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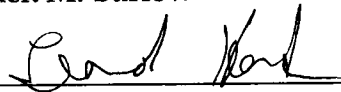


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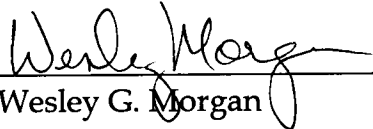
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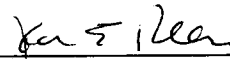
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THE RE-PRODUCTION OF VIOLENCE IN THE LIVES OF  
DOMESTICALLY VIOLENT MEN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

A Dissertation  
Presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Ronda Redden Reitz  
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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Carl E. Reitz  
without whose steadfast support and encouragement  
it would not have been possible  
and  
to the millions of women,  
in America and elsewhere,  
who have been abused and who ask,  
"Why?"

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Child and Family, Inc. of Knoxville, Tennessee has done groundbreaking work in this region with their Managing Emotions Nonviolently (M.E.N.'s) Program for domestic violence offenders. Especially in the person of Dan Weirich, M.E.N.'s Program Senior Facilitator, who has been my mentor, friend, and co-worker, and also in Tom Hale, M.E.N.'s Program Administrator, Child and Family, Inc. was an early and enthusiastic supporter of this study. Their help is gratefully acknowledged.

For many of the men who were interviewed for this study, participation was a conscious effort to atone for their acts of violence. For most, if not all of them, it was painful to talk one-to-one and at length about their experiences of being violent. Even so, they persevered, and some of

them, of their own volition, gave up their anonymity to encourage other men to participate. I thank each of them.

I thank Dr. Patrick Sloan, Chief of the Psychology Service, James H. Quillen Veteran's Affairs Medical Center for his questions, his suggestions, and his ability to help me stay focused and on task.

There is a special debt of gratitude to my family, especially to my father, Ronald M. Redden, who always dreamed big dreams for me, and to my mother, Sue E. Redden, who made it possible for me to follow my own dreams by giving me her blessing. With generosity that astonishes me still, my nephews, Seth and Sean, and my niece, Anna, quite literally allowed my graduate school journey to begin. I thank them. I am grateful to my in-laws, Ed and Millie Reitz, for the many loving and practical ways they contributed to this process, especially for their care of my children when I was in class and of my husband when his job kept him away from home during the week.

Finally, there are not words enough to acknowledge the contributions and sacrifices made by my husband, Carl, and our three children, Ian, Caroline, and Kirby. They have worked side-by-side with me each step of the way. Would that the degree could be shared with them, because they, as much as I, have earned it. I thank them. I love them. I am profoundly joyful that, in this world, we belong together.

## ABSTRACT

Fifteen men were interviewed about their experiences of being violent in domestic relationships. Interviews were analyzed using an interpretive method designed to uncover themes in the structure of violent experiences. Results revealed participants' pervasive awareness of themselves and their partners in relationship, an awareness entitled Self-Other, that formed the ground against which descriptions of being violent emerged, in two sets of themes. The first set of themes, labeled Relational Themes, described comparisons the men made of themselves with their partners that encompassed experiences of being Big or Little, Good or Bad, and Winning or Losing. The experiences described by Relational Themes formed the context for violent activity that was described in the second set of themes, Themes of Violence. Themes of Violence included descriptions of feeling In Control or Out of Control, a sensation of Pressure, and Exploding. There were six sub-themes associated with Themes of Violence that further described details of the men's violent experience. The sub-themes represented the men's experiences of feeling like or unlike themselves—labeled "me" or "not me"—of feeling "aware" or "not aware," and of having a sense of "choice" or "no choice" about their behavior. The sub-themes also represented experiences of physical change—labeled "body changes"—that the violence "happens fast,"

and that it is “automatic,” by which participants seemed to mean both that it happened outside of their volition and that, over time, it became easier to be violent. These results are discussed in terms of theories of domestic violence and also in terms of the relevant empirical literature. It is concluded that, for the men in this study, domestic violence was a failed attempt to assert a preferred identity – Big, Good, and Winning – in relation to a partner who could be identified as the devalued opposite – Little, Bad, and Losing. Because of their violent behavior, however, the men ultimately offered judgments of themselves in devalued terms: they felt small; they felt bad; they felt like losers, indications that the relational context for violence had been recreated. The implications of these findings for the victim are discussed, including the fact that, in the aftermath of their violent behavior, when the men appear to be contrite, they may also feel powerless – small, bad, and losing – experience to which they have previously responded with violence. Suggestions are made to expand treatment interventions to focus on Relational Themes, the men’s ongoing experiences of being Big or Little, Good or Bad, and Winning or Losing in relation to their partners, experience from which they described their violence as emerging and from which it may be reproduced.

## PREFACE

How much more grievous are the  
consequences of anger than the causes of it.  
Marcus Aurelius

In 1983, I began working in a court of law where, as part of my duties, I conducted intake interviews with complainants who were seeking warrants of arrest against their spouses for domestic violence. All of the complainants I interviewed were women and, sometime during the interview, nearly all of the women asked, "Why does he do this to me?" It was not a question for which I had an answer. When I went into the courtroom to record the Judge's dispositions, I discovered the law had no answer for this question, either and, in fact, was neither interested in it, nor equipped to ask it. In part, my entry into the discipline of psychology was driven by my desire to find a field interested in the problem of domestic violence and equipped to ask questions about it.

E. V. Sullivan (1984) reminds us that the world we live in is a personal world in which "individuals use expressions because they intend meanings for others" (1984, p. 19). With Sullivan, I make the assumption that human being is relational being and that all of our interactions with one another, both verbal and non-verbal, are communicative. In the question, "Why does he do this to me?" asked by the victims of domestic violence, I discerned a faith similar to my own, if borne of darker and more terrifying experience, a belief

that the abuser's behavior was communicative—meaningful, if painful—and that it made sense from some perspective, if not a perspective the victim shared. What was that sense? What was that meaning? For the victims of domestic violence, knowing the answers to those questions might make the difference between life and death.

As for the rest of us, it occurred to me that, while we are horrified and repulsed, and rightly so, by the medium of violence, we might have a better chance of stopping it, changing it, or finding an alternative to it, if we knew what message it contained. It occurred to me, as well, that the medium itself might be a message—a communication from the world of the domestically violent. The present research study was designed around my attempt to carry the victim's question "Why does he do this to me?" across the border and into that world. I wanted to hear from those who are, or have been, violent in their intimate relationships what sense they make of their own behavior and what it means in the context of their lives. The results of this study are my attempt to bring back an answer from that world.

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## Chapter I: INTRODUCTION

Social policy that addresses the problem of domestic violence in the United States has undergone a number of significant changes in the years since publication of the landmark final report of the Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence (U.S. Department of Justice, 1984). For example, warrantless arrest laws now remove the onus for lodging a domestic violence complaint from the victim who may be subject to intimidation or retaliation by the perpetrator. In many locales, law mandates arrest as a preferred response of police officers to domestic violence calls, and police are specially trained to handle domestic violence disturbances. In addition, the Task Force report encouraged courts to mandate treatment for perpetrators in addition to or instead of incarceration. There are now psychoeducational programs for domestic violence perpetrators in cities and towns across the United States. Despite these and other changes in social policy, however, domestic violence against women remains an entrenched social problem.

To focus on male-to-female domestic violence in heterosexual relationships is not to suggest that violence does not occur in homosexual relationships. Increasingly, violence between gay and lesbian domestic partners is the subject of research interest (e.g., Hamberger, 1994; Lie, Schilit, Bush, Montague, & Reyes, 1991; Schilit, Lie, & Montague, 1990). Nor is this

focus meant to suggest that women cannot or do not aggress against their male partners. They can, and they do (Steinmetz, 1978; Strauss and Gelles, 1990a; Strauss, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). Male aggression against female intimates represents the greater social problem, however, as the following statistical data — the most recently published — illustrates.

More people are victimized by male-to-female domestic violence. Each year, from 1992-1996, on average, more than 960,000 women age 12 and older were victims of violence committed by an intimate (husband, ex-husband, boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend.) Women were about eight times more likely to be victimized by an intimate than were men (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).

Male-to-female domestic violence results in the greatest number of injuries and fatalities. Fifty percent of women who reported violent victimization at the hands of an intimate also reported that the violence resulted in an injury (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998). For the years 1976-1996, approximately 30% of female homicide victims were killed by a husband, ex-husband, boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend. This is compared with less than 6% of male victims killed by an intimate in the same time period (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).

Male-to-female violence also results in a drain on medical resources. From 1992-1996, approximately one in five women injured by domestic

violence sought professional medical treatment (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998). For the year 1994, hospitals recorded more than a quarter of a million visits from patients seeking treatment for intentional injury by an intimate. Eighty-four percent of those seeking such treatment were women (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998). Female victims of non-lethal intimate violence, during the period 1992-1996, incurred annual medical expenses totaling at least \$62 million (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).

Finally, male-to-female domestic violence results in a drain on law enforcement and other social resources. About half of female victims report calling police or other law enforcement officials during or immediately after an incident of intimate violence — an annual average of 500,300 calls for the years 1992-1996. About 20% of these calls resulted in immediate arrest of the perpetrator (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998). At least 160,000 female victims annually receive services from victim service agencies (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998), and approximately 25% of violent offenders in local jails report being incarcerated for violence against an intimate (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).

The surveys cited here deal only with physical violence: homicide, rape and other sexual assault, aggravated and simple assault, and robbery (obtaining another's property through the use or threat of physical force).

Many women, however, have been subjected to other forms of abuse by their intimate partners, sometimes in conjunction with or as a precursor to physical violence (Graham, Rawlings, & Rimini, 1988; Pagelow, 1981). Non-physical forms of abuse may include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats and coercion, destruction of property or pets, forced economic deprivation, and isolation from family and friends (Edleson & Tolman, 1992; Pence, 1989). Clearly, male-to-female domestic violence commands research interest, interest that increasingly has been focused on the perpetrator of the violence, as attempts are made to predict and change violent behavior.

## Chapter II: REVIEW OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LITERATURE

### Single-Factor Theories of Domestic Violence

Single-factor theories about domestic violence can be divided into those that explain the phenomenon at the level of social systems and those that explain it at the level of the individual (Dutton, 1995). For example, sociocultural theories, including culture of violence (e.g., Gelles & Straus, 1979) and feminist theory (e.g., Adams, 1988; Kurz, 1989; Smith, 1990), have located the causes of domestic violence in broad cultural beliefs and practices that have historically supported both the use of violence and male dominance of women.

Charles Darwin (1871, 1872) theorized that the physical characteristics and behaviors of species develop over time and through the process of natural selection. Sociobiology has extended this theory of the evolution of species to account for the social behavior of animals (Wynne-Edwards, 1962), including human beings (Wilson, 1975). Sociobiologists locate the cause of domestic violence in the genes (e.g., Daly & Wilson, 1988). They argue that domestic violence serves an evolutionary function by increasing the likelihood that an individual male's contributions to the gene pool will be maximized by the control violence gives him over his female partner's reproductive resources.

Family systems theory has located the roots of domestic violence in dysfunctional couple interaction patterns and in limited family conflict resolution strategies (e.g., Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993; Margolin, 1984).

Finally, intrapersonal theories traditionally have located the causes of domestic violence in the individual, linking domestic violence with personal learning histories (Bandura, 1979) or with personality disorders and pathological behaviors (e.g., Gondolf, 1988; Gottman et al., 1995; Hamberger & Hastings, 1986, 1988c).

#### Criticism of Single-Factor Theories

Criticism has been leveled at each of these single-factor approaches to the problem of domestic violence. For example, sociocultural theories do not adequately account for individual differences among men raised in the same culture (Dutton, 1994a). Not all men are abusive, nor are those who are abusive all abusive in the same way or to the same degree.

Sociobiological theory, in general, has been criticized for relying on post-hoc explanations (e.g., Hyde & Oliver, in press), for the ahistorical and acultural nature of its analysis (e.g., Thorne-Finch, 1992), and for resting on an outmoded version of evolutionary theory considered naïve by modern biologists (Gould, 1987). In regard to sociobiological explanations of domestic

violence, Dutton (1995a) has made the ironic point that it is not clear how wife assault, especially lethal wife assault, can help maximize a man's contributions to the gene pool.

Family systems theory has been criticized for ignoring gender-based power differentials in marriage (Luepnitz, 1988) and for blaming the victim by holding both victim and perpetrator equally accountable for the violence (Bograd, 1984). It has also been criticized for recommending couples treatment for domestic violence without due consideration for the vulnerability and safety of the wife (Bograd, 1984; Jacobson, 1989).

Early intrapsychic explanations for domestic violence were based on case studies of men who were being treated for other psychological problems or who had been incarcerated for the crime. Until approximately the past twenty years, incarceration occurred only in the aftermath of especially vicious assaults or attempted murder (Fields, 1978). Basing explanations of domestic violence on this restricted range of cases led to the oversimplified conclusion that all men who abuse their wives do so because of pathology or mental disorder (e.g., Elliott, 1977; Faulk, 1974; Pizzey, 1974; Snell, Rosenwald, & Robey, 1964). It also led to the erroneous conclusion that wife abuse is rare and the men who commit it are unusual.

More recent quantitative studies looking for intrapsychic explanations for wife abuse generally include adequate sample size, differentiation of kinds of abuse (minor or severe physical violence; physical or psychological abuse), and the use of non-violent controls. Often, however, the studies have done little more than make reference to a clinical category – say, similarities between descriptions of batterers and DSM-III-R diagnoses (e.g., Bland & Orn, 1986; Hamberger & Hastings, 1986, 1988c, 1991). Dutton (1995a, 1995b) has noted that documenting the co-occurrence of personality disorder and domestic violence, while not uninteresting, is not the same as accounting for the violence, the disorder, or some relationship between them. A final criticism of intrapsychic explanations for domestic violence is that they often have ignored legal considerations and other factors from the broader social context that have encouraged domestic violence and allowed it to continue (e.g., Kurz, 1989).

By themselves, none of these single-factor theories – or the empirical research based on them – has been able to render an adequate account of wife abuse. Each of them, however, may contribute to one or more interactionist models of domestic violence.

## **Interactionist Models of Domestic Violence**

### Nested Ecological Theory

Nested ecological theory provides an interactionist explanation of domestic violence (Belsky, 1980; Dutton, 1985; Edleson & Tolman, 1989).

Developed primarily by developmental psychologists and ethologists (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Tinbergen, 1951), a nested ecological model takes into account the multiple spheres of influence in which an individual lives and the factors in each sphere that may have an effect on the individual's behavioral choices. A nested ecological model of domestic violence considers factors at four levels: the macrosystem, the exosystem, the microsystem, and the ontogenetic level or the level of the individual.

The macrosystem, which has been the main focus of sociological investigation, includes broad sets of cultural beliefs and values relevant to wife assault. For example, male sex-role socialization in some cultures encourages men to feel agentic and expressive when they take charge and act on the environment to change it (Novaco, 1976). Research based on analysis of macrosystemic variables has shown that domestically violent men are somewhat more likely than other men to endorse patriarchal beliefs—e.g., that “sometimes it’s important for a man to show his partner that he is head of the house” (Smith, 1990). It has also shown that there is a positive correlation

between non-egalitarian sex role attitudes and wife abuse (Stith & Farley, 1993). Stark and McEvoy, in a 1970 survey, found that 24% of North American males approved of a man slapping his wife "under appropriate circumstances," and Stith and Farley (1993) found a positive correlation between approval of marital violence and wife abuse. Crossman, Stith, and Bender (1990) found that attitudes supporting marital violence and actual use of severe marital violence predicted traditional sex-role attitudes among males.

More recently, Sugarman and Frankel (1996) found that assaultive husbands not only reported more positive attitudes toward marital violence but also had lower scores on a measure of masculine and feminine gender schema than non-assaultive men. These authors suggest that assaultive men may use domination by means of abuse to allay anxiety about uncertain gender identity. Gondolf (1988) also found that batterers attempt to compensate for failure to live up to prescriptions for masculinity stipulated by sex-role stereotypes.

Because evolution is a large systemic process, sociobiological factors also can be included at the macrosystemic level. Daly and Wilson (1988) have argued that intimate homicides follow patterns that are best explained from a sociobiological perspective. For example, they have suggested that, because

they have no guarantee of paternity, males are more likely than females to experience sexual jealousy. Daly and Wilson (1988) used data from Canadian police reports filed for the years 1974-1983 that classified homicides by motive, gender of perpetrator, and relationship of perpetrator to victim to support their claim. Such data showed that 24% (195/812) of male spousal homicides and 7.6% (19/248) of female spousal homicides were driven by jealousy.

Dutton (1995a), however, has pointed to comparable data for Detroit that appear in a table elsewhere in the same source (Daly & Wilson, 1988, p. 176), and that were used by Daly and Wilson to support a different point about data classification. These data, when compared with the Canadian statistics, call the sociobiological conclusion into question. In data from 212 Detroit homicides for the year 1972 that were classified by motive, gender of perpetrator and victim, and relationship of perpetrator and victim, 25 of 183 homicides committed by males were jealousy-driven, as opposed to 9 of 25 jealousy-driven homicides committed by females.

Dutton (1995a) has suggested that the Detroit statistics – 13.6% jealousy-driven male-perpetrated homicide and 31% jealousy-driven female-perpetrated homicide – when compared with the Canadian statistics, call for a different interpretation of the data than the sociobiological one:

...the relationship between gender, jealousy, and homicide varies considerably when one introduces race and culture. The Detroit homicides are mainly black, the Canadian are mainly white. The jealousy-driven rate for female homicides in Detroit is 4.5 times that shown in the Canadian data, while the male rate for Detroit drops by almost half (the reason being a much larger number of homicides in Detroit falling into other categories) (p. 33)

If sociobiological explanations do not adequately account for cultural variation, they nevertheless make one statement that would seem to have strong relevance for domestic violence: males have an inherited tendency to secrete adrenalin in regard to sexual threat, and they experience such secretion as arousing (Dutton, 1995a). Surveys of domestic violence victims reveal that a commonly cited instigating factor for an episode of abuse is the abuser's jealousy arising from real or perceived loss of sexual access (Daly, Wilson, & Weghorst, 1982; Rounsaville, 1978; Roy, 1977). How that arousal will be labeled, however, seems to be culturally driven. In some cultures, men may label the arousal experienced from increased adrenalin secretion as hurt, anxiety, or fear (Gilmore, 1990). Men in western cultures, however, most often label the arousal anger (Gondolf, 1985; Novaco, 1976). While anger does not

lead inextricably to violence, the presence of anger does increase the probability of aggression and violent behavior (Konecni, 1975; Rule & Nesdale, 1976).

Neuroendocrine chemicals other than adrenaline, notably testosterone and other androgens, as well as estrogen, are linked with increased levels of aggression and related behavior in laboratory rodents (e.g., Archer, 1977; Conner, Constantino & Scheuch, 1983; Simon & Whalen, 1986). In non-human primates, however, the linkage is less clear (see Dixon, 1980) and in humans, the evidence for a link between androgens and social behavior is equivocal (Miczek, Mirsky, Carey, Debold & Raine, 1994). In fact, causal evidence is slightly stronger for the influence of social behavior on testosterone levels than the other way around (see Elias, 1981; Gladue, 1989; Mazur & Lamb, 1980). No suggestion has been made that testosterone has any direct effect on levels of domestic violence, although Julian and McKenry (1989) did find that lower testosterone levels were associated with better marital and parental relationships in a sample of middle-aged, professional males living in the Midwest. Brain (1994) has reflected that "...there is not a simple relationship between any hormone and behaviors that will receive the labels aggression or violence. 'Raging hormones' do not cause violence" (p. 228).

At the next level of analysis in a nested ecological model of domestic violence—the exosystem—factors are considered that mediate between the individual and the culture-at-large, e.g., membership in a subculture, the influence of friendship and extended kinship groups, and work-related factors, like unemployment. Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) reported that wife abuse rates increased with the number of stressful events a family experienced. Unemployment and under-employment are stressful events that have consistently been linked with increased levels of domestic violence (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986, 1990; Kantor & Straus, 1987). The mechanisms that connect unemployment to wife assault include increased contact between the spouses with greater likelihood of conflict over financial matters (Parke & Collmer, 1975), lowered self-esteem in the unemployed male (Gelles, 1976), and redirected aggression (Gelles, 1976), i.e., men who are frustrated about unsatisfying work situations sometimes take their frustration out on their wives.

In considering the meaning of the association between income status and wife assault, Carden (1994) has warned that sampling bias must be taken into account. It may be that batterers with higher incomes and occupational status have the means to exclude themselves from those arenas from which samples are typically drawn, for example, from court-ordered group

treatment programs. U.S. Department of Justice surveys, however, use techniques that sample nation-wide and that cut across socioeconomic lines. Reports from the most recently published survey indicate that wife abuse occurs at all socioeconomic levels, but occurs more frequently in low income than high income homes (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

In considering economic factors, most studies focus on the relationship between domestic violence and the husband's employment and income. Daly, et al. (1982), however, found that wife assault occurs less frequently in those cultures that feature independent female economic groups. Babcock, et. al (1993) found that income discrepancies that favored husbands were most frequent in domestically violent couples, and income-discrepancy favoring wives was most frequent in happy, non-violent couples.

Male unemployment and job stress represent exosystem factors that increase the likelihood of wife assault. Informal support groups, on the other hand, might represent a potential ameliorative variable within the exosystem. Such groups could provide emotional support and corrective feedback that might prevent individuals from behaving violently (Dutton, 1995a). No studies have been identified that make the connection between isolation and wife abuse, but isolation has been found to be associated with child abuse (Belsky, 1980). An exosystem view of wife assault would predict wife-

assaulters to be either more isolated than the average person, or less capable of using available support groups when under duress (Dutton, 1995a).

The microsystem refers to interaction patterns that exist in the family itself and to the structural elements of that family. For example, one structural element relevant to wife abuse is power sharing arrangements – who makes most of the important decisions? In two national studies involving thousands of heterosexual couples, four varieties of marital power-sharing arrangements were discerned: male-dominant, female-dominant, divided task, and equalitarian. Domestic violence was found to occur most often in those marriages where one party or the other was dominant and where there was conflict about the power-sharing arrangement (Coleman & Strauss, 1986; Strauss, et al., 1980). By contrast, equalitarian marriages, in which power was shared, had the least incidence of domestic violence (Coleman & Strauss, 1986).

Babcock, et al. (1993) investigated the effects of three marital power domains on domestic violence. These domains included power bases (e.g., income, education), power outcomes (e.g., decision-making), and power processes (e.g., communication patterns). Observing and coding the interactions of three groups of married couples – happy and non-conflicted, distressed but non-violent, and distressed with husband-violence – the

authors found that power-processes (i.e., communication patterns) moderated power bases and power outcomes. Couples in which the husband was abusive were more likely than distressed or happy couples to engage in husband demand/wife withdraw interaction patterns. The conclusion was made that domestically violent husbands use physical and psychological abuse to gain power in their marriage and control over their wives; in other words, they use abuse to coerce their wives to meet their demands.

The final level in a nested ecological model is the ontogenetic level – the level of the individual. This level focuses on features of the individual's personality and developmental experience that shape responses to microsystem or exosystem stressors. Strauss, et al. (1980) correlated reports of wife assault with reports of parental violence. They found that men who had seen their parents physically attack one another were almost three times more likely to have hit their own wives during the year preceding the study. Being a victim of parental violence also increased the likelihood of committing wife-assault: males who were physically punished as teenagers had a rate of severe violence toward their wives that was four times greater than that of males whose parents did not hit them. Finally, the researchers found a compounded effect: compared with others, men who had both observed and experienced

parental violence were five to nine times more likely to be domestically violent.

