characteristics of the situation in which the persons immediately interacted.

Nurses' determination of "present risk" using behavioral indicators or underlying pathophysiology in psychiatric patients was found to be unreliable (Lambert, Cartor, & Walker, 1988). However, Binder and McNeil (1988) found that manic patients were most likely to be violent during hospitalization. They concluded that this may be due to their extreme mood changes. Because manic patients have periods of relative calm when they appear in control, staff may not be aware of their potential for violence and may not act as quickly to prevent or intervene in increased agitation during these periods of calm.

One of the problems in determining danger in psychiatric patients is that violence is a relatively rare event (Lambert, Cartor, & Walker, 1988). As violent events becomes less common the accompanying tension and awareness diminish, violent events appear to occur suddenly and without warning. The same may be true of women's assessment of danger in their battering partners when violence in the relationship is infrequent or when women are newly in a relationship.



There has been little empirical research examining the interactional or temporal characteristics of danger.

Because of the risk to staff, nurses in psychiatric facilities have also been interested in identifying potentially dangerous patients. Clunn (1984) found nurses identified cues of potential violence based on observed changes in the autonomic nervous system such as dilated pupils, uncontrolled shaking, nonpurposive motor activities, other body language, and hostile or threatening verbalizations. However, nurses based much of the assessment on their knowledge of the patient's history of violence. Interpreting the findings of Clunn's study are difficult because the author described the method as grounded theory, but a priori categories were developed and used as a basis for an original questionnaire. In addition, relationships between categories were not explored and a large part of the analysis relied on statistical description.

In another qualitative study of nurses assessment of dangerousness, Fisher (1989) examined psychiatric nurses assessment of dangerousness in institutionalized psychiatric patients and found they also used eye contact, verbal expressions, and body movements to assess patients' intent. Again, many of the patients had been labelled as dangerous or violent prior to admission so the diagnostic label was used as the initial identifier of potentially dangerous patients. A key characteristic emerging from Fisher's study of assessing danger was the importance of knowing the patient. Nurses felt through repeated

interaction with patients they became familiar with patients' "normal" behaviors and were able to notice subtle changes that warned of increasing danger. Nurses described that returning to the setting after a prolonged absence or vacation was the most dangerous time because they were not aware of the subtle changes that had occurred in patients during their absence. Under these conditions, nurses feared unknowingly walking into a dangerous situation because they misinterpreted a patient's behaviors. The implications of these studies are that it is nearly impossible to predict dangerousness or identify dangerous individuals in advance of knowing their personal history or closely monitoring their behaviors.

There are significant differences that must be noted between danger in psychiatric patients and danger in the context of woman battering. The largest oversight in the psychiatric literature on dangerousness is the absence of discussions of power and use of violence as a means of gaining or exerting control. Dangerous behavior in psychiatric patients is often assumed to be a symptom of the mental illness and beyond the individual's control. Labeling individuals as dangerous when their behaviors are deemed threatening to others or the community is a social act, conducted by those given authority such as the police, mental health workers, or judges (Warren, 1979). The participants of the studies reported above were inpatients being treated for specific diagnoses and had been labeled as dangerous prior to their admission. Battering men on the other hand are often not labelled as dangerous because of their "limited" threat

to others and the "private" nature of violence in the home. Rather, their actions are labeled as "crimes of passion" and considered differently than other acts of violence. Indeed, battering men are often only dangerous to their wives, girlfriends, or children.

Inpatient environments are specifically organized to protect against and monitor for violence with the resources necessary to quickly control those using violence. Staff in these facilities are also repeatedly trained in crisis intervention. Nevertheless, patient assaults continue to be a common problem in mental health facilities. Conversely, battered women are on their own in the community with limited resources to assist them. Battered women have not been "clinically prepared" to recognize or manage potential violence because violence at home is a private matter.

Woman battering occurs within the context of the family, setting it apart from other types of violence. The strong beliefs that differentiate family from other social groups support the belief that woman battering is a private interaction where both partners share responsibility for the violence. The "family ideal" are distinct beliefs that value family privacy, conjugal and parental rights, and preservation of the family (Pleck, 1988). The "family ideal" represents a significant barrier to family violence reforms that assert to move domestic violence into public debate. In addition, the very nature of family life

provides structural characteristics that create high levels of conflict, often leading to violence between family members (Straus, 1977).

1. Family members spend many hours of the day together interacting thus exposing them to more opportunities for conflict.
2. Family interactions cover a vast range of activities resulting in more events over which conflicts can occur. Conflicts often arise from the diversity of interests and limited family resources.
3. The encroaching on one's personal space brought about by lifestyle and habits of others in the family lead to conflict.
4. Family membership comes with the implicit right to influence the behaviors of others based on hierarchal and patriarchal organization of the family. Social and cultural values surrounding gender and age are reflected in family organization.
5. Roles in the family are often assigned by biological characteristics rather than by interest, competence, or choice.
6. The family continuously undergoes major changes that lead to high levels of conflict as a result of processes associated with family development.

At the same time these characteristics increase the risk for violence, they are the characteristics that make intimate relationships unique, attractive, and supportive. Assessment of danger is dependent on knowledge of the offender,

victim, and circumstances enabling violence to occur. What is known about danger in intimate relationships?

Determining Dangerousness in Woman Battering

Men's characteristics.

Two explanations are put forth in the literature accounting for men's use of violence. First, is the presence of psychopathology. Battering men have been suspected of having mental disorders or personality characteristics that make them more dangerous to those around them. Battering men have been found to be moody, impulsive, self-centered, demanding, aloof, and have poor problem solving skills that rapidly decompensate under stress (Barnett & Hamberger, 1992; Dinwiddle, 1992; Else, Wonderlich, Beatty, Christie, & Staton, 1993). These characteristics led researchers to conclude that many battering men have anti-social personality disorders. In addition, Else, Wonderlich, Beatty, Christie, and Staton (1993) found that battering men engaged in more acting out and self-criticism than a comparison group of non-violent men.

Saunders (1992) developed a typology of three types of battering men. The first two groups of men included those who were "violent only within the family" and those who were "generally violent" both at home and outside home. These men were found to use more severe levels of violence, have more rigid attitudes about women's roles, and abuse more alcohol. The third group of men were described as "emotionally volatile" and had high levels of depression, anger,

suicide, and jealousy. Each group presents a different profile of danger in terms of men's characteristics, intoxication, severity of violence, expectations of women's roles, jealousy, and anger.

Ptacek (1988a) criticizes the psychopathology approach which focuses on psychiatric diagnosis, temporary "loss of control", poor impulse control, and anti-social personality characteristics. Ptacek argues that using psychiatric pathology to understand violence dismisses issues of responsibility, power, and the obvious benefits one receives from using violence. Characteristics such as poor impulse control or substance abuse are used to explain the origins of violent behavior similar to the diagnostic labels given to psychiatric patients. These labels are often used to excuse men's violent behaviors.

The second explanation of violence in the literature is that battering is a product of male socialization. Men are socialized to inherit and maintain positions of power by devaluing subgroups of the population. Men are allowed to either excuse or justify the use of violence against their wives or girlfriends (Ptacek, 1988b). They excuse their violence because of intoxication or they justify their violence because their girlfriends would not do as they wanted. Rates of woman battering appear higher in the context where women's status in economic, educational, legal, and political institutions is relatively high but where the prevailing norms favor women's subordination in marriage (Yllo & Straus,

1990). Social norms and expectations are an attribute of danger by condoning the use of violence against certain members of a society.

Women's experience of danger.

Battering of women has been described as a circular process composed of three distinctive phases, tension-building, violent episode, and contrition (Walker, 1979, 1984). According to Walker's Cycle Theory of Violence tension in the relationship steadily builds until the partner erupts in violence. The violence phase is followed by shock and disbelief and both partners search for explanations. During the contrition phase the batterer showers his wife with gifts and promises that the violence will never happen again. But soon the tension begins building and the cycle is repeated. Over the duration of the relationship the loving-contrition phase changes. No longer is the violence followed by gifts, apologies, or promises. The violence becomes more frequent, severe, and prolonged. Through the cycle of violence, assessment of dangerousness is an everyday activity for women, who must continually monitor the building tension in the relationship. Actions taken during the tension-building phase may avert or stimulate the inevitable violent outburst. The cycle of violence provides two areas in which women must be aware of danger; (a) awareness of specific indicators that tension is escalating and (b) recognition of the larger patterns of their partners violent behaviors.

Instilling the sense of fear that a physical attack is possible at a particular moment is one way of exerting control. However, for such control to have long-term effect the batterer must convince the woman that the potential for violence is real and may be carried out at anytime and at the discretion of the assailant (Gagne, 1992). Battering men's violence and unpredictable, often irrational, behavior reinforce women's fear that their partners are capable of carrying out their threats. Women yield to being manipulated and intimidated because they fear his threats of physical violence. Fear of what might happen or could have happened becomes as important as the actual physical assault and an important part of establishing and maintaining the threat of danger. Once the constant threat of danger is established, other means of exerting control increase in effectiveness.

Women appear to respond to increasing threats of danger with increasing levels of help-seeking. Help-seeking behaviors and attempts to leave a relationship increased as the level of violence increased (Bowker, 1983; Gondolf & Fisher, 1988, Hoff, 1990). However, Reidy and Von Korff (1991) found that severity of violence was not related to delays of up to one year in seeking help at a shelter. Their study only examined the severity of violence and one form of help-seeking, women's use of shelters. Help-seeking is far more complex involving multiple resources. Many women have a network of friends and family on which they rely for assistance.

Gondolf and Fisher (1988) found the range of help sources utilized by battered women increased as the batterer's antisocial behaviors increased. They concluded that help-seeking behaviors do not appear to be a direct response to increased abuse by itself, but rather help-seeking increases in the context of other batterer behaviors. Gondolf and Fisher found 30% of the batterers in their sample could be characterized as having "antisocial" behaviors that were expressed in violence toward non-family members, criminal records, and heavy drug and alcohol abuse histories. "Helpseeking is apparently an effort to gain safety from generally dangerous men" (p. 37).

Other researchers have found women continuously attempt to mitigate the threat of danger to protect themselves and others. Women in a housing project who identified "shooting" as their major safety concern adopted a variety of strategies to protect themselves and their children (Dubrow & Garbarino, 1988). Women were often not aware they had developed strategies for protecting their children. It is important to note that these strategies were not always successful but mothers continued trying to manipulate their immediate environment. Likewise, battered women have been found to engage in activities they believe reduced the level of dangerousness or potential lethality of their partners' violent behaviors (Bowker, 1983; Campbell, 1986).

The degree of danger, often expressed in terms of severity of violence, appears to be one factor that moves women through violent relationships and

causes them to redefine themselves in terms of the relationship (Landenberger, 1989; Lempert, 1994, Ulrich, 1991). Landenberger (1989) described this as a phased process of entrapment and recovery. Validation by others of the abuse that was occurring and feelings of danger and being trapped moved women into a different level of awareness of their situation that prepared them to leave. During their relationships with violent men, women described reaching a "breaking point" in which they knew they had to take action such as leaving the relationship (Landenberger, 1989; Ulrich, 1991). The "breaking point" was often associated with increasing levels of violence used by battering partners to keep women in the relationships. Prior to leaving battering relationships, women reported realizing that they may be killed, their children may be seriously injured, or they were seriously contemplating killing their abusive partners.

Assessing danger in battering relationships is a continuous and ongoing process because of women's repeated contact with the batterers. Women can only learn the indicators of danger through repeated experiences with their partners. Yet, battered women are assaulted an average of three times per year (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1986). The infrequency may in fact prevent women from identifying patterns resulting in assaults that are a "surprise" or occur "without warning".

Danger assessment.

Women and their battering partners are at high risk for homicide. The probability of homicide as an outcome of violent relationships increases over the course of relationships as the frequency and severity of the violence increases. The very danger created by a battering man in some cases becomes a threat to his own safety. Women who killed their partners were often found to do so in self-defense after years of being battered (Foster, Veale, & Fogel, 1989; Goetting, 1989b). An accurate assessment of dangerousness may prevent the potential homicide of either the battered woman or her batterer. Assessing danger in battering should take into consideration that the women and their assailants know one another, are in prolonged contact and interact regularly with one another, and that women in these relationships are repeatedly victimized (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1986).

The potential of homicide for battered women and their partners makes danger assessment a priority intervention for clinicians working with battered women. A review of the literature on homicide revealed a common list of risk factors. The risk factors include access or ownership of guns, previous use of weapons, threats with weapons, threats to kill, serious injury in prior abusive incidents, threats of suicide, drug or alcohol abuse, forced sex of female partner, and obsessiveness/jealousy (Campbell, in press).

The Danger Assessment Scale (DAS) was developed for use by clinicians and researchers to assess the risk of homicide for battered women and their partners (Campbell, 1981, 1986). It identifies potential assailant and situational attributes that are associated with high levels of dangerousness. The same attributes are used in assessing the risk of homicide for battered women or their battering partners. The DAS evaluates the presence of attributes like the availability of firearms, partner's substance abuse, threats of suicide or homicide, sexual abuse, child abuse, abuse during pregnancy, and the frequency and severity of abuse. The DAS takes ten minutes to complete and determines only if an attribute is present or absent (Table 1.1). It is best thought of as a statistical risk factor assessment rather than as a prediction instrument (Campbell, in press).

The DAS has been found to be reliable (.71) and have face validity (Campbell, 1986). Stuart and Campbell (1989) conducted interviews with 30 women to test the psychometric properties of the DAS. The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of the original DAS was .57. When removing the demographic items from the original form and adding an item about suicide the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of the DAS increased to .60 and .86 in subsequent studies (Campbell, in press). Test-retest reliability has ranged from .89 to .94.

Table 1.1: Danger Assessment Scale

Several risk factors have been associated with homicides of both batterers and battered women in research that has been conducted after the killings have taken place. We cannot predict what will happen in your case, but we would like for you to be aware of a danger of homicide in situations of severe battering and for you to see how many of the risk factors apply to your situation. (The "he" in the questions refers to your husband, partner, ex-husband or partner or whoever is currently physically hurting you).

<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Has the physical violence increased in frequency over the past year?
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Has the physical violence increased in severity over the past year and/or has a weapon or threat of weapon been used?
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Does he ever try to choke you?
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Is there a gun in the house?
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Has he ever forced you into sex when you did not wish to do so?
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Does he use drugs? By drugs I mean "uppers", "speed", amphetamines, angel dust, cocaine, "crack", heroin, or mixtures.
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Does he threaten to kill you and/or do you believe he is capable of killing you?
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Is he drunk every day or almost every day? (In terms of quantity of alcohol.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Does he control most or all of your daily activities? for instance, does he tell you who you can be friends with, how much money you can take with you shopping, or when you can take the car? (If he tries but you do not let him, check here ____.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Have you ever been beaten by him while you were pregnant? (If never pregnant by him, check here ____.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Is he violently and constantly jealous of you? (For instance, does he say, "If I can't have you, no one can.")
<input type="checkbox"/>	12. Have you ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
<input type="checkbox"/>	13. Has he ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
<input type="checkbox"/>	14. Is he violent toward the children?
<input type="checkbox"/>	15. Is he violent outside of the home?
TOTAL YES ANSWERS	

Thank you. Please talk to your nurse, advocate, or counselor about what the danger assessment means in terms of your situation.

Construct validity of the DAS has been supported by moderate correlations with the Conflict Tactics Scale (.49-.55) and the Index of Spouse Abuse (.44-.75) (Campbell, in press). The Conflict Tactics Scale and the Index of Spouse Abuse both measure severity and frequency of abuse. In samples of battered women using prenatal care, emergency departments, shelters, and in samples of nonabused women, the DAS reflects the differences in degree of severity of abuse expected in these populations which lends early support to the instrument's predictive validity (Campbell, in press).

The DAS weakly correlated with women's perceptions of danger (Spearman Rho .26), type of abuse (Spearman Rho .37), and moderately correlated with severity of abuse (Spearman Rho .48) in Stuart and Campbell's (1989) sample of 30 women from a shelter. The authors concluded that the low and moderate correlations lend initial evidence to construct validity. However, the low correlation of the DAS with women's perceptions of danger is noteworthy. It is not surprising that the correlations between the DAS and women's perceptions of danger were low. The DAS focuses on objective risk factors associated with homicide while the participants were asked, "How dangerous they rated their present battering relationship." Women's perceptions of danger most likely included factors that were not on the DAS such as intuition or instinct. Another possibility explaining the low correlations between risk for homicide and

level of danger is they each represent different points on a continuum of violence and may each characterize different constructs.

Stuart and Campbell (1989) conducted a thematic analysis of women's responses to the question of how they decided on the dangerousness rating they gave their relationships. The most common answers women gave for determining danger was the rapid mood changes of their partners (38%). The more erratic, unpredictable, and impulsive their partners behavior the greater women's sense of danger. A smaller number (21%) evaluated their own emotional and physical status, such as intensity of stress, anxiety, and headaches to gauge their assessment of dangerousness. Changes in their partners' values, evident in statements like "the behavior was out of character for him", was highly rated as an indicator of dangerousness (51%). Like nurses' assessments of psychiatric patients, forms of nonverbal communications were identified as important signs of dangerousness (17%), particularly changes in "the eyes". Other sources women used to identify the level of danger were intuition, increasingly violent dreams, and their partners' use of death threats. These characteristics in assessing dangerousness identified by battered women share many similarities to the characteristics identified by nurses. More research is needed on monitoring these characteristics and their prediction potential.

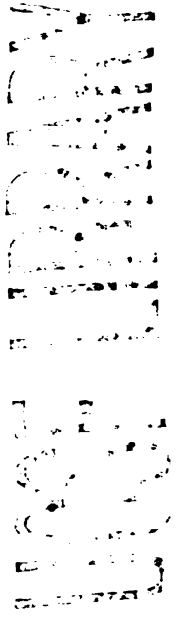
The major limitations in the DAS as an assessment of danger are that it is based on the risk of homicide, an extreme end in the continuum of violence

experienced by women. In addition, the DAS does not discriminate between variations of a characteristic and for that reason has less specificity. For example, the possible differences in dangerousness between frequent poly-substance abuse and occasional alcohol use or between having a gun in the house and carrying one at all times may represent two distinctly different conditions of danger. An additional weakness of the DAS has been its use almost exclusively in populations of battered women. There is little data showing how women in non-battering/non-violent relationships scored on the instrument. It would be interesting to further test the DAS with women in non-battering relationships with partners who are addicted to drugs and alcohol, mentally ill, or emotionally abusive.

Summary

Determining the level of dangerousness is important for women who need to take the actions necessary to protect themselves and their children. It is also an important intervention for clinicians who must be concerned with issues of women's safety. Dangerousness is a difficult condition to determine and is based mostly on knowledge of past history. There has been little research presented in the battering literature on the behavioral or interactional manifestations of dangerousness or documenting women's processes of assessing their level of

danger and their responses to their assessment. The following study will contribute to our understanding of danger in battering relationships.



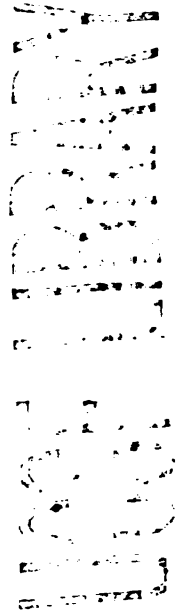
CHAPTER II

DISCOVERING GROUNDED THEORY: RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION, AND ANALYSIS METHODS

Research Design

Grounded Theory Methodology

The present study exploring women's experiences of danger in battering relationships was designed using grounded theory methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). Grounded theory is an inductive theory-building methodology that systematically builds substantive and formal theory from phenomena present in everyday life. Research using grounded theory seeks to explain (a) human behavior and interaction, (b) how individuals interact with their immediate environment, and (c) the conditions under which these interactions occur and change. Concepts emerge from the data and are constantly compared to other emerging concepts. Grounded theory has also been called the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Researchers must identify their own preconceptions of the phenomena so they can remain open to concepts as they emerge from the data. Concepts are combined to create categories. Categories are related to one another resulting



in hypothesis and theoretical formulations. The essential requirement of an emerging theory is that it remain "grounded" in the data. The theoretical foundation guiding grounded theory methodology is symbolic interactionism.

Symbolic interactionism posits that all human behavior is the result of interactive processes in which individuals define the objects, events, and situations they encounter based on the meanings those objects, events and situations have for the individuals (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interactionism has three premises. First, human beings act on the basis of the meanings events and experiences have for them. Second, the meanings of events and experiences are derived from the social interactions that one has with others. And third, these meanings can be changed and modified through interpretive processes and applied to other individuals and situations. It is through interaction that knowledge of others' "social worlds" is possible and the basis on which researchers can begin to understand social phenomena.

In addition to interacting with others, human beings carry on social interaction with themselves. The significance of this "internal dialogue" is that human behavior is more than simply a cause and effect relationship. "Instead of being merely an organism that responds to the play of factors on or through it, the human being is an organism that must deal with what it notes" (Blumer, 1969, p. 14). Through interactions with themselves, individuals determine how to respond based on their perceptions of the other, meanings given to the context

of the interaction, and their perceptions of how "others" perceive the situation. Interpretation is the subtle interplay of meanings given to interactions and contexts by those interacting.

Grounded theory provides a way to study the complexity of human behavior and social phenomena. The implications of symbolic interactionism for researchers using grounded theory are that human behavior can only be understood through (a) analysis of interaction which includes analysis of the setting and larger social forces and (b) understanding behavior as the participants understand it. Grounded theory provides a means of understanding common human behaviors in new and different ways (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Because of the complexity of interpersonal and social interactions and the meaning associated with violence, grounded theory methodology is ideally suited for studying woman battering.

The techniques used in recruiting and interviewing participants in this study, analyzing the textual data from qualitative interviews, and the measures taken to enhance the credibility of the study are discussed in the following chapter. This chapter concludes with a discussion of important methodological issues encountered in this study of violence against women, including: participant protection, the researcher as part of the research process, and the dilemmas women faced by telling their experiences of violence.

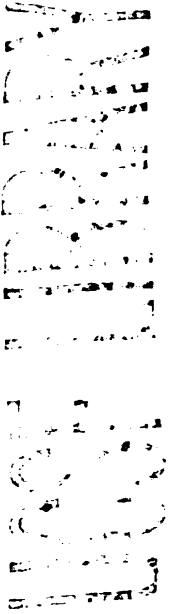
Data collection

Recruiting Women into the Study

Women were recruited into the study from the community using classified advertisements in free neighborhood newspapers in San Francisco. The total running time for the advertisements was the five month period from December 1992 through April 1993. The advertisements varied slightly by paper but essentially ran in either a long or a short form as follows:

- (1). Experienced violence in your relationship with a man in past 5 years? Call UCSF Danger Study, group interviews, compensation (phone number).
- (2). Women in danger study. Women are needed to participate in a two-hour group discussion about personal experiences during relationships in which your man was violent towards you within the past 5 years. Conducted by UCSF doctoral student. Volunteers compensated. Please call (phone number).

Women inquiring about the advertisement were given an explanation of the purpose of the study, overview of the interview and what was expected, and screened to assure they met the inclusion criteria (Appendix A). For inclusion in the study women must (a) be over the age of 18 years, (b) have been in a physically abusive relationship with a man in the previous five years, (c) speak and understand English, and (d) be able to give informed consent. Women received a \$10.00 honorarium for their participation following the interview.



Group Interviews as a Form of Data Collection

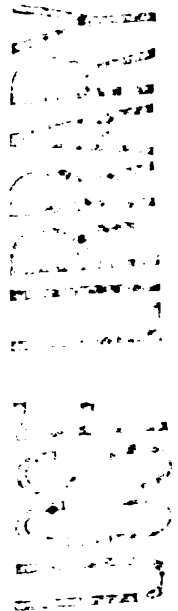
Group interviews were used as the primary source of data collection. Group interviews provided two distinct advantages for the researcher. First, group interviews provided an aspect of safety. The researcher was sensitive to the possibility that women, who had been victimized by men, may be uncomfortable being interviewed by a man they did not know in a place with which they were unfamiliar. Second, group interviews provided an opportunity for women to discuss among themselves the phenomena of "living with danger", thereby minimizing the potential of the researcher to impose preconceived ideas and issues.

The major advantage of conducting group interviews was the spontaneous interaction that resulted between participants in the group which produced fairly high levels of participant involvement (Krueger, 1988). Experiences of one group member can stimulate ideas and memories in other group members that the investigator may not think to ask. One participant's experiences elicited responses from other group members so that interviews became group discussions. "When all goes well, focusing the group discussion on a single topic brings forth material that would not come out in either the participants' own casual conversation or in response to the researcher's preconceived questions" (Morgan, 1988, p. 21). The participants were able to discuss their experiences of violence in their own words using their natural vocabulary. The natural

comparing and contrasting done throughout the discussion by the members of the group provided the researcher with built-in analytic comparisons and dimensions of the phenomena. The problem inherent in relying on the interactions of group members is never knowing whether or not their discussions mirror individual behavior.

All interviews were conducted by the investigator using low levels of moderator involvement to maximize group discussion. Low levels of moderator involvement are important when using qualitative methodologies such as grounded theory. "If the goal is to learn something new from participants, then it is best to let them speak for themselves. . . . Otherwise, your results will reflect what the moderator, not the participants, thought was interesting or important" (Morgan, 1988, p. 49). However, using low level moderator involvement does not mean the role of the moderator is a passive one.

The role of the moderator is to facilitate the discussion by eliciting stories, asking focusing questions, or asking for points of clarification on issues of importance that may have been implied or mentioned in passing. The moderator promotes group process and assures that everyone gets the opportunity to speak so the interview and more important the data for analysis, is not dominated by one individual. Throughout the interviews the moderator encouraged participants to discuss the similarities and differences in their experiences. The moderator of group interviews must be skilled in working with



groups, be flexible, able to project sincerity, have a sense of humor, and a keen memory (Krueger, 1993). The most critical quality in a moderator is the ability to listen. The error most often made by novice moderators is talking too much. Moderators sharing their opinions and ideas about a topic may unwittingly direct the participants' responses.

