Battered women: Exploring motivating factors to leave or remain in violent relationships

Lora Ellen Kirn
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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BATTERED WOMEN: EXPLORING MOTIVATING FACTORS TO LEAVE OR REMAIN IN VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS

by

Lora Ellen Kim

Bachelor of Arts
East Carolina University
1996

Bachelor of Arts
East Carolina University
1996

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree
Department of Criminal Justice
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2000
The Thesis prepared by

Lora E. Kirn

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Battered Women: Exploring Motivating Factors To Leave Or Remain In
Violent Relationships

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Master of Arts in Criminal Justice

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative
ABSTRACT

Battered Women: Exploring Motivating Factors To Leave Or Remain In Violent Relationships

by

Lora Ellen Kim

Dr. Terance Miethe, Examination Chair
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University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The current study explores factors motivating women to leave or remain in violent relationships from an interactionist perspective. Literature reviewed will integrate gender socialization and labeling with studies on domestic violence to investigate a woman’s role in becoming a victim and her responses to violent relationships. Interview data from women residing in a domestic violence shelter examine the label “battered woman” insofar as it may serve as a catalyst for leaving an abusive relationship once a woman identifies with being a battered woman. Further, a woman’s view of her role, commitment to family maintenance, and children in the home are examined as factors influencing women to remain in or leave abusive relationships. The following questions are examined qualitatively using responses to open-ended survey questions: (1) does the identification of being a battered woman motivate women to leave an abusive relationship? (2) To what extent does a woman’s belief in family maintenance and obligation motivate her to remain in an abusive relationship? (3) How is the decision to leave a violent relationship
influenced by behavior changes in the child/children? Factors influencing women to remain in or leave abusive relationships are important to identify for further development in policy and education programs of family violence prevention.
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INTRODUCTION

The term "battered woman" refers to a woman who is the victim of domestic violence\(^1\). As society has gained awareness of the complex problem of domestic violence affecting the population every year, the need for understanding the battered woman has increased as well. The importance of identifying factors involved in a woman's socialization, gender identity/ideology, and motivation for staying in and leaving abusive relationships can lead to new strategies for domestic violence intervention and prevention. The goal of such strategies would be to decrease the rates of domestic violence by lessening the time period in which women seek help, eliminating the stigma attached to battered women, and increasing programs aimed at domestic violence awareness and education.

The differential socialization processes that take place for women and men can result in substantially different ideologies toward relationships, marriages, and the household. Previous research suggests that women develop a subordinate self-concept\(^2\) during the socialization of female identities in American society (Schur, 1984). Women involved in

\(^1\)Domestic violence is abuse that occurs in intimate relationships. Domestic violence can consist of physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, and economic abuse.

\(^2\)A self-concept is a construction of personal beliefs about what one is.
abusive relationships may have experienced similar gender socialization, and therefore, are likely to share beliefs about a woman's role within a relationship, as a mother, and within the household. Exploring beliefs shared by abused women may indicate what holds them in their violent relationships and the factors leading them to escape. Beliefs recognized as shared by women experiencing domestic violence can be used to educate women about healthy relationships and what is inappropriate behavior.

Through traditional socialization, a female potentially learns there are negative stereotypes and stigma attached to being female (Schur, 1984). Stigmatization refers to the process of attaching labels that are publicly recognized and suggest moral inferiority (Lemert, 1967). Women in abusive relationships may have a heightened awareness of the female stigma and as a result may exhibit increased levels of shame due to the violence they incur. To avoid further shame or stigma, it is possible that abused women do not attribute the "battered woman" label to themselves inhibiting their leaving violent relationships. It is important to understand at what point a woman experiencing violence will recognize herself as a battered woman and whether the recognition influences her to leave. Removal of such stigma from the label, battered woman, may allow women to identify with their situations more quickly and therefore leave the relationship sooner.