The same study (Strauss, et al., 1980) found that married couples fight most frequently about money, housekeeping, social activities, sex, and children. Dutton (1995a) suggests that money, housekeeping, and child-rearing issues often involve beliefs and expectations about power and authority in the household. In part, these beliefs may be shaped by macrosystemic factors—cultural values and patterns that historically have supported male dominance—and they may also be shaped in part by family of origin experience and by individual needs for power and control over family process. High scores on need for power correlate significantly with frequency of arguments (McClelland, 1975) and with other behavioral indicators of aggression, such as destroying furniture or glassware (Winter, 1973). Dutton and Strachan (1987a) found that wife assaulters differed from happily married men on need for power only when the stimulus materials used were scenes of male-female interactions. These researchers suggest that wife assaulters have a stronger desire to dominate in male-female contexts than do happily married men.

Issues arising from social activities and sex often involve anxieties about too much or too little intimacy (Dutton, 1995a). Wife abusing has been

found to be associated with low self-esteem accompanied by high levels of dependency, suspiciousness, and jealousy of spouses (Barnett, Martinez & Bluestein, 1995; Bernard & Bernard, 1984; Sonkin, Martine & Walker, 1985). Jealousy on the part of their male partner is mentioned frequently by battered women as an issue that instigates violence (e.g., Daly, et al., 1982; Rounsaville, 1978; Roy, 1977). Much male-to-female intimate violence occurs in the process of real or perceived relationship dissolution (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Dutton & Browning, 1988). Battered women are most at risk for being murdered when they try to leave abusive relationships (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998). Wife abusers have been found to have above average levels of hostility (Bersani, Chen, Pendleton, & Denton, 1992; Maiuro, Cahn, Vitaliano, Wagner & Zegree, 1988). Dutton and Browning (1988) not only found that men who assaulted their wives had high levels of chronic anger, but that such anger was frequently triggered by the men's perceptions of change in the level of intimacy with their partner. The anger was triggered under conditions of both greater and lesser intimacy – perceiving their partners as moving away from or moving toward them – when the men believed that the change in intimacy was outside of their control.

### Typologies of Wife Abusers

Given repeated evidence of heterogeneity within the abusing population, an alternative to “two category” research studies – batterers vs. non-batterers – has been multi-category typologies of wife abusers (Gondolf, 1988). Elbow (1977) was the first to report identifiably separate groups of abusers. She described them as controllers, who view their wives as the objects of their control; defenders, who overprotect their wives; approval-seekers, who make excessive demands for approval on their wives in apparent attempts to bolster their own poor self-esteem, and incorporators, who need their wives to validate and define themselves.

Shields, McCall, and Hanecke (1988) distinguished three groups of violent men: family only, who were assaultive toward their wives, but not to people outside of their families; generally violent, who were assaultive both in- and outside of their families, and outside only, who were violent with others but not with family members. According to Shields, et al. (1988), the family-only violent group stood out from the other groups in that the members tended to be more law-abiding, to have higher occupational status, were less likely to have substance abuse problems, and were more likely to have been victims of parental abuse.

Hamberger and Hastings reported two studies (1986 and 1988c) in which they factor analyzed the responses of wife-assaultive males on the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI, Millon, 1983), the Novaco Anger Scale (NAS, Novaco, 1975), and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI, Beck, 1978). They found four battering subtypes, three of which had approximately equal distributions. The schizoid/borderline group was characterized by high volatility and high dysphoria – the men were angry and depressed. The narcissistic/antisocial group was self-centered and aggressive. The passive-dependent/compulsive group had high degrees of both intra- and interpersonal conflict. The fourth subtype, which accounted for approximately 13% of the total number of abusers in the study, was found to exhibit no psychopathology.

Gondolf (1988), using the reports of 525 battered women, measured three abuse indices (verbal abuse, physical abuse, and victim's response) and three anti-social behavior indices (substance abuse, general violence, and previous arrests). Performing a cluster analysis and cross-tabulating with demographic factors, Gondolf found three distinct battering subtypes. Sociopathic abusers (7% of the total sample) used extreme physical and sexual abuse and had the highest rates of substance abuse and previous arrest. Antisocial abusers (41% of the total) used extreme verbal and physical abuse,

but no sexual abuse, and had some history of substance abuse and arrest. Typical abusers (52% of the total sample) used less severe family-only abuse and had the lowest rates of substance abuse and previous arrest.

Saunders (1992) assessed 182 wife assaulters referred for treatment and performed a cluster-analysis of a number of factors related to domestic violence, including the severity and generalizability of the violence, sex-role stereotyping, decision-making power, level of conflict, anger, jealousy, depression, and alcohol use. What emerged were three battering subtypes. Family-only aggressors, comprising 52% of the total sample, were emotionally repressed and reported low levels of marital conflict. Generally violent aggressors, 29% of the total sample, were severely violent, reported being abused as children, used alcohol in association with their violence, and had high rates of arrest. The final group, emotionally volatile aggressors, tended to be angry, depressed, and jealous. They used psychological abuse and had high rates of marital dissatisfaction.

In a review of batterer typologies, Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1993) suggested three basic categories into which most batterers can be classified: family-only, dysphoric-borderline, and generally violent-antisocial batterers. Most researchers agree that, at a minimum, batterers can be

classified into those who are violent outside their domestic relationships and those who are not.

Noting this duality, Gottman, et al. (1995) also noted that there is evidence to suggest a physiological substrate to criminal activity – specifically, that criminality is associated with low levels of physiological reactivity (Moffitt & Mednick, 1988; Raine, Venables, & Williams, 1990; Schalling, Edman & Asberg, 1983). Gottman, et al. reasoned that batterers might be classifiable by levels of physiological reactivity. They were able to differentially type batterers according to heart-rate reactivity during marital conflict interactions. Type 1 batterers, about 20% of the total sample, displayed heart rates below baseline level during conflict interactions with their wives, whereas Type 2 batterers displayed higher heart rates during conflict interactions. Type 1 batterers were more verbally aggressive than Type 2. Type 1 batterers were also more violent toward people other than their wives and family members. On scales that measured antisocial behavior and sadistic aggression, Type 1 batterers had elevated scores compared with Type 2 batterers, but on measures of dependency, Type 1 batterers had lower scores. Gottman, et al. speculated that Type 1 abusers may be vagal reactors – “vagal” referring to the vagus nerve that conducts impulses between the brain and muscles in the heart, throat, and abdomen – whose heart rates are

parasympathetically, rather than autonomically, controlled during conflict.

These abusers are internally calm during interpersonal conflict despite looking and acting aroused and displaying emotionally aggressive behavior.

At a two-year follow-up, Gottman, et al. (1995) found that Type 1 batterers had a 0% marital separation-divorce rate, compared with a separation-divorce rate of 27% for Type 2 batterers. In a 5-year follow-up study, however, Jacobson and Gottman (1998) found that 25% of wives married to Type 1 abusers (now termed "cobra" abusers) had left the relationship and that, altogether, 65% of the wives of violent men had left. They suggest that Type 2 batterers (whom they now call "pit bull" abusers) may be easier to leave in the short run, but in the long run, they may be more dangerous to leave, possibly because of their greater dependency. Many batterers who kill their wives weeks and months after she has left the relationship seem to fit the Type 2 or pit bull profile (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). Type 1 or cobra batterers, on the other hand, while more difficult to leave, are less likely to pursue their victim for very long because they soon lose interest and go on to other pursuits (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998).

Meloy (1988), in his study of the anti-social or psychopathic personality, provided corroboration for Gottman, et al.'s (1995) analysis. Meloy classified cross-species aggression as either affective or predatory according to thirteen

separate criteria that included the presence or absence of autonomic nervous system arousal. According to Meloy, the two modes of aggression do not preclude one another and may sequentially precede or follow one another. Although those with psychopathic personalities may display both modes, Meloy (1988) has stated:

Psychopaths are psychobiologically well suited to the predatory task because their autonomic baseline and evoked responses do not interfere with, and in fact, sustain, the hyporeactive sequence during predation. This should be contrasted with individuals who are not autonomically hyporeactive yet attempt to consummate an act of predatory violence; their autonomic reactivity may publicly betray, through behavioral cues...the predatory intent and thus minimize its effectiveness (p. 236).

In other words, individuals who are not autonomically hyporeactive are less likely to be rewarded for their predatory efforts. The role of reward, as well as punishment, may well be integral to the prediction and control of domestic violence as a review of social learning theory shows.

### Social Learning Perspectives on Domestic Violence

Albert Bandura (1979) developed social learning theory as a comprehensive approach to understanding violence. While not typically considered an interactionist model of domestic violence, social learning theory, which posits that aggressive responses are shaped through the individual's learning history, does consider factors at various levels of social influence. Bandura's analysis of aggression focused on three major determinants: the origins of aggression, the instigators of aggression, and the regulators of aggression.

Social learning theory views biological factors, observational learning, and reinforced performance as the main origins of aggression. One biological factor, in addition to the secretion of adrenalin in response to sexual threat, that may influence male-to-female aggressive behavior is that males inherit greater musculature than do females. Because of this greater musculature, males have increased probability that physically aggressive responses will produced their intended effect and, therefore, will be rewarding.

Observational learning suggests one potential explanation for the finding that men who had observed parental violence are three times more likely to have engaged in wife assault (Straus, et al., 1980). Furthermore, Bandura's famous television studies that found that watching television

violence was significantly related to increases in toddler's aggressive behavior (1973), suggest that macrosystemic influences can also play a role in the origins of aggressive behavior. Sources for the observation of violent behavior are nearly ubiquitous in this culture and, as Dutton (1995a) has pointed out, many violent behaviors, like hitting, kicking, pushing, and choking are not motorically complex so that most people, who chose to, could use violent behavior.

Social learning theory does not assume that any behavior that is acquired will be practiced. Instead, mediating between acquisition and enactment, a response must have 1) an appropriate inducement or instigator; 2) it must have functional value—do work on the inducement or instigator, and 3) it must result in reward or an absence of punishment for the performer (Bandura, 1979). An instigator or inducement is any situation that is likely to be followed by the target behavior, e.g., domestic violence. There are many types of instigators, but two that typically apply to wife assault include aversive and incentive instigators. An aversive instigator is one that a person would work to remove. An example of an aversive instigator for domestic violence might be changes in the level of intimacy in the relationship that the male believes are out of his control (i.e., Dutton & Browning, 1988). A second example of an aversive instigator might be the tension produced in the

husband by release of adrenalin in response to a threat to his self-esteem by his wife's non-compliant behavior when he makes a demand – e.g., husband demand/wife withdrawal interaction pattern (Babcock, et al., 1993). These are potentially aversive stimuli to which it is known some batterers have responded with violence.

An incentive instigator for violence would be an anticipated payoff for aggressive action, e.g., a man's belief that aggression will bring the level of intimacy in the marital relationship back under his control – either make her leave him alone or pay him more attention. Another potential incentive instigator for violence might be a man's belief that behaving aggressively toward his wife will relieve the tension he feels because of increased adrenalin release.

About two-thirds of males who once commit wife assault repeat the behavior within one year (Schulman, 1979; Straus, et al., 1980). Bandura (1979) has described regulators of aggression as mechanisms that serve to sustain or reduce it – reinforcements and punishments. Dutton (1995a) has suggested the ways in which macrosystemic influences play a role in regulating – rewarding or punishing – domestic aggression:

The behaviors involved (e.g., punching, shoving) are not complex and, as Bandura points out, have been universally

modeled. If a male uses these behaviors against his wife and is rewarded through (1) regaining control or dominance, (2) feeling expressive or agentic (i.e., acting out and taking charge in a fashion consonant with male sex roles (Novaco, 1976), and (3) terminating an aversive state of arousal or upset, and if he is not punished for using the violence, the likelihood increases of his using these actions again in a similar conflict situation (p. 87).

Bandura (1979) has concluded that when alternative means of accomplishing ends are available and the risk of punishment is high, aggression decreases rapidly. Both theory (e.g., Wilson & Daly, 1996) and empirical evidence, however, have suggested that domestically violent men have diminished repertoires of conflict-resolution strategies compared with non-violent men (Babcock, et al., 1993; Holtzworth-Munroe & Anglin, 1991). Alternative means of obtaining reward may not be apparent to them, or they may have little faith in their ability to use alternative strategies to bring about a satisfactory conclusion. Under this condition, punishment must be forceful and consistent to decrease aggression.

Despite legal reforms – a macrosystemic influence – external means of punishment for domestic aggression is unlikely to be either forceful or

consistent. As mentioned, only half of victims reported that they had called the police (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998). For a variety of reasons, police respond around 79% of the time to reports of injury from domestic violence (Dutton, 1987). If police attend the crime scene, they make immediate arrests about 20% of the time (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998). Of the arrests that are made, about 67% result in trials and, of those cases that go to trial, about 53% result in conviction (Dutton, 1995a). Unless the victim is in a position to leave the relationship – and this is when she is in most danger of serious, even lethal, assault (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998) – there is not a great deal of risk of external punishment for the abuser. This leaves only internal means of punishment – the consciences and moral standards of the men, themselves – to reduce domestic aggression.

Although Walker (1979) has described a "cycle of violence" in which abusive men go through a period of shame and contrition following an episode of violence, considerable variation has been found regarding the capacity of abusive men for self-punishment. A consistent finding in domestic violence research is that 25%-40% of abusers show sociopathic and antisocial traits, including absent or impaired ability to feel guilt (Gondolf, 1988; Hamberger & Hastings, 1986, 1988c; Hart, Dutton, & Newlove, 1993). These abusers may not be capable of applying internal punishment to their abusive

behavior. This still leaves about 60%-75% of batterers who are capable of mustering some internal means of punishment that might reduce future aggressive behavior.

Bandura (1979), however, has suggested that there are mechanisms that do not involve defects in development or character by which even moral or normally socialized people disengage self-evaluative processes. It may be important to keep in mind that typologies of batterers that have measured clinical diagnoses (e.g., Hamberger & Hastings, 1986, 1988c) have found that 10%-15% of batterers registered no psychiatric diagnosis, whatsoever. When normally socialized men commit behavior that violates their own standards and values, a variety of mental mechanisms become operative that will neutralize self-punishment for reprehensible behavior. In the language of social learning theory, these mechanisms are collectively termed "cognitive restructuring."

Domestically violent men have been reported to use the following forms of cognitive re-structuring (Dutton & Hemphill, 1992; Ganley, 1981; Sonkin, et al., 1985): They may re-structure their understanding of their behavior by using euphemistic labeling, i.e., by describing a serious assault in non-serious terms, or they may use palliative comparison, i.e., making the observation that all men beat their wives and their only misfortune was being

caught. They may use moral justification, convincing themselves that violence was necessary to bring the unacceptable behavior of their wives in line. Wife assaulters may displace responsibility for their behavior, obscuring the connection between their own actions and the injurious consequences for their victims, e.g., blaming their violence on the use of alcohol. Domestically violent men may restructure their understanding of the consequences or detrimental effects of their behavior by minimizing its effects or by using selective memory to underestimate the number of violent incidents. Finally, domestically violent men may restructure their conception of the victim of their abuse by dehumanizing her and by blaming her for their own behavioral choices. A major objective of clinical work with domestic abusers is confronting and altering these mechanisms for neutralizing self-punishment in order to restore impetus for behavioral change.

Dutton (1995a) has suggested a second process by which abusers may disengage normal processes of self-evaluation. This process derives from Zimbardo's (1969) work on de-individuated violence. In committing violence that is de-individuated, "...the aggressor launches into a self-reinforced series of progressively more destructive actions which are extremely difficult to terminate" (Dutton, 1995a, p. 91). Batterers may remember events leading up to the violence; they may remember its aftermath; but even after the passage

of time, they cannot recall the violence itself. Victim reports indicate that such batterers are in a high state of rage, that the pleas of the victim do not diminish the violence, and that the beating sometimes continues until the batterer is exhausted (Dutton & Painter, 1981; Walker, 1979).

Zimbardo (1969) has hypothesized that, during some severe episodes of violence, the batterer's attention shifts completely away from the external environment to his own highly rewarding, internal, responses. Until reaching a point of exhaustion, or until something in the environment intrudes to distract him, the batterer is attuned to nothing but his own body. His behavior may be neither coded nor stored in memory and, therefore, will be unavailable for recall or for use as an inducement to reduce future aggression (Dutton, 1995a).

### Psychodynamic Perspectives on Domestic Violence

Some feminist and other sociocultural activists and theorists have criticized intrapsychic explanations of domestic violence for relying too heavily on factors at the level of the individual and ignoring cultural practices and institutions that allow or even encourage wife abuse (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Kurz, 1989). These critics have pointed out that intrapsychic explanations tend to frame wife abuse as a private and potentially excusable

issue of mental illness rather than as a public issue of social welfare, community health, and criminal justice.

Other feminist theorists, however, have illuminated the ways in which psychological development, often taken for granted as “natural,” is a product of culturally and historically situated social structures, especially patterns and practices of childcare (Benjamin, 1988; Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976). What have been understood as intrapsychic factors, then, ultimately are rooted not in the individual but in the interaction of an individual with culture as mediated by the family.

For example, feminist contributions to psychoanalytic theory have posited that, given current childcare arrangements, personal identity formation is necessarily intertwined with gender identity (Benjamin, 1988; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982). Cultural splits in gender roles continue to make mother the primary caregiver and father the primary breadwinner. This set of circumstances contributes to the infant’s divergent experiences of the parents. Mother is experienced as near, constant, attuned, soothing, holding, and nurturant, whereas father is experienced as distant, coming and going, exciting, physically stimulating, intermittently attuned, and curiosity-provoking (Yogman, 1982). This division in parental role and the resulting division in infant experience are reflected in differential pathways to selfhood

available to male and female infants. A split in the culture becomes embedded in the structures and functions of the selves the infants become.

This interpenetration of culture and psyche in the development of the self results, under paradigmatic circumstances, in a male identity concerned with separateness, independence, and dominance (Benjamin, 1988; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982). How that is so, and how it may go awry, is relevant to the central focus of the discussion, the problem of male-to-female intimate violence. Its relevance justifies a brief digression into psychodynamic developmental theory as it relates to the pathways and roadblocks to identity formation for the male child.

Benjamin (1988), has argued that "the repudiation of femininity," taken for granted as necessary to the development of masculinity in little boys, is something other than "a biological fact, a part of the great riddle of sex" (Freud, 1937, p. 252). Instead, when mothers are primary caregivers, the infantile stage of rapprochement (Mahler, 1971) that takes place from about 15 to 24 months, becomes a struggle for differentiation from and assertion of will in relation to a powerful and ubiquitous female. The struggle is further bound together with gender because, as considerable evidence now suggests, gender identity begins in the second year of life (Fagot, 1985; Maccoby, 1988) and is well on its way by the third year for most children (Martin & Halverson, 1983;

Martin & Little, 1990; Serbin & Sprafkin, 1986). The onset of gender identity coincides not with the oedipal stage, as Freud believed, but with rapprochement (Stoller, 1968).

Rapprochement is preceded by and represents an end to the "practicing stage" (approximately 10 to 15 months of age), a time when the infant seems in love with the world and with himself in it (Mahler, 1971). Acutely aware of newfound powers and abilities in the practicing stage, the infant in rapprochement is becoming aware of the limits to his power, some set by his own inabilities, others set by Mother. Both disappointed and frustrated, the infant is caught in the paradoxical need to have his independence recognized by Mother, the one on whom he is still dependent (Benjamin, 1988). Either way he moves, forward into the world or back to Mother's arms, he experiences powerlessness and loss.

Although Freud assigned little role to the pre-oedipal father, Benjamin (1988) has averred that the father's role at the stage of rapprochement is crucial. Father who, in our current childcare order, represents for the infant "what is outside and different" (Benjamin, 1988, p. 102), presents an avenue of escape from the intensity of the rapprochement paradox. Father becomes idealized, a liberator to counterbalance Mother's power and a guide to the world outside. It is to Father that the infant now turns and when his striving is

validated by paternal recognition, "...the child denies dependency and dissociates himself from his previous maternal tie" (Benjamin, 1988, p. 104).

The little boy not only idealizes Father but also identifies with Father as one who is the same gender as he. For the male child, now, "schematically, the mother can become the object of desire, the father the subject of desire in whom one recognizes oneself. Separation-individuation thus becomes a gender issue, and recognition and independence are now organized within the frame of gender" (Benjamin, 1988, p. 104). The paradox of rapprochement has been resolved, but at the cost of locating a split that originated in the culture's division of parental roles in the child, whose contradictory strivings have been divided between his parents. At the close of the oedipal phase, having already relinquished identification with his mother, the male child relinquishes her as the object of his desire:

After Oedipus, both routes back to mother – identification and object love – are blocked.... Both agencies, paternal ego ideal and superego, push the boy away from dependence, vulnerability, and intimacy with mother. And the mother, the original source of goodness, is now located outside the self.... She may still have her ideal properties, but she is not part of the

boy's own ego ideal. The good mother is no longer inside; she is something lost... (Benjamin, 1988, p.161).

The boy child repudiates femininity and enters latency in defensive "triumphant contempt" for women, a contempt that may not wholly dissipate as he grows up (Freud, 1925). Benjamin asserts that the repudiation of femininity that is accepted by psychoanalysis as both "bedrock" and normalcy in male gender development is, instead, evidence of damage to the psyche that is "disguised as mastery and invulnerability" (Benjamin, 1988, pp. 160-161).

Some feminist activists have disavowed the importance of psychological influences for wife abuse, believing that to explain the abuse at a psychological level is to explain it away. The dual attitudes of triumphancy and contempt, however – combined with mastery and invulnerability – seem to be at the core of the social context that feminism argues supports and encourages wife abuse. As Dobash and Dobash (1979) have said, "men who assault their wives are actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are cherished in Western society – aggressiveness, male dominance, and female subordination – and they are using physical force as a means to enforce that dominance" (p. 24). If the interaction of culture and individual in normal male psychological development may be implicated in setting the

sociocultural stage for the domestic abuse of women, then theory and evidence suggests that the stage may be further augmented when the process of male psychological development goes awry.

Kernberg (1982) identified borderline personality organization as a “chronic characterological organization, which is neither typically neurotic nor typically psychotic” but covers the middle ground between them (p. 22). Kernberg believed that borderline personality organization encompassed a variety of clinical syndromes in which internalized object relations were pathologically divided between “all good” and “all bad” representations of self and other – in contrast to the neuroses in which such representations are integrated. Because self and other representations have been sufficiently differentiated from one another, however, in contrast to the psychoses, reality testing is basically intact, if at times impaired. In the ensuing years, the term “borderline personality organization” has been co-opted to designate a particular clinical syndrome (Gunderson, 1984) that is related to, but different than, Kernberg’s construct and that is also relevant to a discussion of domestic violence. Therefore, the structural borderline to which Kernberg referred will be designated “borderline disturbance” for the remainder of this discussion.

The signal symptoms of borderline disturbance in Kernberg's (1982) structural schema include: 1) chronic, free-floating anxiety; 2) ego weakness manifested in, among other things, lack of impulse control and blurring of ego boundaries; 3) the use of primitive defense operations such as splitting, idealization, projection, and denial, and 4) diffused identity, shallow emotions, and an inability to empathize with others or to realistically evaluate others' feelings and motives. Kernberg (1982) characterized patients with borderline disturbances as manipulative, demanding, and exploitative with an early history marked by intense aggression, engendered either constitutionally or by extreme frustration. Mahler (1971) associated borderline disturbances with difficulties and failures in the tasks of separation-individuation that conclude with rapprochement.

Studies that classify batterer behavior and psychopathology (e.g., Gondolf, 1988; Gottman et al., 1995; Hamberger & Hastings, 1986, 1988c; Saunders, 1992) indicate that partner assaultive men show variation in behavior patterns and diagnostic categories. Not all batterers are alike. Most of these patterns and diagnoses, however, suggest disturbances in the formation of the self that fall within the range Kernberg identified as "borderline."