Every group interview began by obtaining informed consent from each of the participants (Appendix B). To assure confidentiality and safety the consent was unsigned and women given the option of keeping a copy. Obtaining consent was followed by the moderator introducing the purpose of the interview and reviewing the rules for the group. Groups ended with an offer to discuss how the participants were feeling after talking about the violence.

The interview guide consisted of a central question, a contrast question, and suggested focusing questions (Appendix C). The semi-structured interview proceeded in a format that could best be described as a guided discussion. The central question asked of the group was "I'd like you each to talk of a time you felt in danger in your relationship including what happened before, during, and after." Women were encouraged to respond to the question in the form of a story that included events leading to and following their experience of danger. Each member of the group was given time to respond to the opening question. Throughout the interview clarifying questions were asked and points made in one story were asked for comparison and contrast from other group members.

The moderator deviated from the interview guide as needed or re-directed questions in order to explore emerging concepts consistent with grounded theory methodology.

Groups met only once because of the potential danger of retaliatory violence to participants if their abusive partners discovered their participation. The groups ranged in size from two to five women and lasted approximately two hours. Individual interviews were conducted when only one participant was present for the interview. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Field notes of the interview highlighting discussion themes and group dynamics were written following the interview. Interviews were held in meeting rooms of a university's library. Following the interview participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire asking information about their age, income, and relationship (Appendix D).

Lessons Learned from Group Interviews

Anticipated problems in conducting group interviews were scheduling difficulties, smaller than planned attendance, difficulties in group process or conflict between group members, and not enough discussion. Scheduling and attendance was the most difficult aspect of utilizing group interviews with this population. When notifying women of meeting times it was common to find phone numbers had been disconnected or find women were no longer living at that address. In addition, there were transportation, child care, and work issues

that severely limited the times women were available to participate. These women lived day to day, a fact borne out in the interviews. Often only one or two of the five to six women scheduled for a group would make the interview appointment. Frequently no one showed-up for the interview. With their permission, the interview proceeded as planned if fewer than the scheduled number of women were in attendance.

It was a serendipitous finding that, in research on a sensitive topic such as violence, smaller group sizes produced better results. The literature recommends groups of approximately eight (Morgan, 1988). Women participated in this study for very specific reasons, including: they had never discussed the violence with anyone before, they hoped sharing their experience would help others, or they thought talking about it would help them understand their experience better. At times the interviews grew very intense. Groups having five participants resulted in high levels of frustration because women did not have adequate time to express what they needed to say. Groups of three were the ideal size for discussing intense and troubling experiences in a two hour time frame. Interviews were kept under two hours because of the emotional and physical exhaustion women experienced as a result of participating.

Conformity of participant responses has been identified as a potential threat in group interviews. Morgan and Krueger (1993) argue that conformity is not a problem in social science research using group interviews since reaching

consensus is not the goal of the research. However, group interactions were observed to affect the central themes of the interview. Subsequent speakers often echoed or repeated similar themes in their comments as those of the first speaker. For example, central themes characterizing the first speaker and continuing throughout other participant's comments were: alcohol and drugs (group 3), passion (group 8), testing boyfriends for characteristics of violence (group 11), and secrecy and losing friends (group 15).

The protocol was modified to include telephone and individual interviews under certain conditions for those women who preferred not to participate in a group setting (Appendix E). This was done as a practical matter to keep the interviewing process moving forward. Some women were never available to meet with the group and the only option available was interviewing them individually. A second small subgroup of women expressed interest but, because of the potential danger from their battering or stalking partners, it was unsafe for both the women and the members of the group to include them in the group interview.

Participant Characteristics

Response to the advertisements was enthusiastic. Over 100 calls were logged. A total of thirty women participated in the study. Women participating were in their mid-thirties and generally of low income. One third of the women participating were in battering relationships at the time of the interview. The

levels of violence experienced by the women participating in this study were high. Twenty percent reported being assaulted weekly, 27% monthly and 33% bimonthly. Nearly two-thirds (60%) reported the severity of their assault as being "hit with objects such as telephones, lamps, chairs" or "threatened with knives or guns". Three women (10%) had been threatened with violence but never physically assaulted. Table 2.1 summarizes participant characteristics.

Table 2.1: Summary Participant Characteristics (n=30)		
Age (yrs)	mean	35
	range	21-62
Ethnicity	White	22 (73)
	African American	3 (10)
	Latina	3 (10)
	Native American	2 (07)
Participant Income	Public Assistance	8 (27)
	< \$13,999	11 (37)
	\$14,000 - \$29,999	8 (27)
	\$30,000 - \$44, 999	3 (10)
Currently in a battering relationship		9 (30)

Data Analysis

Sampling

Data collection and analysis occur simultaneously using a sampling technique in grounded theory called "theoretical sampling" (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The investigator decides from previous interviews the data to collect next and where to find it in order to develop the emerging theory (Glaser, 1978). "Theoretical sampling" allows researchers to change their sampling criteria and alter their questions to best explore theoretical concepts. Data analysis begins as soon as an interview is transcribed so emerging hypotheses, categories, and codes can be further explored by the participants of subsequent interviews. Future selection of participants is guided by the ongoing analysis. "Theoretical sampling" ensures discovery of variation, process, and density in the emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Sampling in this study combined theoretical and convenience sampling. "Theoretical sampling" was restricted to sampling concepts within those women responding to the broad sampling frame of the newspaper advertisements. The selection criteria for participants of this study were slightly changed to include women experiencing only psychological and emotional abuse. This change was based on descriptions from women participating in the first interview of the intense sense of danger and fear of violence that accompanied psychological

abuse. Likewise, interview questions evolved throughout the research project to reflect new categories that needed further development.

Glaser (1978) warns that restraint must be used in "theoretical sampling". Neophyte scholars and researchers who sample outside their substantive area too soon risk eroding the emergence of process from the data by comparing it to less prevalent or unrelated processes. "An important rule is, when the analyst is still 'young' at generating skills, as a sociologist and/or as a scholar within the area, to sample exclusively within the substantive area until focus on a basic social psychological problem and the process by which it is resolved both have been discovered and stabilized in an emerging theoretical framework" (p.50). In this study, theoretical sampling was restricted to the substantive area of battered women.

Codes, Concepts, Categories

Coding and analysis of transcripts generally followed techniques developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Coding consisted of three interactive processes that first break down the data into concepts and then reconstruct it. "Open coding" is the process of breaking down, conceptualizing, and comparing data in the transcripts. "Axial coding" is the process of comparing and contrasting codes to create categories, their properties and dimensions. And "selective coding" is the process of identifying a core category and systematically integrating other categories always validating the relationships with the data.

The analyst moves freely between the three coding processes throughout the analysis.

During the stages of coding, the analyst is constantly comparing and asking questions of the data and emerging categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Questions such as, "What is this?" and "What does this represent?" allow comparison of each incident so that similar phenomena can be given the same names. Once concepts are labeled the purpose of questioning is to "open up" the data and think about potential categories and their properties and dimensions. Properties and dimensions of a category are its attributes or characteristics and their range of variations. Basic questions such as Who?, When?, Where?, What?, How?, How much?, and Why? are likely to stimulate more specific and related questions which will lead to further development of a category and its properties and dimensions.

Analysis began by coding the transcript. Segments of text, usually several lines in length, were coded with short descriptive labels conceptualizing "what was going on" in the segment. "Open coding" is nothing more than assigning brief conceptual labels to segments of text. Codes serve to label, separate, compile, and organize the data necessary for categorizing and sorting (Charmaz, 1983). A single segment of text may be rich with concepts and have multiple codes assigned. Through asking questions of the data and comparing codes within and between interviews for similarities and differences, codes were

collapsed into categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Swanson, 1986). Table 2.2 is an example of the coding procedure.

Table 2.2: Coding Procedure		
<u>Data</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Category</u>
I had no feelings, I mean I just repressed my feelings so much, I had no feelings; no love, no anger, no remorse, no anything. I was just like a dead person.	repressing feelings	masked emotions
Things like that had become so commonplace, you know, I was just so stunned on such an ongoing basis.	repeatedly stunned	
I will never ever ever let anybody ever make me lose my temper again. I'll never do that again. I almost killed a person because of silly argument over a silly hamburger.	controlling emotions	
I kept all of my emotions inside, pent up, inside. I never showed anger, I never showed happiness, I never showed, you know, any kind of emotion. On the outside I was just calm all the time.		
I was never violent in return because I, he was quite a bit larger and stronger than I was, and it, you know, there's no way that it wouldn't have brought greater violence down on me.	suppress behavior/ suppress feelings for protection	

Table 2.3: Properties and Dimensions of "masked emotions"	
<u>Properties</u>	<u>Dimensions</u>
control	always certain situations conscious unconscious
emotion	no emotion filled with emotion
awareness	suppress control
repression or suppression	high none all interactions selected interactions
partners' actions	expected stunned with warning without warning
duration	always present selectively present over one relationship lifelong
intensity	completely numb no numbness constant intermittent

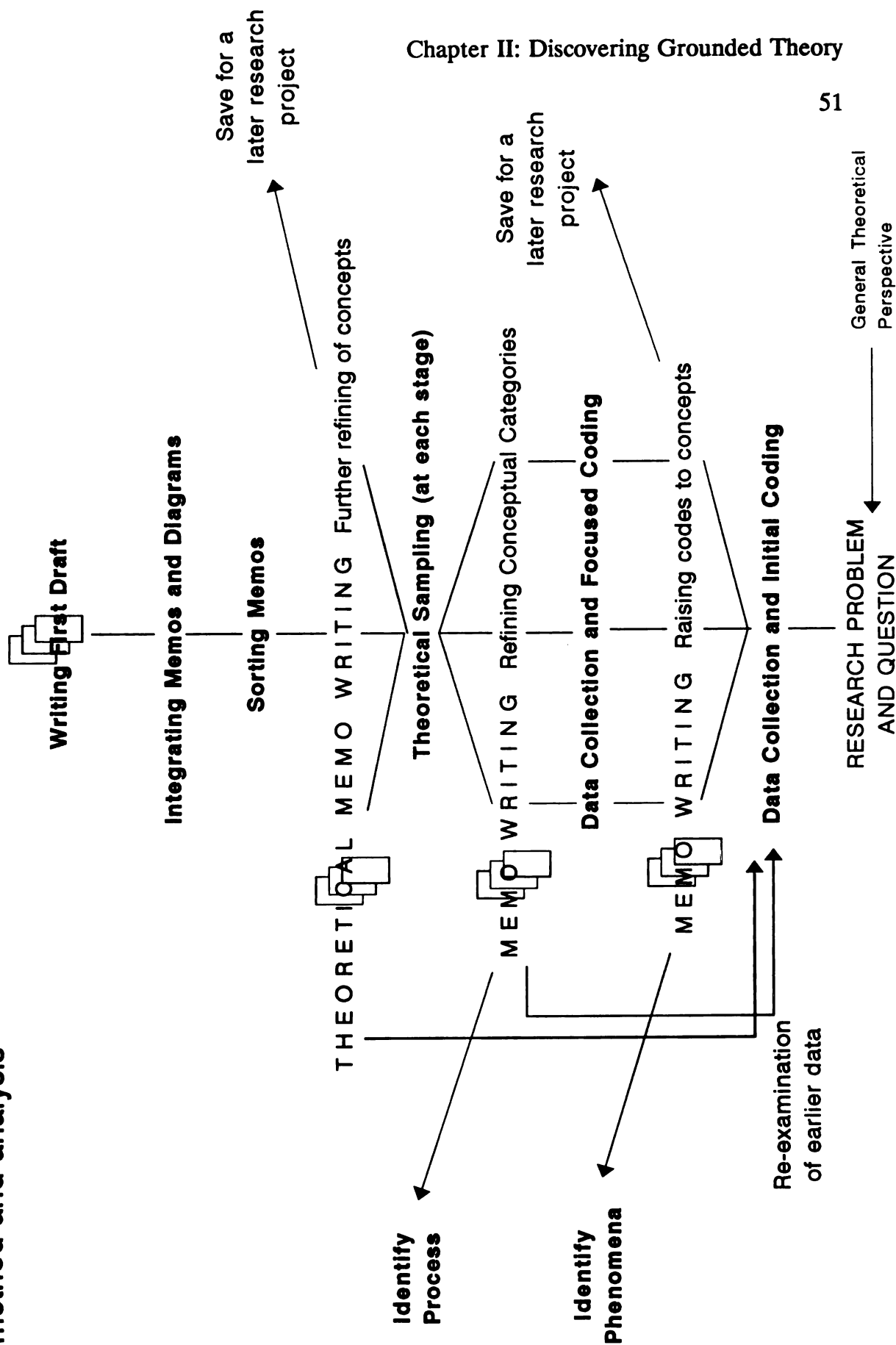
Once identified, categories were given depth by defining their properties and dimensions. Table 2.3 presents an example of selected properties and dimensions of the category of "masked emotions". As categories are given more depth they can be related to one another. Categories have analytic power because they can be related to other categories and subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Categories are related to one another by thinking of the conditions giving rise to a category, the intervening conditions, interactional strategies, and consequences of an interaction. Figure 2.1 shows the dynamic and interactive processes of sampling, collecting, and analysis data using

grounded theory methodology. The analysis is complete when all categories are thoroughly related to one another. Relationships between categories, comparisons, and the insights and inspirations that come from immersion in the data are recorded using memos and diagrams.

Memo Writing and Diagraming

Writing memos is the analytic activity of grounded theory methodology. Memos allow the researcher to think abstractly about the data. Memos are the theorizing "write-ups" of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst (Glaser, 1978). They help the analyst gain analytical distance from the data. Memos are constantly expanding and being revised throughout the different phases of coding. They are the analyst's written record of the analytical process and step by step development of the theory (Corbin, 1986; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). It is through memos that the analyst describes the developing theory, integrates changes as new data comes in, asks and answers emerging hypotheses, and documents where the analyst has been. In this study, memos were written describing emerging codes and developing categories, exploring potential relationships among categories, comparing categories in and between interviews, and comparing categories to phenomena outside the interview. This last type of comparison was particularly helpful in keeping the focus on concepts and not the details of the data.

Figure 2.1: Schema of processes in grounded theory method and analysis



Note. Adapted from Charmatz, K. (1990).

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Diagramming categories was used as an analytic tool for visualizing processes and relationships. Diagrams are graphical memos portraying categories and their relationships. Lines of action and the sequencing of conditions, strategies, and consequences were identified through diagramming. Like memos, diagrams are continually being revised and become more detailed as the analysis progresses.

Saturation

The end of sampling was determined when "theoretical saturation" of the categories was achieved. Saturation occurs when (a) no new or relevant data are found that further describe the emerging categories, (b) variation is built into category development with properties and dimensions, and (c) the relationships between categories are well established (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As similar instances appear over and over again, the investigator becomes confident that a category has become saturated. To assure saturation has been reached, the investigator looks for cases in the data that do not fit or conform to the developing categories (negative or alternative cases). Searching for alternative cases is an important step in adding the necessary variation and depth to categories. Inclusion of alternative cases assures that categories are based on the widest possible range of data for the purpose of adding complexity to the emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Analyzing for Basic Social Processes

Once concepts and categories began developing, the analyst started looking for social processes. Analyzing for "social process" is an important part of any grounded theory study (Charmaz, 1983). Describing social processes raises the analysis from description to theory. Process occurs around a core category (Glaser, 1978). It is not uncommon to discover several core categories in one analysis. The researcher must decide which is the most important. By asking, "What is the most interesting or puzzling part of the analysis so far?" the researcher can avoid developing obvious or superficial categories as core categories (personal communication Donna Barnes, June, 1993). Strauss and Corbin (1990) recommend that researchers write a "storyline" to assist in describing the core category. The storyline is a type of memo that describes the central phenomena and begins integrating concepts. Once the core category is identified, the researcher asks, "What is going on here?"

Social processes are characterized by the passage of time, sequenced or staged events, and turning points that account for changes over time. Processes link sequences of actions and interactions as they pertain to the management of, control over, or response to, a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). "Process must be accounted for to a degree sufficient to give the reader a sense of the flow of events that occur with the passage of time" (p. 147). Process provides explanatory power for the emerging theory (Fagerhaugh, 1986). To capture

process analytically, one must account for the evolving nature of events by noting why and how action and interaction changed, stayed the same, or regressed and why there was progression of events or what enabled continuity of a line of action or interaction in the face of changing conditions, occurrence of contingencies, and with what consequences. Documenting complex interactional processes requires the researcher to include all the variations of the process in the analysis.

The Discovery Process

Midway through this analysis several core categories were identified: violence consequences, emotional dissociation, unpredictability (later becoming social chaos) and predicting unpredictability. What remained most intriguing and difficult to identify was how women continued to function, day-to-day, within the unpredictable and constantly changing dangerous environment created by their abusive partners. The question to be answered was, "What was happening between the beatings?" This question focused the analysis on developing the core category of "predicting unpredictability" that described processes of living or surviving in dangerous situations. These processes were first described in the early storyline as "walking on eggshells" and "living with danger". Appendix F is the early storyline of "living with danger".

Achieving Credibility and Fittingness

Evaluating Research Design

Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative studies is "a matter of persuasion whereby the scientist is viewed as having made those [interpretive] practices visible and therefore, auditable; it is less a matter of claiming to be right about a phenomena than of having practiced good science" (Sandelowski, 1993, p. 2). The trustworthiness of qualitative studies is established by their completeness and thoroughness. Trustworthiness is evaluated on criteria of auditability, credibility, fittingness (Beck, 1993, Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sandelowski, 1986), and relevancy (Hammersley, 1992).

Auditability.

Auditability addresses issues of consistency in the research. An audit trail allows others to follow the decisions made by the researcher and the turning points in the analysis throughout the various stages of the research process (Beck, 1993). Auditability is important to an investigator in providing the means for that investigator to track the evolving analysis, monitoring turning points in the researcher's thinking, and reconstructing the research process when reporting findings of the study.

Auditability of qualitative research requires a complex collection of coded transcripts, memos, and a research diary (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). In this study, the audit trail consists of coded interview transcripts; memos written as

part of the analysis documenting the evolving theory, categories, and conceptual linkages; and cassette tapes of analysis group meetings. In addition, a research diary was maintained documenting the frustrations, problems, questions, and changes arising from ongoing data collection and analysis and the influences of conversations and meetings with other scientists and scholars concerning battering or methodology.

Credibility.

Credibility refers to how vivid and faithful the description of the phenomena is to the accounts of the phenomena given by the participants (Beck, 1993). Readers, participants, and others should recognize the experience. Major threats to credibility are becoming too distant or too close to the participants so experiences are not explored in enough depth or concepts and theoretical relationships are prematurely closed. Credibility was achieved through verbatim transcription of audio-recorded interviews, searching for alternative or negative cases to add diversity, rich description and use of quotes in the report grounding the findings to the data, working with an ongoing analysis group to prevent premature closure of categories, and the use of member validation.

The researcher was a member of an analysis group that met regularly to analyze and work through specific analytical exercises. The analysis group was an ongoing multi-disciplinary group consisting of three qualitative researchers who had been working together for two years on the members' individual

research projects. Members of the group were given sections of transcripts with specific analytic goals and when they met together each presented their perspectives and analysis of the materials. The members of the analysis group did not function as a "panel of experts" establishing content validity. Instead, their purpose was to suggest alternatives and ask questions of the researcher to prevent premature conclusions or researcher blindness to obvious concepts caused by immersion in the data. The meetings were audio-recorded. It was left to the researcher to decide whether to incorporate or dismiss the feedback because only the researcher who collected the data knew the context of the entire interview.

Member validation was used to discover if participants recognized, understood, and accepted the investigator's description of their experiences (Bloor, 1983). Because of potential participant safety issues, original interview groups were not reconstituted for the member validation. Instead, member validation was modified so that other women meeting the original eligibility requirements were recruited to serve as validation groups. The analysis was presented and the participants were encouraged to compare and contrast their experiences. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed as additional data to refine and modify the analysis (Emerson & Pollner, 1988).

Fittingness.

Fittingness refers to how well the working hypothesis or propositions fit into a context other than the one from which they were generated and whether its audience views the findings as meaningful and applicable to their own experience (Beck,1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was first accomplished by theoretical sampling to assure that the complexity and diversity of the phenomena was represented in the analysis. Sampling focused on exploring certain concepts and categories that had emerged from the analysis. Theoretical representiveness was assured by sampling until categories were saturated and deliberately trying to discount conclusions by searching for alternative or negative cases.

Relevance.

Finally, Hammersley (1992) argues that relevance is a criterion that must be taken into account in any assessment of qualitative research. But the question of "relevance" is dependent on the audience of the research. Hammersley suggests that "importance of the topic" and its "contribution to the literature or practice" are the criteria with which both research and clinical communities should judge the relevance of research. Research directed toward understanding how woman monitor and respond to danger is relevant to both scientific and clinical practices in nursing.

In establishing rigorous designs in qualitative research investigators are warned to use caution not to destroy the art, versatility, and sensitivity that mark qualitative works (Sandelowski, 1993). What has been missing from most discussions of qualitative methodology are the uses of intuition, creative thinking, and "flashes of insight" that come with experience and immersion in the data (May, 1994). These are the unique contribution each individual researcher brings to the analytic process. These characteristics must be nurtured throughout the analysis as will be described later in this chapter.

Evaluating Grounded Theory

Readers of grounded theory should be able to make judgements about the adequacy of the research process and empirical grounding of the study. Evaluation criteria specific to grounded theory studies have been outlined by Corbin and Strauss (1990).

Adequacy of the research process:

1. How was the original sample selected?
2. What major categories emerged?
3. On the basis of what categories did theoretical sampling occur?
4. What were some of the hypothesis pertaining to relationships among categories?
5. How was the core category selected?

Empirical grounding of the study:

1. Are concepts generated and systematically related?
2. Are the categories well developed and conceptually dense?
3. Is there variation built into the theory?
4. Are the broader conditions that affect the phenomena built into its explanation?
5. Has process been taken into account?
6. Do the theoretical findings seem significant and to what extent?

These additional criteria reinforce the credibility and fittingness of a grounded theory study.

Methodological Issues

Participant Protection

Standard safeguards protecting participant confidentiality were used throughout the study. The research protocol was approved by the Committee on Human Research at the University of California, San Francisco (H1990-08177-01). No names were used that could identify participants to transcripts. In the chapters that follow, pseudonyms have been used to personalize excerpts from the transcripts. All dates and references by name to persons or places have been altered to preserve anonymity. The materials of the research, audio-tapes, computer diskettes, and transcripts were stored in locked files in a secured area and only available to the researcher. For women needing assistance after

participating in the study the names and phone numbers of crisis lines, support groups, counselors, and shelter programs were available.

Researching the topic of danger in battered women presented some unique problems in participant protection. The potential of putting participants, who are already living in danger, in greater danger was a major risk of this research. All design considerations and decisions about participant contact and interview locations were made weighing the potential risks to participants.

The primary issue in battered women research is participant and researcher safety. Safety guidelines developed by the Nursing Research Consortium on Violence and Abuse were used to guide investigator/participant interaction (Parker, Ulrich, & Nursing Research Consortium on Violence and Abuse, 1990). These guidelines mandate that the research design protect women from the possibility of retaliatory violence from their partners and that researchers be aware of the potential danger to themselves and other participants in the study. It was assumed that women living in battering relationships were at risk of retaliatory violence by their partners. In addition, women who had recently separated or had left an abusive relationship also presented a risk because of the possibility of being stalked by ex-husbands or boyfriends.

Safety Protocol

Recruiting by advertisement allowed potential participants to contact the investigator when they felt it was safe. An answering machine was used to record incoming calls. A short message introduced the researcher, the name of the study, and asked women to leave a phone number and times when they could be safely contacted. Women's safety was assessed in the screening interview to assure participation would not jeopardize their safety or the safety of the group.

The investigator made the initial screening contact and reviewed with the participant the safest way future contact could be made for notification of group interview times. Contact with participants living in battering relationships was kept to a minimum. Notifying participants of up-coming interviews followed the safety procedures outlined by the woman in the initial interview. The interviews were held at the university's library which provided greater security and anonymity than other community locations.

The research protocol was changed to accommodate individual and telephone interviews for women assessed at too great a risk to participate in the groups. Reasonable attempts to include women from very dangerous relationships was essential because of the research question focusing on women's experiences of danger.

Women were asked to reveal their experiences of violence detailing the intensely private and traumatic moment in their relationships. It is a characteristic of qualitative research that the detail provided by narrative accounts of specific experiences can create potential difficulties in assuring confidentiality of the participants from those reading the transcripts or when using the text in presentations and publications. The experiences shared by women participating in this study could potentially result in the loss of anonymity if not sensitively handled. The sensitivity of some material expressed in the interviews prompted an application for a "Certificate of Confidentiality" to be filed with the Public Health Service. This certificate provides protection of transcripts and identifying information from subpoena or other types of forced disclosure.

One topic threatening confidentiality and trust in the investigator/participant relationship was the legal obligation professionals have to report suspected cases of child abuse. While the interview questions focused exclusively on women's own experiences, it was anticipated that information about the abusive treatment of children might be disclosed. Not only do professionals such as doctors, nurses, and school teachers have an obligation to report suspected cases of child abuse, researchers are also obligated to report present or past cases of abuse (Urquiza, 1991). Participants were cautioned both in the consent process and in the researcher's introductory comments preceding

the interview of the investigator's obligation to report suspected cases of child abuse. They were told that questions concerning children would not be asked in the interview.

The Researcher

Researchers using grounded theory use themselves as both the instrument of data collection and the analyst generating concepts and categories needed for theory construction (Lipson, 1991). It is through the researcher's senses and through the researcher's creative processes that interview data becomes theory. Therefore, the researcher must remain flexible and alert to recognize and elicit data important for the developing theory. The personal qualities of the researcher and the researcher's ability to remain sensitive to the data is called "theoretical sensitivity" (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). "Theoretical sensitivity" is the result of the researcher's personal and professional experience, knowledge of the technical literature, professional socialization, understanding of the world, immersion in the data, and practices the researcher has developed for remaining alert and open to the data. Particularly in research on sensitive and disturbing topics, the researcher must be careful not to become overwhelmed by the data or participants experiences so as not to diminish "theoretical sensitivity".