Women with children in the home may experience different motivations for leaving or remaining in abusive relationships. Socialization toward motherhood and familial obligations may keep a woman from leaving her abusive partner, but behavior changes in the children may force a woman to identify with her abusive situation and influence her to leave in an attempt to break the cycle.
Using interviews with women in a domestic violence shelter, the current study will examine these factors and how they affect decisions. Three research questions underlie this study. First, does the identification of being a battered woman motivate a woman to leave an abusive relationship? Second, to what extent does a woman’s belief in family maintenance and obligation motivate her to remain in an abusive relationship? Third, how is the decision to leave an abusive relationship influenced by behavior changes in the child/children? After comparing the factors that motivate a woman to stay and/or leave her partner, the thesis will discuss suggestions for increased education among social service and criminal justice agencies.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Domestic violence has gained recognition over the past twenty years as a serious issue affecting women and their families. Researchers have examined the history of women’s roles and gender socialization as an explanation for women becoming victims of abuse by their intimate partners. Specific factors have been identified as to why women choose to leave or stay in abusive relationships. Further research on identifying these factors is crucial to developing preventative measures for domestic violence. Also, research suggests that women are not the only individuals subjected to abuse in the home. Children are affected by witnessing such violence. These issues will be reviewed below.

Self-Concept Development and Its Relevance to Behavior and Social Roles

The self-concept is defined as “the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object” (Rosenberg, 1979, p.7). In other words, the self-concept is a set of beliefs one holds about himself/herself having great influence on individual choices and behaviors. According to Hazel Markus (1977), the belief system that forms in reference to ourselves is what we use to define ourselves, form feelings about ourselves, and affects how often we accept new information about ourselves.
Charles Horton Cooley (1902) and George Herbert Mead (1914) (contributors to the symbolic interactionist perspective) explain how individuals and small groups interact to create a self-image. During socialization, individuals define situations and develop their self-concept through meanings they have learned from primary groups such as family and peer relations. Depending on how individuals interpret the symbols and meanings of words and behaviors in society, their use and attribution to themselves differ; individual perceptions and behaviors will be different. Therefore, self-concepts are socially acquired because individuals interact symbolically.

Cooley (1902) further explains the social self as the looking-glass self. The looking-glass self refers to viewing oneself as a reflection of others’ beliefs. The term explains how we construct self-conceptions as if we are looking in a mirror. In other words, individuals perceive an image of their selves in others’ minds and use that reflected image to define their selves. Similar to Cooley, Mead (1914) states that a child’s understanding of who he/she is, reflects what he/she believes others to see him/her as. Thus, the self is a societal construction. In general, the symbolic interactionist perspective views deviant (outside the norm) behavior as the result of role-taking and the behavior may be predicted by an individual’s self-concept (as derived from others definitions). Further, societal reinforcement increases attachment to the role (Matsueda, 1992).

Lemert (1951; 1967) explains that a deviant rationalizes his/her actions as a part of his/her normal self-concept. However, negative societal reactions to individuals’ behaviors will lead to negative self-concepts and result in further negative behavior. Lemert (1951)

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3Role-taking refers to the process of acting out behaviors attached to one’s self by others.
suggests that labeling, stereotyping, and stigmatizing are the result of an escalating relationship between an individual who engages in deviant behavior and societal reaction. He states that social stigmatization will push an individual to identify with the stigma, change the normal self-concept to one of deviance, and finally, acceptance of a deviant social role will occur. This process of self-concept formation seems especially relevant to the females in our society who become "battered women."

Gender Socialization and the Female Identity

From an interactionist perspective, gender identity has been a societal construction. Both men and women have been placed in roles that imply there are natural differences between the two. Women are said to be weak, frail, emotional, indecisive, and nontechnical; women are subordinate to men. Men are viewed as big, strong, decisive, physical, achieving, intuitive, and not emotional; men are authority figures (Lengermann & Wallace, 1985). Beliefs such as "women are to stay at home," "women are to take care of the family," and "what is private among the family is not to go outside the family" represent societal attitudes about women's roles and belief in the sanctity of the family (Lengermann & Wallace, 1985). These beliefs may possibly serve as a foundation to establishing a pattern of abuse based on traditional sex roles and isolation of the modern nuclear family.

Societal attitudes toward women and more specifically, abused women, can create a deviant status that becomes known through social interaction. Howard Becker (1963) suggests deviance is created by society through interaction and therefore is not inherent. Social interaction allows individuals to recognize the stigma placed on them by others and

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reactively develop shame for the trait that is stigmatizing (Goffman, 1963). Abused women often blame themselves for having caused the abuse. The shame they feel is reinforced by society which blames them for being victims. Not only does society teach a woman there is shame in being a woman, but society teaches women to be shameful of being abused.