For example, studies of batterers have consistently found high scores on measures of psychopathic deviance, aggression, sadism, and antisocial behavior (e.g., Beasley & Stoltenberg, 1992; Caesar, 1986; Gondolf, 1988; Gottman, et al., 1995; Hamberger & Hastings, 1986, 1988c; Hart, et al., 1993). Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1993), in their review of batterer typologies, estimate that 25% of batterers can be classified as antisocial and psychopathic/sociopathic. These batterers engage in moderate to severe marital violence, including psychological and sexual abuse. They are likely to engage in violence outside their families, as well, and to have extensive criminal histories and histories of substance abuse. Murphy, Meyer, and O'Leary (1993) found that a history of severe child abuse was significantly correlated with elevations on the antisocial personality disorder scale of the MCMI-II (Millon, 1987). Kernberg (1975) explicitly identified antisocial and psychopathic personality as severe forms of narcissistic personality disorder, a borderline disturbance.

Meloy, in his (1988) study of the psychopathic mind, has concurred with Kernberg's assessment. Drawing on Mahler's (1971, 1975) observations of young children, Meloy traced the likely etiology of psychopathic disturbance to severe problems in the early mother-child relationship, probably in the symbiosis phase of the separation-individuation process.

During this phase, which encompasses approximately the first six months of life, the infant is gradually introduced to those perceptions and sensations that will culminate, in rapprochement, in the ability to distinguish self from other (Mahler, 1971). "Optimal holding and suckling of the infant at this time results in an integration of receptivity...and entering...and the germination of adaptability and resiliency in the infant, a beginning sense of psychological well-being" (Meloy, 1988, p. 42-43).

When holding and suckling are far from optimal, however, such as when there are severe failures of mother-child attunement through neglect or abuse, the child may experience "...'twoness' too harshly, too early, too suddenly for him" (Tustin, 1981, p. 190). The infant develops basic mistrust rather than basic trust in the environment (Erikson, 1950) that colors subsequent separation-individuation experiences and processes of internalization. Meloy (1988) has acknowledged that infant temperament—hyper-aggression or autonomic hyporeactivity—may contribute to the symbiotic failure in as much as it may render otherwise adequate maternal efforts ineffective.

Meloy (1988) has hypothesized that psychopaths not only develop the grandiose self-structure that other narcissists develop, but within their grandiosity, in contrast to other narcissists, psychopaths have idealized

aggressive or persecutory object representations, and they have identified with "the stranger selfobject" (Grotstein, 1982). When other children are manifesting awareness of their vulnerability to the stranger as "stranger anxiety", the budding psychopath is taking the stranger into his self-structure (Meloy, 1988). He is becoming the one to whom others are vulnerable.

In contrast to Kernberg's (1982) structural conception of borderline personality organization, Gunderson (1984) has proposed borderline personality organization (BPO) as a discrete clinical syndrome, related to, but less severe than, borderline personality disorder. Gunderson's (1984) criteria for BPO included 1) intense, unstable interpersonal relationships characterized by intermittently undermining the partner, manipulation, and masked dependency; 2) an unstable sense of self accompanied by an intolerance of being alone and anxiety about abandonment, and 3) intense anger, demandingness, and impulsivity, usually tied to substance abuse or promiscuity.

Dutton (1994b, 1995a) has proposed an abusive personality profile that draws from both Kernberg's (1982) and Gunderson's (1984) descriptions of BPO. This abusive personality corresponds descriptively with Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart's (1993) dysphoric/borderline category of abusers who use moderate-to-severe forms of violence, are violent mostly with their families,

sometimes abuse alcohol and drugs, and as a group report more depression than other abusers. Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart (1993) have suggested that, like the antisocial/psychopathic category, the dysphoric/borderline category represents about 25% of all abusers.

Gunderson (1984) has described a three-phase defense structure for BPO that Dutton (1994b, 1995a) has linked with victim descriptions of their partners' cyclically violent eruptions (Walker, 1984). In Gunderson's first phase, the borderline personality exists in a "dysphoric stalemate" in a relationship in which intimacy needs are unmet and the motivation and skills to assert those needs are nonexistent. This stage corresponds to the tension-building phase of Walker's abuse cycle. In Gunderson's second stage, the relationship appears to be slipping away and the borderline erupts in anger and open rage, devaluing the significant other – Walker's battering phase. In Gunderson's final phase, the relationship is lost and the borderline engages in impulsive behaviors, like alcohol abuse or promiscuity, to ward off anxiety and perceptions of aloneness. Dutton (1994b, 1995a) has proposed that the exaggerated appeasement behaviors some batterers engage in after an abusive episode – Walker's third phase of the abuse cycle – serve the same defensive purpose: to ward off anxiety and to avoid being alone.

In a series of studies, Dutton and colleagues tested the strength of the relationship between BPO and wife abuse. They found a significant correlation between scores on a measure of BPO that had subscales measuring identity diffusion, primitive defenses, and reality testing (Oldham, et al., 1985) and measures of anger, jealousy, the use of physical and verbal abuse (Dutton, 1994a), and the use of psychological abuse (Dutton & Starzomski, 1993). There was also a significant correlation between BPO and trauma symptoms (Dutton, 1994a) for wife assaultive men. Men who scored higher on BPO also scored higher on all other measures (Dutton, 1994a; Dutton & Starzomski, 1993). Discriminant function analysis revealed that trauma symptoms, anger, and jealousy correctly classified 88% of the assaultive men for high and low levels of BPO (Dutton, 1994a).

Other researchers have found elevated levels of anger and dysphoria among wife abusers. Beasley and Stoltenberg (1992) found that domestically violent men scored higher than non-violent controls on both state and trait anger, suggesting that many batterers carry anger as a stable personality trait and that they perceive more situations as anger provoking. Maiuro, et al., (1988) found that domestically violent men had elevated levels of anger, hostility, and depression. They found that these levels were even higher in men who were self-referred to treatment programs than in those who were

court-referred. Dutton and Starzomski (1993), who replicated this finding, suggested that self-referred men may be BPO/cyclical abusers in the third or contrition phase of an abuse cycle. Consistent with this suggestion, 45% of self-referred abusers but only 27.5% of court-referred abusers attained the 85th percentile on the borderline scale of the MCMI-II (Hart, et al., 1993).

The relationship between trauma in the family of origin and wife abuse has also been previously noted (Caesar, 1986; Kalmuss, 1984; Saunders, 1992). Strauss, et al. (1980) found that men who had seen their parents physically attack one another were almost three times more likely to have hit their own wives in the year previous to the study than men who had never witnessed parental violence. These same researchers found that being a victim of parental violence increased the likelihood of wife assault: males who were physically punished as teenagers had a rate of severe violence toward their wives that was four times greater than that of men whose parents did not hit them. Men who had both observed and experienced parental violence were five to nine times more likely to be violent than those had neither witnessed nor experienced violence (Straus, et al., 1980). Murphy, et al., (1993) found that a history of severe childhood abuse correlated significantly with increased levels of psychopathology. They also found that a history of childhood abuse and witnessing physical abuse of the mother correlated significantly with the

frequency of physical and psychological abuse perpetrated by domestically violent men in their current relationships.

Dutton and Ryan (1994) investigated possible links between BPO and childhood trauma in partner assaultive men. They found that BPO was significantly correlated with reports of parental abuse during childhood. More specifically, however, they found that paternal rejection, followed by paternal abuse, and lack of paternal warmth were the strongest contributors to BPO scores. Linear comparisons of men scoring in the top quartile on the BPO measure with men scoring in the bottom quartile revealed significant differences in parental rejection ratings, especially for paternal rejection. Beasley and Stoltenberg (1992) also found evidence of disruption in the relationship of domestically violent men with their fathers. Dutton (1995a) concludes that "cold, rejecting, and abusing fathers may do more than model abusive behaviors; they may contribute to the formation of a personality pattern that is associated with adult abusiveness, anger, depression, and mood cycles" (p. 142).

Bowlby stated that "attachment behavior is held to characterize human beings from the cradle to the grave" (1977, p. 203). Drawing on the work of Hazan and Shaver (1987) who saw adult romantic love as an attachment process with patterns paralleling those of childhood (Hazan & Zeifman, 1994),

Dutton explored the attachment styles of partner assaultive men (Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, & Bartholomew, 1994). Using a four-category model of adult attachment based on positive and negative representations of self and other (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), Dutton and Saunders, et al. (1994) found that 20% of their sample of batterers were securely attached (positive self-positive other), 20% were fearfully attached (negative self-negative other), 33% displayed preoccupied attachment (negative self-positive other), and 27% were dismissively attached (positive self-negative other). The fearful attachment pattern was characterized by high degrees of anxiousness and anger in both the test and control group. BPO correlated so strongly with the fearful attachment style (avoidant attachment in children) that, as Mahler (1971) hypothesized, it could probably be considered the personality representation of the fearful attachment pattern (Dutton & Saunders, et al., 1994).

Reporting on observations of children aged 15-30 months who were separated for the first time from their mothers, Bowlby (1969) noted that:

...[in] the initial phase (Protest), the young child appears acutely distressed at having lost his mother and seeks to recapture her by the full exercise of his limited resources. He will often cry loudly, shake his cot, throw himself about, and

look eagerly towards any sight or sound which might prove to be his missing mother. All his behavior suggests strong expectation that she will return (pp. 27-38).

At a later date (1988), Bowlby termed the described display "functional anger" and stated that it was the way children could communicate to their primary attachment figure that their needs weren't being met. Dutton and Saunders, et al. (1994) have speculated that adult rage responses may originate in parent-child attachment relationships. They have suggested that parenting practices that shape childhood attachment patterns (e.g. Crittenden, 1988; Main & Stadtman, 1981) provide an alternative mechanism to modeling for the well-documented intergenerational transmission of violence (Cappel & Heiner, 1990; Dumas, Margolin, & John, 1994; Straus, et al, 1980).

In another study exploring the relationship of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) to male intimate violence, Kesner, Julian, & McKenry (1997) found that the male perception of relationship support was the strongest predictor of domestic violence. They suggested that female intimates might be in a vulnerable position with men who have insecure attachments. Such men may have unrealistic expectations about the amount of support that they are entitled to receive from female attachment figures, and they may be pre-disposed to believe that attachment figures will be unavailable to them in

times of stress. For example, domestically violent men have been found to attribute more negative intentions to their wives' behaviors than non-violent men (Holtzworth-Munroe & Hutchinson, 1993). They have also been found to focus on the primary relationship to the exclusion of all others to get their needs met (Murphy, et al., 1994). These contradictory expectations, beliefs, and attributions may prime insecurely attached men to display functional anger behaviors.

Summing up the findings of his various studies on BPO and domestic violence, Dutton (1995a) has speculated that intimacy, itself, generates anger in some abusive men, especially those with BPO. The reason for this, according to Dutton, is that such men depend on their partners to maintain their ego integrity even while they mask and deny their dependency. Their relationships are fraught with dysphoric stalemates because the men, who are very demanding, and who may be threatened by either too much or too little intimacy (Dutton & Strachan, 1987a), also have poor skills for communicating their needs. When the partner fails, or is perceived to fail, to meet his needs, the assault-prone male becomes angry because his sense of self is threatened and because his use of the primitive defense of projection causes him to externalize blame to his partner. She is now "all bad", in his view. When he

resolves the situation abusively, he will then view himself as "all bad" and enter the contrition phase of the abuse cycle described by Walker (1979, 1984).

It is interesting to note how much this cyclical intimacy anger resembles the conflict of the male infant in rapprochement who wants both dependence on and independence from his mother (Mahler, 1971). According to Benjamin (1988), it is the father who can break this original dysphoric stalemate, acting as liberator, guide, and identificatory figure. Fathers who are cold, rejecting, and abusive (Dutton & Ryan, 1994) may not be suitable to the task, and their sons may be forever suspended in the insecurity of the rapprochement crisis, simultaneously approaching and avoiding an intimacy that is both desired and feared.

There is a strong correlation between psychopathology and domestic violence perpetration. As many as 80%-90% of partner assaultive men also register a clinically significant degree of psychopathology (Dutton & Starzomski, 1993). Correlation is not causation, however, and noting the association between psychopathology and domestic violence is not an attempt to posit psychopathology as a necessary or sufficient single-factor cause for domestic violence. In fact, while noting the prevalence of psychopathology among domestically violent men, it is also important to note that 10%-15% of men who batter register no elevated levels of psychopathology (Hamberger &

Hastings, 1986, 1988c). Some men who do register clinical levels of psychopathology are not domestically violent (Dutton, 1995). Rather, understanding the interaction of broad cultural practices such as child-rearing arrangements with the lives of individuals, as mediated by families, and the effects of those practices on individuals, including individual psychopathologies, deepens our understanding of the culture, the families, the individuals and the circumstances in which those individuals are more likely to choose violent behavior.

### **Amelioration of Domestic Violence and the Problems of Attrition and Recidivism**

Researchers have focused on heterogeneity among wife assaulters in the belief that understanding how batterers differ from one another could aid in the development of more effective treatment programs (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). In effect, treatment protocols could be tailored to fit particular sub-types of assaultive men. Gondolf (1997), however, in a six-year study of group treatment program outcomes, has found that no one protocol was more effective than any other with any given batterer subtype. To date, the evidence seems to indicate that a combination of arrest, prosecution, fines, and clinical intervention works better than any single-factor approach (Dutton, 1995a; Gondolf, 1997).

In many communities, however, such a multi-dimensional response to the problem of domestic violence is inconsistently applied, if applied at all. In part because of crowded court dockets and crowded jails – and it is worth reiterating that 25% of jail inmates are domestic violence perpetrators – group treatment programs are likely to continue being used as pre-trial and pre-sentencing diversions even though there is scant evidence that such treatment in and of itself has long-term effect (Harrell, 1991; Levecque, 1998). What evidence there is for treatment effect shows that wife-assaulters who complete treatment programs are somewhat less abusive than untreated men (Dutton, 1986; Palmer, Brown, & Barrera, 1992).

Unfortunately, the attrition rate from batterer treatment programs is substantial. Although research has indicated that approximately 60% of domestically violent men attending the first session of a short-term group program will complete the program (Demaris, 1989; Edleson & Syers, 1991), it also has shown that there may be a drop-rate of greater than 90% between initial telephone contact with a program and program completion (Gondolf & Foster, 1991). There is no debating that only if they show up will offenders receive whatever benefit treatment offers.

Treatment attrition is not an unusual phenomenon. The average psychotherapy patient attends less than four sessions and the modal number

of sessions attended is one (Phillips, 1987). For any type of treatment, however, there are two general factors that predict attrition, lifestyle instability and incongruence between the client's perceptions of his or her problems and the treatment provided (Baeckeland & Lundwall, 1975; Wierzbicki & Pekarik, 1993). Clients are not likely to stay in any type of treatment that does not appear to be addressing their problems (Wierzbicki & Pekarik, 1993). Lifestyle instability includes such factors as low education, youth, alcohol abuse, frequent job changes, and frequent residence changes. These are similar to the variety of factors and impulsive behaviors associated with increased risk for criminal behavior (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990), for criminal recidivism (Hanson, Scott, & Steffy, 1995) and, as it happens, for committing domestic violence (Hamberger & Hastings, 1989).

Cadsky, Hanson, Crawford, and Lalonde (1996) found that the single strongest predictor of remaining in a batterer's treatment program was self-identification of the need for treatment. They have pointed out that congruence and attrition in batterer's treatment programs has received little attention even though, of the two factors associated with treatment attrition, congruence is probably easier to bring about than stability of client lifestyle.

Kelly (1955) has suggested that "if we examine a person's philosophy closely, we find ourselves staring at the person himself. If we reach an

understanding of how a person behaves, we discover it in the manner in which he represents his circumstances to himself" (p. 16). Although Dobash and Dobash's (1979) seminal qualitative inquiry into the experiences of battered women is credited with sparking much of the interest in the phenomenon of domestic violence, only one such study has considered the experience of being violent from the perspective of the batterer. Stamp and Sabourin (1995), however, limited their analysis of 15 interviews with male batterers to the attributions batterers made about themselves and their partners, and the types of accounts they gave about their abusive situations.

For the most part, following the work of Arias and Beach (1987), who found that domestically violent men chronically underreport both the quantity and seriousness of their abuse, batterers' reports of violent and abusive behavior have been viewed with skepticism. Instead, battered wives are routinely asked to report on their spouse's violent episodes. Even if victim reports do increase the validity of quantitative accounts of domestic violence, they cannot substitute for systematic documentation of the experience of being violent from the perspective of those who are so. Without documentation of the ways in which domestically violent men represent their circumstances to themselves and others, our understanding of the phenomenon of domestic violence is incomplete. We are missing a potentially crucial piece of the "why

he does this to her" puzzle, and our attempts to ameliorate the violence may be missing their mark.

### Chapter III: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### **Brief History of the Existential-Phenomenological Approach to Research**

Pollio, Henley, and Thompson (1997) have reminded us that the word method is derived from the root words hodos, meaning "path" or "way" and meta, meaning "across" or "beyond" (p. 28). Addison (1989) has suggested that the choice of a method of investigation depends, in part, on the problem being investigated and the goal of the investigation. The path taken across the uncharted terrain of a research problem, then, depends on what one wants to see and where one hopes to end up—the goal of the journey.

Historically, psychology has attempted to ally itself with the natural sciences by adopting natural science research methods, the paradigmatic method being the controlled laboratory experiment. The natural science path is well suited to those problems in which the desired goal is a third-person perspective: in the observation of overt behavior, for example, or in the measurement of the body as a material or organic object (Polkinghorne, 1988). It has been criticized as a path less well suited to the study of human experience where what is desired is a first-person description of the meanings present in conscious awareness (Colaizzi, 1978; Polkinghorne, 1989; Romanyshyn and Whalen, 1989).

Existential-phenomenology offers an alternative to the natural science approach to psychological phenomena. As its name implies, existential-phenomenology draws from two philosophical traditions. Existentialism can be traced to the thinking of Kierkegaard, for whom it was important to make intelligible those themes with which it seems human beings invariably struggle. Phenomenology derives from that body of thought that, together with the Gestalt psychology of perception, is associated in the Western mind with Kant. As a philosophy, it was first explicated by Husserl who saw phenomenology as the "rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear so that one might come to an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience" (Valle, King, and Halling, 1989, p. 6). To existential-phenomenologists, "understanding experience merely as a mental projection onto the world (the idealistic fallacy) or as a reflection of the world (the realistic fallacy) misses the necessity of the person-world relationship in the constituting of experience" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 42).

First brought together as a coherent approach to thinking about human being by Heidegger (1927/1962), and cast into psychological insight by Merleau-Ponty (1962/1989), existential-phenomenological psychology concerns itself with those themes that are present to human consciousness as human beings experience themselves in their everyday world. Existential-

phenomenological research seeks to describe human experience as it is lived in the interrelationship of the person and his or her world (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio, 1989; Valle, et al., 1989). Because existential-phenomenology is grounded in concerns with human experience, it seems a philosophical path especially well suited to an exploration of the batterer's experience of being violent.

### **Existential-Phenomenological Methods**

Research methods based on existential-phenomenological principles are guided by a set of general procedures (Giorgi, 1975a) rather than by a specific sequence of steps, and "researchers are expected to develop plans of study specially suited to understanding the particular experiential phenomenon that is the object of their study" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 44). Such a plan will include choices regarding participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. It may also include implementing several "bracketing" procedures by which the researcher will attempt to ensure that the study's findings result not from her own preconceptions or biases regarding the phenomena in question, but from the participants' descriptions of their experiences (Valle, et al., 1989).

### Participants

Colaizzi (1978) has succinctly described the criteria for selecting participants in a phenomenological study stating that "experience with the investigated topic and articulateness suffice..." (p. 58). In contrast to a natural science method that seeks a sufficient number of participants to meet statistical requirements for generalizing from samples to populations, phenomenological research seeks enough participants "to generate a full range of variation in the set of descriptions to be used for analyzing a phenomenon" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 48).

### Data Collection

Data for the study of experience has been gathered from literary sources (Halling, 1979; Jager, 1979), from narratives written in response to an interviewer's question (Beier & Pollio, 1994; Giorgi, 1989; Golledge & Pollio, 1995; Fischer, 1989), and from interviews conducted over the telephone (Fischer & Wertz, 1979). However, Pollio, et al. (1997) have suggested that the face-to-face dialogic interview is the "almost inevitable procedure" (p.28) for obtaining precise and systematic descriptions of experience:

Since experience is personal, the problem of other minds can be bridged only with the help of some specific other whose experiences are at issue. The method, or path,

that seems natural to attain a proper description of human experience is that of dialogue in which one member of the dialogic pair, normally called the investigator, assumes a respectful position vis-à-vis the real expert, the subject or, more appropriately, the co-researcher (p. 29).

Although it seeks a description of first-person experience, the dialogic interview is actually a second-person procedure in which the first-person "I," who has experienced the phenomenon in question, seeks to describe it to and clarify the meaning of it with a second-person "you" and "perhaps even to realize [the meaning] for the first time during the conversation, itself" (Pollio, et al., 1997, p. 29). Rather than psychology as a natural science of the third-person, or an introspective science of the first-person, the dialogic interview renders existential-phenomenological psychology a relational science of the second-person in which the meaning of experience emerges in its description and clarification between two people.

### Bracketing

As mentioned, bracketing involves steps to ensure that the findings of a phenomenological study result from descriptions of experience rendered in the dialogic interview between the researcher and participants rather than from the researcher's own preconceptions and biases. This process is called

"bracketing" because, ideally, it allows the researcher to become aware of and set aside her own biases, as if putting brackets around them, so she can be open to new meanings that emerge from participants' descriptions. As an example, it is customary to begin a phenomenological investigation with an examination of the investigator's preconceptions of the phenomenon in question. This initial bracketing procedure may involve self-reflection on the part of the researcher (Colaizzi, 1973), or more interpersonal possibilities such as writing down one's experiences of the phenomenon of interest, then discussing them with other members of the research team (Fischer & Wertz, 1979). Another initial bracketing procedure that may be used is a bracketing interview in which the investigator, before conducting participant interviews, is first interviewed about her own experiences. Ideally, the researcher would be asked the same question as participants will be asked. The text of this interview is then analyzed in the same manner as eventually will be used for individual participant interviews, rendering themes in the investigator's experience of the phenomenon under investigation.

The bracketing interview, like other bracketing procedures, is not intended to eliminate a researcher's preconceptions of the phenomenon in question; this would be impossible (Gadamer, 1976; Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1989). Rather, it is intended to alert the researcher to their existence so

that she may take steps to minimize the limiting effect such biases might have on descriptions rendered by study participants in their interviews (Polkinghorne, 1989). Two such steps, already mentioned, involve the choice of open, rather than leading, interview questions and the use of questions that employ the participants' own words.

Themes in the investigator's experience that are identified in the analysis of the bracketing interview are not included in the final thematic descriptions of the experience being studied. Rather, they mark the starting point in the researcher's understanding of that experience from which more complex understandings of the phenomenon are expected to emerge over the course of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Pollio, et al., 1997).