The data resulting from qualitative interviews is jointly constructed through the interaction of participant and interviewer. Researchers cannot

distance themselves from the participants without losing the richness that sets qualitative data apart. One of the risks in intimately sharing participants' traumatic experiences is the anger, fatigue, frustration, emotional drain, powerlessness, and exhaustion that can occur and obscure the researcher's ability to identify themes and patterns in the data. The emotional toll of research on sensitive topics is often expressed as physical symptoms such as sleep disturbances, distraction, lack of concentration, or headaches (Cowles, 1988; Dunn, 1991). Researchers studying domestic violence and other sensitive topics must incorporate techniques aimed at reducing the emotional toll taken by the intensity of the data. In this study, a maximum of two interviews a week were scheduled as was one way of preventing becoming overwhelmed. Other techniques used by this researcher to prevent fatigue were engaging in regular exercise, writing the personal and emotions responses elicited by the interviews in the research diary, and talking about his emotions and feelings with members of his committee and members of the analysis group. It was also important for the researcher to examine how his personal characteristics influenced the research process.

Self-reflection is important for any researcher using qualitative methodologies. Reflexivity is the researcher's self-examination of how the researcher, the participant, and the research setting influence data collection and analysis (Lamb & Huttlinger, 1989). This is especially important in studies of

violence against women. Like the participants of a study, the researchers exist in historical, social, and gendered contexts that must be understood in order to better understand the analysis. Researchers must be knowledgeable of how their own gender, manner, social position, expectations, history, and education impact their relationships with participants. The research diary provided an excellent medium through which to reflect and explore these issues throughout the study.

The researcher conducting this study is male and represents a position of power not only because of his gender but also because of his affiliation with a major university conducting scientific research. These facts were readily available to participants in the screening interview. During the screening interview, I introduced myself as a doctoral student and nurse interested in and having worked with battered women. I have worked in the area of domestic violence for approximately ten years and have interacted with battered women in both emergency settings and in the community as a public health nurse. In addition, I have worked with health care providers to improve their clinical awareness, assessment, and intervention provided to battered women.

Never having experienced violent relationships I am intrigued by the paradox of violence and fear in intimate relationships that are supposed to provide safety and support. Use of violence by loved ones seemed to be the ultimate violation of trust. The use of violence in society, both sanctioned and unsanctioned, is personally disturbing and frightening. I was also intrigued by

the attitudes of those I worked with had toward battered women. When I started noticing the problem of woman battering in the early 1980's, nurses and other health care providers knew little about woman battering. I was confused by the myths that were very different from my experiences with those women. In addition to working professionally with battered women, I have many women friends who have experienced the violence of battering. In fact, it was during my doctoral study that a good friend was suddenly assaulted by her husband. That event focused my research interest in battering on the concept of danger and its assessment. It caused me to wonder what women in battering relationships knew about their partners that was not known or visible to outsiders and how they determined and lived with the threat of violence. Danger was intriguing because of the period of time women remain in abusive relationships and must survive their partners' potential violence.

Equally important is my theoretical and clinical perspective. Having worked almost exclusively with women throughout my professional life has made me more sensitive to the complexities of women's lives. In addition, my experience as a nurse has sensitized me in a small way to the oppression experienced by women. As a result, I have always visualized women in battering relationships as strong but caught in an impossible situation. I believe individuals make decisions they think are best at the time and I respect their

decisions. Therefore, in my work I seek to understand why things happen and how decisions are made.

It is this philosophy that leads me to valuing qualitative methods of inquiry. In this particular study there are two reasons I chose a qualitative design. First, I seek to understand the perspectives of women experiencing violence. As a man, this is a perspective I can not supply. And as a man I am considered by some to be part of the problem. The second reason is important as it relates to the first. As a man and researcher affiliated with a well known university, I represent a position of power that is often used to speak for others. It is important to hear women's voices.

Of particular concern in this study was the issue of whether women would tell a man about the ongoing violence they experienced by men. Would women call an unknown man and discuss with him the intimate details of their experiences? As I found in the clinical arena, women seemed eager to talk about the violence, being a man willing to listen did not appear to present a problem. It has been much more difficult to be accepted as a man concerned with equality and peace by women's advocates and shelter workers. Participants of this study were supportive and complimentary of a man exploring battering.

It was assumed that women might emphasize or stress different experiences to me than to women interviewers whom they might assume shared certain experiences and backgrounds (DeVault, 1990; Finch, 1984). An

advantage of a man interviewing women is that some experiences might be explained to a man that might otherwise be assumed by the participants to be shared with a woman researcher. Williams and Heikes (1993) found men told male interviewers and men told female interviewers essentially the same stories. However, the telling of the story differed. Men used more sexist language and stereotypes with male interviewers than female interviewers.

Women responding to the advertisements expressed their desire to participate and share with other women through me what they had learned from their experiences. Henderson (1989) found battered women exhibited a strong sense of reciprocity in supporting each other through recovery. Equally important, the women volunteering to be interviewed needed to talk about the violence for themselves. Battered women have difficulty finding an audience that will listen to their intense experiences. Perhaps the interviews provided such an audience.

Interviewing Battered Women

"Research with disempowered groups on a value-laden topic such as violence against women is not only a scientific endeavor it is also an ethical and political act" (Hoff, 1990, p. 252). Failure to recognize the interconnections between the political and scientific nature of research can result in important misunderstandings and misinterpretations of findings. Finch (1984) found it was often easy to get women to talk about their lives to someone who would listen.

Researchers producing work about women have a special responsibility in reporting research findings to anticipate the ways in which the research could be misinterpreted and used in a manner that stereotypes rather than informs women's lives. Researchers have a responsibility to those interviewed not to support stereotypes that further women's oppression.

Because of the historical position of women and the devaluing of women's roles, much of women's experience is not accessible through common qualitative open-ended semi-structured interviews (DeVault, 1990). Many of the daily experiences of women do not easily translate into words so parts of women's lives "disappear" in interviews. Researchers interviewing women must be actively involved in assisting women to access the "taken for granted" and "mundane" activities of everyday life. The researcher must use strategies that listen beyond and around the actual words used.

Standard practices that "smooth out" the participant's speech are one way women's words are distorted (DeVault, 1990). Smoothing the rough parts of speech is a way of discounting and ignoring those parts of women's experiences that are not easily articulated. Therefore, pauses or stumbling over words are important data to include in transcripts of interviews or in fieldnotes. The interviews in this study were transcribed verbatim to preserve subtleties of speech indicative of experiences that eluded description. False starts, tripping

over words, nervous laughs, and pauses have been left in the excerpts used in the following chapters.

Dilemmas of Telling the Story

By telling the stories of violence committed against them by their partners, women were continuing their attempts to make sense of their experiences. Women participating in this study were faced with the dilemma of trying to make comprehensible to others something they did not truly understand themselves. Talking of the violence in the peace and safety offered by the interview made their lives sound all the more unbelievable. There was so much secrecy, emotion, embarrassment, and confusion related to having survived battering that some of the women interviewed had never told or talked about the violence to anyone before participating in this study, not even their therapists. While not the intent of the research, the interviews provided a therapeutic one-time opportunity for some women to begin exploring the violence for themselves with someone they would never see again.

The interview question asked women to detail one experience of danger in their relationship. However, women had difficulty restricting their answers to only one experience of violence. For their answers to make any sense, women had to create a context of the violence by explaining how the relationship developed and could only answer the interview question using several stories of

danger within the relationship. These additional stories were not redirected by the moderator.

Women do not experience battering as a linear process and are unable to talk about the violence in a linear fashion. Likewise, in writing the following findings chapters it was difficult to adequately portray the complexity in the processes. Writing in a logical and coherent manner gives the processes described an artificial linearity that misrepresents their complexity. It is a strength of qualitative research to explore complex nonlinear processes.

A major dilemma faced by women participating in this study was suddenly questioning their complicity in the violence. The stories women told were their reconstructions of the past intended to shed light on the present (Lempert, 1994). At the time of their relationships these women had no frame of reference by which to interpret the violence. However, using the knowledge available to them in the present to interpret their prior experiences, only after living through the violence, caused women to question their long-held beliefs that the violence was unpredictable, irrational, and without warning. For example, women were adamant that there were not warning signs. "If I would have known I could have done something about it" (Martha). But women were able to describe behaviors and actions that warned them of oncoming violence. Telling stories in the present of experiences from the past often made it more difficult for women to understand their own motives and actions because they

superimposed their present understanding of context on those past experiences. What made sense then does not make sense now. Frequently in the interviews, women were left with a blank look on their faces, "I can't explain it." By looking back at the violence in this way women started the analysis with comparisons and reflection. The immediacy of the violence was present in their stories.

Even though two-thirds of the women were out of the violent relationships the immediacy of the violence was still present in their narratives. Many of these women talked of the violence in the present. Women were unable to separate themselves from the violence even after having left their relationships, some as many as five years previous. The findings presented in chapters III and IV were written in the present to reflect the immediacy found in women's narratives of violence.

Another issue faced by women participating in this study was the unreconcilable confusion women experienced because of the disparity between their partner who they had chosen to get involved with and the violence which they had not chosen. Many women depersonalized the violence by referring to "it" instead of referring to the source of the violence, their husbands or boyfriends. So sentences sounded like "It really had just become a matter of when it was going to kill me" (Denise). This response is consistent with the confusion caused by their attraction to their partners and the intense positive and intense negative experiences in the relationship. At the same time women

disliked the violence they continued to be attracted to other aspects of their partners. Having both positive and negative characteristics furthered the disparity and confusion women experienced as they tried to explain why they were attracted to this man or put up with him for so long.

That's hard for me to admit, you know. I, you should think that I would have have the sense to like turn off to him physically, but I didn't, you know. I don't know what that means and its not something I've ever heard another admit too, so (Denise).

There was no resolution possible to these dilemmas in the short time the groups met. It was a limitation of the present research design. One two-hour interview did not allow exploration of women's processes of explaining and understanding the violence. The questions that arose around talking about violence could be more adequately answered over several interviews. It might be possible that seeing other members of the group grapple with the same issues could help women move beyond this problem of understanding their motives and roles in abusive relationships.

Summary

This was a study of women's experiences of danger in battering relationships. Participants were recruited using advertisements in free neighborhood newspapers. Thirty women participated in small group and individual interviews. The transcripts were analyzed using grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory methodology is a inductive theory-building

methodology that generates results grounded in the lived experiences of those interviewed. An essential part of qualitative inquiries included in this chapter was a reflexive examination how the investigator, the participants, and the topic influenced data collection and analysis. In addition, strict procedures were followed to protect participants in this study from the threat of retaliatory violence or loss of confidentiality. The analysis discovered the substantive theory of Predicting Unpredictability. The chapters that follow describe the context of social chaos and violence in which battered women live and introduce the theory of Predicting Unpredictability.

CHAPTER III

IT'S LIKE BEING IN A WHIRLWIND: SOCIAL CHAOS

AS THE CONTEXT OF BATTERING RELATIONSHIPS

You become like hyperreflexive, you know, because everything, anything could be a trigger, anything, and you have no way of knowing at any given time. So, you lose like a sense that your perspective on things has any validity; that the way you view a situation is at all true? Because you're not getting a rational response to something, you know. I think you and I are sitting here talking. Now, if you were to get up and hit me suddenly, then I would have to say that I had misperceived the situation, right? But you're living that way, that's your life, you know. The man that's making love to you is the one who's throwing hot coffee on you, you know. And so you, you, at least for me, I've lost all sense that I am able to adequately assess any situation with which really impairs social function (Denise).

Battered women live day-to-day in a state of social chaos created by their partners' unpredictable behaviors. Nothing can be expected to progress in a consistent or coherent manner. Women living with a battering partner live under the constant threat of violence. In addition to social chaos is the emotional chaos women experience because of the disparity between very positive and very negative aspects in their relationships. Women internalize the chaos and join their partners in blaming themselves for the violence. In response to social and emotional chaos women suppress their feelings and

emotionally distance themselves from their partners. They must concentrate moment-by-moment in order to survive. Women begin doubting their ability to accurately judge situations and feel their ability to distinguish "normal" from "the bizarre" has been impaired. Paradoxically, assessing situations and being keenly aware of subtle changes in their partners is vital for women's survival. Social chaos and the resulting processes of monitoring and responding to their partners slowly isolated women from social contact outside their relationships. This chapter explores the social and emotional chaos that results from living with a battering partner and its effects on women's lives.

Social Chaos

Battered women literally lived in an environment where, "anything can happen" and "nothing was as it appeared to be". It was an impossible situation to socially interact with someone who was constantly redefining and changing the rules of the interaction. Dangerous situations developed suddenly and unexpectedly intensifying the sense of chaos and keeping women focused on their partners. Battering relationships were primarily one-sided. All interactions were planned and based on the abusive partners' emotions and moods. Women's social environments were controlled by their battering partners and were characterized by irrational and constant change. Constant change created an environment where no discernable patterns of behavior were apparent.

Consequently, what women thought were rules guiding interactions with their partners changed minute-by-minute within a single interaction as well as from one interaction to the next. The tone and activities of the relationships were defined by the abusive partner leaving women vulnerable to their partners' inconsistent, often irrational, shifts in moods and behaviors.

Events did not logically or rationally follow one another. For example, trivial matters could elicit acts of "unspeakable violence" which were often immediately followed by intimate activities, as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. But those moods and behaviors could quickly change again.

. . . when the violence came, you know, it was like the explosion part, you know, and maybe it would last for a couple hours or a couple days, you know, whatever, however long it took him to get out of it. And then when he, then when it was over, you know, after he got done, you know, beatin' me for however long, then it was like he was fi-- He was like, for just a split second, you know, or I would think he's a different person, he's okay now. He's just so, just so relieved. He was just so relieved, you know, and almost happy. Sometimes he'd be happy, like "Let's go eat" you know, (laugh) maybe we'll eat for three days and he'd be like this different person. I'd think, "God, he's okay. You know, he's okay and it's gonna be fine." . . . But I didn't feel like goin' to eat. Sometimes I couldn't even walk or move, you know. Sometimes I'd been beaten so badly I couldn't even move, you know, and he'd just be okay. Ahh, you know, but it was a relief, it was a relief for me it was over, just even if it was over for a day. . . . "Okay, let's go eat, you know. Whatever you want, you know. This is great. You're a normal person. Let me just put some clothes on," then if I'm wearin' the wrong thing, you know, even if he didn't tell me what to wear. Like if he tells what to wear, then I know what to wear right, but if he didn't tell me and I just put on the clothes, you know, that he knows I have it, for whatever reason he's-- It sets him off. Then he's mad all over again. So it could be five minutes of bein' okay. It could be two days.

Sometimes after the violence he wanted sex. Jean continues;

Sometimes he'd wanta, you know, have sex. He'd feel great, you know, and I was, (laugh) you know, _____. Or I'd think that, you know, that lots of times that all that physicalness, you know, beating me up would sexually excite him. He was-- He was like a--
- He was also very sexually abusive and I think that part of the violence kind of be, you know, his foreplay, you know. But then here I am sore and beat up and then he wants to, you know, and t--
- And sex with him wasn't like love, it was, you know, another kind of either rape or, you know, some kind of abuse with objects or, you know, really rape'n me holdin' a knife to me or wantin' to tie me up or somethin'.

Wearing the "wrong" clothing, being unable to find the TV Guide or a pair of pants, or exchanging glances on the street with another man could trigger a sudden explosion of violence. Battering men continuously tormented, manipulated, controlled, alternated extremes in intensity, and unpredictably violated social conventions to create a sense of social chaos that kept there wives and girlfriends "off balance". These characteristics were used in combination but will be explored separately in the following sections.

Unpredictability

For women living in battering relationships, their partners' unpredictability was like walking a tight rope wearing a blindfold. Men's unpredictable changes were sudden and extreme prompting comparisons to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. "I mean, he's fine one second, he's hot, he's cold, he's up, he's down, he knocked the hell out of me, he wanted to make love" (Martha).

The concept of unpredictability in these relationships encompassed knowing every interaction carried with it the potential for violence but not every interaction necessarily resulted in violence. Unpredictability was a feeling of vulnerability, knowing the violence would happen again but not knowing when, what would set it off, how severe the it would be, or how long the violence would last. Unpredictability was knowing the potential or imagined severity of the violence based on past experiences, they could be beaten, raped, strangled, or killed by their husband or boyfriend at any moment for any reason. In their relationships with battering men, women were always "walking on eggshells". Many women eventually became resigned to the fact that at some point in the relationship one of them would die because of the violence, most likely themselves.

The physical violence had boundaries. The time being assaulted was short relative to the time anticipating an assault. It was the unpredictability and tormenting that occurred between acts of violence that created tension and the constant possibility that "anything could happen". Unpredictability kept women on edge unable to concentrate on anything but their partners.

Tormenting

The periods between the beatings were filled with continuous tormenting that functioned to keep women "off-balance" and "disoriented". Tormenting consisted of frequent demeaning and degrading rituals as well as threats of

violence against the woman, her friends, or other family members. Because of previous violence women believed such threats were possible even though their battering partners seldom followed through on their threats against friends and family members. Tormenting included such things as not being allowed to sleep or rest, being locked in a closet or denied access to the bathroom, having all the furniture in the house destroyed or clothing shredded, being forced to sit naked on the bed for hours at a time, death threats toward family members, torturing family pets, or being force fed drugs.

One night I woke up and I felt something wet on me and he was throwing roast beef on me. I woke up from a sound sleep and there was roast beef all over me and he was sitting right next to me with a strange look on his face and I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "You put poison in this. I know you did." . . . And, and then he, he put it, he tried to stuff this roast beef down my throat. And said, "Here, you eat it!" And then he left the room and so I was sitting there, you know, shaking, scared to death that he was going to return, and he did! He came back and he had this album photo, a brand new one and they put the paper, the paper picture inside-- He ripped this picture out and he was screaming at me that I put that in there to make, um, make him, make me think-- To make him think that he was having an affair with this woman. I said, "It's not a real picture. It's not a real picture." I was ripping it up showing him it was only paper. (laughs) See, that's what I mean by very irrational (Leslie).

A central characteristic of tormenting was its verbal, mental, and psychological abuse. These forms of violence were as disturbing and destructive to women as the physical beatings. Many women felt the emotional damage to their sense of self from constantly being degraded and demeaned was irreparable, unlike physical bruises that would heal with time. Tormenting was

the essence of emotional and psychological abuse. The terrorizing, humiliating, and depersonalizing effects tormenting had on women further heightened their fear for personal safety. Tormenting was present in all the relationships where there was physical violence. These behaviors caused women to ask what was to become the question that changed their behaviors, "If he is capable of this, what else is he capable of?"

After each experience of bizarre and unexplained tormenting behavior or levels of violence that were incomprehensible, women rationalized that things would be "okay" now. The extreme intensity and severity the violence and tormenting was beyond comprehension. Women simply could not imagine the possibility that the situation could get any worse. But then it did.

You know, I'd think, well just when I'd think, you know, "It couldn't get any worse," it did. I would think, "He can't do this without killin' me," you know. I'd think, "How did I not die? Or how did he strangle me till I passed out and I didn't die?" Like you wake up thinkin' (laugh) _____, you know. You just don't know. So, then you think, "Well, it just can't get any worse," so you feel like its, you're scared but it can't get any worse. There's nothing worse he can do. But then he comes in, shootin' in the house (laughter), you know. Well my God, at least it can't get any worse than this (laugh). You know. You know, that's what I kept thinkin', but I don't feel like any more or less afraid. It's just always the same afraid, but, you know, cause I never would imagine that it would get worse and then it did (Mary).

Without warning, Mary's husband would walk up to her, put a pistol to her head and pull the trigger and then calmly walk away.

Leaving the relationship did not necessarily eliminate the tormenting or end the violence. Men continued to torment and stalk their wives and girlfriends after they had left the relationships. Women received menacing calls, observed their ex-husbands driving through the neighborhood or sitting in the car in front of the house, or would return home to find him in the house. Sometimes even after women had changed their names and moved to distant geographical locations their ex-partners were able to locate them. After finally extricating herself from an extremely violent relationship, changing her name, and moving, Denise found herself being instantly transported her back to the terror of the relationship when she unexpectedly answered the phone to find her ex-husband on the other end of the line.

And then out of the blue he called me, and this was like four months ago. And now I had moved, I had changed my name, I had got an unlisted phone number, um, I wasn't working, I'm still not, so--. And I had, you know, ended all the relationships with anybody who might know both of us, um, and he called me, and I can't tell you what that did to me. Well, you know, I, because it was just, you know, it should have been somebody from the Examiner trying to get me a newspaper and it was like--. And I didn't know who it was and he said, "Well, it's your, you know, ex-husband." I was just like--. Half of me was just so terrified it was just like being right back in that situation; the fear, the dissociation, the passiveness, the need to remain as unprovocative as possible, and the rest of me was so enraged, which I thought was really healthy (laughter). It was just--. I was shaking and I was just like, "What do you want?" And he's like, "Oh, nothing. I just calling you up to see how you're doing, if you're, you know, if you're happy and stuff.

Emotional Intensity

Violent relationships were characterized by their intensity of emotions. There was an overwhelming intensity to every interaction, both positive and negative, as emotions swung from one extreme to the other. Women experienced intense emotional responses to their partners' emotionality, one minute being assaulted and fearing for their lives to the next where they were asked to be cuddly, smothering, or intimate. For some women, this intensity symbolized men's passion and was often one of the characteristics that initially attracted women to these men. "Passion isn't necessarily a pleasant thing, you know. Passion is just, just an intensity of emotions" (Helen). Many of the same behaviors that were examples of men's passion also served to manipulate women's feelings and behaviors. Men played on women's emotions to give them another chance through expensive gifts, promises to change, and pleaded how much they needed their wives or girlfriends. Likewise, men's dramatic and impassioned threats and attempts to kill themselves if they didn't get their way were another example of the extreme emotionality that commanded women's attention.

Manipulation

Many men used threats of self-injury or engaged in high-risk behaviors to manipulate their girlfriends and wives. The consequence of these behaviors was to re-focus women's attention onto their partners' behaviors. Chris described

her boyfriend, "going out on the ledge" to manipulate her. He would climb out the window of his sixth floor apartment and slide along the narrow ledge to her apartment window and let himself in. "And do you think he would be glad to see me (laugh)? He could have died and then he would start telling me what a, you know, terrible person I was." These manipulative behaviors were not always violent but were potentially dangerous for the men engaging in them.

So that was the big fear that having to deal with someone who you never knew what they were gonna do, wasn't always necessarily violent, I mean, he climbed, you know, up an old closed movie house at four in the morning, you know, completely drunk, I thought he was gonna kill himself, that kind of stuff (Jean).

Women felt ambivalent over such events. Nevertheless, they responded to the manipulation because they still loved their partners and did not want to see them injured. Many women responded to the manipulation because of fears they would be responsible for their partners' injury or death. Some feared being accused of causing their partners' injury or death by neighbors or the police who knew of the history of violence in their relationships.

Women's battering partners were very manipulative with other people as well. They were often loved by friends and only their partners knew of their violence.

He could talk his way in and out of anything. I mean, he was very intelligent. He make you believe exactly what he wanted you to believe. He was very manipulative, um, and people loved him. I mean, when I finally came out and said, "Look, he's doing this to me," I was the bad person. Nobody believed it. "There was no way he could be doing this to you. I don't believe it (Martha).

This kind of manipulation turned friends and acquaintances against the women, leaving no one for them to tell about the violence. It re-enforced women's sense that their partners truly controlled their fate in the relationship. Battering men manipulated women into believing and accepting responsibility for the men's behaviors. When trying to get help, women soon discovered their partners could turn the tables so their partners appeared to be the competent ones and the women appeared to be the ones who were out of control.

Social chaos created an unpredictable and irrational environment where nothing could be counted on or anticipated. Women lived minute-to-minute. There were no rules or norms guiding interactions in these relationships. Expectations of appropriate conduct were constantly being violated. Women never knew how their partners were going to respond along a continuum from no reaction, social embarrassment, or degradation to extreme and life-threatening violence. Women's worlds began closing in around them from the isolating effects of the chaos and their need to closely watch their partners. Much like tunnel vision, women found themselves focusing almost exclusively on their partners. Social chaos lead to emotional chaos as women became more isolated and were unable to make sense of the extreme disparity between the positive and negative aspects of the relationship. Women began doubting themselves and their ability to evaluate reality.

Emotional Chaos

It's, uh, it's a very suicidal, you know, sort of thing, but um, it just really involves dissociation, total dissociation from your feelings, and uh, you operate on a very much, "Just let me survive this from minute-to-minute." I know for myself I became very convinced that it was going to be a fatal situation. It was not a survivable situation. And it really had just become a matter of when it was going to kill me (Denise).

Despite their feeling of hopelessness, women had to continue functioning in the world. Social and emotional chaos shattered women's ability to trust their perceptions of the world. Battering partners had taken away the basic elements individuals rely upon in close relationships; reliability, consistency, kindness, and caring. Instead, nothing could be counted on, nothing was as it appeared. Social chaos caused women to question their perceptions. Women's experience of social chaos was emotional chaos. The ensuing emotional chaos caused women to question their own perceptions of reality. The internal confusion was intensified by batterers frequent and sudden shifts in emotion, from violent to cuddly. "You lose your perspective" (Denise).

Contextual Shifts

Women faced an impossible situation interacting with someone who was continually redefining the nature of the interaction. Women were confused and unsure how to respond to the conflicting messages they received from their partners.

It seemed like when I was with him, "Get away from me you no good bitch, you no good bitch. Get away from me." As soon as I

got away from him it's like, "I have to have her back," to everybody, you know, "I have to have her back." It's like, you know, he's like punching me, tellin' me to get away from him, I get away from him, then he's-- I'm the only woman he wants (Beverly).

The contradictory messages given by battering men represented contextual shifts that women were unable to reconcile. Monique saw how nice her boyfriend was sticking up for children and other women. "He was always sticking up for the little guy." But she was stunned when he started beating her and was even more surprised after the beatings to find that, "he would still put down another man for beating a woman, but it was okay when it was him. He had a different set of rules." Many women said their partners would "bend over backwards" for other people. They were considerate and kind to friends and relatives. Women felt isolated and alone when they realized they were the only victims of their partners' violence. Many women concluded that it must be something must be wrong with them that caused their partners to become so violent toward them.