Edwin Schur (1984), focusing specifically on women as deviants, argues that women are a devalued part of society. He states that because women have limited access to positions of power, they are susceptible to stigmatization. The status of being female is a deviant status and women come to realize their subordinate status through interacting with others. Social subordination makes women vulnerable to stigmatization; in turn, effective stigmatization reinforces women’s subordination in society.

Schur further suggests that biological sex carries master status implications. Being female is undoubtedly a master status for women. This means that a woman is seen as being female, with all the negative labels and devalued perceptions that go along with it, before she is viewed as having any other quality. The typical stereotypes associated with being female often act as inhibitors for the woman which lower her in the minds of males and may hold her back in her own mind from possible accomplishments. The devalued master status women have affects the way others respond to them. The prescribed traits society places on women may also create a self-fulfilling prophecy. For instance, if a woman is consistently treated as inferior, she may come to view herself as inferior. Under

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4The categorization of female is not a biological distinction, but a social distinction that refers to socially constructed characteristics assigned to the gender identity.

5A master status is a status that overrides all other (Becker, 1963).
these conditions, society’s view of a battered woman may be a result of the stigma society has created for women; being battered is a consequence of being a woman. Systematic devaluation is most likely internalized to develop a negative self-concept.

Women form a self-concept through social interaction that is most likely a direct reflection of societal attitudes toward women. One’s self-concept, or construction of personal beliefs about what one is, may affect how a woman views her situation and whether she decides to leave or stay with an abusive partner. Browne (1987) states that a woman’s role is crucial to understanding how she can become a victim of a violent relationship. According to Browne (1987), a woman is socialized to believe that she must take the responsibility of maintaining relationships and therefore forms her identity around that of her partner, children, and family; her responsibility is to others, not herself. The woman becomes vulnerable to the man’s wants and needs and they, in turn, become her own. The man views his woman as less than him and the woman comes to believe that too. The woman internalizes negative beliefs about herself and forms her self-concept accordingly.

Men and women have different views about what they perceive to be violence in the home. The difference in views is a direct result of the different positions held by each in society. For example, Hamner (1996) states that women perceive violence as including emotional, sexual, and physical threats. The control and domination men have over women is exerted in the forms of physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse. Women view men as using psychological tactics such as humiliation and degradation to achieve obedience (Hamner, 1996). In comparison, men define violence in much narrower terms. Men view violence as physical violence only, but not including physical forms such
as pushing, holding, blocking, throwing objects, and/or damaging objects (Hearn, 1996).
The contrast between perceptions of violence held by men and women contributes to the
victimization experienced by abused women. If others do not view her experiences as
violent, she is likely to view herself as wrong, endure continued violence, and keep the
violence quiet in order to avoid increased stigma from others.

Society often holds women responsible for keeping matters private. Schneider (1991),
for example, states the notion of privacy is particularly important to women that are
battered. The private domain is part of the woman’s socialized role. Because the woman
believes her responsibility is to maintain the family and keep family business in the family,
she experiences a sense of autonomy from not speaking out against abuse occurring in the
home. To speak out would violate what she believes to be her role in the world and what
she believes about who she is. Therefore, a woman may resist identifying with being a
battered woman to protect herself from further social stigma and inferiority.

Factors Influencing Women to Stay in Violent
Relationships

Several researchers have sought to answer the question of why women remain with
abusive partners. Walker (1979) explains there are several characteristics attributable to
abused women: fear, shame, isolation, guilt, depression, passivity, learned helplessness,
belief in traditional sex roles, low self-esteem, and dependency. These characteristics help
women to endure the abuse. Schur (1984) suggests a lack of resources and social support
coupled with a commitment to gender norms places women in positions of emotional and
economic dependence. Abused women do not see themselves having adequate protection
from their abusers and/or alternatives. Therefore, guilt and shame surrounding the abuse reinforces traditional gender norms and keeps a woman from leaving.

Herbert, Silver, and Ellard (1991) conducted a study to answer the following questions: why does a woman stay with an abusive partner, and what cognitive strategies does she use to help her cope with the situation? They found that women who stay with abusive partners see fewer negative relationship changes, have a larger family income, make fewer partner attributions for the abuse, see their partners’ behaviors as less manipulatory, make more personal attributions for the abuse, experience less frequent severe physical abuse, experience less frequent verbal abuse, and see little or no change in the frequency of abuse or amount of affection in their relationship. From these results, the researchers concluded that abused women may be staying with their partners by cognitively structuring their situations to view them in a positive light.