In addition to the bracketing interview, a second bracketing procedure which may be implemented is the use of an interpretive research group (Fischer & Wertz, 1979; Pollio, et al., 1997; Thompson, et al., 1989). This group, comprised of several researchers experienced in phenomenological work, with whom the researcher meets on a regular basis, serves a bracketing function in three primary ways. First, because research group members analyze the bracketing interview, they are aware of themes in the researcher's pre-understanding of the experience being explored. This awareness helps group members recognize and point out failures of bracketing in participant

interviews, the transcripts of which they also help to analyze. Second, research group members are able to point out failures of bracketing in the researcher's emerging understanding of the phenomenon in question. Third, research group members provide challenges to any interpretation of the data, from the initial analysis of individual interviews, through the process of uncovering themes common to all interviews, to the proffering of a structure for themes uncovered in the course of the analysis. At each juncture, group members function in a critical capacity, challenging the researcher and one another to point to specific evidence in the text of the interviews to support an interpretation. "Whereas the ability of an interpretive group to see support for an interpretation does not guarantee its adequacy, failure to see such support serves as good evidence of its lack of adequacy" (Pollio, et al., 1997, p. 49).

In a similar way, while the ability of study participants to see themselves in an interpretation of their experience does not guarantee its adequacy, the failure of participants to see themselves serves as evidence that the goal of the phenomenological research study, the description of experience from the perspective of the experiencer, has not been met. As an additional step in bracketing, Colaizzi (1978) proposes that final descriptions of experience be negotiated with research participants. Presenting preliminary

results of the study to participants in a follow-up interview, the researcher asks how the results compare with participants' experiences and whether or not aspects of their experience have been omitted. Final descriptions of experience take into account new data garnered from these follow-up interviews.

Finally, although some phenomenological researchers render themes in the language of their particular discipline (e.g., Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1975a, 1975b), bracketing also may be aided by rendering themes uncovered in the descriptions of experience not in the abstract and specialized language of the social sciences but in the experience-near language used by participants (Pollio, et al., 1997).

### Interpretive Analysis

Because existential-phenomenology offers guidelines rather than specific rules for doing research, it should not be surprising that phenomenological researchers list slightly different steps in the process of analyzing their data (e.g., Fischer & Wertz, 1979; Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1975a, 1975b; van Kaam, 1969). Common to all, however, is the use of the hermeneutic circle for data interpretation—the process of attending to the emergence of the meaning of experience in the constant interplay of partial to whole texts (Bleicher, 1980).

Polkinghorne (1989) has noted that "because a whole protocol or a collection of protocols cannot be analyzed simultaneously, they have to be broken down into manageable units..." (p. 51). In other words, one cannot attend to the interplay between parts and wholes without making a decision about what constitutes a part. Giorgi (1975a, 1975b) suggests that "meaning units" for protocols be determined by a change in subject matter. Longer passages can be divided at natural stopping points in the text, e.g., at a change in speaker. The interpretive research group can then discuss the portion of the interview just read, with each member contributing his or her thoughts about the meaning or meanings of the events described. Alternative renderings and challenges to those already offered are encouraged. Disputes are resolved and consensus reached only when supporting evidence can be cited from the text regarding the meaning of a particular passage to the research participant who has provided it (Pollio, et al., 1997). A similar process is followed for protocols analyzed by a researcher working alone: the text can be divided into meaning units and each unit examined for its dominant meaning as given by the research participant in his description of his experience (Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1975a, 1975b).

Following an analysis of all interviews, the next step is to identify all of the varieties of meaningful experience described in each protocol in order to

render a summary description of the meaning of the experience in question for each research participant. Pollio, et al. (1997) refer to this as "idiographic interpretation," or the interplay of meaning between the specific incidents and episodes described in an individual protocol and the meaning of the experience under investigation for the participant as revealed in the protocol as a whole. Giorgi (1975a, 1975b), too, includes this step in order to retain a sense of the situated context of the experience before moving to the trans-situational or general thematic description.

To generate a set of themes common to all protocols (Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1975a, 1975b; Thompson, et al., 1989), meaning units are identified that best exemplify all the various experiences described by all participants. These meaning units are then categorized according to their likeness to one another as revealed in the words of the participants. Care must be taken to ensure that all participants are represented in each preliminary theme.

Preliminary themes are presented to the interpretive research group for their consideration and for their assistance in synthesizing them into a smaller number of general themes. The interpretive research group then evaluates whether or not thematic descriptions are supported by the data presented in the original protocols and whether or not the data are well-represented by the themes. This comparison between themes and protocols, the process of

"nomothetic interpretation" (Pollio, et al., 1997), continues until it is agreed by all group members that the general themes fully encompass the meaning of the experience as presented across all protocols.

The final step in an existential-phenomenological analysis of experience is to examine the general themes for evidence of structural relationships between and among them and to determine the ground against which they stand out – the gestalt of the experience being studied (Colaizzi, 1978; Polkinghorne, 1989; Pollio, et al., 1997; Thompson, et al., 1989). Results of this thematic analysis may be presented in both text and diagrammatic form. The diagrams attempt to represent structural relationships between themes, whereas the text attempts to describe and explicate each theme in the relevant experience.

MacIntyre (1984) has suggested that "in successfully identifying what someone else is doing we always move towards placing a particular episode in the context of a set of narrative histories, both of the individuals concerned and of the settings in which they act and suffer" (p.211). Literature reviews perform that service for any particular study, moving toward placing the study within the context of a set of scientific narratives. Existential-phenomenological research methods attempt to move us toward an understanding of shared experience by describing what is common in our

particular, lived experiences. As such, existential-phenomenology seems methodologically well suited for uncovering what is common in batterers' experiences of being violent.

### **Procedures Used in the Present Study**

#### **Participants**

Participants for this study were recruited from a pool of approximately 70 members of a group program for male domestic violence offenders. Recruiting took place over a three-year period during which the program changed from a 24-week to a 45-week program.

Twenty-one men initially volunteered to participate in the study. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, anonymity was a condition of study participation. Two volunteers hoped to use the data they could provide as favorable evidence in future court hearings, and they were dropped from participation by mutual agreement when they learned that this would not be possible and before they were interviewed. Two other volunteers were unable to schedule a time to be interviewed that was convenient to both themselves and the researcher. Two additional volunteers provided interviews, but the sound quality of the resulting audiotapes was poor and difficult to accurately transcribe – these interviews were not used.

The final group of participants consisted of fifteen men, aged 28 to 50 years, with a mean age of 35 years. Fourteen of the men had been court-ordered to a domestic violence offenders program, seven of them to the 24-week program and seven to the 45-week program. One participant had not been court-ordered but had sought help from the group program on his own. This man and two others, who had been court-ordered, had completed the 24-week program, but all three continued to attend meetings because they wished to do so. These three participants had been in the domestic violence offenders program between one and two years at the time they were interviewed. The remaining participants had been in the program between eight and 24 weeks at the time data were collected.

Nine of the men reported that they had been abusive in multiple relationships. Two men were married to the victims of their violence and continued to live with them. Five men were divorced or otherwise estranged from their victims, and violence had been the reason that the relationships ended. Seven of the men continued to have a relationship with their victim although they were separated, not living in the same house and, again, violence was the reason for the separation. One man had been divorced from his most recent victim for two years, but, in the past few months, they had begun to date again.

Twelve participants had high school diplomas or the equivalent. One participant had dropped out of high school. Another had ended his education after the sixth grade. One had completed a four-year college degree. Fourteen of the participants were Caucasian, not of Hispanic origin, and one was Hispanic. Two of the men identified themselves solely as verbal abusers, although it became clear in their descriptions of their abuse that they hit, kicked, slammed, and tore up objects other than humans and that they knowingly used this activity both as an alternative to physical battering and as way to intimidate their partners.

#### Recruiting Participants

The researcher attended group meetings of the domestic violence offenders program and explained her research interest and the method by which data would be collected. Group members were told that participation in the research study would include the collection of some non-identifying demographic data (age, marital status, educational status, and number of weeks in the program) and a one-to-two hour audiotaped interview.

During the recruiting visit, the researcher announced the initial question with which the interview would be opened and suggested that the men think about how they might answer the question if they were to participate. Also during the recruiting visit, the complete contents of the

Information and Consent Form (see Appendix A) were explained to group members, and each group member was given a copy of the form to keep. Group members were asked to contact the researcher, whose name, address, and phone number were on the Information and Consent Form, if they wished to participate in the study.

There were no incentives offered to group members for participating except that they were allowed to schedule their interview during their regular group meeting time or to receive credit for a session if they scheduled at another time. Arrangements were made for a participant's attendance to be counted in such a way that no one in the domestic violence offenders program knew that he had participated in the study.

### Briefing Participants

At the time of the interview, the Information and Consent Form was read aloud to each participant, and each participant was invited to read along silently. Before they signed the form, participants were invited to ask questions about anything on the form they did not understand or wanted to have clarified. Participants were told that they were free to ask questions before the interview began, while it was going on, or after it was over. Furthermore, they were reminded that if they wished to stop participating at any time during the interview or after it was over, they needed only to inform

the researcher, and the interview would be stopped, or the audiotape of their interview and any resulting transcript would be destroyed, and this would occur without penalty to them.

### Data Collection

Open-ended and unstructured, interviews began with a question about the participant's experience of being domestically violent, "Can you think of a time or times when you've been violent in a domestic relationship and describe that in as much detail as possible?" Subsequent questions arose from the context of the interview and were intended to assist participants in focusing on the experiences they were describing (Kvale, 1983; Polkinghorne, 1989).

Following the recommendations of Thompson, et al., (1989), as well as Polkinghorne (1989), "why" questions and "what happened" questions were avoided because they tend to lead participants away from description of experience. Instead, the interviewer asked such questions as "What was that like for you?" and "What were you experiencing?" as well as framing questions in participants' own words (Pollio, et al., 1997). For example, when a participant stated that he had treated his partner like a child, rather than ask a question that re-framed what the interviewer believed the participant meant by those words, the words themselves were re-stated in the form of a

question: "You said you treated her like a child?" Or even more simply, "You treated her like a child?" This allowed the participant to clarify and tell what was relevant for him about treating someone like a child.

Participants were free to describe as many or as few incidents of domestic violence as they wished. Descriptions of experience which were unclear to the interviewer were queried until both interviewer and participant were satisfied that the experience had been communicated as fully as possible.

When the participant indicated that there were no more violent experiences that he wished to describe, the interview entered its final stage. At that point, the interviewer described back to the participant, as completely as she could, her understanding of his experience of being violent in a domestic relationship. The participant clarified any misunderstanding and the interview ended when a participant indicated that the interviewer had accurately described his experience. Interviews lasted between one hour and one-and-a-half hours.

Complete interviews were transcribed and edited, and the names of people, places, specific dates, and other data that might serve to identify the participant or his victim were removed. The transcribed and edited interviews served as the data of the analysis.

### Bracketing

The initial bracketing procedure used in this study was a bracketing interview in which the investigator, before conducting any participant interviews, was first interviewed about her own experiences of being violent. Ideally, the researcher is asked the same question as participants. In this instance, however, because partner abuse was not part of her specific experience, the researcher was asked to describe her experiences of being violent in any relationship. The text of this interview was then analyzed in the same manner as was eventually used for participant interviews and rendered themes in the researcher's experience of being violent.

In addition to a bracketing interview, a second bracketing procedure implemented in this study was the use of an interpretive research group (Fischer & Wertz, 1979; Pollio, et al., 1997; Thompson, et al., 1989), the Wednesday Night Seminar at the University of Tennessee. This group participated in formulating the plan of research, in formulating the opening question for the interviews, and in all aspects of the interpretive analysis.

The condition of participant anonymity prevented doing follow-up interviews with participants in this study. Because of this, the interviewer took extra care at the end of each interview to provide a detailed description of her understanding of the participant's experience and to invite his

clarification. In addition, results of the study were presented to two different groups of batterers who had agreed to act as focus groups and who were willing to discuss results in light of their own experiences. Members of these two groups agreed that, while one theme or another might seem more salient to any particular man, their experiences of being violent had been adequately captured by the thematic descriptions as presented. Despite trying, they could come up with no experiences that could not be encompassed by the study themes.

Finally, bracketing was also accomplished in this study by rendering themes uncovered in the descriptions of being violent not in the abstract and specialized language of the social sciences, but in the experience-near language used by participants (Pollio, et. al, 1997).

### Interpretive Analysis

Interpretive analysis for this study followed the procedures outlined above. The interpretive research group analyzed 12 of the 15 interview transcripts. Three of the 15 transcripts were analyzed by the researcher working independently. All themes identified were present in each of the transcripts and were supported by specific passages in each protocol. The structure of the relationship between and among themes was reviewed and refined by the interpretive research group to render an understanding of the

totality or gestalt of the experience of being violent. The results of this thematic analysis are presented in both text and diagrammatic form. The diagrams attempt to represent the structural relationship between themes, whereas the text attempts to describe each theme in the abuser's experience of being violent.

## Chapter IV: RESULTS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

### General Overview of the Results

During thematic analysis it became clear that participants in this study had described two distinct sets of themes in their interviews. Without always being an explicit focus of the interviews, an awareness of self and other in relationship seemed to pervade the protocols. This awareness, which was labeled Self-Other, was the context or ground against which the first set of themes emerged, themes that described specific comparisons of self with other. These comparisons were termed Relational Themes, and they, in turn, formed the setting or context within which the violent episodes took place. The second set of themes that emerged in participant interviews was termed Themes of Violence. These themes described the experience of being violent, itself.

### Relational Themes

Located within the ground of Self-Other, Relational Themes placed participants' experiences of being violent in the realm of identity within domestic relationships. What this means is that participants described specific dualities they used to compare themselves with their intimate partners and by which they framed opposing identities for themselves and their partners. These opposed identities were always contested, and there seemed to be little

room for either similarity of identity or negotiation of identity between partners. In the words of one participant, "There wasn't, it wasn't equality. It was either, 'I win and you lose,' or 'you win and I lose'."

The dualities encompassed by Relational Themes described experiences of being Big or Little, Good or Bad, and Winning or Losing. Related experiences were grouped together under these titles that were chosen from the text of the interviews to reflect the dominant meaning of each theme. For example, Big or Little also included experiences that were described as "up or down," "adult or child," and "strong or weak." Table 1 presents each Relational Theme and its related experiences, as study participants described them.

Table 1: Relational Themes in the Experience of Being Violent

| Big/Little  | Good/Bad                  | Winning/Losing         |
|-------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Up/Down     | Good/Evil                 | Matter/Don't Matter    |
| Adult/Child | Right/Wrong               | Controlling/Controlled |
| Strong/Weak | Neat/Messy                | Getting/Giving         |
|             | Smart/Stupid              |                        |
|             | Trustworthy/Untrustworthy |                        |
|             | Normal/Not Normal         |                        |

It is important to note that these themes are not independent of one another. Rather, they form an overall pattern in which there is considerable overlap, both of language and meaning. For instance, when a participant said, "I am all messed up," it was coded under "normal or not normal" for the dominant meaning of the statement in the context of the interview. This statement, however, also contains language about "neat or messy" (from the same theme of Good or Bad) and "up or down" (from the theme of Big or Little). Arguably, one who feels "all messed up" also feels like a loser, and the context of the interview indicated that losing was, indeed, a concern for this participant as he related to his partner: "It was like she knew I'd never cooked a pot of beans and so she was trying to make a point, which was a good point, but I thought my comeback was good, too." The one statement, "I am all messed up, " represented all three themes, although one theme, Good or Bad, seemed to predominate.

Participants presented the dualities encompassed by Relational Themes as polarized opposites. They were aware of identifying their experience, indeed, themselves, as one or the other member of these polarities. This experienced identity was changeable, however, from one pole to the other. Further, the poles of each pair were not equally valued. Instead, Big was a more desirable identity than Little, Good a more desirable identity than Bad,

and Winning a more desirable identity than Losing. Participants often reported their violence as coinciding with a wish to assert themselves as the more desirable pole of each pair of items described in Relational Themes.

### Big or Little

Participants often reported feeling small, helpless, childlike, or childish in their relationships with partners. One said, "I just don't like to be cussed and screamed at. It makes me feel less than what I am." The same participant reported that, after a separation from his wife, "I think one of the reasons I went back...I grew dependent on her...towards doing, like, my paperwork and things of this nature. Just like my mother, you know?" Other participants experienced a similar sense of themselves as a child in relation to their wives, who were cast in the role of adult. Said one man:

I can't even remember how I dealt with it, with [my wife], but it was like, "Well, I'm sorry, but I'm old enough." You know? And I get these crazy, stupid thoughts like that. You know, "I don't need your permission," and "I'm old enough," and "I don't have to ask," and stuff like that.

A second man said:

I guess I felt like a little kid that was being reprimanded for something that he hadn't done. I, I, I can kind of liken it to

that...I can imagine a little kid...knowing that he's innocent, being reprimanded by a teacher, or a parent, or any adult, and the kid trying to say, you know, "But I'm innocent. I didn't do it. Why are you treating me like this?" I could, you know, that's kind of the way I felt.

One participant expressly linked his feelings about being with his partner when he was in conflict with her to his feelings of being a child in the presence of his angry and abusive parents:

**Participant:** I felt like I did when I was little and Dad was beatin' the hell out of me.

**Interviewer:** Wow!

**Participant:** Pretty much. Honestly. You can't get away. There's nothin' you can do about it. No matter what you say...you're wrong, he's right.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant:** That's...basically it. Or Mom. Either one.

Alongside the experience of being little, however, almost all participants mentioned being explicitly aware that they were physically bigger or more powerful than their partners. Their physical size and power could be used to reassert themselves as big.

As one participant said of his partner's attempts to smack him back after he had first smacked her, " 'Course that didn't matter. You know, you know, I could, I could overpower her. That was no big deal."

Another said, "There was one occasion where she walked away from me, and I drove down the road and picked her up. No, I ran down the road, and uh, picked her up, and smacked her on the rear end while carrying her back to my truck."

Still another man related, "I'm very intimidating because I'm very big, and I don't like that, either. I, I really don't like being big. It's sort of a controlling behavior for me, because when I start raging..."

The latter participant went on to describe a time when women in a therapy group had been frightened to the point of cowering by his display of anger, although his display was directed not at the women but at a chair cushion. He judged that his large size made his angry display more intimidating than it would otherwise have been. He also described a time when his physical strength and size allowed him, in frustration, to throw a screwdriver through the steel firewall of a car. He concluded these stories of strength and size by relating that displays of anger were the only way he had ever known to "control circumstances or people."

That physical abuse is used as a display of bigness or dominance is hardly surprising. Participants reported that they used verbal abuse for a similar purpose, however, to assert metaphorical bigness. As one participant said, "I think a lot of the insults I gave was just to bring [my girlfriends] down a little bit lower than I felt."

### Good or Bad

All participants in this study reported a general alertness to goodness and badness and a desire to identify themselves with goodness. Those who reported being violent outside of domestic relationships often portrayed themselves as using violence in the service of good, as the following passages, from two different interviews, illustrate:

But I always, in a way, I always been for right and wrong, you know, and uh, I never went against the cops unless I felt like they was wrong in what they was doin'. But, hey, if I felt like they was right, and I was in the wrong, then everything was all right. But if I seen 'em hasslin' somebody else that I seen the whole thing from the beginning, and I knowed that the other person was in the right, I'd back 'em up regardless of how many cops was there, you know.

But crooks should be scared of me, you know? I'm going to get rid of them. Try my best, you know? But my friends, all my good friends, they should be happy because I'll always, I've got friends I've had for twenty years, you know? They'll be my friends to the end. I'd never draw my, you know, weapons against, or my hands against, you know, I've never gone against my friends.

On a similar note, and without exception, participants reported that incidents of domestic violence took place when they judged that their partner was doing something bad or wrong. Said one, "I was on the edge of insanity, and she lied to me. She set me off. I mean, that set me off. I saw her as being untrustworthy."

Another said, "Just because the Hamburger Helper wasn't done right, wasn't done to perfection, I'd bounce it up over her."

A third participant stated, "We were livin' in a trash dumpster, and I didn't want to live that way. So, I go in the house, and I feel this rage comin' on, you know?"

While a fourth participant relayed the following:

If [the women in my life] are doing what they're supposed to be doing, then, you know, I like 'em. But if they're not, then I

think maybe—I can't remember real far, exactly—but if they're acting stupid or doing something stupid, then I don't like 'em, and I treat 'em, you know, hateful and mean.

Some participants explicitly acknowledged that, in these instances of judging their partner bad or wrong, they assumed the role of an adult attempting to punish or correct their partner who was placed in the role of a child. As mentioned, participants reported that, at various times, they experienced themselves on either side of the adult-child pair. During those times that they were feeling like the adult, however, they assumed violence and abuse to be part of the role. Said one man, "[If] I considered that she was doing something wrong, uh, then I had, uh, I had spanked her...[It] would be just like a child. I had turned her over my knee and spanked her until she, until she would cry."

Another participant said:

Sometimes it'd be because she done some little thing wrong, and uh...it would start out as tryin', wantin' to say somethin', but at the same time, the anger was there while I was tryin' to show her the right and all of a sudden, it would skip, you know, and there [the violence] would be.

### Winning or Losing

Participants reported instances of violence and abuse when they perceived their partners' wishes to be in some way at odds with their own. These instances could deal with issues as large as how affection should be shown in the marriage or as small as who would determine how much salt should go in the soup. The underlying issue, however, always seemed to be a question of whose wishes or point of view would prevail. These themes were grouped under the heading Winning or Losing.

While each Relational Theme was presented by participants in terms of opposites – Big or Little, Good or Bad – the theme of Winning or Losing dealt explicitly with participants' perceptions of domestic relationships as adversarial:

**Participant:** I don't know what in hell I think about when I get angry other than, "I've got to come out on top." That kind of thing.

**Interviewer:** I've got to come out on top?

**Participant:** I've got to come out better. I've got to...I've got to...do whatever it takes to...to be on top. And...you know, that's where it, the, the violence would play into it is...is if the verbal abuse kept comin' back.

Participants reported feeling not just opposed by their partners, but thwarted and deprived by them. One man stated, "She was just not seeing my point of view at all, and more or less telling me that I didn't have a point of view. I didn't matter."

A second man said, "I'm an affectionate-type person. I enjoy showing a person how I feel. I feel like I deserve that for myself. I don't get it, but it bothers me."

A third participant related:

I always watch [two college football teams] play. Always have. I'll miss other ballgames, but that's my favorite game, and she knows that. She always wants to watch [college] football but, for some reason, she wasn't going to let me have peace watching the game. She modeled every lingerie she had, dancing in front of the TV, just trying to get my attention. Which is fine, you know. If she wanted my attention, all she had to do was come over there, and sit down with me, and that would have been no problem.

And another man said:

The first week we were married I realized there'd be problems and, of course, my dream was I wanted to be together.

I wanted to love this woman and I wanted to be her love. I wanted all these things that go with marriage, to be her protector, her supporter, and blah, blah, blah, and all I really got was an adversary. And she plays the part of an adversary real well.

One participant tied his use of physical violence to his desire to win an argument with his wife that he believed he was losing. Even though he believed he was wrong, his desire to win and to regain his position as the one in control of the situation took precedence, and he was willing to use his greater physical size to accomplish these ends:

And, and I, people have asked me, "Well did it make you feel good when you pushed her?" Um...it didn't make me feel good, but it, but when I pushed her, I felt like I had control again because, "I'm bigger than you and what I say is gonna happen, you, you know?" "Right."