Compounding woman's confusion in the midst of the violence were the positive experiences they had with their partners. For many women the relationship was not always bad.

Yeah, and even up till the very end there would be occasional days where it would be like I'd come home from work and he'd of cleaned the apartment and gone grocery shopping and cooked dinner and, you know, chilled the wine and--. Oddly enough we never had a bad sex life. I mean, even when all of this was going on it never impaired, I mean, there was never a time that like I tur-- . . . So even up to the end we would have a good sex life and for me that was very important (Denise).

It was common that episodes of violence were followed by periods of being showered with gifts, profuse apologies, and as one woman said, "The best vacations I ever had were after the violence." It was during these periods that women saw dramatic changes in their partners and believed things were improving or that their partners could change. They convinced themselves the relationship could work and that it was not as bad as they had thought. But the hope was short-lived.

He'd bring flowers, he'd bring candy, he'd take you out and buy you things. The best--. I mean, the kind of man that any woman would want. I mean, all women want men that's gonna, you know, bring them something, take them out, you know, show 'em off, and he destroyed all of that. It's like he'd bring you up and he'd destroy it all (Martha).

Never knowing what to believe, having strong feelings but being unable to express them, and being attracted to a man and at the same time hating him left women questioning their judgement and doubting their ability to assess and understand what was going on around them.

Distrusting Themselves

Women no longer trusted their own perceptions or their ability to assess situations because of the emotional chaos they felt. During several interviews women paused in the middle of a story to ask the interviewer, "Is that normal?" For example, Carol asked if it was normal that her husband went to a concert instead of being with her in the hospital the night before her surgery (which was the result of having an exercise bike thrown on top of her three times during the

prior month). ". . . I don't know is that normal? I mean, would a normal husband have come that night?" The barrage of insults, violence, and illogical behaviors left women unable to make any sense of their situations, unable to differentiate normal and bizarre behaviors.

What you see is not how things are, what you do has no direct correlation to how people are going to react to you, you can't protect yourself and behave in a way that you can count on other people's reactions. So to this day I, um, am almost completely asocial. You know, I have no ability to form relationships or friendships or anything of any kind. Um, I just don't know, you know, have no sense of myself functioning in the world cause it's really terrifying. You know. Sometimes I feel like I want to run to a mirror to look to see if I'm still there, but I can't stand to look at myself (Denise).

Women's sense of order and explanation no longer made sense in their reality of violence and abuse where social conventions were continuously being broken, behaviors were illogical and unpredictable, and there were no consistent patterns of behavior.

Paradoxically, women distrusted themselves and yet had to trust their perceptions when monitoring their partners. Decisions influencing their survival were based on their perceptions and assessments they made of their partners. Women had to be able to interpret and make sense of their partners' moods and behaviors. As Monique described in the following passage, an invitation by her husband to join him on the couch could really be an invitation to get hit.

. . . he'd want me to come sit down but he would try to hit me so that if I came to him I would be hit Like I'm gonna go walk

to you when you're doing this and I'm gonna sit next to you and get all loving, no.

While a woman's ability to figure out what would happen next was being constantly impaired; the most important activity of a woman's life was trying to figure out what was going to happen next. The outcome of a situation for the woman was dependent on how well she observed things, sensed things, and learned from past experiences.

Women developed sophisticated knowledge of their partners behavioral patterns and responses. In addition, women were aware of their own reactions to threats of violence. Intimate knowledge of partners' behaviors and patterns did not necessarily prevent or reduce the occurrence of violence because battering men were continually and unpredictably redefining the rules of conduct in the relationship. But this did not mean women could stop assessing, on the contrary, the more unpredictable the behaviors the more intense and constant monitoring processes had to be to survive. Processes of monitoring and responding to cues in unpredictable and potentially lethal environments is the topic of the next chapter. Women had to learn to function within the limitations imposed by social and emotional chaos. To effectively concentrate on their partners, women had to mask their emotions, emotionally dissociate from their partners, assume more responsibility, and further isolate themselves.

Navigating the Maze

"I mean, here was the hoop and it had fire around it and I was supposed to jump through and, God damn it, I tried" (Anna). Women tried to meet the extreme demands and expectations of roles set by their battering partners. But as much as women tried to rationalize the violence and change themselves to "improve" the relationship, it was never enough. These demands and expectations created an impossible maze for women to navigate.

Masking their emotions and emotionally dissociating from their partners were essential for normal functioning within the chaotic environment created by battering partners. Women had to maintain focus on their partners and neither had the time nor could afford to be distracted by their own emotional responses or confusion. The chaos produced by violence and abuse was so overwhelming that without distancing herself from it, a woman could not deal with the moment-by-moment details needed to survive. The more volatile their partners, the more women masked and suppressed their emotions. Women suppressed and distanced themselves from their feelings so they could continue monitoring and responding to their partners cues.

Masking Emotions

Women learned to mask their emotions. The need to mask or hide ones emotions resulted because of the intensity of the "emotional roller coaster" ride. Some women became completely numb to their emotions.

I had no feelings. I mean, I had just repressed my feelings so much, I had no feelings: no love, no anger, no remorse, no anything. I just was like a dead person. You know? Uh--. Because that's what you do to protect yourself, you know. You hide and suppress those feelings (Leslie).

But most women found they had intense feelings of anger, rage, and fear that they had to suppress.

Emotional responses to the extreme swings in partners' moods had to be suppressed because they were often interpreted as provocative and had the potential of escalating the violence. There were no correct responses, only responses that escalated or de-escalated the potential for violence. Responding with anger or rage to their partners absurd behaviors ensured an escalation of violence. Battering men closely watched women's expressions of happiness, sadness, or disapproval and responded with further tormenting, manipulation, or violence. Denise described the emotional control necessary to survive walking into her apartment after her partner had destroyed everything she owned. Every dish, piece of furniture, book and picture was smashed, and every piece of clothing had been cut into small pieces. All she had left were the clothes she was wearing.

. . . there's a kind of incredible rage to walking in and seeing everything that you own, everything that even vaguely relates to you, having such hatred vented on, you know, it makes a real impact on you. . . . Um, things like that had become so commonplace, you know, I was just so stunned on such an ongoing basis. You know, intellectually you're just so appalled that you're living in such a situation and you hate yourself so much for having gotten in the situation and, you know, I really felt like I had

forfeited my entire life, that there was nothing that was going to happen after that and that's continued to be a problem for me. You know, that this was just where my life was gonna end. And, um--(long pause) It's a very schizophrenic thing because when you're not actually involved in the violence, and I never was violent in return because I, he was quite a bit larger and stronger than I was, and it just, you know, there's just no way that it wouldn't have brought greater violence down on me.

Masking emotions was one way of exercising some control over unpredictable and potentially volatile situations. It was an important survival mechanism in an atmosphere where any response could lead to life-threatening levels of violence. Women exercised extreme control over themselves, keeping their composure during episodes of public humiliation, never letting the batterers see their fear, and refusing to be reduced to "his level" by responding to their immediate desires to strike-out with more violence.

I thought, "I almost killed him, you know, because of a hamburger?" You know, and I thought, "That's--. I will never ever let anybody ever make me lose my temper again. I'll never do that again." I almost killed a person because of a silly argument over a silly hamburger. That's what he wanted me to--. You know. So from that point on I've become very extremely disciplined and self-controlled. I kept all of my emotions inside, pent up, inside. When--. I never showed anger, I never showed happiness, I never showed, you know, uh, any of my emotions. On the outside I was just calm all the time (Leslie).

Constantly being exposed to wild fluctuations in mood and intensity had a numbing effect as the extreme and bizarre became commonplace.

It's kind of like I'm so used to being nervous it's like, sometimes it's like I'm numb. . . . It's like dog biting your leg for so long it's just like after a while the pain just kind of goes away, you know, it's still there (Beverly).

Dissociating and Compartmentalizing Emotions

Women found themselves dissociating and compartmentalizing their extreme and disparate experiences with their partners. Dissociating and compartmentalizing were closely related. Women repeatedly used the words "dissociated" or "dissociating" in the interviews to mean they emotionally disengaged or emotionally distanced themselves from their batterers and from their feeling about him. One woman described her continued relationship with a battering partner as nothing more than a "business arrangement". Masking and dissociating differed in that masking involved hiding, suppressing, and controlling the expression of emotions while dissociating involved gaining emotional distance from their partners so the meaning of their relationship with their partner changed. This use of "dissociating" differs from the psychiatric definition where individuals dissociate from themselves.

Like dissociating, compartmentalizing was a strategy which emotionally distanced women from their partners. Compartmentalizing allowed women to experience the various aspects of the relationship isolated from one another. Being able to compartmentalize one experience from the other or one moment from the next enabled women to experience the intensity of the good times disconnected from the intensity of the abuse. Compartmentalization resulted from the bizarre contradictions within the relationship. It could be seen in

women's repeated references to their partners as two different people, "Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde".

Emotionally the relationships were asymmetrical. The only person in the relationship who was permitted to express his emotions was the battering man. Battering men acted out every emotion while women were allowed a very narrow controlled range of responses. Dissociating and compartmentalizing aspects of the relationship were essential if women were to continue intensely watching and anticipating their partners' behaviors. Occupying every minute with monitoring the battering partners' behaviors left women little time for reflection or perspective on their relationships. Distancing themselves from their emotions and compartmentalizing disparate experiences allowed women to control themselves in a way that permitted them to continue closely watching their partners. In doing so, women often saw the violence as isolated events and themselves as unfortunate by-standers rather than the intentional targets of the violence.

The only time that it would make any sense to me to be with this person in a relationship would be to just not even think about any of the horrible things. So, to get by day-to-day you just, you know, you don't even think in those terms. . . . that's the only way I could survive. If I, if-- The minute I jump out of denial I get really upset and, you know, I torture myself. You know, it's just like, "What am I doing here?" And then I go back into that comfortable space where, you know, everything isn't as bad as I think it is right now. So, as long as the times were good, then the denial really, you know, would give you this false impression that, 'Okay, it'll get better. I can live with this.' (Jean).

Masking and dissociating reduced the danger to women by allowing them to concentrate on their partners so they could manipulate his behaviors. But these strategies also exposed women to greater levels of danger by distancing them from their perceptions of the insanity in such relationships.

Accepting Responsibility

Most of the women shouldered all of the household responsibilities. Women quietly took care of the finances, child care, cooking, cleaning, and communication with other family members in an attempt to eliminate these often volatile areas of family life.

I felt that I had to get the dishes done right after dinner so the kitchen was cleaned up, I felt that the laundry had to be done. He didn't have to do anything. He didn't do laundry, he didn't do housework, he didn't do yard work, nothing. And when he went to work I laid out his clothes when the kids were little and I did marketing research. While the kids were little and, you know, and he didn't have to pay a bill. I had to make due on his salary, my salary, and I had to perform for his parents and it had to be just so (Anna).

Managing the family was as much a strategy to prevent violence as to take care of the family's essential needs. Managing the household was done in the midst of abusive partners spending the rent money on drugs, breaking the dishes and furniture, and throwing food throughout the house. Often women were required to do this on an extreme budget. Women were able to quietly manage the family while constantly monitoring their partners.

Accepting more responsibility for the relationship created additional tension by putting women were in a position to be blamed when things did not turn out as desired or criticized and abused for "not doing things properly".

. . . that way any of the decisions that, like on the weekends or anything, are pretty much left up to me because that way if anything goes wrong he can always say, "Well, you know, it's what you wanted." He will not make a decision, a social decision at all, because then there's a tremendous amount of blame if anything goes wrong. Like at Christmas or, or the holidays that, you know, he does nothing, you know, so that really I am just completely responsible for everything that goes right or wrong. Which I think takes away a lot of, uh, pleasure for me because I'm always worried that, "If this doesn't go right, then I'm gonna hear about," but yet he won't plan anything. But, I don't always know what's gonna lead up to something (Carol).

Women were constantly being told they were to blame for the violence because they never did things right, they were stupid, and they were failures as wives, mothers, and partners. Women accepted responsibility for the violence, in part because no other explanation made sense, and tried to follow what they perceived were their partners' suggestions. But when they did as they were told the consequences were still negative. Again they were told they had not done it right or that they should have done it this way or that way. And when women tried to correct "their error", they were again accused of doing it wrong. Women became disoriented, secretive, and isolated because of the contradictory messages.

Life of Secrecy

"You don't want other people to know about your dirty laundry so you try and hide it to the best of your ability" (Lisa). The violence was kept secret because of the shame and embarrassment women felt after being assaulted by one's lover and companion. Women were also responding to the cultural expectations and myths about family life where they were held responsible for keeping the family together. The violence symbolized their failure as women. Friends, neighbors, even the police ignored or did not take the violence seriously and blamed the women for provoking their partners. Women often accepted responsibility for the violence after being manipulated by their partners into believing they had done something wrong. Even if others knew about the violence women believed there was little anyone could do to help.

And you find out very quickly that even if you do tell, nothing can happen except bad things from it. You know. There isn't anybody who can step in and fix the situation, but they can sure as hell intervene and make it a lot worse for you (Denise).

Keeping the violence secret provided some protection against more violence. Battering men often told their wives and girlfriends they would be beaten if they ever told anyone of the violence. Keeping the violence secret prevented others from intervening and making matters worse. Ironically keeping the violence secret also kept women more isolated and ultimately allowed the violence to continue unquestioned.

Battered women's social relationships were based on lies and deceit.

Families, husbands, boyfriends, and relationships are often the topics of conversation in work, family, and social gatherings. At social functions women pretended they had normal relationships even when only hours before they had been assaulted. Women invented elaborate stories excusing themselves from family gatherings or explaining their injuries without divulging the secret of violence. Visible cuts and bruises were hidden by wearing dark glasses and make-up.

. . . there's a lot of secrecy. You find that you have to begin to lie and conceal everything from you physical self because the marks of abuse are very obvious to why you can't be present for real simple things like family, birthdays or Christmas, or stuff like that. Uh, why you can't leave the house (Denise).

The more stories women invented to cover the violence the worse they felt about themselves. Stories were often fabricated because of the disbelief expressed by others who they had told. "You do tell someone and then they're horrified, you know. And you're thinkin', 'This isn't too bad.' You're thinkin', 'This is nothin'.' If you only knew" (Beverly). Secrecy did not allow women the opportunity to bond or be honest with anyone outside their relationship with their partners and therefore, they were isolated from experiencing close supportive friendships.

Because of their partners' manipulative behaviors and their seemingly normal behavior around other people, friends and relatives often did not believe

women even when they were told of the violence. Other people typically asked what had she done to set him off. Even women's friends blamed them for the violence. Those friends who did not openly blame the woman for the violence often responded with disbelief, "why did she tolerate his abuse" and "why didn't she leave?" Most women felt they received little support from others, instead they only received criticism and judgement. Soon they stopped telling anyone of the violence. Women stopped seeing friends who they felt had been judgmental after hearing of the violence. The following excerpt is from an interview where Mary and Jean were discussing how they dealt with friends responses when learning of the violence.

(Mary): A lot of my friends blamed me, openly blamed me, "Why do you let him do this?". . . You know, "What are you doing to make him do this? You must be this, a bitch." And these were my friends. They just were people that he never knew before, never were his friends. A lot of my friends were really angry with me and I lost a lot of friends. I felt like I had a lot of friends and I lost them.

(Jean): Well I kissed a few friends off over this one too, you know. Well, I did, cause I got tired of hearin' 'em, you know. I mean, you're only gonna make a move when you make a move anyway, when you're ready. . . . But the judgmental bullshit, I couldn't handle any more. It's hard enough getting through all that stuff.

Some friends abruptly ended women's efforts to talk about the violence by saying, "I don't want to hear about it". Many women also felt they could not talk to family members about the violence because of a family history of abuse or alcoholism or long-standing child-parent conflicts. For women already feeling

vulnerable, judgmental responses such as those above made women feel, "like low-lives". Judgmental or accusatory responses by friends and others only served to isolate woman further. Women felt they were being judged in a situation they had little control over. Isolating themselves from others because of lying about the violence or feeling judged was a more common form of isolation in this sample of women than the isolation resulting from being relocated or not being allowed to work, attend school, or go to church. Those friends and family members who were supportive became an important resource for women.

Most women found they had to tell at least one person about the violence, mostly for reasons of protection. There were a small number of friends women could trust and who remained available to them if they needed someone to talk to or a place of refuge in the middle of the night.

I had a friend that was supportive and was always there, you know, and she's still my friend and she would be like, you know, "I know that he hits you. I know that this happens," but never, never said anything to me, never said, "You have to do this, you have to do that." She's always there for me, you know. Here's a--. She gave me a key to her house. I can go there any time, um, no matter how beat up I was. I mean, I I had a hard time tellin' people, you know, and really talkin' about it. You know, she could talk about it to me and then I could talk about it to her (Beverly).

Many women also told selected co-workers because the injuries were more difficult to hide from people women saw on a daily basis. But even when they were supported, women felt compelled to make-up stories covering-up or minimizing the violence.

Women worried about the safety of their friends, acquaintances, and co-workers. Battering men were jealous and frequently accused their wives and girlfriends of having affairs with acquaintances, co-workers, or classmates. The men often accused their partners of being lesbian because they were talking to other women friends. Such confrontations often escalated to violence. Women feared what might happen if their partners saw them socializing with others. One woman's husband unexpectedly showed up at school to "meet" all her friends. Again women found themselves limiting their contact with classmates and co-workers without specifically telling them of the potential for violence. They would discourage their friends or classmates from calling or stopping by the house because of the potential danger. "I just tell them, 'Don't call me', you know, 'I'll talk to you in school'" (Lisa).

There was a lot of frustration and pain linked to repeatedly having to lie and pretend. "I felt like an idiot you know. People know. That's the joke. I mean everybody can look at you and know you're hit" (Jean). For others, keeping the secret bottled up inside deepened their hopelessness. The intensity of the violence and the isolation of having no one to tell left some women few alternatives.

. . . I can't talk to my parents, I can't--. I certainly can't talk to my daughter, she's too young, I can't talk to people I work with and I can't talk to him about it so I tried to kill myself (Lena).

Keeping the violence secret actually increased the level of danger women experienced. Women inadvertently assisted in their own isolation, collapsed potential supportive structures around them, and kept themselves dependent on their abusive partners.

Isolated Social Worlds

Social chaos focused and continually re-focussed women's attention to their partners. Women began searching for patterns, clues, and warning signs in their partners' behaviors in hopes of being able to avert dangerous situations and imminent violence. Social chaos and the resulting processes of monitoring and responding to their partners' behaviors slowly isolated women from outside social contact. This is not to say that women did not seek help. They frequently called the police and visited hospitals and clinics. But mostly women's time and energy was focused on monitoring their partners in hopes of minimizing the chaos and surviving the violence.

Monitoring battering partners differed from the routine daily monitoring of other people and situations because the one-sided nature of the interaction. The batterer defined and controlled all social situations. Over time, social chaos became women's normative generalized world view. Life was unpredictable, dangerous, unreliable, and untrustable. "It was so all encompassing, you know, it affected every part of my life, that it had basically become my frame of reference" (Denise).

Women found their only source of information about themselves and their relationships were the distorted and conflictual messages they received from their partners. They relied on monitoring their partners for behavioral indicators to foresee oncoming violence and minimize the chaos, but the chaos never subsided. Women responded to increasing chaos by shifting into "survival mode", explained by one woman as living minute-by-minute. As their relationships became more chaotic, women responded by more closely monitoring their partners and in doing so became more dependent on their partners' perceptions. And the more women focused on their partners in order to survive, the more distant they became from themselves and others.

Summary

Battered women live in a context of social and emotional chaos created by their partners' unpredictable, irrational, and extreme swings of moods and behaviors. Nothing could be counted on. The rules of interaction were defined and suddenly re-defined by the battering partner. This social chaos shattered women's ability to trust their perceptions. Battering partners eliminated what individuals count on in close relationships, reliability and consistency. Women experienced the emotional chaos of battering men who were one minute loving and cuddling and the next minute abusive and violent. Women never knew what

to believe. Add the confusion, being attracted to a man at the same time hating him.

Women responded to the chaos by emotionally withdrawing from their partners and masking and hiding their emotions as a means of protecting themselves. They could not be distracted by their outrage nor could they appear provocative without risking escalation of the violence. The more women concentrated on their partners the more isolated they became. As women became more isolated their only source of information about themselves and the relationship was the distorted messages they received from their partners. Women's attempts to make sense of the chaos often ended in blaming themselves and doubting their abilities to assess reality and differentiate the normal from the bizarre.

Within this context of social and emotional chaos, women developed sophisticated ways of monitoring and responding to cues of their partners' impending violence. The following chapter describes Predicting Unpredictability, a theory for understanding women's processes of monitoring and responding to danger in their relationships with battering men.

CHAPTER IV

PREDICTING UNPREDICTABILITY: PROCESSES OF
MONITORING AND RESPONDING TO
THREATS OF DANGER

Overview of the Processes

The theory of Predicting Unpredictability consists of simultaneous processes of monitoring and responding to threats of danger. The goal of processes of Predicting Unpredictability is to contain the escalating potential for violence. As was discussed in the previous chapter, episodes of violence happen suddenly and unpredictably. The ability to predict unpredictability set into motion various processes of delaying tactics, harm reduction, and protection women used to provide temporary or fleeting relief but usually did not result in the cessation of violence. In the context of violence and social chaos where women never knew what was going to happen next, predicting was an attempt to stay one step ahead of their partners. These processes also had the potentially negative or reverse effects of sometimes escalating the violence.

Women monitored verbal and nonverbal changes in their partners' moods and behaviors and modified their own behaviors accordingly. Monitoring

provided the only knowledge women had of the minute-to-minute changes in their partners. Monitoring warning signs, anticipating triggering events, and responding to actual and potential threats of escalating violence, like the rules of the relationship, changed moment by moment. Because these processes were immediate, indeterminate, interactive, and dynamic women were required to simultaneously monitor and respond to their partners. The rules of conduct in the relationship were erratic and constantly changing, trivial matters often triggered illogical and disproportional violent responses. Behaviors that one time elicited a violent response another time went unnoticed. Women altered their responding strategies quickly, constructing new responses to the constantly changing cues and behaviors they were monitoring in their partners.

If a woman were assaulted did that mean she misinterpreted the warning signs? Should time and practice have improved women's abilities to identify and respond to danger thereby allowing them to avoid being battered? The interviewees described the futility of trying to watch for warning signs and guess their meanings in hopes of changing the outcome. Women perceived they would be hit regardless of what they did, "if it's going to happen, it's going to happen" (Rosa).

Women were unable to evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions in delaying or reducing the violence. Battering men were constantly changing the rules in the relationships which left women always trying to identify new

patterns. Monitoring and predicting experience did not necessarily prevent battering because the rules were constantly changing. Because of battering men's unpredictability, women could not be sure that any changes in behavior were the result of their interventions or just another manifestation of their partners' unpredictable behaviors. It remained an unexplained phenomena that despite perceptions of little control over the violence women continued engaging in processes of Predicting Unpredictability.

By monitoring their partners, women identified certain behavior patterns that were associated with an increasing risk of violence. With experience, these patterns of behaviors became warning signs. For example, one woman learned that her partner's drinking was followed by degrading sexual rituals and rape. Women proactively responded to their perceptions of danger rather than to the violence itself. Predicting Unpredictability required that women learn the signs indicating possible changes in their partners' moods and behaviors. What remained problematic was monitoring warning signs in the context of social and emotional chaos where there were no consistency, reliability, or predictable associations between behaviors and actions.

Abusive men's moods and behaviors changed abruptly and unpredictably becoming suddenly dangerous for their partners. These sudden changes were illogical and irrational. Women struggled to logically explain why their partner had suddenly changed from "Dr. Jekyll" to "Mr. Hyde". The speed of the change

left women stunned with little time to respond as they struggled to determine what to do next.

We can go through the cycle, a day, every five minutes. I mean five minutes of good sex and lovey dovey and then ten minutes later he's pissed off and then five more minutes later it's back to the good stuff, and it's like, we went through one day when it was like that. . . . It was nerve wracking cause it's like every time I turned over on the bed, we were sleeping, I didn't know if he was happy or mad and, you know (Monique).

As the frequency and severity of the violence escalated, processes of predicting became more important for women's survival. Predicting required women to stay in close physical proximity to their partners, watching for any signs indicating they were becoming agitated or dangerous. Anything might set off an attack, Kelly explained, "he couldn't find a pair of pants he paid a lot of money for". However, being in such close proximity increased the danger for women by putting them within "striking distance" of their partners.

As the level of unpredictability increased, women redefined how they interacted, "Well, the first rule is trust nothing ever, you know, because nothing is as it seems it is" (Denise). In response to increasing unpredictability, processes of Predicting Unpredictability consumed women's day-to-day lives causing them to shift into what one woman called, "survival mode". In survival mode women concentrated on the moment, completely absorbed in monitoring and responding to their partners.