Similar studies have found women who sought help (i.e., psychologist, clergy, lawyer, or counselor) and had traditional beliefs stayed in their abusive relationships longer (Pagelow, 1981); and, fewer personal resources and less power held by the woman were likely indicators of a woman staying in an abusive relationship (Gelles, 1983). Umberson et al. (1998) focused on personal control and gender when examining the dynamics of domestic violence. They concluded that a “unique social-psychological process may occur for women (p.449)” in that being a female victim of domestic violence is closely associated with a loss of personal control. Ross (1991) explains a woman’s conflicting views about her sense of control in a relationship. She states that although a woman experiences a loss of personal control, it is counteracted by her false sense of heightened control. More specifically, a woman feels greater control when there is a stability of
resources such as household income. Therefore, resources provided by the partner serve
as a motivator for staying in a relationship because they create security, but without them
there is instability and a fear of greater loss of control.

Factors Influencing Women to Leave Violent
Relationships

Jacobson and Gottman (1998) conducted interviews with battered women to identify
what motivated them to leave their abusive relationships. They found that every case
involved overcoming extreme obstacles and making a psychological transformation. The
first obstacle was to let go of the dream that kept them loyal to their abusive husbands.
The study indicated severe emotional abuse involving intimidation or control such as
destruction of pets and property, sexual coercion, attempts to isolate, and degradation led
women to leave abusive relationships more quickly than physical abuse. In fact, Gortner
et.al. (1997) concluded emotional abuse to be the strongest and most reliable predictor of
women leaving their abusive partners. They explained that emotional abuse is associated
with intimidation and control that increases over time whereas physical abuse may
decrease or stop. Physical abuse may no longer be necessary once emotional abuse is
effective in controlling and degrading the woman.

Studies suggest additional factors that encourage a woman to leave an abusive
relationship. Factors such as external validation, support, and an increased perception of
danger or risk of severe assault for herself and/or the children are determinants for when a
woman leaves her abuser (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). Furthermore, Vaz and Kanekar
(1990) identified economic independence as the strongest indicator of a woman leaving an
abusive situation. Women who are economically independent from their partners are more likely to leave the abusive relationship.

**Effects of Children on Women in Violent Relationships**

The presence of children in abusive homes may urge a woman to stay in the relationship due to obligations of maintaining the family structure. On the other hand, children may be the motivating factor for a woman's decision to leave. Surprisingly, Steinman (1989) found that in half of all battering incidents the children are present. On average, 3.3 million children witness the abuse taking place in their home every year (Carlson, 1984). Betancourt (1997) notes that even the children who do not witness the violence see the results.

According to Walker (1984), the children who grow up in abusive homes often show the effects in their socialization and mental health. Children are affected most often in the areas of affectional relationships, anger, sexuality, coping with stress, and communication skills. These children become deficient in dealing appropriately with confrontation, aggression, and interpersonal relationships. Some children become aggressive in order to identify with powerful adults and cover-up their own fear to feel powerful as well.

Many studies have documented the behavior changes and problems occurring in children who come from abusive homes. It is important to note how violence in the home affects children and how changes in their behaviors affect mothers' decisions to leave abusive partners. Although women may try to protect their children from witnessing violence occurring in the home, evidence shows that children not only witness violence, but exhibit changes in their behavior. Hershorn and Rosenbaum (1985) found children
who witness parental violence display more personality and conduct problems (i.e.,
depression, anxiety, disruptiveness, impulsiveness, and irritability) than those who did not.
Moreover, abused mothers describe their sons as acting-out aggressively and their
daughters as possessing passive-aggressive refusal behavior. Hughes and Barad (1984)
tested the anxiety and self-esteem of children in a domestic violence shelter. They found
that an overall display of jumpiness, nervousness, withdrawal, fright, and impaired
found that boys tended to be more aggressive and had negative self-concepts, and girls
were more anxious, worried, and sensitive. Wolf et al. (1986) found that children exposed
to violence had fewer interests, fewer social activities, and lower school performance.

A study by Spaccarelli, Coatsworth, and Bowden (1995) focused on delinquency and
its association with exposure to serious family violence. They found that delinquents
exposed to physical abuse and weapons violence between adults were more
likely to be serious violent offenders themselves. The study further suggests exposure to
serious family violence affected the youths competency level, self-control, autonomy, and
belief that aggression builds self-esteem.