Figure 1 illustrates one possible configuration of participants' experiences of these polarized Relational Themes in their domestic relationships. Each theme is surrounded by a broken line to indicate the instability of the experience—the sense that one is at times Big while the other

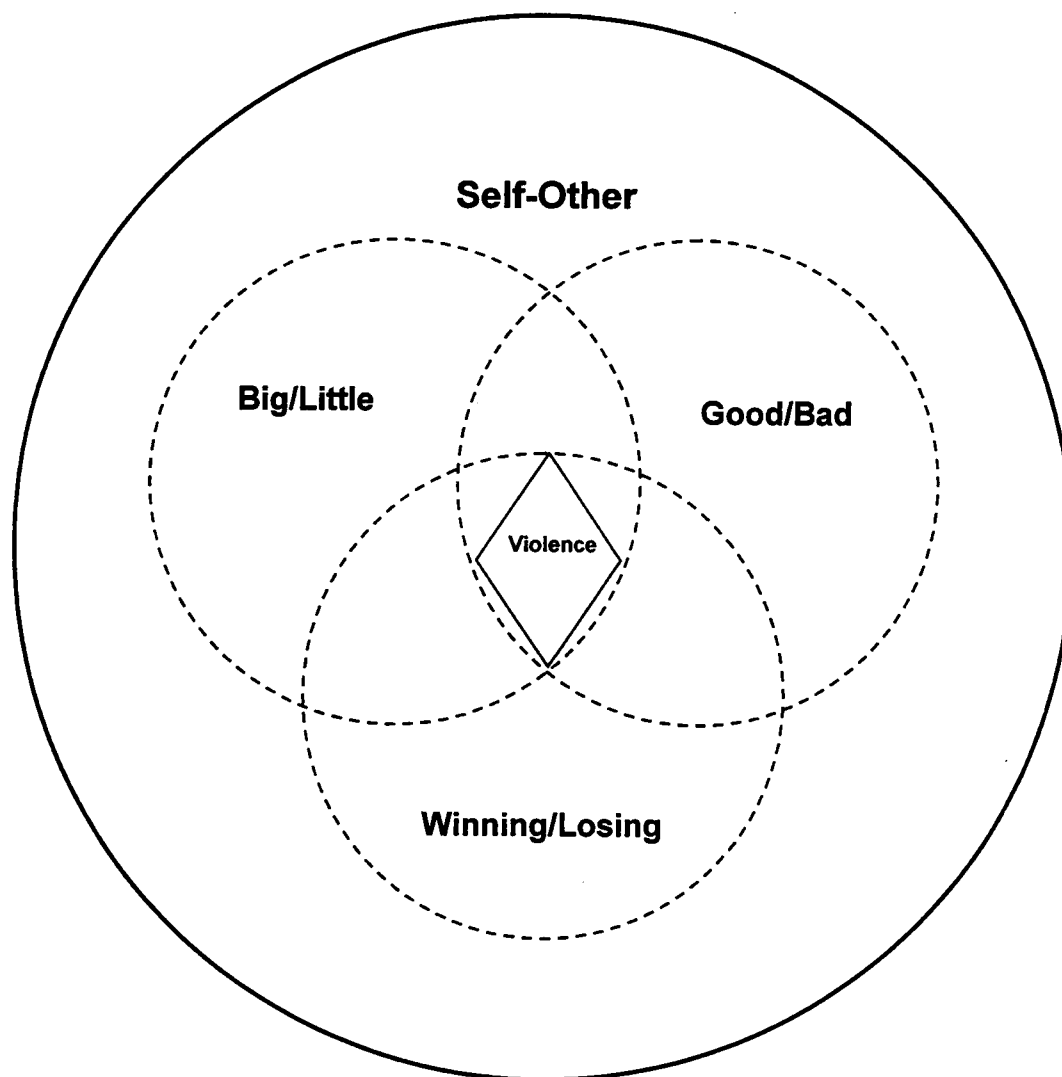


Figure 1: Relational Themes in the Experience of Being Violent

is Little, at times Little while the other is Big; sometimes Good while the other is Bad, sometimes Bad while the other is Good; either Winning while the other is Losing, or Losing while the other is Winning. For participants in this study, using violence in domestic relationships was an attempt to assert their identities as Big, Good, and Winning in relation to partners who could then be identified as Small, Bad, and Losing.

### **Themes of Violence**

The kite-shaped area at the center of Figure 1 is meant to represent participants' experiences of violent action; Figure 2 presents an enlarged and detailed view of this area. Participants in this study described their experience of being violent as bounded by four themes: being In Control, being Out of Control, experiencing a sense of Pressure, and Exploding. As Figure 2 is meant to illustrate, the four Themes of Violence may be envisioned as pairs, In Control – Out of Control and Pressure – Exploding. It may be helpful in understanding the experience of being violent to think of these pairs as the end-points of intersecting axes, as shown by the dotted lines in Figure 2.

Along these axes, within the field defined by the four Themes of Violence, two sets of sub-themes represent participants' described perceptions of change in aspects of themselves or their experience. For example,

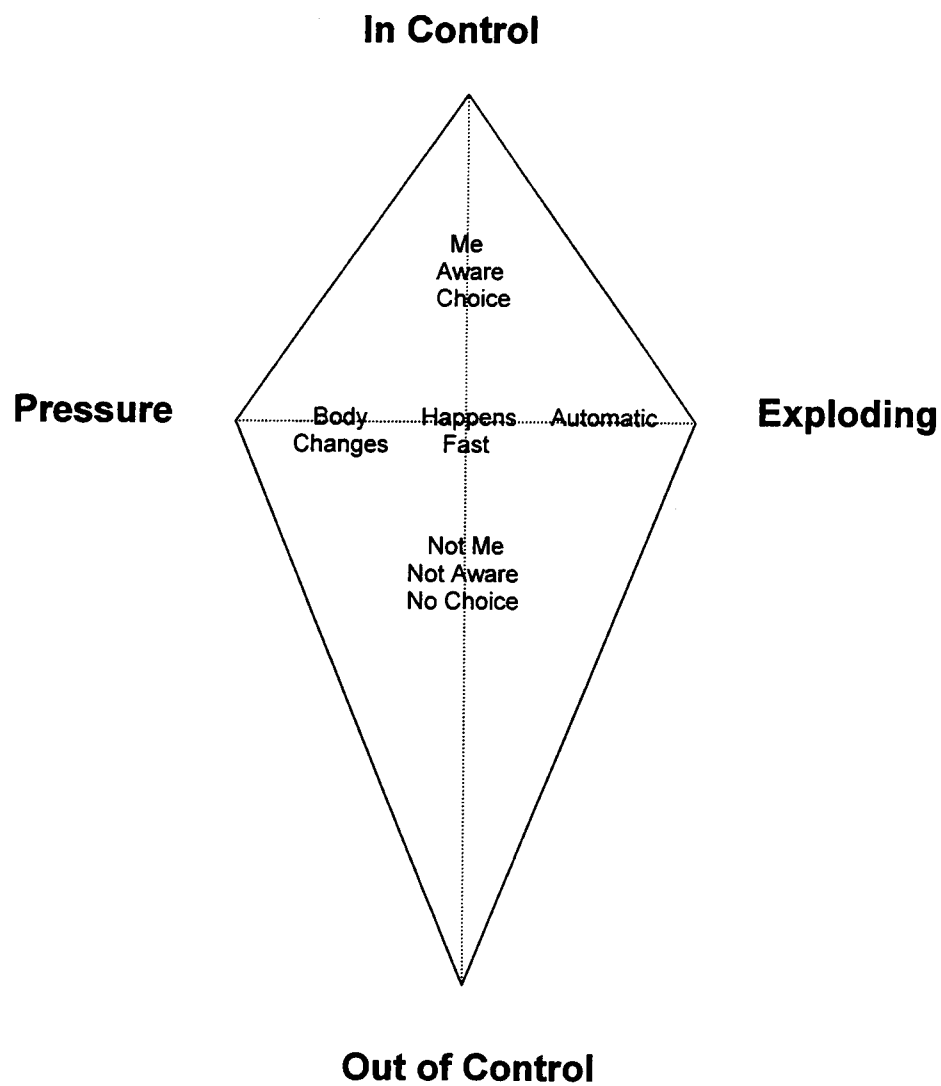


Figure 2: Themes of Violence in the Experience of Being Violent

participants described experiencing physical changes, represented by the sub-theme "body changes." They described a perception that the transition from Pressure to Exploding was a quick one, represented by the sub-theme "happens fast." They also described that their violent behavior felt like something that happened outside of their volition and that got easier to use over time, descriptions captured by the sub-theme "automatic." Finally, some of participants' perceptions of change were described as a series of contrasts: "me" and "not me," "aware" and "not aware," "choice" and "no choice."

### Pressure and Exploding

Themes of Violence entitled Pressure and Exploding also were characterized by some participants as "Tension" and "Snapping," respectively, although the text of the interviews made it clear that the same phenomena were being addressed. One participant commented, "I could control myself very well and quite charmingly at the onset of a relationship but, at a point, tension would build up, and I would hit something, or I would scream at them."

Another man said, "Everything that happened just brought on more tension and more rage. More and more and more."

A third stated, "All of the ingredients were there: very hot, drugs—methamphetamine at the time—she lied to me, and I had a really, really

stressful...you know, I had a death in the family. My brother had died, and I just snapped one day."

One participant, who referred to "a release" when he beat out the windows of his girlfriend's car, while she was in it, also referred to his experience of a violent argument as "volcanic."

For all participants, the characteristic qualities defining the themes of Pressure and Exploding were that something, nearly always identified as anger or rage, built up and that there was a sudden release of the build-up in the abusive behavior. For most, the build-up was associated with images of fire and heat: "Just kept, just like buildin' a fire, just keep puttin' wood on it," or "I stewed on it, and I stewed on it, and I stewed on it. I was angry, but I didn't do anything right away."

The sensation of release also was associated with images of heat, albeit heat suddenly unloosed, as in volcanoes "exploding," dynamite "blowing up" fireworks "going off," and guns being "triggered," with the quoted verbs being those most often used by participants to describe their abusive episodes. For example, one participant said, "I don't know if the hurt's what's causin' the anger, or if it's that I'm just gettin' mad and blowin' up."

Most participants described experiencing changes in their bodies that corresponded with their perceptions of pressure and exploding. Reported one participant, "My heart would feel like it would jump up slap out of my chest."

Another said, "You know, everything gets blurry at that time. My heart's racing and I might start twitching. I lose my focus."

A third stated, "Maybe it's endorphins or something, because, because it was almost a high. It was almost a high. I would get dizzy from it, it would just be so intense."

In the most graphic terms, one participant described his sense of being overcome by the changes in his body:

**Participant:** I stay away from people that really piss me off, until I can cool off, you know, to...I get to a point where I will explode...on them.

**Interviewer:** What's that experience of exploding like?

**Participant:** To me, it's like sticking a, a needle in your arm of pure adrenaline. That's, that's an analogy that I use. I don't know what it's like to stick a needle in your arm of pure adrenaline, but I imagine.

**Interviewer:** What do you imagine?

**Participant:** That's, that's it, you know. Just coming through your whole body, just, you know, faster and faster, and focused, and energy – uncontrolled, but focused-on-the-target energy. You know, sometimes I even see, you know, everything turns red, you know, 'cause blood is pumping throughout my veins. My veins...everything just opens up. I feel it as a chemical change in my body. I don't know what everyone's adrenaline feels like, but I feel my adrenaline, and it feels so hard and so fast, and it over-, it just overtakes me, you know?... There's a change that's so dramatic and so intense that I feel like I'm powerless over it.

For one participant, who spoke only of experiencing change in his thinking, his description of that change sounded similar to what the participant quoted above termed "focused-on-the-target energy:"

**Interviewer:** I'm curious about your rage. You've said that it feels uncontrollable.

**Participant:** Yes. It's like something...It's just like my mind goes into thinking about...nothing else...but the self-destruct part, I guess, is what we're...

**Interviewer:** Your mind goes into thinking about nothin' else? What does your mind think about? Nothin' else but...?

**Participant:** How mad I am.

**Interviewer:** How mad you are?

**Participant:** What I want to do to get, you know? Just like I was tellin' you, when I used to hold her, put my hands over her mouth. It's just...I don't know how to explain that rage, but that's what it was. It was rage.

A second participant also did not report perceptions of change in his body. In attempting to respond to a question about what it was like for him when he was violent, however, he used hand gestures to indicate a sense of something moving out from his chest in an expanding way. He identified the sensation he was indicating as "a feeling," but he said he did not know what the feeling was, nor did he have words to describe it.

As participants described, central to the perception of transition from pressure to exploding was that it happened fast and that it culminated in some level of violent activity that felt as if it were automatic: "From the time she asked me to leave to the time she hit the ground was...[snaps fingers] just like that." "Happens fast" and "automatic" also were sub-themes of the field

formed by the four Themes of Violence—In Control, Out of Control, Pressure and Exploding.

Again, it is important to remember that these themes and sub-themes are not discrete but form a gestalt or pattern in which there is considerable overlap among them. For example, the sub-theme "automatic" seems to include elements both of choice and of quickness but was described by some participants as a separate experience along the brief continuum from pressure to exploding. This automatic quality to violent experience was also described as "programmed," "a habit," and "knee-jerk."

One aspect of the sub-theme of "automatic" seemed to be that escalation from pressure to exploding occurred outside the abuser's will or intent. One participant said, "So I laid down [in bed], and just out of the blue...I just roll over and elbow her in the, in the chest and on the arm, and aside of the head...." Later in the interview, referring to the same episode, he said, "Just, like, I think that I had fallen asleep and woke up...and didn't even know I was awake. And I really woke up when I was...straddlin' her, and she was face up, and I was gettin' ready to strangle her."

A second man said, "You know, [the violence is] just...spontaneous. It's always been to...I guess if I would stop and think about it, yeah, I'd have never done it to begin with, but...but there ain't no stop and thinkin'."

Another participant reported:

You know, I don't, "The person stepped on the brakes.

Oh gosh, I've got to cuss and rant and rave to get this pressure off my chest." You know, it's just they stomp on the brakes and, "AAAAHH! Why the hell do you stomp on your...?" It's not a thought. It's more a knee-jerk reaction.

An additional aspect of the sub-theme "automatic," however, seemed to be that, over time, it got easier to be abusive. Said one man, "And it seemed like that, the more that I...struck her...the easier it was to finish it off."

Another said of his violent experiences, "I swear, it's habit forming. Seems to be, as far as the abuse problem or habit. It seems like, when you get into a...once you do something, it seems like it's, the next time you're mad, you're settin' a fight in that one direction off."

### In Control and Out of Control

Most participants described some of their experiences of pressure and exploding as occurring when they felt more in control of themselves; therefore, In Control became one of the four Themes of Violence. The sense of being in control was characterized by a greater awareness, in the moment, of themselves, their partners, their own potential for violent behavior, and possible consequences. A sense of choice about where and how to vent the

"build-up," referred to in the themes of Pressure and Exploding and labeled by participants as anger or rage, also characterized the theme of In Control. Participants reported that, when they felt in control, they felt more able to choose a less severe form of violence or more able to direct their violence against something other than their partners. For example, one participant said, "If I had any control at all on the situation, I would tear up something else, without hurting her, you know, or somebody else but, most of the time, I didn't have any control." Another participant told the story of a time he came home angry and, recognizing that he might take it out on his wife, drove through the back wall of the garage, instead.

The experience of being in control is a relative one. Grabbing a knife, holding it in someone's face and shouting for her to "sit the fuck down and leave me alone," would probably be judged severely violent by most people. To the participant who reported having done this, however, it seemed less severely violent than killing the victim with his bare hands, which was what he was aware of as an alternative and what he claimed to have been afraid he would do.

Participants reported much the same experience with verbal abuse as with physical abuse. There were times of pressure and exploding when they

described themselves as feeling in control. During these times they were aware of choosing less hurtful things to say or of ending their tirades sooner.

In addition to being relative, however, the experience of being in control was also described as tenuous by many participants, as the following exchange relates:

**Participant:** Now, now I've been, I've also been told, "What are you pickin' for?" You know? And when somebody could say somethin' like that to me, sometimes I can catch myself, you know? But, then again, sometimes I can't.

**Interviewer:** Um hm. And, and when you catch yourself, what do you do?

**Participant:** Uh, sometimes I can control it. I can quit, you know, and do somethin' else. You know, I can leave, or...or go fishin', just somethin'. You know, but I've left pissed off before...and gone to go fishin', you know, to get it off my mind and while I fish, the...things will run through my mind, you know? All the past, ever'thing she's done to piss me off."

**Interviewer:** More stuff that makes you just angrier?

**Participant:** Yeah. Yeah. But not all the time. Maybe about half and half.

For experiences described by the themes of Out of Control, Pressure, and Exploding, no participant reported having a sense of choice about his actions and some participants reported clearly having a sense of no choice about their behavior. One participant stated that he was aware, in the moment, that the violence he was committing was a bad idea. He said variously, however, that he either ignored that thought and continued with his violence, or he felt as though, whatever he thought, he was no longer able to control his actions. Another participant reported that, because his wife would not leave their home when he asked her to, he felt as though she had him trapped in a corner "like a little dog." He said that he felt as though he had to get out of it, and it did not occur to him at the time to call the police for help in getting her to leave, although he later realized that this would have been an option. Instead, he punched his wife in the shoulder. A third participant said,

Well, the only, I guess that's the only way that I knew to get it, to get [control of the argument] back. And I guess I was at a loss, or I couldn't come to terms to say, "You're right. I was completely wrong. I apologize. Um, I know, I know, I was wrong. I should have told you [about spending money intended to pay bills], and I didn't." And I guess, I couldn't, couldn't come to say that, so I pushed her.

All participants reported decreased awareness of self and other when they felt out of control. Said one participant, "As of the further I get into an argument, the less aware I am of what's goin' on, really, and uh, of a hundred percent of what I'm sayin'."

Another said, "I'd forgotten what she meant to me, who she was, and what she meant to me."

A third participant stated, "I wasn't even aware of where my hand was on her. You know, it was like I lost conscience [sic] and was actually...doing somethin', but I didn't realize what I was doing."

Another man reported, "I mean, it was almost like I didn't have anything to do with it. I was out of control."

All of the men described varying levels of "not me" experience that took place when they felt out of control. For some, this "not me" experience involved an almost total lack of recall for their own violent behavior and its consequences for their victims. According to one man, "At the time I about broke [my wife's] neck, it took me three days to actually believe that I did it, with her settin' there, practically 24 hours a day, tellin' me that I did it."

A second participant reported, "The night I hit her, I was so out of control, I don't remember hitting her. I just know that's what happened with my left hand because there was a mark on her cheek, very small."

Still another man said:

So, a lot of times, I, when I would get angry, I would black out and not know what was happenin' until somebody else tell me. I mean, I could be sittin' there, talkin' to somebody, get into an argument and, if it become violent, I wouldn't know about it, or if it got into a hostility, the conversation, then I wouldn't, sometimes I wouldn't know about what was said. People's come back and told me what I've said and done, and I would not know a remembrance of it.

When this latter participant did come to some realization of his behavior and its consequences for his victim, he judged himself so evil that he tried to commit suicide. As he explained:

But, anyway, I took an overdose of pills, and it wasn't because [my wife] was gone. It was because it woke me up. You see, this friend of hers told me some of the conversations my wife had had with her about the violence and the abuse and the way things was. But it wasn't, it was more, it wasn't a lot like she was harpin' on the violence so much. It was included in the things. But that's what woke me up and when it woke me up,

then I saw how evil I was, how wicked I was, and uh, that's what I done. That's why I took the overdose.

This man's report of his attempted suicide is consistent with the previously noted finding that participants sought to identify themselves as good by using violence to eradicate the evil they identified in others, especially their partners. When this man perceived evil in himself, he tried to destroy himself. The participant further reported that, during the coma induced by his overdose, he experienced a vision in which God called him to be an evangelist. In this man's world-view, such a calling represents perhaps the ultimate identification as good.

For most of the men in this study, the "not me" experience was less complete, although still present. Although the men could remember their violent behavior, it seemed inconsistent with whom they believed themselves to be. Some used different epithets to describe themselves along the In Control and Out of Control dimension, with one man invoking the image of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: "I lose any control that I might have and I turn into Mr. Hyde." Another identified himself as Mr. Nice Guy most of the time, but referred to himself as "a crazed animal" when he was feeling out of control.

Even those participants who did not re-name themselves described a different self when feeling out of control, a self that did not feel like the one

they ordinarily knew themselves to be. Said one, "[When I'm in a rage] it's like it's not me, you know?"

And another said, "When I'm not like that, when I'm not angry, I'm a totally different, I'm a pretty okay guy to be around."

A third man lamented, "And that one instant I was different, hurting her."

Another man said, "[After a violent episode,] I go back to being whoever it was I was before that, and it's like [the violence] didn't even exist at that time."

For some of the participants in this study, the "not me" experience was explicitly linked with the desire not to be like their own fathers, whose violence they had witnessed and, in many cases, experienced. As one man put it, "And I don't understand why I, I left home, and I was mad at [my father]...because of what he did [to my mother], and then I turn right around and do the same thing." Another man said, "I...like I said, I mean, I've walked away...from fights...all my life, 'cause I always said I would...not...be...like...Dad." That he had been violent, as his father had been before him, was not only difficult to believe, but was painful to believe:

**Participant:** You know, I, I don't believe in it. I don't want to be it. But then...I've done it.

**Interviewer:** You've done it. Wow.

**Participant:** And it hurts. It's hard.

### **The Re-Production of Violence**

Perhaps the single most important result of this study is that it reveals the way in which domestic violence reproduces the context from which it arose. In their interviews, participants offered their judgments of themselves and their violent behavior in the following terms:

"Losing control is childish."

"I never beat a man like I beat her. I hate myself for it. Ever since then, I feel about this tall [holds his fingers about one inch apart]."

"I mean, granted, when it comes down to doing...certain things...sure, I'm the man for the job, but in general, as a person, I suck. I have sucked bad."

"I mean I lose things from [being violent]. I lose jobs. I lose friends. Stuff like that."

"[The violent argument] got into one of those vol-, volcanic, you know, 'prove your point and wind up losin' everything,' and...I wound up moving out, and now, I mean, as it progressed, now...lost her and...had all my stuff in pawn over it...you know, from not goin' to work...."

Their statements suggest that, in the aftermath of their violence, participants once again experienced themselves in the polarized terms of the

Relational Themes: Big or Little, Good or Bad, and Winning or Losing.

Furthermore, their statements suggest that the violence was unsuccessful in establishing their identities as Big, Good, and Winning and, in fact, the opposite was true. As a result of being violent toward their partners, the men who participated in this study experienced themselves on the de-valued side of the polarities.

They were Little: "I pushed her, and.... she had a vacuum cleaner, and she fell backwards over the vacuum cleaner and hit her shoulder and broke her collarbone. And I felt...about the size of an ant."

They were Bad: "I don't think normal men act like I have. I don't think normal men use the kind of language and body language."

They were Losing: "I mean, it's come down to, uh, uh, losing ever'thing that I've worked these last ten years for..."

These are experiences the men who participated in this study previously had found intolerable. Should they continue to find such experience intolerable, the contextual stage from which to use violence to assert themselves as Big, Good, and Winning will have once again been set.

## Chapter V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

What has been learned that might answer the question asked by victims of domestic violence, "Why does he do this to me?" and that might aid in the endeavor to stop the violence? The fifteen domestically violent men who participated in this study described their experience of being violent as the sensation of pressure building to explosion. This sensation was characterized by the perception of changes in their bodies, a sense that the violence happens fast, and that it was automatic. The automatic quality referred not only to the perception that the violence occurred outside of the participant's will and volition but also that violence already committed seemed to ease the way for subsequent violence to occur. As one participant put it, violence became "a habit."

The sequence of pressure and explosion could take place while participants felt either in control or out of control. If it took place while they were in control, they felt aware of themselves and their partner and felt as though they had choices about where and how to vent the explosion. Such experience felt consistent with who they believed themselves to be. By contrast, if the sequence of pressure and explosion took place while they were out of control, their awareness of self and other was diminished, and they had

no sense of choice about their behavior. Such experience felt inconsistent with who they knew themselves to be.

Participants revealed that their experiences of being domestically violent took place in interpersonal settings in which they wished to identify themselves as good, big, and winning in relation to partners who could be identified as small, bad, and losing. These men reported using violence, both physical and verbal, to assert the preferred identities.