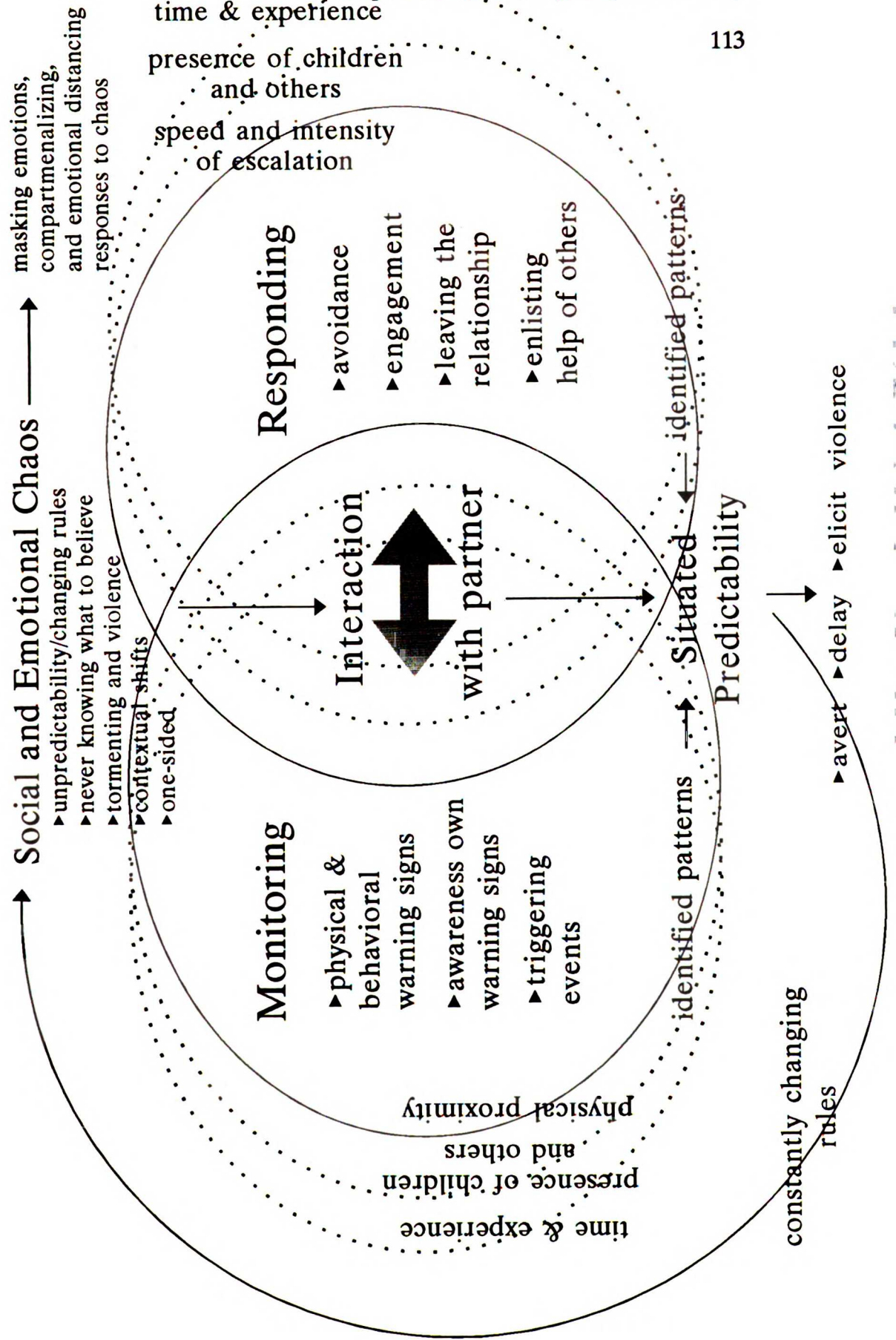
Processes of Predicting Unpredictability were nonprogressive simultaneous processes that required women to repeatedly engaged in the same set of interactions. Nonprogressive processes have no definable sequential steps or phases are still considered processes because the interactions are goal oriented (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The goal of reducing or maintaining the level of danger in the face of constantly changing demands and living conditions required continual adjustments that shaped the processes of Predicting Unpredictability. Women continually engaged in predicting processes despite the fact they felt their actions had little effect on the goal of reducing the violence. Women interviewed in this study expressed their frustration that despite attempts to predict unpredictability they had little control over the violence, it ". . . could happen at any time, at any moment, for any reason" (Martha).

In summary, Predicting Unpredictability were simultaneous processes of monitoring and responding to abusive partners' cues of impending violence within the context of social and emotional chaos. Women in battering relationships identified specific behaviors to monitor and developed sophisticated ways of responding within the severely restricted boundaries of their relationships. The goal was to delay or avert the inevitability of violence. Women had few criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of their monitoring and responding strategies. There was no way of knowing whether changes in their

partners' behaviors were the result of women's specific responses or the result of their partners' unpredictability.

Processes of Predicting Unpredictability were dynamic, indeterminate, non-linear. Figure 4.1 illustrates the major concepts and their relationships to the theory of Predicting Unpredictability. The model is represented by overlapping concentric circles that emphasize the simultaneous, circular, and ongoing nature of monitoring and responding to chaos. On the outside of the circles are the conditions which enhance women's processes of predicting. Processes of monitoring and responding provided situated predictability but because the rules in the relationship could change at any moment predictability was never certain. The concepts and supporting excerpts from the data are presented below. This chapter outlines the characteristics of monitoring and responding to battering partners' cues of potential violence. It begins by examining the role of women's previous experiences with abuse in the processes of predicting.

Figure 4.1: Predicting Unpredictability: A Theory of Women's Processes of Monitoring and Responding to the Danger of Violence



Previous Experiences with Violence

There were three sources of information about unpredictability that women brought into their relationships. The first was comprised of women's experiences in their families of origin and their relationships as children with their parents. The second were experiences women brought from previous abusive adult relationship with men. And third was women's knowledge of their partners' previous relationships with women.

Women learned to accept and expect extreme, sudden, and unpredictable changes in people's behavior based on experiences in their families of origin. Women often compared characteristics of their abusive partners to experiences they had with their fathers while growing up. They often described growing up in chaotic families where parents' behaviors were unpredictable.

I grew up in a situation where, um, both my parents were very severe manic depressives, I grew up with the accepted norm that nobody at any moment could be trusted to behave in a given way. That any time, somebody, for no reason, would explode. This was how people lived. And it's a terrible thing to grow with as a child but it also made me very, what, socialized or accustomed or something to slip into a relationship where that behavior, you know, was manifesting itself. And I have to look back at it now and say that that must have been part of the reason I accepted the strangeness of the situation because everything I had always lived in had been, you know, what you see is not how things are, what you do has no direct correlation to how people are going to react to you, you can't protect yourself and behave in a way that you can count on other people's reactions (Denise).

As children growing up in chaotic families, most women did not learn specific warning signs that could be used in their adult relationships. Instead,

they learned to accept unpredictable patterns of behavior as normal. These childhood experiences contributed to many women having strained relationships that caused them to leave home at a young age and isolate themselves from their families. Once grown and forming their own adult relationships, women were accustomed to extremes in behavior and did not consider them to be warning signs of potentially abusive partners. What women learned from their childhood family experiences was to adapt to the unpredictable, often illogical behaviors whatever they were.

Although childhood family experiences and dynamics taught women to accept and adapt to social chaos, previous abusive adult relationships and the duration of those relationships were more important in learning predicting processes. Women's abilities to identify potentially abusive behaviors became apparent as the interviewees began discussing important characteristics of new relationships. Lori described being more sensitive to verbal cues, "I noticed a few verbal abuses but it's, um, I speak up right away and now I notice it right away." Based on what they had learned from previous relationships, women assessed men they met using a list of characteristics they carried in their heads. Woman called this list "the test".

"The test" was a subjective measure of potential abusiveness generalized from women's own individual experiences. Women who had escaped violent relationships faced the difficulty of identifying potentially abusive men before

getting involved in new relationships with them. "The test" consisted of carefully observing men's behaviors. For example, how men reacted to stress, related to children, and the quality of their relationships with both their mothers and other women.

Whenever I'd listen to people speak, mostly men, you know, if I hear them degrading their mother, their sisters, their women at the office, you know, women friends, anybody. . . . For me, that's a clue that this guy doesn't like women and, you know, he's capable of whatever. But to me that's a really big clue that if they're degrading any type of women, that they're not gonna respect you. Even though they're friendly to you, they're nice, they're, you know, all these other things, that if they don't respect other women, they're not gonna respect you. You're a woman none the less, regardless. So, I mean, that's a real big key (Lena).

The test could also be more direct or confrontive. One woman intentionally started a discussion about religion and beliefs to see how a new male friend would react.

I would throw out stuff that I know he totally disbelieved in. I mean, I knew it but that was just my way, you know, to see what kind of reaction I'd get . . . when it was all over and done with he still had his opinion, I still had mine, his face did not get all contorted (Martha).

Women were frustrated that men's previous histories of violence were not available to them. Even during legal proceedings, previous arrests and convictions related to their partners' violence were not admitted. While dating, women found many men appeared kind and gentle, giving no indication that they were violent. Women discovered only after entering into a relationship and after being beaten themselves that their partners had beaten previous ex-girlfriends.

Some women knew while dating that their boyfriends had been involved in "street fights", but never expected the violence would be turned toward themselves. A smaller number of women married despite the threats and intimidation received from their potential partners. In these cases, men's threats of suicide, jealousy, possessiveness or use of violence was often interpreted by women as passion.

Monitoring the Warning Signs

Processes of predicting required monitoring and familiarity with one's partner. The behaviors and responses of battering partners differed greatly in private and in public settings creating two differing sets of conditions. This required women to become familiar with dual patterns of behavior. Women learned to identify subtle yet distinct changes in mannerisms, posture, speech, and tone of voice. In addition to constantly monitoring these changes, women were trying to interpret behaviors meanings concerning potential violence. Even during phone calls made by their partners' from work or jail, women monitored and interpreted the content and tone of their partners' speech. At the same time, whether they were face-to-face or on the phone, women found themselves monitoring what they said, always aware of the potential for violence.

"I can see it in his eyes": The Physical Character of Danger

Women remained vigilant for changes in the eyes, facial expression, physical manner, and tone of voice, anything that might indicate the increasing risk of violence. Often these changes defied precise description but women knew when changes had taken place. Physical changes in manner or speech were fairly reliable signals. "The eyes" were consistently mentioned by women as the best physical feature warning that a partner was becoming more agitated and violence was imminent.

Women could see "hate", "distance", and "anger" in their partners' eyes and were able to identify the exact moment when the eyes changed from love to hate. The change was described as "a look" or "a flash". "I call those psycho eyes" (Monique). The following excerpt is the discussion about changes in the eyes between two participants of an interview group.

(Monique): There's a warning--. It's one of the warnings you get is the eyes. Cause he could change, when I talk about changing from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde it was mainly in his eyes, from sweet to I don't give a shit about you bitch.

(Martha): And they can still be smiling at you, still caressing you, still doing all this shit, but you know, you see it.

(Monique): Whereas it's more than just a regular flash of anger, it gets deeper than that and when you see someone with that look in their eyes, it's, you can tell it's not normal, "I'm mad and I'm angry," it's, "Oh, I want to really hurt you."

Other physical changes also warned of impending violence.

Like his face would just change. I wouldn't recognize him. I don't know how, but the way he set his jaw or something, I knew that it was about to happen, and like clench, clenching up and, um, he just became another person, physically, somehow and I knew it was gonna--. That it would happen (Vicki).

Changing speech patterns were another cue of increasing danger. While not as reliable as the eyes, changes in language and speech served as a warning for some women. "As soon as the degrading started, that's, that was kind of my clue to, you know, walk very carefully cause it was, something was gonna happen" (Lisa). Many women found distinguishing differences and interpreting meanings between different speech patterns more difficult than interpreting changes in other physical signs. "There were no signs except for he would get quiet, but then he would get quiet when anything irritated him" (Martha).

Sometimes verbal warnings of approaching violence came from the partner himself. Some men walked out of the house shouting and yelling they had to leave or they wanted to hit something.

He used to walk out of the house and say, "I'm gonna walk out here before I do anything. I'm gonna kill some--. I feel like I'm gonna kill somebody." He'd leave the house. So he didn't, he didn't hit me, whether it's because my family was nearby or he had my brother to deal with but he didn't-- (Monique).

Other men told their wives or girlfriends to leave. As Elizabeth was narrating her experience of being told to leave the house when her partner was agitated, she paused,

But see, now that I'm talking about it and I'm thinking about it he does give me time to get out of the way. Because, he, he, he has, he has the time to hit me or to beat me, and he hasn't done that.

Interpreting messages to leave was more complicated than just walking out the door. Before leaving women had to assess how potentially violent their partners' might become and if it was possible for them to leave. Does he mean what he says? Is it more dangerous to leave or stay? Do I have time to grab the baby before leaving? Will grabbing the baby appear provocative and intensify the violence? Lisa described the intensity of fearing for her life and fleeing and the horror of realizing she had left her child in the trailer with her husband.

I forget what we were arguing about but we started arguing and asked me to leave so I just, you know, I would. But as soon as I turned around to walk out the door he pulled me back by my hair and started just punching me, I mean, I became his own personal punching bag and was knocking me on to the couch and here my, at that time 18-month old daughter, was lying on the floor just watching this and I couldn't think of anything like, like--. You know, I hate to admit it, I couldn't even think of her at that time. All I could think about was trying to get away. And the door to, he lived in a trailer court, was open, and there was neighbors out there and I knew they could hear me and I'm yelling, you know, over and over again, "911." That's all I could think of to yell was "911," trying to get out the door and not being able to, and finally I just broke out the door and he slammed and shut and he locked it and my daughter was still in the house, so I continued banging on the door, calling him names, trying to get my daughter out and decided that I would run over to a neighbor's house and get them to call the police for me.

Because many of the warning signs were non-specific and open to misinterpretation an essential component of monitoring was for women to be

aware of their own senses, feelings, and physiological responses. Often women's senses were obscured by feelings of anger and frustration so they missed important cues. "Once, I perceived something over a period of an hour which afterward I thought to myself, 'I should have seen that coming'" (Elizabeth). Especially in relationships where weeks or months passed between violent episodes returning feelings of fear and anxiety were disturbing.

For about four months I didn't feel the fear, the threat to my life, and then all of a sudden it was back again and I couldn't cope with it, could not. I just, I was shaking, I was shaking so bad I was just like on the edge of hysteria (Helen).

Awareness of one's own emotional and physiological reactions became more difficult as women suppressed and controlled their emotions. The self-doubt experienced by women because of emotional chaos caused them to question or distrust their intuition and assessments of their partners. For many women, suppressed emotions and self-doubt became part of their survival skills that continued long after the relationship ended. Women were often blinded because of their closeness to the situation or because of their partners' manipulation.

My instincts are good with other people. Um, but, you know, M. was mine. You know, he was, um, lover, friend, provider, you know, all that, so your instincts kind of I don't think play a big part when they're--. It's like you're mom, you know, you're instincts, you're talkin' family and closeness and stuff. With other people there are thousands of signs. You can see stuff go off miles away. But with M. I don't know if I blocked it out or he was so close to me, or I didn't want to see it, pick one (Martha).

"Recipe for Creating a Monster": Drug and Alcohol Use as a Characteristic of Danger

Drug and alcohol use by women's partners was possibly the most common behavioral warning sign and triggering event of violence. Partners' drug and especially alcohol abuse was a problem shared by nearly all the participants. Many of the battering men had abused drugs and alcohol for years. Drug and alcohol use was the source of much tension between partners. Both men and women blamed the drugs and alcohol for causing the violence. The men often repeatedly promised to get treatment or quit using immediately following a violent outburst or as a condition of parole. But they never followed through with their promises. It is important to distinguish that drug and alcohol use was not solely responsible for violent behavior. Most women recounted experiences of violence by their partners when they had not been using drugs or alcohol. But when women observed their partners had been using drugs or alcohol they knew the risk of violence was greater. "I just say it becomes easier and a whole lot riskier" (Carol). Monitoring men's drug and alcohol use became a daily practice for most women.

Specific behaviors accompanied drug and alcohol use that provided distinctive patterns which women could monitor. "If he was drunk, that was just a key right there, just to get away" (Lena). Many women found monitoring their partners for signs of potential violence was monitoring their partners for signs of

alcohol and drug use. Like other warning signs of violence, there were specific signs women identified that indicated their partners had been drinking. Again women mentioned the eyes.

If I see that he's been drinking and he's denying it, that's a dangerous situation because I don't know then how much he had to drink and I don't know how volatile he will be or is, and he'll lie, lie, lie, lie, lie, lie, lie that he hasn't been drinking, and it's very, very clear to me. And he drinks vodka sometimes and I can't smell it but I can see the effects of it and also the short-tempered responses when he's been drinking Well, he's very thin and it shows in his eyes. His eyes, um, they either get a very, um, kind of mean look or kind of a droopy look, and it's quite obvious that he has been drinking, you know (Carol).

One of the most dangerous situations for women was when their husbands or boyfriends came upstairs from the basement, arrived home from work, or returned home after spending the day with friends. These were situations where women had been unable to monitor their partners' activities or level of agitation. For example, women repeatedly emphasized the danger in not knowing how much or what kinds of drugs or alcohol their partner had ingested. This problem was exaggerated because many men drank in secret were they could not be monitored. Women found stashes of alcohol in the car, garage, basement, attic, and under the house.

I went down to the basement to get something, and we have several storerooms in the basements and because we manage the building, and uh, I was down on my hands and knees getting some stuff out of a box, some fabric or something and I just, you know, remember just glancing up and I was just stunned. On every rafter that I could see there was a beer can or a vodka bottle and I took

out, at that particular time, three huge shopping bags full of vodka bottles (Carol).

Without knowledge of their partners drug and alcohol ingestion, women were unable to anticipate or intervene in the behaviors they had learned were associated with use of specific substances. Conversely, women who were physically present with their husbands or boyfriends could monitor the building tension usually associated with drinking. While the outcome might remain unchanged, monitoring their partners' increasing intoxication gave women an opportunity to anticipate and begin engaging in interventions that could possibly de-escalate the situation.

Part of knowing how to monitor drug and alcohol consumption was having identified specific relationships between certain drugs or alcohol and violent behaviors. Women learned that certain conditions intensified the effects of intoxication, "If he hasn't been eating, he can get violent" (Carol). Women described distinctive behaviors associated with their partners use of certain types, amounts, or combinations of drugs or alcohol, "the recipe for creating a monster" (Helen).

I knew the exact measurements prescribed for his reactions of substance and alcohol One syringe full of speed'll get you a sex fiend, um, two forty ounce will get you a hostile, near-passed out drunk, one forty ounce and a half pint of vodka will have you blacked out, hostile, violent and aggressive individual. Tequila, look out, doesn't matter, what one shot, two, ten shots. Plus he was on carbamazepine which intensified alcohol (Helen).

For another woman the repercussions of alcohol were far more severe than those of other drugs used by her partner.

He didn't beat me after--. We drank on occasions like at parties or when we'd go out and he would go with his friends and, you know, do cocaine cause they were doing it at parties, you know but he didn't bring any of it home. But I didn't get beat after drinking. I got raped after drinking (Martha).

Violence was not the only consequence of their partners' drinking.

Women were exposed to additional sources of danger through their partners careless behaviors while high on drugs or alcohol. For example, Donna's husband smoked and drank in the basement surrounded by flammable liquids. Donna feared her husband would burn the building down if she were not there to watch him. Another woman feared she would be exposed to HIV because of her partners' sexual behaviors with those whom he shared drugs.

Anticipating Triggering Events

The ability to anticipate events, that in the past had been associated with violent outbursts, provided a rare advantage for women in predicting. Over the course of the relationship women gradually began to associate certain situations with violent outcomes. While their partners' behaviors remained primarily unpredictable, a few predictable patterns began to emerge. Yet women remained skeptical of these patterns, reiterating that anything could serve as a potential triggering event.

Women actively constructed responses for potential or anticipated situations. These responses constructed in anticipation of danger were quietly carried out. For one woman bargaining with her husband about not leaving her at the restaurant always preceded going out to dinner. Her husband had a pattern of drinking and in the middle of dinner becoming agitated and leaving the restaurant. The woman was left to pay the bill and get herself home.

Another strategy planned in advance by this woman was to keep herself and her child busy while waiting to be served dinner so to avoid saying the "wrong" thing or get on her husband's nerves. She hoped the service wasn't slow or bad.

These strategies were often unsuccessful. On one occasion her husband stayed throughout dinner but ran home after she had asked him not to run ahead because she felt unsafe at night on the street. When she arrived home and expressed her anger about having been left, she was beaten.

One behavioral pattern that women agreed always escalated a situation was any motion or statement that could be interpreted as challenging their partners' control or authority. This could be a glance, a question, or pointing a finger. "I got beat up by pointing a finger at him one time" (Rosa). Elizabeth linked the violence she experienced to performing within her prescribed role in the relationship. "When I'm nice and loving and a good wife there's no problems. But when I am critical and demanding, then he can't handle that at all." The problem created in identifying triggering events was women often

assumed responsibility for the triggering event and then for the violence, "I pointed", "I was critical", "I am demanding".

Many women anticipated sex as a point of conflict. In most cases, women determined that resisting sex was not worth the potential fight that ensued. As long as it was not violent, it was not worth resisting. However, some men were more aggressive sexually and would wake women up in the middle of the night for sex or want sex following violence. The following excerpt is an exchange between members of an interview group responding to the issue of sex and violence.

(Lena): If there was a time when I didn't want to I would just it didn't really matter what I wanted or what I didn't want to because I wasn't going to use that as an issue. Or as something for him to get mad about. . . . It was very easy for me to just be on my back and like well, go ahead. So, to me it's just a lot easier to do that than to struggle with the whole issue of sex, as long as he didn't get violent about it or abusive during it, it didn't matter to me.

(Lisa): Sex was kind of a touchy subject because, I mean, for the last year I didn't want to have sex with him, I didn't want him touching me because all I could think about during sex was how violent he can be and so it took, you know, the love and the joy out of it. But if I ever said no it created a fight. So it was, like you said, it was just much easier to remove your mind and let him have his way.

Surprisingly, violence did not intrude into the sex lives of many women. Some of the women interviewed said the violence never invaded their sex lives or that sex with their partners was great. It may be that for some women the intensity of intimacy and sex offset the intensity of the violence in other parts of

their relationships. Regardless, the disparity between intense violence in some situations and "great sex" in others or having decided to yield to their partners' demands for sex contributed to women suppressing their emotions, emotionally dissociating from their partners, or compartmentalizing disparate experiences. For other women sex was routinely more violent and horrifying than the violence that preceded it.

Other events that were triggering events for violence were family and financial stresses, pregnancy, and mentioning old boyfriend's names or previous places one had lived. The intense jealousy shared by abusive men served as a trigger anytime women came into contact with other men or women. Women were constantly accused of having affairs with men and in some cases women with whom they worked, went to school, or barely knew. Most of the problems arose when going out in public, to dinner, parties, or other social events.

I just knew every social occasion would end up like that. Like we'd have fun for a while, I would talk to a man for too long and it would happen. Like I just knew. I didn't want to go places cause I knew what happened all the time. And he didn't mind pouting or making scenes or sitting in the corner glaring at someone I'd be talking to. . . . Um, I just knew it was always going to happen. I can't remember a party or anything that I went to where it didn't happen at the time we were together (Vicki).

When going out in public men often told their wives and girlfriends what to wear or expected them to "look" a certain way. And then when they attracted attention they were accused of flirting or wanting sex.

(Martha): He had this thing. He wanted something attractive, you know--

(Monique): But no one could look.

(Martha): --but nobody could look at you. You know. I didn't understand. He _____ all this gorgeous stuff so you can be seen. That's the whole point. You go buy this stuff so people can see you, people can notice you. . . . And, and God help if you look bad. Don't just look, you know, out and catch something, you know, he'd swear you were after it and it was after you and--. Oh, God, the possessiveness. The jealousy was just like ooooo.

In public, battering partners usually limited their use of violence to embarrassing or humiliating their partners but after they returned home, the evening often ended in physical violence. However, most women expressed the belief that they did not have the option of avoiding social events. Declining to attend social events nearly guaranteed a violent response.

Physical Distance

Maintaining close physical proximity to their partners was essential for women to be able to detect subtle changes in posture, eyes, and tone of voice indicating escalation of violence. Being physically distant from their abusive partners eliminated women's primary means of monitoring, their senses of sight, smell, and hearing.

Well, when I was living with him I can kind of tell when he's building up so I could, you know, kind of get to this point in my mind where it's like, "Okay, he's building up and, you know, I'm just gonna have to you know, brace myself." Now it's kind of like I don't know when he's building up or what his cycles are. It's just like, it's out of my watch now (Beverly).

Another woman's sense of fear increased when she was apart from her husband during his frequent trips to jail.

And I found I was even scared, more scared sometimes, when he was in prison cause when he would try to call me, you know, who knows when he would get his phone time and if I wasn't there, you know, if I was just at the store to get somethin' that's something that would be addin' up in his mind, and of course every time something like that happened it would add up more and more and more, so even when he wasn't there--. There was some times the danger seemed worse, you know, cause there was somethin', I knew there was gonna be somethin' worse than I could imagine when he finally did get there, you know. So, just that build up, you know, not knowin' when he was gonna show up and when he'd finally get there, you know, what it was gonna be (Jean).

Jean was not only concerned that she was unable to monitor and intervene in her partner's escalating imagination but from her perspective his routines had been changed and were now more unpredictable. The only way she could respond to this situation was by putting even more restrictions on her activities.

Leaving battering relationships did not necessarily end the violence and terror. Women were convinced their lives were in danger from their partners even if they left the relationship. As part of the constant tormenting battering partners repeatedly threatened to hunt them down and kill them and their families if they ever left. The fear of being stalked and killed was reinforced by sensational front page news stories and "made-for-television" movies. During the interviewing phase of the research several local front page news stories appeared about women and children being killed by estranged husbands and fathers (San Francisco Chronicle, Dec. 29, 1992; July 13, 1993). Under these conditions,

staying in the relationship appeared to be a reasonable strategy for surviving the violence.

My biggest fear is what he would do if I left. See because he'd lose control then. . . . No, he'd never take it out on anyone else. I'm afraid that he would do something irrational to (son's name) and I, that, where we live. You know, I don't think it would be with a gun because he doesn't do anything with guns but I think that if we left that his drinking would escalate and I wouldn't feel safe at all. I, I--. I don't know how somebody who isn't in this situation can understand this, but I feel safer staying than leaving. So it's kind of better to stay and just try to--. I don't know how to say it. Keep things from getting too bad, which puts a lot of pressure on the woman (Carol).

Distance from their battering partners made women more vulnerable to their partners' unpredictable behaviors. Physical distance eliminated women's ability to monitor the indicators they used to assess how agitated their partners were becoming. This was especially true for women who had left their partners. They feared suddenly and unexpectedly coming face-to-face with a partner out-of-control. Women described fearing every noise and shadow as their day-to-day experiences became more unpredictable and frightening than before.

There were risks associated with being in close proximity to a potentially violent partner. The very nature of monitoring required women to stay within "striking distance" of their partners. The geographical closeness limited many of the options available to women for protecting themselves or getting away. Often battering partners interpreted the intense observations as provocative, appeasing, or placating which resulted in further escalating a potentially violent situation.

I would just watch him. He'd be sly and then he'd be real nasty half a second later and there was no explanation for it. I didn't do anything wrong and he'd tell me not to look at him, not to do this, and I'm like how could I not look at you? I want to know what's going on with you (Monique).