The results of this study reveal that the violence ultimately fails to achieve the intended ends. When they reflected on their use of violence against wives and girlfriends, the men in this study found themselves back on the devalued side of the relational polarities. They judged themselves childish. They judged themselves evil. They recounted the wives, friends, jobs, and reputations they had lost because of their violent behavior. What, then, prompts domestic violence against women to continue or, alternatively, fails to make it stop?

Dobash and Dobash (1979) have suggested that the social construction of wives makes them "appropriate victims" for domestic aggression. Where wives are constructed as victims, husbands can only be constructed as victimizers. How such construction might take place is the subject of much domestic violence theory. For example, psychodynamic theory proposes that,

given current child-rearing practices, normal male identity is constructed with a propensity for domination (Benjamin, 1988). When the normal process goes awry in particular ways, the propensity to dominate may become a propensity to dominate at any cost to self or other.

Meloy (1988) has suggested that when there are severe failures of maternal attunement through abuse or neglect, the result may be sudden, harsh experiences of "twoness," in which the infant is overwhelmingly aware of its separateness from those on whom it has no choice but depend (Tustin, 1981). When such experiences are too frequent, the infant may fail to develop basic trust (Erikson, 1950), and one possible outcome of such a scenario is the psychopathic personality who relates to others as predator to prey. Approximately 20%-25% of batterers exhibit traits of psychopathy (Gottman, et al., 1993; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1993).

In addition to its contributions to psychopathic personalities, the mother-infant relationship may be a subtle conduit for intergenerational transmission of violence. Mothers in violent relationships who are preoccupied with the symptoms of their own trauma and with keeping themselves safe may be less able to attend to the needs of their infants and, therefore, may be less likely to provide accurate attunement (Dutton, 1995a). Even when failures of maternal attunement do not result in a psychopathic

personality for the child, such failures may contribute to insecure attachment patterns that will have implications for adult romantic attachments. The insecure attachment pattern has been shown to have a positive correlation with domestic violence (Dutton & Saunders, et al., 1994; Kesner, et al., 1997).

Just as the mother-infant relationship may be a conduit for intergenerational transmission of violence so, too, may the father-infant relationship. According to psychodynamic theory, in addition to the earliest mother-infant relationship, a point in the process of male identity formation that may bear on domestic violence occurs during the period of rapprochement. To relieve the intensity of the dependence-independence conflict in relationship with Mother, the male infant looks to Father as an idealized liberator, as a guide to the world outside of Mother's influence, and as the "subject of desire" in whom the child can recognize himself (Benjamin, 1988, p. 104). A father who is domestically violent, however, or who is neglectful or abusive to his child, may not be suitable for any of these tasks. From a social learning perspective (Bandura, 1979), such a father, in addition to modeling violence, may fail to model appropriate conflict-solving strategies. His liberation tactics may be less than ideal even though his son may still idealize them. From a psychodynamic perspective, such a father may leave open the way for his son to identify with him as the aggressor. To

the extent that the father is neglectful or rejecting, he may leave his son without a guide to the world, trapped in a never-ending rapprochement.

At this point, it is worthwhile to re-emphasize the national survey findings reported by Straus, et al. (1980): Men who witnessed any parental violence when they were children were three times more likely than men who had not to have hit their wives in the year prior to the study; men who had experienced parental violence were four times more likely to have used severe violence against their wives, and men who had both witnessed and experienced parental violence were five-to-nine times more likely to have used violence against their intimate partners. Clearly there is a relationship between violence used by the parent and violence used by the son, even if the exact mechanism for such a relationship is not clearly identified.

In addition to the findings of this national survey, Dutton and Ryan (1994) found that the strongest contributors to an assessment of Borderline Personality Organization among wife assaulters were paternal rejection, followed by physical abuse by the father, followed by a lack of paternal warmth. Dutton (1995a) concluded that fathers who exhibited such traits not only modeled them for their sons, but actively contributed to the formation of an abusive personality in their sons.

Without being asked, even indirectly, most of the men in this study spontaneously brought up conflict and violence in their families of origin. They often did this shortly after or during their answer to the initial interview question, in which they were asked to describe a specific time when they had been violent in a domestic relationship. Violence in their families of origin seemed to be closely associated for them with their own violence. Only three participants in this study made no mention of their families of origin in connection with their own violence. Of the rest, one man said that his mother was controlling and verbally abusive to him and others, but he mentioned his father only in passing and said nothing about the father except that he was intelligent. Another man did not remember his father who had abandoned the family when the participant was two years old, but he vividly recalled physical punishment meted out to him by a much older brother who had attempted to act as a father figure. Ten of the men discussed parental conflict in their families of origin, with nine of these stating that they had witnessed their fathers being physically and verbally abusive to their mothers. One man said, "...and we got home, he started on her. You know? And, uh...he slapped her around, you know, and we was kids, you know? He made us go in our rooms."

Another man stated, "And I, I don't, there's just, uh, my mom couldn't even talk on the phone. If Dad thought she was on the phone too long, he'd jerk the phone out of the wall."

A third man discussed at length the impact that his father's abusive behavior of his mother and rejecting behavior of him had had on his life, even to the point of driving him away from home:

**Participant:** [My wife's] always...I'm not blamin' her for nothin, 'cause I should have never put my hands on her. But I, well, the way I was raised, that's what my dad always done to my mom. I'm not sayin' that that's, that don't excuse me from it.

**Interviewer:** What do you think that that...how do you think that that has something to do with it...that that's the way your dad did it?

**Participant:** 'Cause that's the way I thought it was supposed to be.

**Interviewer:** 'Cause that's the way you thought it was supposed to be?

**Participant:** Yeah. I, I've never been around, uh...to me, now that I've seen all this, and...this has all come down, there wasn't nothin' normal about this. There wasn't nothin' normal

about what he did, and the affairs and all. I've seen him with more women than you could haul on a school bus. And that still don't excuse me from it, but I did it anyway. I done exactly what he did, except for bein' drunk, you know, but...

**Interviewer:** And that's the one way you felt like you were different from him?

**Participant:** Um hm. And I wasn't abusive to my children. Other than I...I would raise my voice sometimes...a little more than what I should have, uh...whatever, but as far as bein' abusive and smackin' 'em around and hurtin' 'em, I never did. No. Huh uh. Now there's not a day goes by that they don't tell me they love me. [P begins crying.] The only time in forty-nine years my dad told me he loved me was last year...one time. And that don't... I never could figure that out. It was like he was jealous of, he didn't.....I don't know. It was like, when he was in the house, he wanted you out. Out of his face. Out of his way. Out of his space.

**Interviewer:** Hmm. He was there, and he wanted you not to be there?

**Participant:** More or less, yeah. He wanted you to be silent. You know? "Go in your room and watch t.v. or do something' else." Just...you know.

**Interviewer:** Away from him.

**Participant:** Yeah. I run away from home, I don't know how many times. A bunch. I started at thirteen and, finally, when I was nineteen...my dad had a friend that owned a trailer park, and me and him talked one day, and he said, "Well, the best thing you can do is just...get out of there." He says, "I've got a trailer down here. We'll work out somethin'." And I lived there until I got married. Four years.

**Interviewer:** Hmm. And how was that for you, that time?

**Participant:** It was all right.

**Interviewer:** It was all right? Um...

**Participant:** It was all right. It was a lot easier. But...when he'd get drunk, even then, he would come there. Yeah. He'd come there. He come there more than once and embarrass the hell out of you. He'd get drunk, and you'd have friends there and whatever. Yeah, it was...embarrassing.

**Interviewer:** Hm. You would feel embarrassed by him?

**Participant:** Sure. Who wouldn't? I mean, you know.

The reason I left...he kept on my mother. That's what really gets my goat. They would fight, and he'd smacked her. Well, I was nineteen years old and back then, I was as strong as a horse, and I just politely stepped in, and that's the first time I ever did this. And that's when I had to go. 'Cause it was at—

**Interviewer:** Had to go?

**Participant:** Had to go. 'Cause it was at the point that me and him were gonna...somethin' was gonna happen. Somethin' was gonna have to give. And I don't understand why I, I left there, and I was mad at him...because of what he did, and then I turn right around and do the same thing.

In addition to the above participant, five others stated that they had experienced physical abuse at the hands of their fathers. Two men stated that their mothers had also been physically abusive to them. Four men had both witnessed and experienced paternal physical abuse.

Domestic violence victims often cite sexual jealousy on the part of the abuser as an instigating factor in episodes of domestic violence (Daly, et al., 1982; Rounsaville, 1978; Roy, 1977). Jealousy was the most frequently

mentioned instigator in this study, with eight of the men citing their own jealousy as an issue in instances when they had been violent to their partner. For example, one man said, "Uh, I was very jealous about her, uh, about her past boyfriend, at that time. I...was screaming at her, calling her names such as 'whore,' and 'bitch,' and 'slut.' ....Even going so far as to ask things, in quite a rage, to ask things about, uh...whether or not sex was good with him."

A second participant said, "Uh, I guess the first time that I actually said that I was violent is when I caught my first wife...going out on me. Violent to the nature of...I beat her constantly the day I caught her. Uh, had her bleedin'. Uh, I was in a rage to the point I would have killed her."

A third man said:

And, uh, and...I remember one time, she'd, she'd, she'd really do nothing. She'd, we'd be pulled up at a stoplight and some guy'd, you know, be checking her out, and he'd be smilin', and I'd see her smilin', and uh, flirtin' back, and I had to put a stop to that. I was sick, you know? It was just that kind of thing, you know? I started slappin' her a lot.

Straus, et al. (1980) found that married couples fight most frequently about money, housekeeping, social activities, sex and children. In this study, two participants identified their partner's jealousy and possessiveness as an

issue in conflicts in which they had been violent. In concert with Straus, et al. (1980), however, other instigating issues mentioned by participants were the partner's housekeeping habits, her mothering and childcare, her cooking, and disputes about money.

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1979) suggests that traditional male sex-role socialization may contribute to the rewards of domestic violence by prompting men to feel as though they must regain control and dominance over their wives and leading them to feel satisfied when they do (Dutton, 1995a). The men in this study construed dominance as possible in any or all of three overlapping categories: bigness, goodness, and winning in a contested situation. They construed many marital encounters as contests in which there could be only one winner. Such a description is consistent with Stith and Farley's (1993) data that suggest a link between non-egalitarian sex-role attitudes and wife abuse.

In contrast to another Stith and Farley (1993) finding—that wife abuse is linked with approval of marital violence—a conflict existed for the men in this study between their desire to dominate and their use of violence to achieve dominance over their partners. Paradoxically, while they used violence to achieve dominance, the use of violence was in some ways

inconsistent with their view of dominance. Specifically, they seemed unable to justify violence as good.

Dutton (1995a) proposes that batterers use the process of "cognitive restructuring" to cope with such conflicts. They construct an understanding of their violent behavior, its consequences, or the victim, herself, in such a way that guilt is lessened and moral conflict relieved. Certainly participants in this study gave accounts of their violence that were replete with cognitive restructuring. For example, the men sometimes attempted to rationalize their violent behavior by using moral justification – by describing their violence as a response to a partner's behavior that they judged to be bad, wrong, stupid, or untrustworthy. The house was messy. She put too much salt in the soup. She lied. She cheated. She didn't get up with the baby. She came home drunk. As a cognitive restructuring, moral justification is an attempt to present episodes of violence as the understandable, if not inevitable, response of a moral person to another's reprehensible behavior. One participant said, "Um, she showed no interest in being a mother, which, we had a child. I was taking care of him, working. She was...I'd come home, she was doing nothing, and um, there it started."

Another participant said:

I would try to get my point across to someone that maybe wasn't as educated as myself, and I, I guess I expected it [sic] to understand. I tried every way I could think of to get them to understand what I was saying about how I think that society as, as well as myself, viewed her actions and what she was doing.

A third man said:

You know, I didn't trust her. I had no trust in her at all. She'd stay out all night and...she'd drink and...I'd, I'd go to work during the day, and I'd come in, she'd be settin' there, gettin' high with her buddies and stuff. I, I just didn't trust her. It's hope and trust. So, uh, we got into it. We fought.

One participant reported that one result of his violence against his girlfriend had been that, for a time, he hated himself. He soothed this feeling, however, by using a form of cognitive restructuring—palliative comparison—to minimize the reprehensibility of his violence against his partner:

When I, when I went into court, I think I started gettin' something back, because I was able to stand up and say, "I have a right, here. I said I'm guilty. Here's the minimum. Here's the maximum. You give me somethin'...that...I mean, look at this

guy that beats his wife every weekend. Look at this guy that killed his girlfriend. He went off and killed her."

In effect, this participant was saying that, because he did not beat his girlfriend every weekend and because she did not die from her injuries, he was not a very bad batterer and should not be treated by the court as if he were. He acknowledged that the effect of this way of thinking about his violent actions was to give him "something back" so that he didn't feel as bad about his behavior as he had been feeling.

One way that wife assaulters use cognitive restructuring to obscure the connection between their own actions and choices and the consequences is by displacing responsibility onto their culture or to their use of alcohol and drugs. Displacement of responsibility may have been one reason so many participants in this study mentioned their father's violence soon after telling about their own, as if, instead of saying, "The Devil made me do it," they were saying, "My upbringing made me do it." One man stated that, in his opinion, his violence was inherited because his father had been violent to his mother, and all seven of his brothers had been violent to their wives.

Alcohol is estimated to be involved in 30%-56% of domestic violence calls attended by police (Bard & Zacker, 1974). Dutton (1995a) has pointed out that "some therapists feel that assaultive men sometimes get drunk in order to

get violent" (p. 89). In any case, alcohol is commonly known to be a disinhibitor of behavior so that men who were concerned about not being violent could choose not to drink it. Eight participants in this study reported that at least some of their incidents of violence took place when they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs. At least three of the men indicated that their decision not to drink was part of a decision not to be violent with their partners.

Only occasionally did the men in this study overtly blame their victims for the violence. One said, "She lied to me. She set me off." He then tried to change his claim by saying, "I mean, that set me off," blaming the violence on the victim's lying rather than on her – a rather fine distinction. For some of the men, the moral justification they used – all the bad things they reported that their partners did – may have been doing double duty as a way of blaming their victims for their violent behavior.

In sometimes subtle ways, the themes uncovered in the men's descriptions of their experiences of being violent reveal cognitive restructuring at work. For example, all of the men in this study said that their violence took place when they were out of control. Hallmarks of being out of control were that they were not themselves (an experience captured in the sub-theme, "not me"), they were unaware of what was happening, and they

had no choice of alternative behavior, experiences represented by the sub-themes, "not aware" and "no choice." One or two of the participants gave descriptions of the severity of their victims' injuries and of their own inability to recall having inflicted the injuries that were consistent with deindividuated violence (Zimbardo, 1969) in which the batterer's behavior may be neither coded nor stored in memory (Dutton, 1995a). Most of the violence that participants described was not consistent with deindividuated violence, however. The experience of being out of control may be a way in which the men constructed their understanding of their violent behavior to relieve felt moral conflict.

Granting that these men, as they claimed, valued being dominant (good, big, winning) but also, as they claimed, did not condone the use of violence as good, they would be likely to feel some level of moral conflict. One way to relieve the conflict is to construct goodness and dominance as mutually exclusive so that the choice between them is not free, but forced. If the choice is forced, the men would be less accountable. If they had no choice, or were unaware of what they were doing, or could not control what was happening, they could not be held accountable. These are exactly the descriptions of violent behavior made by the men in this study — they were

unaware of what they were doing, they felt as if they had no choice, they were out of control.

Of course, there are many situations in which people do experience restricted choice, and a few in which they may experience no choice. There are some situations over which a person has no control or in which one is unaware of what one is doing. In these latter situations, a person may not be held accountable by others even if the something done was wrong. A man may still hold himself accountable, however, and feel guilty. An additional way for the men to relieve guilt would be to find some way to reclaim goodness for themselves or rather, to reclaim themselves as good.

If the men who participated in this study valued both dominance and goodness but judged that, by using violence, they had chosen dominance over goodness, one guilt-reducing way for them to construct an understanding of their behavior would be to claim both dominance and goodness for themselves, but disavow themselves as violent. To be violent, then, would be a not-me activity, exactly as the men described it. What this means is that these men may be restructuring not just their understanding of their behavior, its effects, and the victim, but also their understanding of their own identity. In their not-me experience, they may be splitting off and denying their ability

to be violent rather than accepting it and dealing with it by learning to do otherwise.

Cognitive restructuring—construing situations in such a way as to relieve moral guilt and conflict—is a largely unreflected process. It is one that is frequently used (Bandura, 1973) and one that even may be beneficial when unnecessary or too forceful self-punishment impedes desired change. In the case of domestic violence, however, neutralizing self-punishment may prevent violent men from feeling the impetus to learn new behaviors and thus to reclaim goodness for themselves by doing good.

Walker (1979), in her work with battered women, has documented what she calls the “cycle of violence.” From the perspective of the victim, following an episode of violence, the batterer is contrite and apologetic about his behavior; he is cooperative and treats her well, and the two enter a “honeymoon phase.” The danger of this phase for the victim is that it persuades her to stay in the relationship with the batterer who is suddenly behaving toward her as she may have hoped he would. The victim becomes convinced that the violence was an aberration that will never happen again. The present study suggests that, from the perspective of those committing it, the violence emerges in and from this phase of the cycle when the batterer feels not only regretful but also powerless—little, bad, and losing—while

wanting desperately to feel otherwise. From this perspective, the violence almost certainly will happen again unless something intervenes to change the batterer's ongoing experiences of being big or little, good or bad, and winning or losing.

The group programs presently dominating treatment of domestic violence offenders (e.g., Bathrick, Carlin, Kaufman, & Vodde, 1987; Paymar & Pence, 1993; Sonkin & Durphy, 1989), often address the issues presented as Themes of Violence in this study, the themes of In and Out of Control, Pressure, and Exploding. Using the diagram presented in Figure 2 to discuss these programs, the line from Pressure to Exploding is the one treatment programs most often attempt to change. The line is "moved down" when men are confronted about the ways in which they construct their understanding of their behavior and are asked to stop minimizing and justifying it, denying aspects of it, or blaming their victim. It also may be "moved down" when the men are asked to take responsibility for their violence, owning it and owning up to it. The line is also "moved down" when domestically violent men are taught to identify and verbalize their feelings, thereby increasing the repertoire of behavioral choices available to them when they feel angry. These moves "enlarge" the upper triangle, moving more of

the relevant pre-Explosion experience into the realm of "me," where the men reported feeling more in control of themselves.

The line from Pressure to Exploding also may be expanded horizontally. That is, attempts may be made to help domestic violence offenders increase the length of time from one state to the other, or to defuse the explosion altogether. Nearly all of the men in this study spoke of changes in their bodies associated with the buildup of pressure or tension. They reported feeling muscle tension in their chests, shoulders, arms, or stomachs. Some experienced twitching facial muscles or changes in vision that produced narrowly focused or blurry content. A number of participants reported what they called an "adrenaline rush" in which it felt as though all of their blood vessels were opening up and their hearts were pounding as though they would leave their chests. Although these changes were associated with the build-up of tension or pressure, they also contributed to the sensation of being out of control.

Treatment programs encourage men to note such changes and use them as a signal that they are fast approaching a critical point. They may be advised to take a "time out," that is, to leave the vicinity for an hour or so to keep their partners safe, cool down, and think about constructive ways to work with their partner to resolve the conflict at hand. If taken and acted

upon, this encouragement and advice increases men's awareness (and their choices) by further moving the line down and enlarging the upper triangle. At the same time, such action increases the time between pressure and exploding. As such, it addresses participants' reports that violent explosions happened fast and were automatic – "knee-jerk reactions," as one of the men called them. In effect, present techniques ask potentially violent men to take the time (and space) to bind their own tensions rather than act them out on their partner.

Less often, however, do treatment programs question what it is that makes this tension so great in the first place. The physical changes reported are consistent with defensive reactions to perceived threats to the self. How is it that these men feel so often and so greatly threatened in their domestic relationships with partners they usually describe as physically smaller and less powerful than themselves? Or, as the victims of domestic violence put it, "Why does he do this to me?"

This study suggests that the answer can be found in the relational experiences of *Big or Little*, *Good or Bad*, and *Winning or Losing*. In a world-view where "there is no equality," where identities are always polarized, always contested, and never negotiable, a person is constantly under threat of

subjugation or annihilation unless he can first subjugate or annihilate the other.

Program evaluation reviews (e.g., Gondolf, 1997) consistently find that men who have completed domestic violence treatment programs have a lower rate of recidivism than men who drop out. Cadsky, et al. (1996) found that the single strongest predictor of remaining in a batterer's treatment program was self-identification of the need for treatment. Wierzbicki and Pekarik (1993) have pointed out that clients are not likely to stay in any treatment that does not appear to be addressing their problems. In light of this study's findings, interventions that focus on the Themes of Violence—the experiences of In or Out of Control, Pressure, and Exploding—as group programs for domestic violence offenders routinely do, are addressing only part of the problem as it is described by the offenders, themselves. This is not to suggest that such interventions should be dropped or replaced in treatment curricula. It is to suggest, however, that the effectiveness of treatment interventions might be increased if the remedial focus were expanded to include what the abusers, themselves, identify as the context from which the violence arises, the ongoing experiences of Big or Little, Good or Bad, and Winning or Losing from which the violence, time and time again, is inexorably re-produced.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

### Information and Consent Form

As a graduate student in clinical psychology at the University of Tennessee, I am currently collecting data for doctoral dissertation research. The topic of the research is the experience of being violent in a domestic relationship. The purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of what it is like to be violent and to contribute this understanding to the existing scientific literature on domestic violence. You can help in this endeavor by contributing the data.

Specifically, your participation in this project will include a one to two-hour audiotaped interview, during which I will ask you to tell me about some times when you have been violent with a domestic partner (e.g., your wife or your girlfriend). Since the goal is to understand as much as possible about your experience, I will ask questions about the things you say that I don't understand, until both of us feel satisfied that your experience has been communicated as much as it can be. I will also ask you for some non-identifying demographic data: your age, level of education, and your marital status.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. The risk to you for being involved is minimal. You will choose the incidents and experiences you wish to talk about. You are free to discontinue your participation or withdraw from the study at any time, without question or penalty. Many people find that exploring their experiences and communicating them to another person is satisfying. While I cannot promise that this will be the case for you, I hope that it will be.

This study is being conducted anonymously and all material obtained from you will be held in strictest confidence. Audiotapes, transcripts, and demographic data will be identified by a code number, rather than by your name. This signed consent form will be kept in a locked file separate from the file where the tapes and transcripts are stored. Access to the audiotape of your interview will be restricted to me, to the professor who is my project advisor, and we have both promised to maintain your confidentiality. Any potentially identifying information in the interview will be edited out of the transcript, and the audiotapes will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

It is possible that this study, when completed, will be published or presented in a public forum (e.g., a professional conference). By signing this form, you are consenting not only to participate in the interview but also to allow all or part of your interview, as edited and transcribed, to be used in a publication or presentation.