Constructing Responses to Partner's Cues

Women constructed their responses as dangerous situations arose.

Responses were consciously constructed and customized for specific situations based on women's knowledge of their partners, past experiences with similar situations, monitoring of distinct warning signs, anticipation of triggering events, and behavioral patterns of their partners. To simply react to battering partners' bizarre or tormenting behaviors was certain to escalate the potential for severe violence. Processes of Predicting Unpredictability were simultaneous, ongoing, and constantly changing. Women monitored their partners and responded to subtle cues they interpreted to be warning of escalating danger.

Processes of predicting included responding to identified cues; monitoring changes and responding again; and continuing to "fine-tune" the response, abandoning it, and trying a new approach. It was common for women to implement more than one intervention throughout an interaction with their partners as they tried to reduce the possibility of violence or alter the anticipated trajectory of their partners' actions. Interactions aimed at minimizing the risk of violence could last seconds or days. Many women in extremely violent

relationships became resigned to the fact they would one day be killed. In this situation, ". . . you just operate on trying to delay that as much as possible" (Denise). The one-sidedness of these relationships where battering partners defined and re-defined the rules guiding interaction kept women guessing what to do next which substantially increased the risk of violence for women.

Women in this study used the analogy, "It's like living in a whirlwind" to describe their experiences of trying to keep up with the rapidly changing rules in the face of impending violence. They knew the storm was approaching and that the consequences could be severe. But the storm's course was unpredictable, they did not know where, when, how quickly, or how severe the storm would be. Monitoring and responding provided limited opportunity for women to prepare themselves.

The rules guiding interactions in the relationship were constantly changing within an interaction and from one interaction to another. These rules were primarily constructed and controlled by the men. "He had so many rules. You couldn't eat a banana or you couldn't eat a ice cream cone, and the rule might change cause that means you want to have oral sex with somebody else, you know" (Beverly). Constantly changing or instability of rules were one reason responses that were successful on one occasion made things worse on the next occasion and the reason Predicting Unpredictability differs from other processes of skill acquisition.

Women did become more skilled in identifying and responding to dangerous situations. However, this was not enough to prevent the violence because the rules and partners' patterns were continually changing. While women were able to acquire situational predictability, they usually found themselves on the defensive, constantly trying to outguess their partners' next moves. Absence of consistency made the processes of predicting appear illogical and chaotic. As one woman explained,

While I was gone their father found out that I was going to move, we were going to move to Missouri, and he asked my mother if he could have the children for the afternoon and he took 'em and hid 'em. . . . I knew he was gonna hide them. Of course my mother didn't know, but I knew him. So I went back a day early so to throw him off, which did throw him off because he had already taken to his, at that time, his new mother-in-law's house and out in the country somewhere. I talked to my children every day and I told them, you know, that I would be in tomorrow and that I'd pick them up and we'd come back. When I went in and I went down to his house to pick them up, unannounced, and a day early so that I could be sure to get them, they were gone (Rosa).

Under conditions of unpredictability, intimidation, and manipulation, one strategy some women hoped would control certain aspects of the relationship was to become unpredictable like their partners. Particularly around child visitation, women gained some control by setting the rules and catching their partners off-guard. For example, women gained some control over their husbands' visitation schedule by showing-up late for visits, cancelling visits because of illness, or finding church or school functions for the children to attend instead.

Women expressed frustration because their responses seldom altered the outcome they feared. Once the partners' agitation started escalating, women felt there was little they could do to reverse it. Lisa and Lena exchanged the following comments in the interview.

(Lisa): I mean, you try different things each time and you try and be sickeningly sweet and then they see that as being condescending and so that doesn't work. . . . You try to yell back and that doesn't work. And it's, it just, nothing, there's nothing that's good enough at that point.

(Lena): Just get out. I mean, that was just the only thing I could ever think of was just get out cause if I would--. I would try to order him out of my apartment in some cases, thinking, "Well, just get out. This is my place. (laugh) Just get out," you know, and if someone's intent on doing whatever they want to do to you, that's not gonna, it's not gonna stop anything.

The concept of constructing responses extended to most interactions in women's relationships with their battering partners. For many women the risk of violence was constant. The risk of appearing provocative was always present, even during simple routine exchanges. Avoiding interaction with their partners was not always possible. As a result, women followed prescribed procedures in getting some things accomplished. For example, in order for Carol to get a problem with the electricity in the apartment corrected she had to repeatedly point out the problem to her husband while he belittled her, minimized her concerns, and made excuses for the problem. During this time she continually plugged and unplugged the lights and appliances fearing a fire or electrocution. This went on for six months before she was finally able to call the electric

company herself. By following this prescribed pattern she got the problem with the electricity repaired while minimally "agitating" her husband. Unable to restrain their anger and frustration over such rigid and ridiculous rituals or their partners' irresponsibility, many women were propelled into confrontations with their partners over such things as using the rent money for drugs or repeatedly being awakened in the middle of the night.

Women living under conditions of unpredictability and violence were anything but passive as has often been implied. Within the confines of their relationships, women actively negotiated and renegotiated their position. These responses ranged on a continuum from avoiding a confrontation to saying "no" to fighting back or leaving. All the women interviewed had called the police, reported partners to child protection authorities, escaped to stay at shelters or friends homes, or repeatedly told their partners that their violence was not acceptable.

Responses were literally created as interactions unfolded based on women's assessment of their options, speed at which the situation escalated, and presence of others who might become involved or render aid if necessary. The primary strategies used in interventions were avoidance, engagement, leaving, and enlisting the help of others.

Conducting Interventions

Avoidance strategies.

Avoidance strategies were used most often when a situation escalated quickly or when a woman was suddenly faced by her partner whom she had been unable to monitor. The purpose of avoidance strategies was to minimize one's role in the interaction thereby slowing its escalation. The most common avoidance techniques were becoming suddenly quiet or placating one's partner. Avoidance strategies involved avoiding confrontation such as walking away, never complaining, or doing as had been told.

Attempts of defusing situations using avoidance often backfired. There was always the risk of misreading or misinterpreting how agitated a partner had become so instead of stabilizing the situation avoidance escalated it further.

But I thought maybe if I sit there and I'm quiet and I just let him rant and rave and, you know, carry on, you know, he'd go on, he'd calm down, he'd come and we could have a discussion. No. "You don't have anything to say? You always have something to say." You know, and it starts from there. So I couldn't win. So--. Cause I really believed I was provokin' him cause I always have something to say, you know. People used to tell me I'd make a good attorney cause I'll debate you under the table. You know. But, um, I shut up and it was hard for me to do but I would sit there and be real calm and real quiet and I'm trying to hear him, you know, hear where he's coming from. . . . And he still beat the hell out of me for not saying something, and then if I said something it was the wrong thing (Martha).

As a situation continued to intensify fewer options remained for women except changing their responding strategies. As portrayed above, suddenly becoming quiet was easily misinterpreted by a battering partner as condescending behavior.

Gaining weight was another avoidance strategy women tried after deciding escape from their violent partners was impossible. Women hoped gaining weight could protect them. They hoped the extra weight would act as a cushion against their partners' assaults, reducing the potential for injury. Additionally, women hoped that by gaining 80 or 90 pounds the added weight would repulse their partner so he would lose interest in them and leave.

I got into this eating things and decided I'd eat and maybe he'd leave me alone, he wouldn't want me any more cause he is all into image. Everything has to be right; right car, right house, right neighborhood, right girl. You know. So, I ate. I'd piss him off and get fat. But, you know, that was my mentality. I was down so low I really thought this would work. That didn't work either (Martha).

Another way of responding to the threat of violence was by controlling as many environmental variables as possible. Controlling was a type of avoidance strategy used in anticipation of danger. It had nothing to do with directly manipulating the batterer's behaviors. Rather, battered women's lives became task-oriented and very structured, one woman said she became "a control freak". As men found more excuses on which to blame their violence, women attempted to control those factors by spending all their time, cleaning, dusting, cooking, washing, ironing, and hiding the alcohol. In addition to managing the family,

women's days were now filled with lists of tasks to be completed in hopes of pacifying their partners and delaying the violence.

He was so volatile it was, there was no predictor during the time of the relationship and I became a control freak so that we could avoid the violence. . . . I got more on guard and tried to have everything perfectly organized cause he likes things--. Fifteen months and I'm still talking in the present tense. He liked things to just flow (Anna).

As discussed in the previous chapter, women tightly controlled their emotions. Women suppressed and masked their emotions as a protective strategy to remain as unprovocative as possible and to avoid being distracted from focussing on their partners' verbal and nonverbal cues. Women learned to maintain their composure as a means of self-protection while their partners denigrated and embarrassed them in public.

Strict control of their emotions gave women a sense of control over themselves and the interaction. "Never let him know you're afraid". Women could not show they were feeling vulnerable, exposing their fear or anger could initiate more verbal or physical abuse. "No, I wouldn't let him. I wouldn't let him know I was afraid. I might all of a sudden just shut up very quickly, you know, just you know, not to let something escalate" (Carol). Many women expressed the belief that their partners' violence resulted from them being unable to control themselves. By controlling their own fear and anger, women were able to control themselves.

After I realized how violent he was, in some ways it made me feel superior to him because I felt like no matter what, I would never sink to that level. So, when he would hit me or when something would happen I would feel horrible of course, but there was part of me that would feel like you bastard you, you know, that's how you're gonna react and you're never gonna get me to react that way. So, but then, you know, it changed. Cause, you know, eventually you did. I more protected myself than to begin so. But in a weird way it did make me feel superior to him (Vicki).

Engagement strategies.

Engagement strategies were used by women to actively engage or manipulate their partners in response to or anticipation of perceived threats of danger. These strategies might include attempts to complement or entertain a partner, logically discuss a problem, bargain over anticipated behaviors, or in extreme situations resort to the use of violence in self-defense.

There are a lot of times that I'm not a stereotypical battered woman. I mean, I really tell him how angry I am, and uh, there are other times when I know that I better just let him sleep, go away, be quiet" (Carol).

It was equally important for women to know when not to engage their partners. In some situations, such as when they were drinking, any contact with a partner potentially invited an argument and the possibility of violence. Helen's instructions were clear about engaging her boyfriend after he had been drinking. "Do not open the monster's cage."

Any type of confrontive engagement was never safe. It was common for women to note their physical surroundings prior to using confrontive engaging

strategies. Lena noted, ". . . what room I would be in, you know, what I would be doing in it and if I could leave the house". Another example is,

If I was to call him at work I might say, "You know what you did to me in the restaurant," or something, I might really just tell him how angry I was. If I call him at work and he, you know, on a line or something where he can talk, but if I was alone at home with him, with absolutely no one at home, I wouldn't. You know, especially if, if it was a time when I might, I didn't hear my neighbors or something, um, you know, I'd have to know that other people are around before I had the confidence to say anything. And also that I was close enough to a door (Carol).

Engagement strategies were often used when avoidance strategies were no longer being effective in an interaction. For example, Lisa described the difficulty of responding to her husband when he was intoxicated. There was no way of avoiding him when he was drinking so she encouraged him to continue drinking, exploiting the side-effects of the alcohol. She encouraged him to continue drinking until he passed out.

If the alcohol was there he'd pass out and then I'd, you know, have a few hours of rest. Yeah, there was a lot of times when he'd be drinking and start yelling and I'd just kind of like, 'Here, have more.' you know, pass out soon [laugh].

Another woman told of the difficulty trying to avoid a partner who routinely woke her in the middle of the night. Beverly described her style of confronting her partner and its risks. All she wanted was to be left alone so she could get some sleep.

And I didn't really ever learn to just be quiet. A few times I tried to fake sleep, uh--. I couldn't put up with it. I couldn't do it, you know. I mean it was just like, "Get the hell out of here. Take

your beer. Sit outside and drink it. I don't care." And that would-. I'd harass him until he'd leave. So my way of, my defense was to just bitch until he couldn't handle it anymore, and I would take my chances. It would either be physical, um, his physical abuse on me, or he would take off and say, "I can't hear this anymore." But either way I wanted him out and that would be usually my way of doing, that late at, early in the morning. It was worth it. And I have never been one to sit back and take the abuse either. I hit right back. So, that probably, probably got me in a lot of trouble, but, uh, you know, when you're living in a studio with somebody, you know, there's not a lot--. When someone's in your face, and you need them out of your face, you're afraid, it's just there's very few ways to do things.

The potential for sudden violence was inherent to all interactions women had with their partners yet women needed to communicate with their partners about daily routines. Asking a question, getting a ride to the grocery store, or telling her husband that he was wrong to hit her had to be done in ways that minimized the chance of provoking a fight. Helen described her technique of gradually pushing the limits.

(Helen): I would kind of work my way in, kind of like one of those burrowing-type worms, and see how far I could get right before I got to the edge where I'd set him off. It's cause I wanted my level of dominance in my home.

(moderator): Give me an example.

(Helen): Oh, I'd put him on trial.

(moderator): That's going right to the edge.

(Helen): Yeah, you know, but just out of curiosity and then just getting a little bit more, say, inquisitive. You know, never hostile accusations but just basically putting him on trial, putting him on the defense.

Women were often able to tell when their partners were in-control and could be approached.

It seems a contradiction that women in relationships exposed to ongoing life-threatening violence would "play-fight" with their partners. Yet in relationships based on violence, intimidation, and manipulation "play-fighting" might be a way of engaging a partner, establishing intimacy, or releasing built-up anger and tension in a nondestructive and controlled way.

We used to play-fight a lot and I would never let him-- . . . we would play-box, I always could tell where the limit was and I would always stop him before he got to his limit of where it would change to real physical violence. and I was always able to stop it from there cause I wasn't really threatened by it (Monique).

There was the risk of getting a partner "worked-up" and once "play-fighting" not being able to stop the interaction from escalating into uncontrollable violence.

Play-fighting was not a common phenomena, only two women described engaging their partners in this way. Women had to have confidence in their ability to monitor and control their partners. The phenomena of "play-fighting" highlights the complexity of women's interactions with their violent partners and the sophistication of women's knowledge. Through constant monitoring women knew when engaging their partners was safe and when to stop.

Sometimes engagement resulted from the expression of built-up anger, frustration, or fear. The most extreme form of engagement was physically fighting back. Striking out in anger was extremely dangerous and an impulse

most women learned to control. In most cases, a physical response by women would have forced them into physical combat where they were certain of being severely injured or possibly killed. There were times when physically defending oneself was necessary. None of the women participating in this study had used lethal force against their partners in self-defense. However, several women had used knives or guns to threaten their partners and all the participants had at one time thought about killing their partners or wishing them dead.

Women discussed having an internal dialogue where they weighed the possibilities of using violence but saw little benefit in killing or maiming their partners. Most concluded they risked being killed themselves or spending the rest of their lives in prison. They worried what would happen to their children in their absence and who would get custody. They feared their surviving abusive partner would be awarded custody of the children. Women thought that by responding to violence with violence they had been reduced to their partners level and ultimately would be the loser. However, the possibility or fantasy of using lethal force remained in the back of many women's minds.

Leaving the relationship.

Leaving the relationship was commonly used by women to escape when their partners were out-of-control and the violence was too intense or escalating too quickly to intervene. After fleeing, women often found themselves sitting on the curb in their robes with no where to go. In these situations women did not

have time to gather clothing, money, or the phone numbers they might need. After leaving their homes women often felt they were once again vulnerable to violence on the street. In fact, many women believed the potential for being a victim of crime on the streets exceeded their risk of violence at home. At least at home women were familiar with their partners patterns and knew what to expect. Battered women's shelters provided one option which nearly all the participants had used at one time or another. However, many women relied on a supportive friend or family member for a place of refuge. Out of this necessity many women told a selected friend or family member of the violence despite the secrecy and isolation surrounding battering.

Arrangements for spending the night or getting picked up were often made in advance or when women suspected their partners were beginning to spiral out of control.

I would have all day to wonder how he was gonna come home and what kind of mood, so if I get home at 3:00 [PM], I'd have between 3:00 and 2:30 in the morning to worry and wonder and set up, and call girlfriends and say, "I might be sleeping on your couch tonight (Jean).

Many women expressed amazement that friends sympathized with them and were willing to help them in the early morning hours. Fleeing the violence was usually a temporary response. Women often returned home the next day to find their partners passed-out or absent for several days. Permanently leaving a relationship required far more coordination and planning.

Every woman interviewed had at one time considered the possibility of permanently leaving her batterer and the abusive relationship. Two-thirds of the women interviewed had permanently left their batterers. But the promise of leaving the violence behind and starting over was often a myth. Leaving an abusive partner did not necessarily guarantee a permanent end of the violence or the relationship. In many cases the harassment and violence continued as men called, drove through the neighborhood, threatened, and stalked their former wives and girlfriends. In addition, some women were forced by the legal system to continue interacting with their partners around child visitation. The only escape was to uproot themselves, change their names, and disappear. And even after relocating and changing their names some women's ex-partners were able to find and contact them.

Enlisting the help of others.

Intervention in the violence also came from outside the relationships, most often from neighbors or the police. Women found they had little control over the interventions provided by others and that relying on outside assistance was somewhat unreliable and inconsistent. However, women often planned their responses based on availability of neighbors who could assist or call the police in the event the violence escalated. Women often did not have the opportunity to leave or call the police during an assault and were surprised when neighbors ignored the violence and their cries for help.

What really hit me was that, that, that you know, if, if for me when I was screaming, that nobody would respond. I mean, cause my landlord lived right downstairs and he's a very big man and he's not afraid of, of getting involved in things and get, you know, I know he easily take of--. The fact that they didn't do anything, um, the people across the hall didn't do anything, um, you know, when I'd be outside, you know, we'd be engaged but nobody would come up and say, you know, "What's going on? Leave her alone," or do anything, you know. The public reaction is nil (Lena).

Women expected assistance from neighbors and by-standers and were surprised when no one came to their aid. Outside interventions often included nothing more than a neighbor calling the police or the sense of security provided to a woman by surrounding herself with others. For example, Carol always arranged for foreign students to be living in their home. "As long as I have students in the house I'm relatively safe. I mean, he, he bends over backwards not to do anything in front of people." Other women surrounded themselves with classmates or co-workers to intimidate and reduce the chances of being confronted by their partners or ex-partners. Those surrounding the woman frequently had not been told of the violence and were unaware of the potential danger to themselves.

Another potential but unreliable source of assistance for women were the battering partners' friends or co-workers. These individuals were often aware of the violence but did not offer help unless they were specifically asked. Batterers' friends often would not intervene even when they were present during an assault. One woman described being repeatedly assaulted by her husband while his

friend sat in the other room and watched television. The batterer alternated between beating her and watching television with his friend.

The most frequent form of outside intervention was provided by police departments. All the women interviewed had experienced police intervention. Calling the police was often the response strategy used when women were frightened because situations had quickly escalated out of control. By simply arriving on the scene, the presence of the police immediately stopped the violence. The police were perceived to be closer in size to the abusive partner and have the strength necessary to subdue him. Therefore, the police provided an effective intervention when women's efforts to delay the violence had failed. As a representative of the state, police response to domestic violence calls also reinforced what most women had told their partners, "that his violence was not acceptable".

The most effective forms of police interventions were those using threats and intimidation specifically directed toward the man. Many men were responsive to the implied threats of police intervention and feared the consequences of being arrested and jailed over night. For some women, simply threatening to call the police was an effective response for reducing the violence.

Police intervention produced only temporary cessation of the violence. When police officers arrived the fighting usually stopped, but unless someone was injured the police often turned around and left. Police responses were

unpredictable, some women described rapid and aggressive police intervention while others described lax disinterested response by police officers. Women risked greater violence if they called the police and the police did nothing once when they arrived. Many women complained that even when the batterers were arrested and taken to the police station, they had been released before the women had returned home. The violence often resumed after the police left or when a partner returned home.

Children

Questions about the impact of children on women's interpretations of danger were not included in the study for reasons of confidentiality and participant protection that have been addressed in Chapter II. However, many women expressed that having a child would have changed their perceptions about their partners and caused them to be less tolerant of the violence because of a child's vulnerability and need for protection. Having children was an important condition in women's processes of Predicting Unpredictability. The presence of children led women to use strategies of leaving or calling the police more quickly in order to "protect the baby".

Women feared their abusive partners would also be abusive to their children. Because of these fears, women struggled never to leave their children alone with their partners. Likewise, women who had to share custody of a child

with their ex-partners were continuously engaging in strategies limiting the duration of visits, cancelling visits, or delaying court determined visitation. Child custody became an important issue which required women to remain in contact with their abusive ex-partners and continue monitoring their behaviors.

Situated Predictability

The importance of these processes was that women did develop the ability to recognize cues warnings of oncoming violence. Identifying physical and behavioral warning signs and triggering events provided women with the ability to situationally predict their partners' behaviors. This situated predictability was based on consistency in their partners' behaviors and patterns. The difficulty for women in predicting their partners behaviors was the absence of consistency and established rules in their relationships. One of the central characteristics of social chaos was unpredictability. Battering men suddenly changed the rules of interaction or their patterns of behaviors which led to women being assaulted despite their vigilance. As a result, men's violence was never completely predictable as women continually struggled to identify new patterns in Predicting Unpredictability.

Summary

The social chaos created by battering partners' unpredictability, tormenting, manipulation, and inevitable repetition of violence required women to engage in processes of Predicting Unpredictability. Processes of predicting consisted of simultaneously monitoring and responding to the physical, behavioral, verbal, and nonverbal cues of their partners' escalating agitation and violence. The risk of violence was constantly changing so processes of predicting were indeterminate and ongoing. Women continually watched their partners hoping to predict the unpredictable. Predicting Unpredictability were processes of delaying tactics, harm reduction, and protection that provide temporary relief but do not usually result in the cessation of violence.

Women identified specific physical and behavioral changes in their partners' eyes, posture, tone of voice, and speech indicating increasing threat of violence. Women learned through experience that there were precursors or "triggering" events which often escalated into violence. Drug and alcohol use by partners' was the most common characteristic warning of increasing danger. Monitoring for warning signs and triggering events required women to stay in close physical proximity to their partners' which increased women's exposure to violence by limiting their ability to respond or escape sudden explosions of violence. Conversely, being physically distant or apart from abusive partners

increased the danger women experienced by eliminating their ability to monitor the distinct and subtle physical and behavioral changes associated with violence.

Women constructed customized responses to their assessments of danger based on past experiences with their partners. Responding to partners' cues was a fluid and dynamic process. Frequently many responses were required within a single interaction as women monitored, responded, monitored changes, and responded again, continuing to fine-tune their interaction or abandoning it and trying a new approach. Women used strategies of avoidance, engagement, leaving, and enlisting the help of others in responding to the assessment of danger.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF PREDICTING UNPREDICTABILITY

Overview of Social Chaos and Processes of Predicting Unpredictability

Each year an estimated 1.8 million women are severely assaulted by their partners (Strauss & Gelles, 1990). The impact of domestic violence on women's health is significant. Domestic violence accounts for approximately 27,700 emergency department and 39,000 physician visits each year costing approximately \$44,393,700 (McLeer & Anwar, 1987). Furthermore, approximately one in ten women encountered in any health care setting who are in intimate heterosexual relationships are survivors of abuse by their male partners (Sampelle, 1991). Despite these alarming statistics, clinicians in medical settings often fail to identify and assess the danger of violence to women living in battering relationships.

While domestic violence poses a serious threat to women, little is known about women's experiences and responses to danger. This study investigated how battered women assessed changing levels of danger in their relationships

through the application of grounded theory methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). Participants were recruited using advertisements in free neighborhood newspapers. Thirty women were interviewed in small groups or individually.

Two aims of this study, discovering the characteristics women used as indicators of danger and how women monitored and responded to increasing danger, were addressed with the introduction of the theory of Predicting Unpredictability. This chapter begins with a brief overview of the theory of Predicting Unpredictability and its defining concepts. This is followed by a discussion of the study's limitations and strengths, its contributions to the field of domestic violence, and its implications for practice and research.

The Theory of Predicting Unpredictability

Predicting Unpredictability were processes of simultaneously monitoring and responding to battering men's physical, behavioral, verbal, and nonverbal cues of escalating or impending violence. The goal of Predicting Unpredictability was to anticipate or predict their partners' violent behaviors so women could act to avert or delay the violence. Women identified specific changes in their partners' eyes, posture, tone of voice, and type or absence of speech that served as warning signals. This is supported by the findings of Clunn (1984) and Fisher (1989) who found nurses identified changes in posture, activity, and speech of psychiatric patients that warned of their increasing

agitation. In addition, women identified "triggering events" that were associated with escalations of violence. Examples of "triggering events" were drug and alcohol use, sex, social events, or family maintenance activities such as finances, child care, or meal preparation.

Close physical proximity to the batterer was an important condition of monitoring but one that put women at greater risk of being assaulted. Being close enough to watch for changes in the eyes or posture or to detect the smell of alcohol kept women within "striking distance" of their partners. Like the nurses in Fisher's (1989) study who felt the most dangerous time was after being away from the patients for awhile because when they returned they were unaware of the subtle changes that had occurred, women's in this study also felt the danger increased when they were apart from their partners and unable to monitor their behaviors. Distance impeded women's ability to notice the subtle changes warning of increasing agitation or to note the type and amount of drugs or alcohol consumed. The more unpredictable and chaotic their partners' behaviors, the more women needed to concentrate on watching their partners.

In addition to distance, women's past experiences with unpredictable or violent behavior in their families of origin, previous male partners, and current relationships were important. Growing-up in chaotic families taught women that unpredictability and abuse were normal expectations of adult relationships. But these experiences did not teach women how to monitor and respond to specific

behaviors or situations. The information most useful to women in predicting violence, knowledge of their partners past violence, was generally not available to women and was seldom offered by friends or acquaintances who knew the violent men.

Predicting Unpredictability were processes which included delaying tactics, harm reduction, and protection strategies aimed at providing temporary or fleeting relief but which usually did not result in the cessation of violence. These processes also carried with them the potential for escalating the violence. Women developed specific strategies for responding to patterns of behavior based on previous experience and knowledge of their partners' behavior patterns. Women thoughtfully and purposefully responded rather than reacted to their partners' outrageous behaviors. Women's choices of responding strategies often depended on the speed with which violence was escalating. Specific strategies used in responding to perceived escalations in danger were: avoidance, engagement, temporarily leaving the relationship, and enlisting the help of others outside the relationship.