If you have any questions at this time or at any point later in the study, please do not hesitate to ask them. If you decide to participate, you will be given a copy of this form to keep. I encourage you to leave a message for me at the following address and phone number any time you have questions or concerns about this project and I will get back to you as soon as possible:

Ronda Redden Reitz  
Department of Psychology  
227 Austin Peay Bldg.  
The University of Tennessee  
Knoxville, TN 37996-0900  
Voicemail: (423) 382-2747

**I have read the above information and consent form, and I agree to participate in this project. I also agree to have all or part of my interview, as transcribed and edited, included in any publication or presentation of the study.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Confidentiality Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby affirm that I will keep the confidentiality of the participant whose interview, as transcribed and edited, is being presented on this date, \_\_\_\_\_.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

Interview DV98-17  
29 MWM HS+2 (~9)

- 1 I: Can you think of a time or times when you've been violent in a domestic  
2 relationship and describe that to me in as much detail as possible?  
3
- 4 P: Uh, in a, in a physical way? Physically violent?  
5
- 6 I: If that's how you'd like to define it.  
7
- 8 P: Um. Um...um.....yes. There's been one time. And, and I can honestly  
9 say that. A lot of people have said, it, it's a long period, or, you know,  
10 and it builds up and finally, this happens, but I can honestly say, um...I  
11 never hit a woman. I never hit my wife. I never pushed her, until  
12 this...it was Memorial Day of this year, and we got into an argument,  
13 and I pushed her down. And that's why I'm in the [batterer's group]  
14 right now. Uh, I think the, uh, that's about as violent as I've ever been.  
15 Um, yelling. We've yelled at each other. I've uh, I've screamed, we've  
16 cursed at each other, uh, never violent. I've, I think it came to that, or  
17 matter of fact I know now it came to that uh, due to a control issue. Uh,  
18 I think we were in an argument...and I was on the losing end of that  
19 argument, and uh, the easiest way for me to gain control was to push her.  
20 I didn't have anything to say. I knew what I did was wrong or, what we  
21 were arguing about was wrong, which was a money situation, where I  
22 had spent some money, and...it wasn't a big deal, but I made it into a big  
23 deal. I'd spent some money and didn't tell her about it and of course,  
24 you know, when you're managing a household and you don't tell  
25 someone about it, it, uh...kind of created a problem. And I, I blew it off,  
26 and it was, I made it to be smaller than it was, and uh, when we did argue  
27 about it, I blew up. I'm just gonna say that.  
28
- 29 I: You blew up?  
30
- 31 P: Yeah. I uh...I have a uh—and I know this now—nine weeks ago, I can  
32 say I never would have thought I had a control problem. Ever. Until I  
33 actually sat in my first [batterer's group] class with [group facilitator]  
34 and four or five other guys and listened to them talk and said, "That's  
35 me. That's me. That's me". You know, I realized, "Wow, I have a  
36 problem. I ought to be in control, you know, or I feel I have to be in  
37 control of every situation," and uh, I don't know why that is. Uh, maybe  
38 it's, it's growing up. I was, uh, my father was really controlling. I grew

1 up, my father was a career Marine, twenty years. I guess every aspect of  
 2 my life was controlled—what I did, you know, where I went, what I  
 3 wore. Um, and I guess I took it one step farther when I left, as soon as I  
 4 graduated high school, and joined the military. (I: Um hm.) Right back  
 5 in the control situation. Told what to do, when to be where, you know?  
 6 It was, to me, I thought it was structure, and that's what I needed. But  
 7 uh, I soon realized as I gradually moved up in rank, stayed in the  
 8 military—all told, I've been in the military, with active reserve,  
 9 [approximately ten years]. Uh, now it's not so much being controlled.  
 10 You do a change, and now you're in control. And uh, it just felt so  
 11 comfortable for me. And I think I carried it just a little too far with uh,  
 12 when I first got married, and even with my children, you know? Being  
 13 just...completely in control. I, it just feels so natural. I know now it's  
 14 wrong, or to some extent. But uh, you know, I used to say...no, uh, a  
 15 prime example um, I used to tell my wife, you know, "You can go," you  
 16 know? "You and your friends do whatever you want," you know? "I  
 17 don't care if you go some place. Go out with your friends," or anything,  
 18 you know? I'd tell myself, "It's no big deal," but...I guess it would be  
 19 kind of, uh...not straight out telling her "No." It...it started to work it's  
 20 way where...somethin' would come up with my job, or somethin' would  
 21 come up where I had to be away, and she couldn't go. And, and I never  
 22 thought. "Well, that's just how it goes, I'm sorry. I'm not tellin' you  
 23 you can't go. It just happened." And I see, now, it's a control thing.  
 24 And, uh, it just slowly, it just escalated and escalated. Um, when I got  
 25 off of...out of the active Army [about four years ago], I guess I lost some  
 26 of that control, you know? With, um, I had twelve people that worked  
 27 for me. I controlled every aspect of their life, you know? I had to make  
 28 sure their beds were made, make sure their bills were paid, make sure  
 29 their hair was cut. I guess when I lost that, I kind of felt lost. I think the  
 30 control...I just moved it from that to my family. It just got worse and  
 31 worse, over a four-year period, it just, you know, the control, over and  
 32 over. When I felt I wasn't in control I felt lost, uh...felt like no power.  
 33 Didn't, you know, felt like the world was gonna end, you know? I didn't  
 34 know what to do.

35  
 36 I: Wow! You felt like the world was going to end?

37  
 38 P: I mean, well, I don't, I don't, I guess I shouldn't say the world was  
 39 gonna end, but I felt lost...you know?

40  
 41 I: You felt lost.

42

- 1 P: Yeah, like, you know, you know, I'm not, if I wasn't in control of the  
2 situation then, uh...I needed to get out of that situation.  
3
- 4 I: Uh huh. As you described it—  
5
- 6 P: That's strange.  
7
- 8 I: —you said that you felt...It seems strange to you?  
9
- 10 P: As I think about it now, I can see, you know, you know...how, how it  
11 got so bad and how I let it, but I guess, maybe I just didn't see it. I don't  
12 know.  
13
- 14 I: You said that when you were not in control you felt lost.  
15
- 16 P: Yeah,  
17
- 18 I: And you said you felt, sometimes, as though the world was gonna end,  
19 and you kind of took that back and said, "Well, not literally."  
20
- 21 P: Yeah, I don't say, like, "The world's gonna end." It just felt like, if I  
22 was in a situation where, in everyday life—not just...with my wife and  
23 my relationship—but at work, if I was doing [my job], if there was a  
24 problem I couldn't solve, and I wasn't in control, it felt like...it was, it  
25 was, it was, controlling me. I just couldn't take it. It ate me up inside.  
26
- 27 I: Wow, it ate you up inside. Can you tell me some about what that feeling  
28 is like? You said it's like being lost.  
29
- 30 P: Yeah. I guess it feels, I guess it feels like...you feel like you're nothing.  
31 You know, like you can't accomplish anything. You're a failure. I  
32 guess that sums it up in one word, that you're a failure.  
33
- 34 I: Wow.  
35
- 36 P: Yeah.  
37
- 38 I: So, if you weren't in control, you felt like a failure.  
39
- 40 P: Yeah.  
41
- 42 I: I'm wondering...when somebody says, "The world is going to end,"  
43 what I think of, what it makes me think of is that, at least, it feels like

- 1 something really bad may happen. And I'm wondering if that...is how  
2 that felt for you?  
3
- 4 P: I guess, in some situations. Yeah, I guess. I guess so. I guess. I think,  
5 I think one of the problems that I have is I take things to the extreme. If,  
6 if someone says—and I'll take this to the court system—if somebody  
7 says, "For what you've done, you could get one-to-five years." I don't  
8 hear one year. "I'm gonna be here five years for what I've done!"  
9
- 10 I: Wow.  
11
- 12 P: You know what I mean? It's to the extreme.  
13
- 14 I: You hear the worst possible—  
15
- 16 P: Right. There's no, you know, it says, "Well, um..." Last year I broke  
17 my wrist. And they said, "Well, you'll probably be in a cast four-to-six  
18 weeks." "Six WEEKS?" Well, it could be four weeks, but I didn't look  
19 at it that way. (I: Hmm.) Yeah. I don't...I don't know why that is. It's  
20 just...I've always, always done that.  
21
- 22 I: Be prepared for the worst.  
23
- 24 P: I think—and, I don't know—maybe that comes from some of the  
25 military. Just, you know, "Always be prepared, you know, for what,  
26 what could happen."  
27
- 28 I: Mmm. Sounds like, uh, "Always be prepared." It sounds like you just  
29 never get to be at ease.  
30
- 31 P: Yeah, I guess you're right. Yeah. (I: Hmm.) That's, yeah. Uh...well,  
32 now that you look at it, I guess you're right. I never, I never thought of  
33 that, but yeah, you're right. Like you're never relaxin', you know?  
34 There's always somethin', yeah.  
35
- 36 I: Hmm. No standdown.  
37
- 38 P: No. It, it, it seems that way. No.  
39
- 40 I: Hmm. Well, you said that uh, there was only the one time that you were  
41 physically violent.  
42
- 43 P: Yes.

- 1 I: Um...and you said that, in that situation, you were...losing the  
2 argument. Was that what you said?  
3
- 4 P: Yep. She...I mean, what we were arguin' about is, you know, like, I  
5 said I had spent some money and I completely forgot to told her, tell her,  
6 that, you know? I, I took money out of the bank 'cause I needed this,  
7 and it was valid, and she knew it was valid, but that wasn't the point.  
8 The point is you need to tell me when you do that so I can make  
9 adjustments so that, when I, you know, pay the car payment, or the house  
10 payment, I'm not, you know, I don't figure that in and somethin'  
11 happens. Uh, you know, um, and I guess my thing was, "Well, you  
12 know, I don't have to tell you anything. I don't have to tell you that,"  
13 you know? "That's my money, too." I just didn't see... "Yeah, that's a  
14 valid point." I just felt like, "Hey, you're tryin' to control me. You're  
15 tryin' to tell me what I can spend and what I can't, what I can do and  
16 what I can't do." And uh, I just kept going on, you know, and uh, with,  
17 you know, you know, you know, "We need to get separate bank accounts  
18 if that's the case," and "This is my money," and on and on. And  
19 uh...she, she basically laid it out very calm. "If I," she said...I have a  
20 new truck, and she said, "If your truck, if I'd have made your truck  
21 payment and there wasn't enough money in the bank to cover your truck  
22 payment, 'cause you did that, whose fault would that be?" And, of  
23 course, I, you know, I immediately said, "That's your fault." You know,  
24 now I see, "Well, no, it's my fault," but at the time, "No, it's your fault."  
25 And uh, I just, I couldn't, I couldn't take it, so I started walkin' away and  
26 she kept, she followed me, she said, "Don't walk away, because it's not  
27 gonna solve this problem. We need to work this out. All I'm saying  
28 is...." And, at that point, I just turned around, and I pushed her, and she  
29 fell. Well, I pushed her down. I'll say it. And uh...completely ashamed  
30 of it. Um, she um, you know, her, her first reaction, she, she didn't call  
31 the police. She was very upset. Uh, called her mother, her brother  
32 happened to be there, and um, and I was goin' on, and he called the  
33 police. Um, I thanked him for that because, um, if it starts with just me  
34 pushing her...four years from now, is it me choking her or hitting her?  
35 And, and you know, that...I'm, I'm, I'm actually really happy that I'm  
36 here.  
37
- 38 I: You're afraid it might have escalated if you hadn't had –  
39
- 40 P: Yeah, because I think, you know—I don't know if this is the right thing  
41 to say— my control problem was actually taking me out of control, you  
42 know what I mean?  
43

- 1 I: No. It was taking you out of control?  
2
- 3 P: Well, I couldn't control my, I guess I couldn't control my emotions or  
4 my feelings.  
5
- 6 I: Hmm. What was that like for you when you couldn't control your  
7 emotions or your feelings, can you ...?  
8
- 9 P: I, I was scared.  
10
- 11 I: You were scared.  
12
- 13 P: Yeah.  
14
- 15 I: Hm.  
16
- 17 P: [Long pause.] I guess, in the past four years it, it...it's really gotten to  
18 the point where, um...that's where I feel, where I felt most out of  
19 control. I guess the, the change in my lifestyle from a military, real  
20 strict, regimented lifestyle—even though I was married and had kids—  
21 but it was still a strict regimented lifestyle, you know? And I knew  
22 exactly at, at six o'clock, this was gonna happen, in the morning, and at  
23 nine o'clock, this was gonna happen, eleven o'clock, this was...I knew  
24 exactly what was gonna happen. And uh, I made the choice to get out of  
25 the military and it, I guess...it, it, the change in the lifestyle, it, it's taken  
26 me a long time to adjust to it.  
27
- 28 I: Um hm. And the thing that you had to adjust to, you said you knew at  
29 six and nine—  
30
- 31 P: Yeah. I knew exactly, I knew exactly what was gonna happen, you  
32 know? In the military, you know, you know, you have to be here at this  
33 time, this is gonna happen, today. On Mondays, we do this at nine  
34 o'clock and Tuesdays, at eleven o'clock. You know exactly, whereas—  
35
- 36 I: The world is very predictable.  
37
- 38 P: Very much so. I knew, um, yeah. The only time it's not predictable is  
39 uh...well, I can't think of a time when it wasn't predictable. I knew  
40 exactly what was gonna happen, you know? You know, everything was  
41 mapped out for the, you know, you'd get a, a, it was strange, you'd get a,  
42 uh, you'd get a piece of paper that had what was called a training  
43 calendar. It had it mapped out for the month, exactly what you're gonna

1 do, five days a week, every minute of the day, for the time that you were  
 2 there, and you knew. And it was just, you know, it was, I guess it  
 3 became just uh...easy where, I don't know...my wife tells me now, as  
 4 we sit and talk, uh, "You don't really think for yourself." (I: Hmm.) You  
 5 know? You're told, "This is what you do." Yeah, you make decisions  
 6 on how you're gonna accomplish...certain tasks, but you have guidelines  
 7 to do it, so it, I guess, ultimately, no, you're really not, you know? They  
 8 tell you, "This is how you do it," so...you know...you do it. And I  
 9 guess, when uh, when all that changed, it uh...I, I didn't know how to  
 10 react, you know, because, uh, now I've gotta find a job of my own.  
 11 When I got out of the military, I didn't have a job. Um, I'm not  
 12 originally from...[this city]. I'm from [elsewhere]. My wife's from [this  
 13 city]. We met in the military. She was also in the Army. Um, we  
 14 decided, when I got out of the military—she got [discharged prior]—we  
 15 decided that we would come to [this city]. It was a whole new, I didn't  
 16 know, the only people I knew was her family. Uh, we didn't have a  
 17 house. I did not have a job. It was, it was, that was really scary, you  
 18 know, not knowing, you know? We had to immediately find a house.  
 19 We had to find employment, uh...get the kids in school, my wife needed  
 20 to find a job, daycare...It was a big change—  
 21

22 I: Sounds like a lot of changes.  
 23

24 P: Big change. Because, uh, the military, for so...you know, so many  
 25 years, uh, "Okay, you're goin' to Germany for three years." So, you  
 26 don't have to worry about it. When you get there, you'll have housing  
 27 waiting for you. You have a job, you know? Everthing's just, it's just so  
 28 stable. (I: Hmm.) And I guess I couldn't handle that instability.  
 29

30 I: Wow. Instability. You said that this felt like a big change.  
 31

32 P: Oh, it was a big change. It's a complete change in life. Yeah. Uh, and I  
 33 knew it, when, when I first...got my first job. It's so hard because, you  
 34 know, it would, it wouldn't anger me, but it would just...uh.....in the  
 35 military there's consequences for actions. Uh, if you're late for work,  
 36 we'll, there's a, there's a consequence for that. Um, in everyday society,  
 37 um, you clock in. If you're late, you just lose pay. There's no big deal.  
 38 I guess that's a consequence to them, but I just, I just felt, you know, I  
 39 don't know. That's...wrong, you know? I just felt...I don't know, I  
 40 guess it was just the way that...I'd lived for so long that, uh, I uh, didn't  
 41 realize...that uh, there was a complete, you know, the civilian lifestyle  
 42 was... just, it was, you know? I don't know how to explain it. It was  
 43 just...I was awed by it, like, "Wow!" I could hardly, you know, "I didn't

- 1 even know this was out here," you know? (I: Um hm.) Especially  
2 coming...you graduate high school one day, and the next day, you're in  
3 the military. There's really no change. There's no...I guess there's  
4 no...being on your own and making those decisions for yourself.  
5
- 6 I: Uh hm. You kind of went from your parents home to—  
7
- 8 P: Right. From them making decisions for me to somebody else making  
9 decisions for me. Yeah. (I: Uh huh.) Yeah. So then, even though I was  
10 married, and uh, had a wife and children, I never uh...there weren't a lot  
11 of decisions to make, you know? Maybe buy a car...or um, where we  
12 gonna go on vacation, what are we gonna have for dinner? That, that,  
13 you know, that's the biggest thing we were gonna do, I mean, a lot, a lot  
14 of things were mapped out for you that you had no control over. (I:  
15 Hm.) Yeah.  
16
- 17 I: And to some extent that felt comfortable to you?  
18
- 19 P: It did. It, it, yeah. I, I could probably slide back in that lifestyle right  
20 now...and...it wouldn't bother me at all. (I: Um hm. Hmm.) And...that  
21 bothers me, you know? I don't want that. That's, that's, I don't think  
22 it's...now, I know it's not, it's not a good way to live. (I: Hm.) Maybe  
23 it is, but you just have to learn how to separate, um...the mil-, that,  
24 with...the way you live, I guess. I don't know, yet.  
25
- 26 I: Sounds like that's something you're still working out?  
27
- 28 P: Yeah, I'm still, I'm still, you know, yeah, it is.  
29
- 30 I: As we talk about this, the issue of control comes up a lot—  
31
- 32 P: Yes.  
33
- 34 I: —and you said you went from your parents home to the military and—  
35
- 36 P: Uh huh.  
37
- 38 I: —in both those situations someone else had the control—  
39
- 40 P: Right.  
41
- 42 I: —and you followed along.  
43

1 P: That's it, exactly.  
2  
3 I: You followed the rules—  
4  
5 P: That's it, exactly.  
6  
7 I: —and if you didn't, there were definite consequences.  
8  
9 P: Exactly.  
10  
11 I: And they felt, like...har-, they felt harsher than just getting docked for  
12 pay.  
13  
14 P: Yeah. Yeah. Exact-, yeah.  
15  
16 I: Okay.  
17  
18 P: Oh, yeah.  
19  
20 I: And then you said that, as you moved up in rank, you got some of the  
21 control. As you moved up in the system—  
22  
23 P: Yeah.  
24  
25 I: —some of that control transferred over to you. Now, there were still  
26 people controlling you, but then, you got to control—  
27  
28 P: But you weren't at the bottom of the pile anymore.  
29  
30 I: You weren't at the bottom of the pile anymore.  
31  
32 P: It, it felt better. Yeah.  
33  
34 I: And it felt better?  
35  
36 P: Yeah. And, it shouldn't be that way because, uh, as I look back now, it  
37 probably uh, it didn't...it wasn't good for the people that I was over, at  
38 the time, you know, because I'm controlling. And I probably took it to  
39 an extreme, because I'd been...you know, like, but uh, you know,  
40 controlling them more than probably what needed to be done. Or  
41 needed, or that I needed to have the control over them. Yeah. I thought I  
42 was doin' the right, the right thing, you know? I can honestly, you  
43 know, I, I, and to this day, I even say, people say to me, "You were

- 1 really hard on those guys.” Uh, I take, I go back, uh, during Desert  
2 Storm, I had four guys that worked for me, and I, and uh, and my wife  
3 used to say, “You’re really hard on those guys.” I said, “Yeah, but I took  
4 them to a country where we were shot at, and they all came back alive.”  
5 I said, you know, “I did them a favor,” but I probably could have done it  
6 differently and still had the same results.  
7  
8 I: Still had the same outcome.  
9  
10 P: Right.  
11  
12 I: Now you wonder if it’s...?  
13  
14 P: Yes. And I wonder, you know...what kind of impact it made on their  
15 lives by me doing that.  
16  
17 I: What, what, do you ever think about that, or speculate what might have,  
18 what the impact might have been?  
19  
20 P: If I’d have, if I’d have been different towards them? If I’d have gave  
21 them a little, if I wouldn’t, uh, had so much control over them?  
22  
23 I: Or what the impact is of your having had so much control?  
24  
25 P: Oh, wow. I, I guess I was very, you know, I, I was hard on them. I  
26 know those particular three or four guys they, one left in the middle, but,  
27 uh...I was a lot harder than anybody else was on people that, like that.  
28 And uh, um...the people that I worked for saw it as, you know, “He’s a  
29 good leader. He has control over his people. They listen to him. They  
30 do it, you know. They do what he says.” And I don’t think they, it was  
31 because they respected me as a leader. I know they did, but I think it  
32 was more out of fear of consequences of what I’d do if they didn’t listen  
33 to me and didn’t do what I said. That’s not how it should be, you know?  
34  
35 I: Hmm. That’s interesting, ‘cause consequences came up, too.  
36  
37 P: Yes.  
38  
39 I: You talked about being really surprised when you hit civilian life and—  
40  
41 P: Yes.  
42  
43 I: —people didn’t punch the time clock on time the way—

- 1 P: And that bothered me, too. To see somebody come in late for work  
2 bothered me. (I: Okay.) You know? Um, we were just...and it, and it  
3 still does, certain things. Just sitting in, uh...we were in [batterer's  
4 group] class...when I first came in, there was a, a, a guy, this was his  
5 third class, and I think one of the requirements is, are, before you go  
6 from an assessment group to working group, you have to have your  
7 paperwork from [court] turned in. And, uh, [the group facilitator]  
8 confronted the guy and said, "This is your third class, and I let you slide  
9 to come into class, but you haven't brought it." And it just ate me up.  
10 And I thought, you know, you know, it wasn't, it didn't bother me  
11 whether he brought it or not, because it didn't affect me, because "I'm  
12 here. I brought mine." But it did. (I: Uh huh.) It just bothered me that  
13 he didn't, and uh, like I said, we went around the room and [the group  
14 facilitator] said, uh, you know, "I think it's everybody's decision. What  
15 do you think?" And most of the people said, "Uh, let him stay. Make  
16 sure he gets it tomorrow." I didn't say anything. I just, I didn't raise my  
17 hand, but I thought, "He should leave, and he should leave right now,  
18 because he was told what he had to do, and he didn't do it, and that's the  
19 way it should be." It just, I thought, you know, as I thought about it  
20 more and more in class, I thought, you know, "It doesn't matter to me."  
21 Yeah, you know, "It shouldn't eat, it shouldn't bother me that much that  
22 he didn't, you know, that he didn't do what he was supposed to do."  
23
- 24 I: Tell me a little bit about this being bothered. What's this being bothered  
25 like for you?  
26
- 27 P: I guess it made me angry. There you go.  
28
- 29 I: It made you feel angry.  
30
- 31 P: That...simple emotion. It made me angry. (I: Uh huh.) Yeah.  
32
- 33 I: What, what, how do you get angry? How do you feel angry?  
34
- 35 P: [Pause.] Well...I know...in there, it, uh....[P sighs.]  
36
- 37 I: [Long pause.] Let me ask the question a different way and see if it helps.  
38
- 39 P: All right.  
40
- 41 I: What happens with you that lets you know you are angry?  
42

- 1 P: I guess...I guess the first thing is, uh...I actually get a, a real warm  
 2 feeling throughout my body that I'm just, I just, you know, you know  
 3 what I mean? Like I'm hot. People say, "Oh I'm just hot about that." I  
 4 can honestly say that, you know, I get hot when I'm really truly, angrily,  
 5 angry, you know? I'm, I'm burning up. I'm, I'm just hot. Um, I get  
 6 flushed, my face gets flushed when I get, you know, when I get really  
 7 angry. Uh...there's been times when I've been so angry, um...and this  
 8 goes back to the military, where things were, you know. I was doing—  
 9 not with [my wife] but with, uh, the military—I'd get so angry that, uh—  
 10 people have said they'd see red—my thought processes, I just couldn't  
 11 think straight. You know what I mean? Just couldn't, couldn't  
 12 coherently tell, you know? I was so mad I had to go sit down and, you  
 13 know—ten or fifteen minutes—just to, just to get myself, people say,  
 14 "Get yourself together," you know? I guess to the point where, if it had  
 15 gone anymore...I don't know. Maybe I'd have hit one of those people, I  
 16 don't know. You know? It never came to that, but uh...yeah. In the  
 17 class tonight, I knew I was angry because I just told myself, "That's not  
 18 right," you know? "I was accountable. I, I, you know, I know what the  
 19 rules were. I did what I was told. He didn't. That's not right, and he  
 20 should have to leave...and, uh, right now." But, uh, I guess it really  
 21 shouldn't have bothered me...or really shouldn't have affected how I  
 22 felt, my emotions. Uh, and I knew that because, you know, watching  
 23 [the group facilitator] and some of the other guys, they said, uh, uh,  
 24 "Yeah, he was not accountable, but I think he should stay, uh, because  
 25 he's really not getting anything if he's out of class." I didn't look at it  
 26 that way. I thought, "He was wrong. He needs to leave." (I: Hmm.)  
 27 Yeah.  
 28
- 29 I: [Long pause.] I'm real struck by that. Um, so, right and wrong also  
 30 sounds like that's an issue for you.  
 31
- 32 P: It is. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. What's right and what's wrong. And I, and I,  
 33 I guess it's what...I don't think it's uh.....I guess it's what I believe is  
 34 right and wrong. What I believe is right and wrong, I guess, isn't what  
 35 some, what you believe is right and wrong...in certain things. Sure,  
 36 there's morally right, morally wrong. Um...an example, uh, the  
 37 situation...with the President, right now. Uh...I have no sympathy you  
 38 know? People say, "Oh, it's his private life." No, it's not, you know,  
 39 and that makes me angry, you know. And, and it, I guess, people say, "It  
 40 shouldn't make you angry." I say, "Well it does." You know? What's  
 41 right and what's wrong is greatly, it, it bothers me...it doesn't bother me,  
 42 but uh...I guess my emotions are affected by...right and wrong. When I  
 43 see somebody do wrong, I'm affected by it.

- 1 I: Hmm. You feel affected by it.
- 2
- 3 P: Yeah.
- 4
- 5 I: Um, on the day that you pushed your wife down—
- 6
- 7 P: Yes.
- 8
- 9 I: —um, can you tell me some of what your feelings were then? I
- 10 remember you said that, uh, you couldn't see it the way she was talking
- 11 about it.
- 12
- 13 P: I couldn't. Um....
- 14
- 15 I: And that you felt like she was telling you what to do.
- 16
- 17 P: Yes. Like she was controlling. Like she was in control. And I've never
- 18 felt that way about [my wife] because, um, we've always had, um, we've
- 19 always communicated very well. We've talked about things. But...as I
- 20 see now and we talk now, um—yeah, we talked about it, but in the
- 21 end...I always went with what I thought was right or what I thought was
- 22 the way that it should go, you know? Yeah, um, we went, matter of fact,
- 23 we went, when we went to buying the truck that I have, [my wife] said,
- 24 "Well I like this one." "Okay, that's nice but, you know, that's not what
- 25 we're gonna do." Or, or, things, you know...just, uh...[I'm] trying to
- 26 think of a instance where, uh, probably what she said was, or what she
- 27 had, or her opinion, or what she thought somethin' should go was right,
- 28 but, in the end, that, and, you know, I, "Oh yeah, that's a good idea, but
- 29 we're gonna do it this way." You know, I never really came out and
- 30 said, "but...", you know. It was always in a roundabout way...I got my
- 31 way...about things. Yeah. Yeah. And uh, and I don't blame her. I
- 32 wish...I wish...for a, I won't say "I wish", but um, it shouldn't have
- 33 been that way, and I wish it could have been stopped before it got to this
- 34 point. This doesn't do anything for, it's, it's not helping, or it's helping
- 35 me now, but I wish it could have helped me four years ago. Maybe,
- 36 maybe some counseling, uh—and I can say this now—and I turned it
- 37 down. Uh, there is exit counseling out of the military, to help you cope
- 38 and deal, and I, I said, "I don't need that," and I turned that down. "I
- 39 can handle this." [Pause.] I, I, now, I will say, I wish I would have done
- 40 that then. Uh, probably would have helped me, uh, to make the
- 41 transition a little bit easier.
- 42
- 43 I: Um hmm. Yeah, it sounds like it's been a bumpy transition.

- 1 P: Yeah. I think it's starting to smooth out now, but it's, uh, yeah.  
2
- 3 I: Hmm. And so, on the day that, um...you argued with [your wife] about  
4 the money—  
5
- 6 P: Yes. Uh huh.  
7
- 8 I: —um, um, you said that...you felt like she was in control.  
9
- 10 P: Yes.  
11
- 12 I: You said you felt like you were losing the argument.  
13
- 14 P: Yes.  
15
- 16 I: Uh, can you remember your...those were things that you were thinking?  
17
- 18 P: Oh, yeah. I knew, I said this, well, I, I didn't think that, um...I didn't,  
19 you know, have a, you know, while we were arguing, say, "I'm losing  
20 this argument," or "I'm out," you know, "She's controlling me." I guess  
21 it was just, uh, I won't say, "Subconsciously," 'cause I don't think that's  
22 right. It's just, uh, I know that's the way I felt that, you know, I wasn't  
23 in control, and, and by me saying what I knew, I guess, in a way, I could,  
24 what she said, I could say "That's, what she's saying is right.....but I've  
25 got to get the upper hand in the end." You know?  
26
- 27 I: Um hm. You needed to have the upper hand?  
28
- 29 P: Right. And...there's nothing I could say to give me the upper hand,  
30 because I knew she was right.  
31
- 31 I: Okay.  
32
- 33 P: You know, you know what I mean?  
34
- 35 I: So, so that was a problem... she was right—  
36
- 37 P: And I was wrong, and I couldn't handle that. And uh....  
38
- 39 I: She was right, and you were wrong?  
40
- 41 P: Right. And the easiest way for, and, and, and I guess that was a control  
42 thing because I guess, I guess being right, I guess being right and wrong,  
43 I guess it, it kind of has a control thing with it, because, uh, usually we,

- 1       you know, I guess being wrong is being out of control, like, I suppose,  
2       and I guess I thought, "Well, I was wrong, and I don't have control of  
3       this situation, or I don't have control of myself, uh, so...I'll push her."  
4       And that's what I did.  
5
- 6    I:       "And I'll get the control back?"  
7
- 8    P:       Yeah, but uh, I guess I only had it for a few, a little while, huh, after that.  
9       That's really not control. Yeah. And, and I, people have asked me,  
10       "Well did it make you feel good when you pushed her?" Um...it didn't  
11       make me feel good, but it, but when I pushed her, I felt like I had control  
12       again, because, "I'm bigger than you and what I say is gonna happen,  
13       you, you know? Right."  
14
- 15   I:       Oh, that's interesting. You just said, "I'm bigger and what I say is gonna  
16       happen."  
17
- 18   P:       Right.  
19
- 20   I:       And, and before, you were talking about...what feels, what was, what  
21       felt so bad about being in the wrong, and I wonder if that's connected?  
22       If, if the person who is in the right is the person who gets to say what's  
23       gonna happen.....and the person who is in the wrong is, is, you said,  
24       doesn't "...have the upper hand."  
25
- 26   P:       Yeah. I, I mean, I guess the way I look at it, if you're wrong, I guess,  
27       you really don't have....you know. If, if you're asked a question  
28       or...well, I don't know...and I guess if you are in the right, or the, in an  
29       argument or somethin', I guess you do have the control and you do have  
30       the say-so, you know what I mean? Or maybe there's no, I guess, as I  
31       learn, there is no, "Who has the say so." It has to be each other together.  
32       I see that, now. Yeah, I see what you're saying. Yeah. There is no,  
33       "Yeah, I have the say-so because I'm right." I might be right, but um, I  
34       guess...well, the person that's wrong, you know, should understand that  
35       it's, that that person's right, and uh...they should come to a compromise.  
36       Yeah. (I: Hmm...yeah.) I see that, yeah. I mean, I know I was wrong.  
37       I see that, yeah. I can see that, but uh...  
38
- 39   I:       Oh, I'm wondering, you said that you had the feeling...of...and I kind of  
40       tried to turn it into a thought, or something, and you said, "No, this is the  
41       feeling."  
42
- 43   P:       Oh, okay.

1 I: 'I felt like I was in the wrong, and I was out of control—'  
2  
3 P: Uh huh.  
4  
5 I: '—out of control—'  
6  
7 P: Uh huh.  
8  
9 I: '—and I needed to get the upper hand.'  
10  
11 P: Yeah.  
12  
13 I: Can you tell me what that, that feeling, or those feelings are like?  
14  
15 P: What I thought at that time? Or...Oh, how I felt when I was out of  
16 control and didn't have the upper hand?  
17  
18 I: Yeah.  
19  
20 P: I guess the first thing that came to mind was fear. And, you know, fear  
21 that I was, fear that I was gonna lose control...of not only this argument,  
22 but um, you know, I guess it goes back to being like, your manhood, you  
23 know? Uh, I was brought up the way my mother and father were, or my  
24 father and mother was. "I'm the man. I am the head of the household."  
25 You know, and uh...I know, growing up—it's not like this now—but  
26 when I was, when I was younger, um, my mother didn't have a lot of  
27 say-so in what happened. My mother didn't work. My father worked,  
28 and uh, I guess he, it was the attitude that, "I'm the breadwinner,  
29 therefore, I say what happens, what, you know, what comes and goes,"  
30 or whatever. And I guess that's why, when I say fear that, um, I was  
31 gonna lose, not be in control of, you know, be the head of the household,  
32 or be the man, anymore, you know what I mean? Yeah. It was more  
33 fear than anger, you know? Yeah. We really weren't yelling. I mean  
34 we weren't yelling or cursing each other. Um, I did raise my voice and  
35 so did she. Um, and I think that's another control thing, you know.  
36 Somebody says something, and you try and talk above them, I know that,  
37 uh, trying to be in control of them.  
38  
39 I: Well, thinking of that, um, can you think of another time...[BRIEF  
40 INTERRUPTION WHEN SOMEONE KNOCKS ON THE  
41 DOOR.]...Uh, sorry about that. I was about to ask you, can you think of  
42 another time, um, in your, in a domestic relationship, when you've been  
43 violent?

- 1 P: When I've been violent? (I: Um hm.) Not physically, no. Um.....this  
 2 is the first time I've ever, when people say, you know, "You abuse your  
 3 wife," um, I know I've emotionally abused her. I know that. With the  
 4 control, and uh.....I guess I used the military to control her, uh, simply  
 5 because, um... I had a chance...to get out a lot longer, or earlier, than I  
 6 did. And uh, I chose to re-enlist because that's the lifestyle, even  
 7 though she chose to get out because, she said, you know, "This isn't for  
 8 me." I, I should've seen that, "Well, if it's not for you, then it shouldn't  
 9 be for me." Um...she didn't like the lifestyle. She didn't spend a long  
 10 time in, you know, just her initial enlistment. And uh, I guess I used the  
 11 military as a control thing. Um, and, and I know it...it uh, I guess  
 12 not...mentally, but emotionally, you know, controlled her or abused her  
 13 in the fact that, uh...I'd volunteer for things to, you know, to go here or  
 14 go there. And that was control, you know, uh...you know, uh, you're,  
 15 you know, never giving her a chance to, after she was out, to go back to  
 16 school. Or to, or pursue a career. "Uh, I'm gonna volunteer to go  
 17 [overseas] for six months. You're gonna have to stay home and take  
 18 care of the kids and handle the finances and do this." And that's a lot of  
 19 burden. It wasn't a decision that I discussed, and it should've been a  
 20 decision we, as a family, we sat down and discussed. "Um, uh, they  
 21 need ten people to go to [overseas]. What do you think about me  
 22 going?" It was more like I came home and said, "I've gotta go  
 23 [overseas] tomorrow," when actually, I didn't have to go  
 24 [overseas]...next month or whenever it was. But, that was a choice I  
 25 made, and I guess that was a controlling choice. I guess that's, you  
 26 know, I guess you'd consider that abuse, yeah.  
 27
- 28 I: So you sort of presented it to her as a "have-to" when it was actually—  
 29
- 30 P: Yeah, and it wasn't. It was—  
 31
- 32 I: —a "choose-to."  
 33
- 34 P: Yeah, exactly. I, I think that was a, you know, I've done that...you  
 35 know, I've done that quite a bit, where, instead of saying...uh, uh, "I, I  
 36 have to work late," no, I don't have to work late, I choose to work late.  
 37 You know, they ask me, "Does anybody wanna work late tonight?" or,  
 38 "Can anyone take care of this problem tonight?" "Well, I will," you  
 39 know, and when I call my wife and say, yeah, instead of saying, "Uh,  
 40 they asked me if I wanted to work late. Would it be okay if I did that?"  
 41 It's like, "Oh, they told me I have to do this. I have to stay late." And  
 42 that's a control thing, you know. "You need to go get the kids. You  
 43 need to go home," you know, "whether you had plans or not." And I

- 1       guess I use that in the same instance...when, uh, maybe she had plans,  
2       you know? "Oh, I've gotta do this. I gotta do that." When...I really  
3       didn't have to, but I used that...to control her.  
4
- 5    I:       Hmm. To get her to...how did it control her?
- 6
- 7    P:       Well, um, if she had plans like, uh, um, say she had plans with her  
8       sisters, or her friends, um, "Oh, I've gotta work late." You know, "You  
9       aren't gonna be able to go do that," you know? "Sorry." And you know,  
10       I guess I presumed, you know, "I'm sorry, but this is the way it's gotta  
11       be." But it, it didn't have to be that way.  
12
- 13   I:       Hmm. Well, let me see if I can, um—
- 14
- 15   P:       I guess I'm not—
- 16
- 17   I:       —check back with you. [P laughs, nervously.] You're fine.  
18
- 19   P:       No, I mean uh...I can honestly say this is the only time I've ever been  
20       violent physically. You know, I regret it. I mean, I'm not gonna say I  
21       wish there was more for your study, but, um...  
22
- 23   I:       Oh...no, thank you. I'm glad that this is probably going to be a short  
24       interview.  
25
- 26   P:       Yeah, I just, uh, this, you know, I, I'm, I'm, I'm happy that, I'm not  
27       happy it happened, but I'm happy that it didn't escalate to where  
28       someone was hurt. She wasn't hurt, but it was wrong, and I know it was  
29       wrong, and I regret that, and I'm hoping that this will make a change.  
30       You know, I've made, and I've told, you know, the first time when we  
31       introduced ourselves [in the batterer's group], I said, you know, "I've  
32       made a commitment to change my lifestyle so this will never happen  
33       again, so that I can be more understanding and, and know how to deal  
34       with her and communicate."  
35
- 36   I:       Uh huh. Okay. Let me see if I can describe back to you—  
37
- 38   P:       Okay.  
39
- 40   I:       —some of what I've heard, and see if it fits—  
41
- 42   P:       Okay.  
43

1 I: —with your experience. See if I got it. If I get it wrong—  
2  
3 P: No, that's fine.  
4  
5 I: —I want you to tell me that I got it wrong. Uh, we're, kind of like co-  
6 researchers, and let me...I want to check out what I'm hearing—what I  
7 think I've heard—with you and make sure I got it right.  
8  
9 P: Okay.  
10  
11 I: What, what you told me, I'm going to describe back what you talked  
12 about, especially about the day you were violent with your wife—  
13  
14 P: Okay.  
15  
16 I: —when you were in the argument about the money.  
17  
18 P: Um hm.  
19  
20 I: You said that, I think you said that you felt like she was in the right—  
21  
22 P: Uh huh.  
23  
24 I: —and you were in the wrong, but that felt like a loss of control. And  
25 you actually said to her, "You can't tell me what to do."  
26  
27 P: Yes.  
28  
29 I: "I can do what I want to with my money."  
30  
31 P: Yes.  
32  
33 I: So, it almost sounds like you felt like she was bossing you around.  
34  
35 P: Yes.  
36 I: And you were the bossed around one.  
37  
38 P: Right.  
39  
40 I: You felt like you were on the losing end of that argument?  
41  
42 P: I knew I was.  
43

1 I: You knew you were?  
2  
3 P: I knew I was on the losing end.  
4  
5 I: And, for you, that was a scary feeling. That had something to do with, to  
6 lose that argument was like losing your masculinity in some way.  
7  
8 P: Yeah. Yeah. Right.  
9  
10 I: And you wanted to get...the upper hand back, and the way to get that  
11 upper hand, you knew that you were...bigger than her—  
12  
13 P: Well, the only, I guess that's the only way that I knew to get it, to get it  
14 back. And I guess I was at a loss, or I couldn't come to terms to say,  
15 "You're right. I was completely wrong. I apologize. Um, I know, I  
16 know I was wrong. I should have told you, and I didn't." And, I guess, I  
17 couldn't, couldn't come to say that, so I pushed her.  
18  
19 I: You pushed her.  
20  
21 P: And you're exactly right.  
22  
23 I: And this was, this helped you get the upper hand—  
24  
25 P: It did.  
26  
27 I: —for that...brief amount of time.  
28  
29 P: Yeah.  
30  
31 I: But, you said that, afterwards...?  
32  
33 P: Yeah, then I realized that...the, the shame and guilt that, you know—  
34 well, first shame—um, I can't, you know, and I, then you try to, I try to,  
35 you know, comfort, be comforting. But, um...I felt bad. I felt, you  
36 know, I was ashamed of what I did. And then, when the, uh, the police  
37 showed up—and, and they took a report, and I can honestly s-, you  
38 know, they took a report, and I, I said, "Yes, I, I, that's exactly what I  
39 did." And, uh...you know, I was ready to pay consequences for it.  
40  
41 I: That's another thing that you've talked about—that, to you,  
42 consequences are important, and it feels like the consequences should be  
43 big enough to...deter—

1 P: From...me—  
2  
3 I: —the crime.  
4  
5 P: —ever doing it, ever again.  
6  
7 I: Okay. And that's something that's even bothered you about civilian life  
8 is the consequences—  
9  
10 P: In the past—  
11  
12 I: —aren't severe enough.  
13  
14 P: —yeah. Now? Um...certain things still do, but, uh, other things, I've  
15 learned to let go and say, "Oh, well." If someone comes, you know,  
16 "Aaa, it doesn't bother me," but other things do, yeah. Yeah.  
17  
18 I: And you've talked about...a feeling that, when you're angry, for you, it's  
19 a physical thing.  
20  
21 P: Yeah.  
22  
23 I: You feel...hot. It, it, for, for you, the, the figurative, the figure of  
24 speech, "I'm getting' hot about this," is...right on. It's literal.  
25  
26 P: It's...that's right. That's exactly how I feel.  
27  
28 I: You...feel hot. You said you feel—  
29  
30 P: Oh, and I can, you, I can, I, and my wife can tell me...can, can sit here,  
31 and she'll know when I'm getting angry, because my ears will turn red  
32 first, and I'll just flush. And I'll just be just, just...beet red. And I'm  
33 just mad.  
34  
35 I: And you said sometimes...you even have a hard time thinking straight.  
36  
37 P: It's got to that point several times...in my life, yeah.  
38  
39 I: Um hm. Where you had, and you had to stop out, and—  
40  
41 P: And say, "Hey, you know, I need to go sit down, go be by myself."  
42

1 I: And you even said that...it felt a little bit like, you talked about...people  
2 talk about "pulling themselves together,"—  
3  
4 P: Yeah.  
5  
6 I: —which would imply that a person feels a little bit like they're falling  
7 apart.  
8  
9 P: Right.  
10  
11 I: And that you, um...feel a little bit like you're falling apart...and have  
12 to...  
13  
14 P: I've been to that point a couple of times. Yeah.  
15  
16 I: Um, I'm trying to think...There was one other thing that I remember that  
17 you said...You said that, um—I think that I may have mentioned this,  
18 but I want to make a point of it—that, along with your anger is fear.  
19  
20 P: Yes.  
21  
22 I: That anger and fear go together for you.  
23  
24 P: I think...the thing for me is when I, when I feel afraid, the way to turn  
25 that around is to get angry about...things. You know, if I'm afraid of  
26 something, I've learned to deal with my...fear through anger. And, and I  
27 learned that in the military. I was afraid of heights, and I learned to get  
28 mad about it. And, uh...especially when you learned, uh, in the military,  
29 they send you to learn to jump out of a plane, and...I was deathly afraid,  
30 and uh, I learned to turn that around. Just be angry about it, and I could  
31 get over it.  
32  
33 I: Get good and mad and then—  
34  
35 P: And then, then—  
36  
37 I: Geronimo!  
38  
39 P: —hey! Then, you're not afraid, any more.  
40  
41 I: Uh huh. Wow! Wow. So, anger and fear—  
42

- 1 P: I guess they kind of go hand-in-hand, don't...or I take 'em hand-in-hand.  
2 Yeah. I, I take my fear and...turn it into anger, and it...I guess, it, it  
3 helps me.  
4
- 5 I: That's worked for you in some circumstances.  
6
- 7 P: Yeah, in some things, but I guess I've used it in, in instances where it...it  
8 shouldn't have been used if it didn't work, yeah. Or it worsened the  
9 situation.  
10
- 11 I: I want to ask you one more question.  
12
- 13 P: Sure.  
14
- 15 I: You mentioned that...after...you pushed your wife down...you felt a  
16 sense of shame.  
17
- 18 P: I did.  
19
- 20 I: Can you tell me, what is shame like for you? How do you know you are  
21 feeling shame?  
22
- 23 P: I, I...maybe it wasn't shame, but, you know, I guess I looked at it, you  
24 know..."How am I gonna face my father?" "How am I gonna face...her  
25 father? Her brothers?" You know..."My children?" You know, "How  
26 am I gonna face them?" That's, that's the shame that I felt. I get, maybe  
27 it's not shame, but that's the feelings I felt. "How can I, how can I, when  
28 my work finds out, or my friends find out, how can I...look them in the  
29 eyes, knowing what I did...or if they know what I did?" You know?  
30
- 31 I: "If they know what I did, I can't, um...look them in the eyes, again."  
32
- 33 P: Yeah, or, yeah, or, or, or "I, I can't, I can't function," or, or "They're not  
34 gonna look at me the same," you know? You know? "I'm not gonna  
35 be...a man," you know?  
36
- 37 I: Wow!  
38
- 39 P: Yeah.  
40
- 41 I: So, that very thing you were kind of trying to avoid—  
42
- 43 P: Yeah.

1 I: —that feeling of emasculation...  
2  
3 P: It put me right there.  
4  
5 I: It put you right there.  
6  
7 P: Yeah.  
8  
9 I: You felt emasculated by your own actions?  
10  
11 P: Yeah.  
12  
13 I: Wow. [Pause.] Well, I want to thank you for talking with me.  
14  
15 P: Well, I hope it helps. Uh, I don't know if my case does or doesn't,  
16 but...I haven't been extremely violent, but uh, I do have some issues,  
17 though.  
18  
19 I: I can assure you that it's very helpful. I appreciate it, so much.  
20  
21 P: Oh, thank you.  
22

## VITA

Ronda Redden Reitz was born in Richmond, Missouri on August 15, 1957. She grew up in the farmlands of northwestern Missouri, near Kansas City and also lived near Cleveland, Ohio. She graduated from Brecksville Senior High School, Brecksville, Ohio in 1975. In the fall of that year, she entered Miami University at Oxford, Ohio, from which she graduated in 1979 with a Bachelor of Philosophy degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, with concentrations in English and American literature. In 1989, she returned to Miami University to study Psychology. She was accepted into graduate study in Clinical Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 1992. Her psychology internship at the James H. Quillen Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Mountain Home, Tennessee was completed in August 1998. In December 1998, she was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Psychology from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.