Women's knowledge of the warning signs and their responses to escalating violence did not always de-escalate the violence. Battering men were continually changing the rules of the relationship which left women always having to identify new patterns. Women could not be sure that any changes in behaviors were the result of their actions or just another manifestation of their

partners' unpredictability. Nevertheless, women continued engaging in processes of Predicting Unpredictability.

Prediction in the Context of Chaos

Battered women lived in a world of social and emotional chaos created by their partners' unpredictability, tormenting and violence, manipulation, emotionality, and intensity. This created an environment "where anything was possible". Social chaos was a collection of behaviors that kept women off-guard and guessing what was going to happen next. Because battering men were continually defining, violating, and re-defining the rules of interaction within the relationship, women were often unable to accurately predict their partners violence. Serra (1993) observed the context of intimate violence was one-sided, where only the men were allowed to express any and all of their emotions. Expressions of violence in these relationships were controlled by the men and because of differences in size and strength between men and women they were nonreciprocal. Living in the context of social chaos meant nothing could be trusted and "nothing was as it appeared".

Women experienced emotional chaos in response to the social chaos surrounding them. For many women, their relationships proved to be a mixture of intensely positive moments and intensely terrifying moments that represented a confusing disparity in experiences. Women responded to the disparity by emotionally dissociating from their partners, compartmentalizing the disparate

positive and negative experiences, and suppressing or masking their own emotions. Battered women exercised extreme control over their physical and emotional selves to prevent being distracted by their feelings of outrage and anger from their task of closely monitoring their partners. The slightest emotional or unplanned reactions might be interpreted as provocative or condescending and escalate an already dangerous situation.

Women experienced extreme isolation as the chaos and violence cut them off from their social worlds. Men timed women's trips to the market, allowed prescribed time to get to and from work, would unexpectedly call or check on women throughout the day, and were intensely jealous. While most of the women did have contact with other people through work, school or church, battered women were unable to share the same stories about their relationships, partners, or daily lives that other women shared. As a result, they never developed friendships. In addition, many women felt judged by friends, family members, religious leaders, health care providers, and law enforcement professionals who they told of the violence. Most women responded to others judgmental responses by terminating any further contact. The isolation that resulted from having to lie about the violence because of the tremendous guilt, shame and embarrassment associated with battering or because of the judgmental responses from others was as isolating as being geographically moved to a new area with no friends or supports.

Blaming themselves and accepting responsibility for causing the violence was the only logical explanation women had for their partners' irrational, unpredictable, and violent behaviors. As battering men became more violent and unpredictable, women became more absorbed in monitoring their behaviors. Women soon found their only source of information about themselves and their relationships were the distorted and conflicting messages they received from their partners. The most profound effect of emotional chaos was how it caused women to doubt their perceptions and question whether they were capable of adequately perceiving the world. Paradoxically, as women felt the relationship was impairing their ability to perceive and assess their world, the most important thing women could do was trust their instincts, intuition, and impressions in their ongoing processes of monitoring and responding to their battering partners.

The characteristics of social and emotional chaos in this study were similar to those found in research on battered women. Avni (1991) compared the lives of battered women to Goffman's "total institution" where residents lived under constant surveillance, strict rules of behavior, limited and controlled social contact, and were exposed to many debasing and depersonalizing rituals.

Additional Concepts in the Nature of Danger

The word "danger" has been used throughout these chapters to describe women's assessment of threat by their partners, situations, or environments. One of the aims of this study was to discover how women perceived danger;

instead, what emerged from the interviews were women's immediate needs and processes of surviving danger. Therefore, the concept of danger was limited to refer to "threats of violence or injury". Violence was a component of social chaos so conceptually danger would appear to be related to social chaos. Danger was expressed as a subjective feeling of fear or not wanting to be with a person because of the potential for serious consequences. Other characteristics of danger were feelings of fear, vulnerability, powerlessness, never knowing what would happen next, being held or controlled against one's will, and being helpless to protect oneself.

Patterns in the frequency and severity of violence have been reported to be established within 18 months of the start of the relationship (Follingstad, Hause, Rutledge, & Polek, 1992). This implies that it may take women up to 18 months to identify basic warning sign and triggering event patterns. Therefore, the longer women have been in battering relationships the more control they may feel they have over their partners and the violence. However, severity and frequency of violence are only one part of women's assessment of danger. This study found unpredictability to be a more important factor than violence in defining danger and keeping women "on edge". The temporal aspects of unpredictability as they relate to patterns of violence need further study.

Intensity emerged from this analysis as an important concept which has not been explored in the literature on battering. The concept of intensity was

best illustrated in comments like "when it's good it's real good, but when it's bad it's real bad." Intensity was a characteristic of battering men related to emotionality, obsession, and extremes. However, women also experienced intensity in their relationships with battering men. Women often labelled the characteristic of intensity as "passion" because of their association of intensity with emotions. Passion could be exciting, scary, or violent. Intensity or passion could be a positive characteristic that many women looked for in potential partners.

The concept of intensity raised more questions in the analysis than it answered. There was certainly intensity in these relationship caused by the violence. However, even before the violence started, the intensity in these relationships was very high. These couple were often "inseparable". The men would often "do anything" or "go to extremes" to please their girlfriends. Some men even threatened to kill themselves if the women they were dating ever left them. The concept of intensity warrants further study to discover if intensity is a characteristic of violent men. "Do highly intense men tend to be violent?" "Are women who are "risk takers" or want to "experience" life attracted to certain men because of their intensity?" This is not to say that women want to be beaten or like the violence. There was no evidence that women were attracted to the violence. On the contrary, early in the relationship most women did not know of their boyfriends' or husbands' history or potential for violence. These women

were attracted to, enjoyed, or sought out high levels of stimulation similar to those who enjoy the intensity provided by skydiving, mountain climbing, or racing. Each is inherently dangerous but individuals engage in these activities for the emotional and physical thrills. Intensity in relationships may be similar. This line of inquiry could suggest possible explanations why certain couples get together. Battering relationships may represent an extreme in the continuum of men and women's need for stimulation and excitement.

Battering men's extreme and sudden changes in mood or emotion were found to be an important characteristic of the chaos present in battering relationships. These "contextual shifts" created great disparity and confusion in women because they experienced both intensely great and intensely terrifying moments in their relationships. Concepts similar to "contextual shifts" have been identified by others as an important characteristic in women's experience of violence. Dutton and Painter (1993) concluded that "intermittency", the problematic juxtaposition of positive and negative behaviors; domination; and severity of abuse were significantly correlated with symptoms of the "battered woman syndrome". Their conclusions question the adequacy of Walker's Cycle of Violence (1979, 1984) in explaining the battering process because it implies the use of violence is predictable and mood-driven. "It appears that it is the extremity and juxtaposition of positive and negative behavior that contribute to battered women syndrome, rather than the predictability of abuse per se"

(Dutton and Painter, 1993, p. 620). They propose that "intermittency" is a significant factor contributing to women's low self-esteem, social withdrawal, and learned helplessness.

More important, Dutton and Painter proposed that "intermittency" was responsible for women's strong and continuing attachment to their abusive partners. However, Campbell (1989a) found that battered women had as much difficulty in ending intimate relationships as non-battered women. The present study also found men's contextual shifts and the resulting disparity women experienced between the coexistence of positive and negative experiences caused women to remain in their relationship working to improve them by providing the hope that their partners could change. "Contextual shifts" are part of many women's relationship experiences and serve to prolong processes of separation for women in unsatisfying relationships but are not unique to battered women or the cause of pathological conditions such as traumatic bonding as Dutton and Painter have suggested.

Care must be used in interpreting the similarities between Dutton and Painter's study and the present study on danger. Dutton and Painter mistakenly assumes characteristics resulting from exposure to violence to be symptoms of pathology or self-destructive coping mechanisms (Campbell, 1990). The present study found that the "contextual shifts" in their relationships lead women to

emotionally dissociate from their partners or compartmentalize their experiences in order continue functioning in their world of chaos and violence.

Substance and alcohol use by abusive partners was a universal condition warning women of increasing danger and potential violence that warrants additional discussion. Substance abuse by battering men was a pervasive topic in women's accounts of violence. Women's perceptions of the risk associated with partners' drug and alcohol use support findings that drug and alcohol use are a significant factor in battering (Kantor & Straus, 1990). Based on data from a nationally representative survey of 5,159 couples, Kantor and Straus found that heavy alcohol users had two to three times the rates of assaulting their wives than did husbands who abstained. But it is important to note that drinking immediately preceded violence in only about a quarter of assaults against wives. Interpreting the relationship of alcohol to wife battering must be done carefully. Eighty percent of the men in the high alcohol use category had not hit their wives in the previous year. The finding that partners' drug and alcohol use was associated with increased perceptions of danger and potential violence may represent the extreme examples of violence experienced by the women participating in this study. More importantly, drug and alcohol use may represent a tangible explanation which women can use to make sense of episodes of erratic violence. Intoxication was not the primary cause of violence, but it served as a major signal warning women of increasing danger.

Decreasing Danger by Staying in the Relationship

An important finding of this study was that women often stayed to maintain what little control they had of their partner and circumstances outside the relationship. Leaving battering relationships did not necessarily end the violence or women's sense of danger. Most women had considered the possibility of permanently leaving their violent relationships but feared their partners would follow through on their threats to kill them and their families. Women feared their partners would "come and get them" if they left and in fact several women participating in this study reported being stalked by their ex-husbands or ex-boyfriends. Battering men often threatened to kill their wives and girlfriends if they ever left and women believed they were capable of carrying out their death threats. These fears are supported by research that found women were much more likely to be killed by their husbands after separating than when living together (Wilson & Daly, 1993). Some women chose to remain in abusive relationships where they could monitor their partners emotional state, prepare themselves, and exercise some control over their partners behaviors rather than leaving and living in fear of every shadow or noise.

Women's perceptions of danger transcended the physical violence experienced in the relationship. Physical violence was one extreme on a continuum of violences. Women who had never been hit by their partners,

reported experiencing a sense of danger and fear for their safety from his verbal and emotional abuse alone. Verbally abusive men had many of the same characteristics as battering men and often threatened to physically harm their wives and girlfriends. Because of their partners' unpredictable, tormenting, and manipulative behaviors women believed their partners' threats were possible. Women also feared they were more vulnerable to street crimes if they were single rather than in a relationships.

Women's fear of being a victim of crime helped maintain battering relationships. In most cases women considered it safer and more predictable to stay at home with a batterer where they knew what to expect than to live on the street. Women experience a sense of vulnerability, danger, and fear of victimization in public (Stanko, 1987, 1988). Through the popular media, women perceive themselves at greater risk of being a victim of crime than men (Stanko, 1988). Many women felt they were more vulnerable to crime without the protection of a man. Therefore, their relationships with men, even when the relationships were bad, offered some degree of protection and safety. The violence at home was somehow manageable compared to the unpredictability of street violence. The theory of Predicting Unpredictability has potential application to women's experiences of living with the fear of crime.

Social Conditions Sanctioning Violence Against Women

Violence in intimate relationships reflects the uneven distribution of power and social norms condoning violence that are present in the larger society. Use of violence is one of several means of oppressing others to maintain a hierarchical order. "Violence has come to be seen as a socially-produced and often socially-legitimated cultural phenomenon, rather than the 'natural' expression of biological drives or an innate male characteristic" (Edwards, 1989, p 26). The use of violent and nonviolent means of controlling women are determined by the larger cultural and social structures that condones men's violence against women (Gagne, 1992). In addition to the effectiveness of violence in establishing social control, Gagne described the effects of low wages, stagnate working opportunities, and lack of child care that severely constrained and controlled women's lives and reflected the sexism in both society and marriage. Women have been socialized to defer to men's persuasiveness such that forced parenthood and withholding of transportation further limit and control women's opportunities.

Male social control of women is a normal part of women's everyday life (Green, Hebron, & Woodward, 1989). Generally this control is seen as natural and legitimate, particularly within marriage. Women live with the fear of violence if they resist men's authority or governance. Processes of Predicting Unpredictability are exaggerated because of violence but reflect processes which

most women engage in their daily communication with their male partners.

Because of status differences between men and women, socialization to avoid conflict, and fear of violence, women will often suddenly defer to men, concede, change the subject, or blame themselves for erring. These processes are similar to the exaggerated processes practiced by women in violent relationships.

Future research is needed to examine the ways in which the theory of Predicting Unpredictability can be extended to other aspects of women's lives.

Limitations and Strengths of the Research

The data for this study was obtained from interviews of women discussing their experiences in past or current relationships with abusive men. Accuracy of recall and distortions in memory were possible problems in interviewing women about past intense and traumatic personal experiences. Participants were limited to discussing abuse experiences in the previous five years to enhance accuracy of memory recall. Because women's perspectives of their relationships change over time, women who were currently living in battering relationships as well as those who had escaped were interviewed so the data would capture both the urgency of living in a battering relationship and the insight that women gained with time and distance from abusive relationships. This study examined women's experiences. There were no interviews of battering partners, friends, or

associates. Therefore, care must be used in drawing conclusions about the motives and actions of battering partners or others.

Women recruited into this study were living in the community and able to respond to the newspaper advertisements. This sampling strategy excluded those women living in extremely violent, controlled, or isolated relationships whose experiences of danger differ in important ways from women who have the flexibility to read the paper, use the telephone, and attend an interview. Additional factors such as lack of childcare, transportation, and work excluded other women from participating. Finally, no women were interviewed who had killed or severely injured their partners. These subgroups of women theoretically represent variations in level and intensity in their experiences of danger. Attempts to address this limitation were made by changing the protocol to include telephone interviews with women who could not leave home because of their partners control and by interviewing women who had escaped extremely violent relationships in the preceding five years.

Because of safety concerns and difficulties in scheduling group interviews, participants were interviewed only once which limited the range of experiences women could address. Interviewing women multiple times could have allowed more in-depth exploration of experience by each interview building on the previous one. Group process is an important part of group interviews and must be preserved in designs using multiple group interviews. Introducing new

members or reconstituting groups negates any advantage of multiple interviews because of the disruption of group process. Multiple interviews are not necessarily a reliable means of comparing the consistency of participants stories because in-depth interviews are constructed through the specific interaction of participants and researcher (Sandelowski, 1993). Both participants' and researchers' perceptions are changed as a consequence of participating in the interview so perspectives and as a result insights will differ in subsequent interviews.

The most significant conceptual limitation of this study was the exclusion of questions probing the role of children in women's assessment and response to danger. Discussing the many of ways children affect parental decisions was avoided because of the ethical dilemma of promising participants confidentiality in the face of legal and ethical mandates to report known or suspected cases of child abuse. When confronted with violence, women's decisions are influenced by their perceptions of their children's needs (Henderson, 1990; personal communication Janice Humphreys, Oct. 1993). The presence of children is an important condition influencing women's assessment of danger and at the same time one that limits women's options in responding to the danger. The area of children's roles in women's perceptions of danger warrants further research.

The strengths of the study are the strengths of grounded theory to identify and describe interactional processes that are grounded in the experiences of

those being studied. Theoretical sampling of experiences and phenomena were used to build variation into the emerging concepts and categories. Sampling was completed when the core categories were saturated, that is, no new concepts or codes were found in the data. As a result of theoretical sampling, the sampling criteria were expanded to include women who were verbally and emotionally battered but not physically battered because of data suggesting their perceptions of danger were similar to those women who had been physically beaten. Theoretical sampling was limited to the substantive area of battered women. Therefore, the theory of Predicting Unpredictability is representative of women's processes of assessing danger in abusive intimate relationships.

The sample was racially diverse and reflected the racial composition of San Francisco with the exception of Asian women. The lack of participation by women of Asian decent may be explained in part because public discourse of private family matters, such as violence, remains a cultural taboo (personal communication, Debbie Lee, Dec, 1993). Except for occasional references to the difficulties of interracial relationships, no analytically important demographic variations emerged from the analysis. However, specific cultural and ethnic variations in the theory of Predicting Unpredictability need further exploration. While woman battering is common across cultures and races, there are important racial differences, for example; spouses of interracial marriages are at higher risk of homicide (Mercy & Saltzman, 1989), familial confrontations more

often end in homicide in African-American families than in European-American families (Stark, 1990), and Mexican-American women in one study tolerated higher levels of abuse and had different perceptions of what constituted abuse than European-American women (Torres, 1991). Porter and Villarruel (1993) have outlined conceptual and methodological issues unique to conducting research in ethnic populations and have suggested ways of adequately including minority cultural and ethnic perspectives in research.

Using small interview groups provided a safe, supportive, and efficient environment for women to discuss intense and personal experiences. The small groups allowed women to discuss with one another similarities and differences in their experiences. The technique of asking women to tell their experiences of violence as a narrative allowed women to focus on their most salient experiences of danger and discuss issues central to their experiences rather than answering a series of questions asked by the moderator. However, the concept of danger was introduced by the moderator in the initial question and may have distorted women's perceptions of danger by focusing them on experiences using a preconceived idea of danger.

Interview data differed between individual or group interviews. Data generated from group interviews was broader and provided a richer description of conditions, strategies, and consequences because of the multiple examples

provided by the interactions of women in a group. Individual interviews provided greater depth and detail on fewer topics.

One of the risks in qualitative analysis is premature closure of categories or overlooking important concepts because of immersion in the data. Two strategies used in this study to guard against these threats were the investigator's participation in an analysis group and the use of member validation interviews. Throughout the duration of the study, the researcher was a member of an ongoing analysis group that met regularly to analyze data, discuss concepts and categories, review memos, construct diagrams, and read chapter drafts. The function of the analysis group was to suggest alternatives and ask questions of the researcher about the data and analysis. It was then the responsibility of the researcher to incorporate, discard, or revise the analysis based on the input of the group.

Member validation was used to check "members" impressions of the analysis for completeness and representiveness. Member validation of the framework Predicting Unpredictability generally confirmed the analysis and involved minor modifications. There are potential problems in using member validation in grounded theory. Participants may not recognize their individual experiences as part of a more abstract theoretical framework (Emerson & Pollner, 1988; Sandelowski, 1993). Similarly, participants in validation groups may not point out to the researcher discrepancies between the analysis and their

experiences. Like the analysis group, the researcher decided how to incorporate, discard, or revise the analysis based on the member validation.

Contributions to the Field of Violence Against Women

There is extensive literature in the field of violence against women on why women stay in battering relationships. Much of this research tries to explain the seemingly illogical behaviors of battered women by focusing on their internal traits. This study begins to address the complex question of "how women experience their day-to-day lives within the context of a violent relationship". The focus of this study was the phenomena of "living with danger" and its consequences as an interactional psycho-social process rather than a psychological process.

The theoretical framework described in this study adds to the growing body of research focusing on women's personal strengths in the context of domestic violence (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988; Gordon, 1988; Hoff, 1990; Landenburger, 1989; Ulrich, 1991). It depicts women as actively manipulating their environments to promote their own safety rather than being the often stereotyped passive or helpless victims. Women in this study were astute, sophisticated, and observant in their interactions with violent partners.

The discovery of social chaos and women's processes of Predicting Unpredictability prompt a re-examination of currently accepted psychological

theories of battered women such as Learned Helplessness and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These current theories risk pathologizing women rather than seeking to understand their behaviors within the context of their lives. Alternative frameworks are needed to guide research and clinical practice if battered women's behaviors are to be understood.

Re-examining Learned Helplessness and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Learned Helplessness.

Learned helplessness remains a predominate theory used in both research and clinical practice to explain battered women's apparent passive behaviors. Learned Helplessness theory suggests that repeated violence and battered women's unsuccessful attempts to alter that violence produce hopelessness, helplessness, passivity, and depression. Women's repeated unsuccessful attempts to either escape or stop the violence diminish their motivation to respond (Walker, 1979, 1984). In a grounded theory study of women using a shelter, Newman (1993) described the phenomena of women returning to their batterers as "giving up". A finding that was very similar to Learned Helplessness. She concluded that women seeking refuge in a shelter found it easier to return to their batterer than to seek alternatives because of "helplessness" and fear of the unknown.

The Learned Helplessness model has led to research focusing on women's coping capacities. Coping capacity includes specific strategies for managing

one's emotions, obtaining support, problem-solving, and changing environment variables. Research on coping found many battered women had experienced violence in their families of origin, had low self-esteem, were socially isolated, had poor problem-solving skills, were passive, and had limited economic opportunities (Launius & Lindquist, 1988; Nurius, Furrey, & Berliner, 1992). These studies of women's coping were conducted using women in shelters where it could be argued that situational characteristics of crisis might temporarily alter women's coping abilities. In addition, the studies provided one-time measurements using a variety of questionnaires. It is assumed that documenting women's coping deficits could lead to interventions for correcting those deficits which would assist women in overcoming the learned helplessness so they could leave their battering partners.

The Learned Helplessness model has been criticized for its inaccurate and incomplete portrayal of women's strength and courage under extremely dangerous conditions (Bowker, 1993). In fact, women's help-seeking behaviors have been noted to increase as the level of violence and danger increases (Bowker, 1983, Gondolf & Fisher, 1988, Hoff, 1990). Characteristics often associated with Learned Helplessness; low self-esteem, depression, powerlessness, and poor problem-solving skills have been alternatively explained using Grief and Loss frameworks (Campbell, 1989a). Women in battering

relationships face many losses including the loss of trust and safety, self-esteem, body image, and their dreams of the ideal marriage and intimacy.

Learned Helplessness theory focuses on deficits rather than women's strengths and creative abilities to survive. Women use different combinations of personal strategies and outside resources to resist their husbands violence until they were able to free themselves (Bowker, 1983, 1993; Gondolf & Fisher, 1988; Follingstad, House, Rutledge, & Polek, 1992). Bowker (1983) found women used the following strategies to end the violence; talking men out of using violence or making them promise not to use violence, avoiding the men or certain topics, running away or hiding, threatening to call the police or file for divorce, and physically fighting back. The strategies women used to respond to threats of danger in the present study, avoidance, engagement, leaving, and enlisting the help of others, were very similar to the list of strategies women used end violence in Bowker's study.

Unlike the women in the present study who felt their actions had little effect in preventing their partners' violence, other research found women perceived their sanctions on the abuser produced cessation of the violence and that their actions were necessary to end the abuse (Bowker, 1983, 1993; Gondolf & Fisher, 1988; Follingstad, House, Rutledge, & Polek, 1992). The difference in findings might be explained by these other studies emphasizing strategies that ended the violence. In the present study of danger, women were asked to tell of

an experience of danger without regard to worst case or last case of violence. Even though many women in this study felt they had little or no control over the violence they continued monitoring and responding to their partners' cues of possible violence. Women learned through their experience of violence was that external supports such as family, friends, and the police had limited abilities to stop the violence and could not be counted on for assistance. Therefore, the responsibility for women's safety depended on the women's creativity and resourcefulness.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

There is much clinical attention currently being given Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and its application in understanding battered women. PTSD focuses on the psycho-physiological consequences of experiencing or witnessing traumatizing events such as, rape, assault, disasters, or war. The consequences of witnessing or being a survivor of violence can change individuals' personalities. Changes such as hypervigilance, dissociation, and emotional numbing have been observed in studies of battered women staying in shelters (Houskamp & Foy, 1991; Kemp, Rawlings, & Green, 1991; Walker, 1993). These findings have prompted inclusion battering in discussions of PTSD . Walker (1984, 1991) has argued the presence of these symptoms in battered women make-up a subclassification of PTSD called "the battered woman syndrome". However, there is still little research examining battering of women

in relation to PTSD and the adequacy of including battered woman syndrome as a subclassification of PTSD (Woods & Campbell, 1993).

PTSD has generally been conceptualized as the result of clearly circumscribed events of relatively short duration such as disasters or rape. PTSD is acontextual, treating all types of violence equally. It does not differentiate types of violence or meanings associated with violence such as being assaulted or raped by a loved one. Herman (1992) hypothesized that prolonged or intermittent exposure to violence such as battering, may have more devastating consequences than PTSD including enduring personality changes and high risk of repeated harm either self-inflicted or at the hands of others. Many battered women experience severe consequences from violence, low self-esteem, depression, and suicidal ideation that require long-term assistance. PTSD offers a legitimate explanation for women's often unexplainable behaviors that are the result of traumatic stress. Unfortunately, uncritical acceptance of diagnostic criteria such as PTSD risks further pathologizes women by again focusing on the physical and psychological disorders created by violence and on treating those disorders rather than trying to understand women's behaviors within the bizarre and illogical context of battering.

The Predicting Unpredictability theory introduced in this study conceptualized women's responses to the recurrent pattern of battering as logical, purposeful, and necessary for their survival and protection. These

findings are supported by Campbell's (1989a) assertion that behaviors demonstrated by battered women may be normative responses to violent situations. It is noteworthy that the characteristics of emotional chaos expressed by women in this study share labels such as dissociating, numbing, and hypervigilance with those of PTSD. However, the mechanism of these constructs is different. PTSD emphasizes these characteristics as the consequences of violence while Predicting Unpredictability emphasizes their origins as women's conscious and unconscious survival strategies. The major difference between the two models is that the focus of intervention and understanding using PTSD is on women's personality. The focus of intervention and understanding using Predicting Unpredictability is on the social and emotional chaos created by battering men.

The meanings given to violence are absent in both Learned Helplessness and PTSD theories. Both models give inadequate consideration to the implications of the social and cultural acceptance of violence or the consequence of being a woman in a society that condones many forms of violence against women on behaviors. This study provides an alternative explanation and theoretical perspective in understanding women's behaviors within violent relationships. Understanding violence against women involves more than merely measuring physical or psychiatric sequela or levels of violence. Living with such chaos and violence, women developed complex and sophisticated knowledge of

their partners and engaged in complex processes to protect themselves and others. These processes have important implications for practice, education, policy, and research.

Implications

Nursing Practice and Education

The implications of this study suggest changes in the practice and education of nurses giving care to survivors of domestic violence. These implications are: (a) danger assessment should be expanded to include characteristics of social chaos, women's knowledge of their partners' behavior patterns, and women's own perceptions of their danger, (b) interventions by nurses should identify women's strengths and support their efforts to control the violence within the relationship, (c) prevention programs targeting teens and young adults could focus on interactional characteristics of danger in teaching men and women to avoid violent relationships, and (d) education about violence against women must be required in all levels of nursing education.

Assessing danger.

Assessing women's safety and exposure to violence should be part of every history-taking interview. McFarlane, Parker, Soeken, and Bullock (1992) found that combining three questions about physical abuse, abuse during pregnancy, and forced sexual activities within the past year increased

identification of battered women seventeen percent. Adding the question "Do you feel safe at home?" to nursing assessments might increase identification further. This question would identify subgroups of women who feel they are in danger but may not be physically battered. Women who were verbally or psychologically battered expressed feelings of fear and danger similar to women who were physically abused. Like physically battered women they believed their partners were capable of carrying out their repeated threats of violence. Psychologically battered women could benefit from the same interventions given physically battered women.

The primary intervention for women once they have disclosed being battered is assessment of danger. In addition to using the DAS (Campbell, 1986; Stuart and Campbell, 1989), the following areas about social interaction should be assessed as risk factors: (a) the extent to which women have identified patterns of behavior in their partners and are able to monitor those behaviors, (b) the degree of social and emotional isolation, (c) the number and effectiveness of strategies women use to avert or delay violence, and (d) women's overall perceptions of their danger. Assessment of women's ability to monitor their partners is essential in assessing their risk and developing an "escape plan". Inhibiting women's ability to assess their level danger is not having enough time or experience in the relationship to develop knowledge of

their partners' warning signs and triggering events. Most importantly assessment of danger should rely on women's own perceptions of their danger or safety.

In assessing risk in violent relationships, it is important to take seriously the women's fears and perceptions of the danger. Despite abused women's tendencies to understate the severity of their experiences and skip the details of the more bizarre and embarrassing incidences, they are extremely knowledgeable about the patterns of violence in their relationships. Professionals confronted with these cases should make use of the woman's expertise; her ability, when encouraged, to assess the degree of risk she is facing; and her experience in predicting when another assault seems imminent. Without some knowledge of the history of violence, recommendations or interventions by outsiders may be highly inappropriate for the situation, and may actually serve to exacerbate the aggression and further endanger the lives of those involved (Browne, 1987, p. 183-184).

Supporting women's efforts.

Nursing care of battered women must support and build on women's strengths including; knowledge of their partners, keen powers of observation, creative adaptive abilities, and strict control over their physical and emotional responses. Clinicians must assume battered women are the experts in assessing and responding to changes in their partners potential for violence. Viewing battered women as the expert requires a change in treatment philosophy from the current practices of diagnosing and treating women's psychological symptoms. In the past, behaviors such as avoidance, resistance in telling others of the violence, and emotional distance have distanced nurses from battered women (Kurz, 1987). Instead, these behaviors should be considered essential strategies women have developed to survive their hostile world.

Non-supportive approaches by nurses pressuring women to prematurely leave battering relationships alienate and distance women from using health care providers as a help source. In addition, it trivializes the skills and knowledge women possess. Many battered women struggled with the desire to leave the relationship and most had carefully weighed the risks and benefits of leaving. Women are justified in fearing that leaving their battering partner would put them in greater danger. It is inappropriate in most cases for nurses to expect women to leave such potentially dangerous situations without careful detailed preparation.

Prevention.

This study provided important data on interactional and behavioral characteristics of violent relationships. With this data, prevention programs targeting adolescents and young adults could be developed to teach both women and men how to avoid violent relationships. Particularly in adolescents the very characteristics of social chaos that are potential indicators of danger; jealousy, drug and alcohol use, unpredictability, and intensity are characteristics considered desirable and central to their intimate relationships. After reviewing the literature on teen violence, Girskick (1993) concluded alcohol and jealousy were the most common causes of dating violence. Many young women do not consider their boyfriends' alcohol use, intensity, unpredictability, and jealousy as potential warning signs of violence until they are given the context through

experience. Early school-based or church-based interventions for young women could teach them to notice high risk behaviors in advance. Likewise, interventions with men could target specific behaviors and sexist patriarchal attitudes for potential change. Interventions with adolescents and young adults have the potential to change their intimate relationships.

Education.

Nurses and other health care providers have been the least effective resource for women experiencing violence (Bowker & Maurer, 1987). This in part can be attributed to health professionals receiving little formal education on issues related to domestic violence, seeing violence as a social rather than a medical problem, and frustration in treating survivors of domestic violence. Nurses at all levels of practice need to be educated in assessing and intervening in battering. Educational approaches should emphasize violence as a social interaction and women's behaviors as survival strategies.

At the undergraduate level basic assessment and intervention of violence should be required for accreditation of all schools of nursing. Questions concerning survivors of domestic violence should be included on the licensing examination. Likewise, most nurses in advanced practice, especially nurses treating women, nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, pediatric or psychiatric nurse specialist, and women's health clinical specialists need advanced assessment and intervention skills. There is a sufficient body of research to

support the need for advanced practice nurses specializing in the area of violence against women because of its devastating and complex ethical, legal, and health-related sequela.

Policy

The policy implications resulting from this research focus mostly on the battering men. The primary objectives of policy must be stopping men's violence against women while at the same time continuing to provide the necessary resources to shelter and support women.

Mens' treatment.

Men control the violence and chaos in battering relationships. Violence, more specifically social chaos, is a constellation of behaviors. Therefore, treatment and research on domestic violence must change from treating violence as an isolated problem to providing a comprehensive treatment program for men based on this and other research findings. The frequency and problems associated with drug and alcohol use that emerged from these data make a compelling argument that men's violence treatment programs should include or at least require participants to undergo concurrent substance abuse treatment. One of the participants, Carol, strongly advocated for residential violence treatment programs modeled after residential drug treatment programs. Using this residential treatment model would, allow men to go work, avoid the problems associated with jail time, give their wives and girlfriends a much

needed break, allow authorities to better monitor and control their treatment, and allow better enforcement of terms of probation for those court-ordered into treatment.

Police intervention.

Police intervention remains an important intervention for battered women. The effectiveness of police intervention in reducing the prevalence of violence is currently being debated (Buzawa & Buzawa, 1993). But the police were one resource women used frequently. The immediate effect of police intervention was to abruptly stop a violent situation that was escalating out of control and by doing so potentially save the lives of many women and their batterers. In addition, many men were intimidated and therefore responsive to police intervention, they feared staying in jail or the effects an arrest might have on their work or status in the community. As representatives of the state, the police department's aggressive response to domestic violence sends the community the message that domestic violence is not acceptable. Policy should continue to promote aggressive police arrest and detain procedures, anti-stalking legislation, enforcement of parole and treatment violations for men already convicted of battering, and continued attempts at gun control.

Services for women survivors.

Many women experienced difficulty developing new relationships after having been in a battering relationship. The effects of violence and emotional

chaos were associated with long-term difficulties trusting other people, continuing to be isolated because of poor self-esteem or depression, and continuing to never feel safe (Bergman & Brismar, 1991; Dutton & Painter, 1993). Providing reimbursable services for women who have been battered must continue to be a priority in promoting women's mental and physical health and recovery.

Future Research

This research has generated as many questions as it has answered. Many of those issues needing further research have been discussed in the preceding pages. Of primary importance are further studies developing, validating, and applying the theory of Predicting Unpredictability. These studies would further explore the concepts such as danger, chaos, and intensity. Intensity emerged from this study as an unexplored and potentially important concept in battering relationships. Further studies are needed to explore the role of intensity in developing and maintaining battering relationships.

The theory of Predicting Unpredictability needs to be applied to other chaotic family forms such as incestuous, alcoholic, or mentally ill families. Of particular interest in chaotic families are processes children use to cope with family life. Applying the theory to other family forms could highlight conceptual similarities and differences in the concepts of unpredictability or intensity. Some of this work could begin immediately using secondary analysis of data already

collected or through "meta-analysis" of recurring central concepts such as unpredictability, chaos, or avoidance.

This study focused exclusively on women's experiences in battering relationships. Portions of the theory could be enhanced and expanded through discovering men's perspectives of their use of chaos and violence. It has been suggested that different typologies of men's violence exist and that women's responses to danger might differ based on the typology (Saunders, 1992). In future research, "dangerousness" could become the variable used to examine severity of injuries, frequency of health visits, readiness to change or leave the relationship, or differentiate between types of violent relationships. Qualitative interviews of men in treatment could provide further insight into danger. In addition, interviewing friends and family members of battered women would allow better understanding of the processes that enhance or inhibit needed social support to battered women.

An important question that remains after this research was what enabling and constraining influences do children have on women's processes of monitoring and responding to danger. Research providing the appropriate protection to women and their children should focus on modifications in processes of Predicting Unpredictability caused by women's protection of their children.

Further research is needed on danger assessment which could assist clinicians in more accurately assessing and intervening with battered women. Additional characteristics emerging from this study such as physical distance, fear, isolation and tormenting should be added to current danger assessment protocols. Sheridan's is developing the Harassment Scale (HARASS) using concepts similar to those of social chaos to measure levels of harassment in addition to physical violence (Campbell, McKenna, Torres, Sheridan, & Landenburger, 1993). Development of this scale is just beginning so there are no published reports of its reliability or validity. The potential of this scale to measure dangerousness warrants further study.

Finally, research into the processes women use to explain and understand their violence experience would provide important methodological information about interviewing and research involving battered women. Research exploring the "dilemmas of telling the story" discussed in chapter III could suggest ways of improving the research to better answer such questions as, "How do women reconstruct their past traumatic experiences?" and "Why do aspects of their relationships become more troubling as women gain more perspective and distance on the relationships?"

Summary

An estimated 1.8 million women are severely battered each year by their partners. The impact of woman battering on health care is significant. Domestic violence accounts for approximately 27,700 emergency department and 39,000 physician visits each year costing approximately \$44,393,700 (McLeer & Anwar, 1987). Furthermore, approximately one in ten women encountered in any health care setting who are in intimate heterosexual relationships are survivors of abuse by their male partners (Sampsel, 1991). Yet, despite these alarming statistics, there is little content concerning domestic violence in the educational curriculum of most health professions (Centers for Disease Control, 1989; Hendricks-Matthews, 1991) or identification and assessment of danger by clinicians of battered women in medical settings. This study investigated how battered women assessed changing levels of danger in their relationships.

This research used grounded theory methodology to explore women's experiences of danger in battering relationships. A theory of Predicting Unpredictability emerged explaining women's processes of simultaneously monitoring and responding to physical and behavioral cues of increasing danger in the context of social and emotional chaos. Processes of Predicting Unpredictability included delaying tactics, harm reduction, and protection aimed at providing temporary, often fleeting, relief but which did not result in the cessation of violence. The findings of this study present battered women as

intelligent, sophisticated, observant, and actively manipulating their environment. These findings challenge the stereotypes of battered women as passive helpless victims. The theory of Predicting Unpredictability can enhance both women's and clinician's understanding of battering and improve their ability to assess levels of danger. It can be used by clinicians to develop domestic violence prevention programs.

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APPENDIX A

Initial Contact Screening Form

Danger Study
CHR No. H1990-08177-01

University of California, San Francisco
School of Nursing

David Langford RN, MS
Doctoral Candidate
Principal Investigator
Catherine Gilliss RN, DNSc
Associate Professor
Sponsor

Dept. Family Health Care Nursing
Box 0606
San Francisco, CA 94143
(415) 476-9602

Telephone Screening Interview

Is it safe to talk for about 10 minutes? N Y

(Introduce study from information sheet)

For purposes of assembling groups of women who are somewhat similar, I need to ask for the following information. This sheet will be destroyed after the group meetings.

Name: _____

Contact Date: _____

Age: _____

Income: _____ /yr /mo

City: _____

Neighborhood: _____

Currently in battering relationship: N Y

Length of time in battering relationship: _____

Where did you see the ad: _____

It is possible that if you discuss this study with your partner, he may become angry. I would like you to tell me the safest way notify you of the times and places of the group interviews.

Is there a safe time/place to call you? N Y

Times: _____

Days: _____

Person to contact: _____

Phone #: _____

Available times to meet: _____

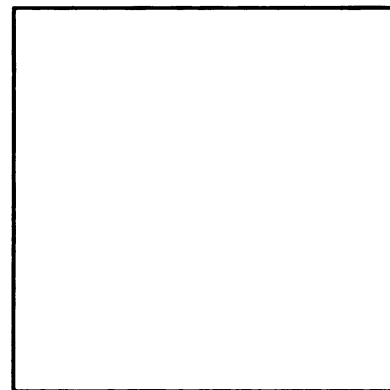
Eligibility		
<input type="radio"/> > 18 yrs. old	<input type="radio"/> relationship with a man	<input type="radio"/> battered in past 5 yrs.
<input type="radio"/> English speaking		

APPENDIX B
Informed Consent

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO
INFORMATION SHEET FOR DANGER STUDY**

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

David Langford RN is a nurse and doctoral student at UCSF School of Nursing. He is conducting a research study on women's perceptions of danger and safety in abusive relationships and how they respond to it.



B. PROCEDURES

You are being asked to participate in an interview that will last about 2 hours. The interview will be recorded on audiotape and transcribed. During that time the following will occur.

1. You will be part of a 5 woman group interview about your experiences in a relationship where your man was violent toward you.
2. You will be asked to complete a short two part questionnaire concerning you and your relationship with the abusive partner.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop the discussion at any time. This is not a support group. If you desire, information about support groups will be available.
2. Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, all records will be handled as confidentially as possible. Only Mr. Langford and those directly associated with the study will have access to the interview transcripts and audiotapes. No individual identities will appear in the transcripts or be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. Materials will be kept in locked files. The screening information you gave will be destroyed at the completion of the group interview.
3. In this state the law requires that nurses report suspected child abuse to protective services. Therefore, if you choose to talk about child abuse in your home during the interview, it will have to be reported. If that happens, Mr. Langford will talk to you further about the reporting process.

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, it is anticipated that the information you provide may help other battered women and health professionals better understand women's responses to danger in battering relationships.

E. COSTS

There will be no costs to you as a result of taking part in this study. You will be paid \$10.00 for participating in this study. If you decide to withdraw before the end of the interview, you will receive the \$10.00 payment. You will be paid in cash immediately following the interview.

G. QUESTIONS

If you have further questions, you may call Mr. Langford at (415) 476-4745 or write him at UCSF School of Nursing, N337, Box 0604, San Francisco, CA 94143-0604. If you wish, you may contact his professor, Dr. Catherine Gilliss, who is working with him on this study. Her phone and address are: (415) 476-4433, UCSF School of Nursing, Department of Family Health Care Nursing, N411Y, Box 0606, San Francisco, CA 94143.

If for some reason you do not wish to talk to the investigator, you may contact the Committee on Human Research, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the committee office between 8:00 and 5:00, Monday through Friday by writing to:

*Committee on Human Research
Box 0962, University of California, San Francisco
San Francisco, CA 94143*

or by calling (415) 476-1814.

H. CONSENT

As a further protection of confidentiality, you will not be asked to sign a written consent form. Your willingness to participate indicates consent. You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep if you desire.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on any present or future associations with UCSF.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study.

APPENDIX C
Interview Guide

Group Interview Guide

- I. Welcome participants/introductions
- II. Review project purpose - Examine danger and safety in relationships where your man is violent towards you.
- III. Review ground rules:
 - A. No right or wrong answers.
 - B. Want to hear as many points of view about your experiences as possible.
 - C. Session tape recorded, please talk one at a time or it is hard to understand. In addition, if you use names, please use first names only.
 - D. I am looking for you to teach me what you have learned.
- IV. START TAPE RECORDER
- V. Start by each of you **defining** what you consider to be violence/danger.
- VI. **1st open-ended question:** "I'd like you to talk about a time when you felt you were in danger in your relationship." "What happened before, during and after."
Contrast question: "I'd like you to talk about a time when you felt safe in your relationship."
 A. Prompts
 1. "How did you know you were in danger?" or "How did you know you were safe?"
 2. What did you do when you realized you were in danger?
 3. "How did you prepare for violence?"
 4. How did you monitor/predict the violence - what to watch for, how observant must one be
- VII. Focusing topics to be explored with groups [TOPICS EMERGING FROM PREVIOUS GROUPS] [GIVE EXAMPLES]
 - A. is it fear or something else. what makes you fearful
 - B. when did you first see the pattern of unpredictability or predictability
 - C. how does he control your behavior?
 - D. is it the unpredictability that creates the fear
 - E. what are the most dangerous things/times you notice at home? What do you do?
 1. availability of weapons / yours & his substance use
 2. times such as holidays, weekends, sports events
- VIII. **To get back on track:** "I've heard from others that X; I wonder what the rest of you have to say." Or "How does Y fit into the picture.
- IX. Summaries: Asking group members to provide summary statements
- X. How participants are feeling, referral to resources
- XI. Conclusion, demographics sheet, payment, and Thank you.

APPENDIX D
Demographic Questionnaire

Danger Study
CHR No. H1990-08177-01

University of California, San Francisco
School of Nursing

David Langford RN, MS
Doctoral Candidate
Principal Investigator
Catherine Gilliss RN, DNSc
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Dept. Family Health Care Nursing
Box 0606
San Francisco, CA 94143
(415) 476-9602

Danger Study Demographic Sheet

Part I

1. Age: _____ yrs
2. Race: _____
3. Income: \$ _____ /yr /mo
4. Occupation: _____
5. Zip code: _____ (*optional*)
6. Are you currently in a battering relationship? N Y
7. Have you been in a battering relationship prior to your current relationship? N Y
8. How long ago were you in the battering relationship? _____ yrs mos
9. How frequently were you hit?
 - a. weekly
 - b. monthly
 - c. every 2 or 3 months
 - d. twice a year
 - e. once a year
10. Rate the severity of the hitting
 - a. pushed and shoved
 - b. hit with fists and/or kicked
 - c. hit with objects such as the telephone, lamps, chairs
 - d. threatened with knives or guns
 - e. injured by knives or guns
11. Did you ever require medical care as the result of a fight? N Y

XII.

Part II

(circle one, continues next page)

No Yes Is there a gun in the house?

- No Yes Has your husband (partner) ever forced you to have sex when you did not wish to do so?
- No Yes Does your husband (partner) use drugs?
- No Yes Is your husband (partner) violent outside the home?
- No Yes Does your husband (partner) threaten to kill you and/or do you believe he is capable of killing you?
- No Yes Is your husband (partner) drunk every day or almost every day?
- No Yes Does your husband (partner) control most or all of your daily activities?
- No Yes Have you been beaten by your husband (partner) while you were pregnant? (If never pregnant mark 0 _____)
- No Yes Is your husband (partner) violently and constantly jealous of you?
- No Yes Have you ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
- No Yes Has your husband (partner) ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?

Thank you for participating.

APPENDIX E

Modified Protocol Criteria for Individual and Telephone Interviews

Criteria for Individual Interviews

To reduce the significant attrition rate that has been occurring because of the time lapse between initial contact and the scheduled group interviews, individual interviews will be considered an alternative in the following circumstances.

It may take two or more weeks to coordinate a meeting time that is convenient for a group of four to five women. In the time it takes to schedule a group many of the women who are interested have found employment, have other commitments or can no longer be reached because they have moved, changed their phone numbers or disconnected their phones. And when a group is scheduled to meet, it is common for only one or two of the participants scheduled for an interview to show-up. In addition, a couple of women have asked for individual interviews because they feel too vulnerable sharing their experiences in a group. Group interviews will continue to be the primary means of interviewing participants. There will be no change in future advertisements to include individual interviews. The following criteria further define the use of individual interviews.

1. The option of an individual interview will be offered during the screening interview if a woman requests or inquires about such a possibility.
2. The option of an individual interview will be offered during follow-up calls if a participant has been unable to attend prior groups or has been unable to find an available time to meet with a group. If the participant does not find an individual interview acceptable and wants to remain in the study, she will continue to be contacted about meetings times.
3. In cases where only one participant shows-up for a group interview, the interview will proceed as an individual interview if the participant consents to do so.
4. In extreme cases, where it is assessed that the risk of danger is too great to the participant, researcher, or other bystanders (e.g., because of stalking) and with permission of the participant an individual interview will be conducted on the telephone. This is expected to be the rare exception. In such cases the participant will be told when the recorder is turned "on" and "off". The information sheet will be read while the recorder is "on" and the \$10.00 reimbursement will be mailed to an address designated by the participant at the conclusion of the interview.

APPENDIX F

Storyline

Date: February 11, 1993

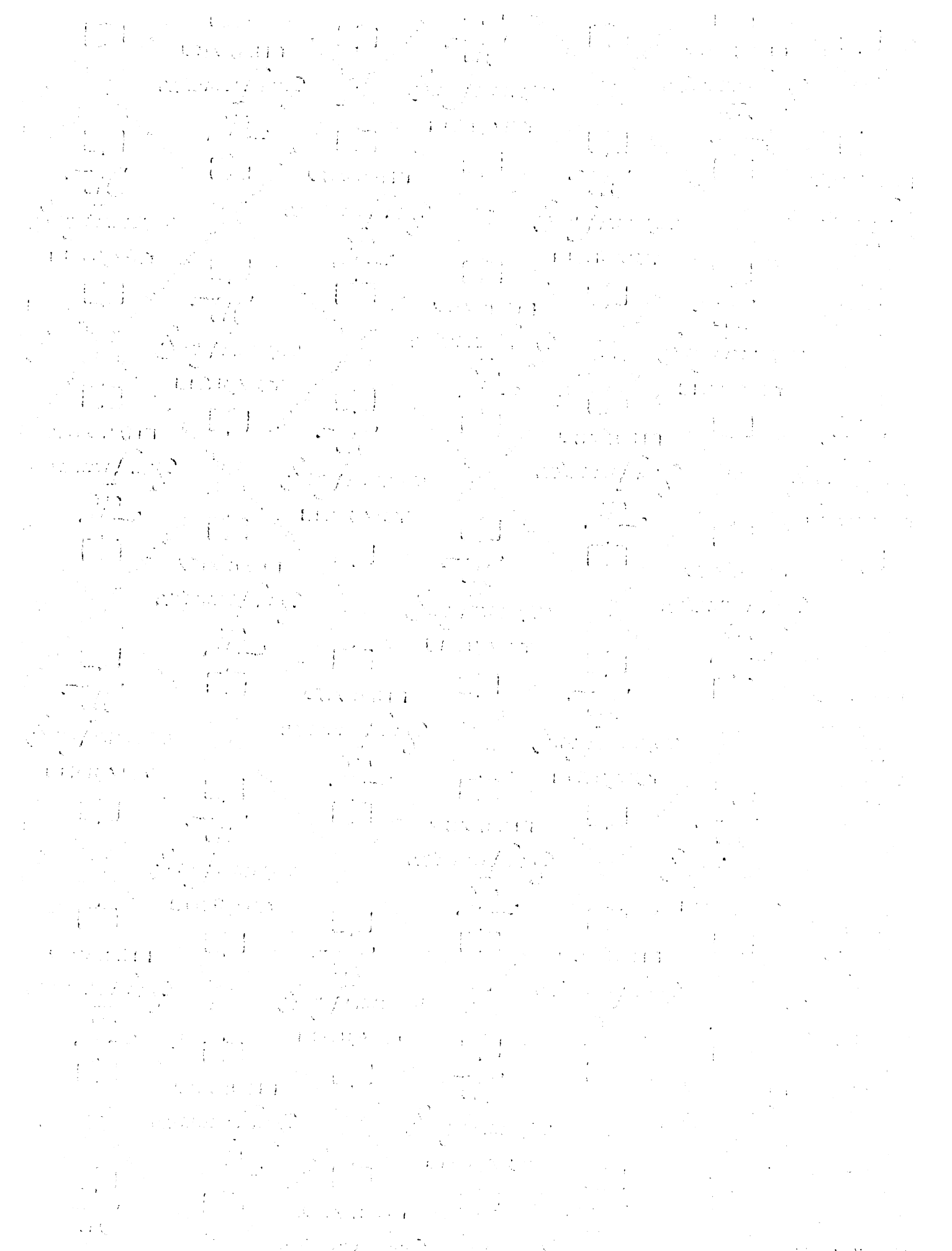
Revised: March 30, 1993, May 1, 1993

Storyline: Living with Danger: Walking on Eggshells

The main story here is one of living with danger. Women in abusive relationships live with a constant sense of danger to themselves or others. Danger is not simply a characteristic of their partner but his unpredictability and the vulnerabilities of the women, and peers of the partner. Danger is the time between episodes of violence when a woman is not sure when the violence will erupt again. This has been referred to as "walking on eggshells". Women in this situation develop a heightened sense of "readiness" apparent by comments like, "anything can happen". They in fear of what will happen next. In most cases, the fear is always present; however, it does appear to fluctuate a little based on the physical distance and established patterns of a partner's behaviors. There may even be brief times when a woman feels safe, for example "the best vacations I ever had were after I was beaten" as some partners use gifts to smooth over their behaviors. But the flipside is the constant looking over ones shoulder even when a partner is in jail.

The period of time between episodes of violence is filled with constant harassing/tormenting by their male partner which perpetuated a woman's sense of danger. This pattern of harassing/tormenting, name calling, not letting sleep, changing the locks functionally contributes to a woman's sense of danger by reinforcing the unpredictable of the partner and subsequently the violence. The continuous harassing/tormenting over time has the consequence of reducing the woman emotionally to nothing, "like a dead person", as she redefines her reality of her relationship. In extremely violent relationships women become resigned to accept that they will die as a result of the violence. However, contrary to outward appearances and popular theories such as learned helplessness, the women do not become passive. Just the opposite, they become very active trying to control their situation and appease their partners in an attempt to increase the length of time between violent episodes or the severity of the violence. The women describe this switch to "survival mode" where their behaviors are focussed on living day to day. These behaviors do not alter the violence and in some ways increase the danger.

The fear continues long after women leave an abusive relationship, fearful of the possibility he will show up again. Many men continue to harass and torment through stalking, phone calls, or simply driving through the neighborhood, a trait reinforced by the media of the risk for those who try to leave. For some, the intense, unpredictable nature of an abusive partner keeps them in the relationship where they can monitor his state of mind, something that is impossible if they are living alone.



For Not to be taken
from the room.
reference

632923



3 1378 00632 9232