The development of family violence in future generations may directly be the result of
children witnessing violent behaviors. The behavior changes reported in children who have
witnessed violence are closely related to problems possessed by adult batterers and victims
(Kenning, Merchant, & Tomkins, 1991). Betancourt (1997) reported sixty-two percent of
boys fourteen and older are injured in the process of protecting their mothers from abuse;
and sixty-three percent of boys ages eleven to twenty who commit murder, kill the man
abusing their mother. Adult batterers with violent early home environments have the
highest rate of severity in their violence; the witnessing of interpersonal violence was the strongest predictor of future severity of violence (Carter, Stacey, & Shupe, 1988). In fact, Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, (1980) found that sons who witnessed their fathers’ violent behavior had a 1000% greater rate of battering than those who did not. As children display dysfunction or aggressive tendencies, a woman may escape her violent relationship to protect their interests.

Developing an understanding for the dynamics of domestic violence and its affects on women is instrumental to developing laws and programs to protect and prevent families from experiencing and/or enduring violence. Determining factors that influence women to remain in or leave violent relationships can offer insight into the very reasons violence in homes is prevalent and how to encourage women to leave sooner. Both a woman’s perception of being a battered woman and the effects of domestic violence on her children appear to offer explanations.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants in the current study were women determined to have been victims of domestic violence because of their residence in a domestic violence shelter. The participants were residents of an emergency shelter located in Henderson, Nevada. The status of being a victim of domestic violence was determined by the shelter's staff during initial telephone interviews (via the crisis hotline) as a requirement for entering shelter. Interviews were conducted with forty women. The current study does not presume to generalize to the population of all women victims of domestic violence and only stands to describe patterns found in the responses of those interviewed. The small sample size and individual location of the domestic violence shelter lends to the inability of making generalized statements regarding the population affected by domestic violence.

Before recruiting individuals to participate in this study, I obtained approval from the Human Subjects Board at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and the Executive Director of the domestic violence agency. At the time the interviews began, I had been working as a Domestic Violence Advocate and Residential Facilitator at the domestic
violence shelter for one year. I consistently worked with the women in one-on-one and group situations and used those times to recruit women for interviews. I explained to residents of the shelter that I was interviewing women in their situation for a study and would like to ask them some questions. The women were assured before agreeing that no names would be used and they would not be linked to any answers. Those who agreed were taken to a private area and the nature of the research was explained to them.

At the beginning of each interview, women were provided a consent form (see APPENDIX I). The consent form was read to the participant and accompanied by an explanation. Subjects were informed that no names or signatures would be used to ensure anonymity. Therefore, approval to answer questions and completion of the questionnaire would be considered consent. All participants agreed to follow through with the interview. Participants were then advised they could refuse to answer any and all questions throughout the interview. Questions were read to the participant from a prepared questionnaire (see APPENDIX II). Participants were encouraged to answer questions using whole thoughts or descriptive words. Responses were hand recorded as participants answered each question. For the purposes of this study, a sample of forty was considered to be a sufficient size to explore the process of developing a "battered woman" identity and the motivating factors of leaving or staying in an abusive relationship. The interviewing process took approximately four months from June of 1999 through September of 1999. Table 1 shows the demographics of the sample interviewed.
Table 1. Sample Description

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<td><strong>Months In</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>504.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 1, the average abused woman in this shelter had the following characteristics: White, thirty-six years of age, Christian, a household income over $15,000, and were involved in the abusive relationship for an average of seventy-five months. However, the women interviewed vary considerably in terms of their social and demographic profile.

Qualitative Response Coding

Eleven of the thirty-one questions were open-ended and required descriptions from respondents (see APPENDIX II for the interview questionnaire). These responses had to be categorized and applied to the appropriate research question for the purposes of finding possible response patterns. Each response to an open-ended question was hand-recorded. Responses were then converted to categories based on descriptive words. For example, one question asks “what is your definition of abuse?” Sample responses included answers such as “verbal abuse, mental abuse, physical abuse, sexual terrorism, money abuse,” “when you get your feelings hurt, intentionally inflicting discomfort on another,” “violence, grabbing, hitting, putting a gun to your head, calling names such as stupid, hurting the baby to hurt you,” “put-downs, mind games, told no good and evil and a bad person,” and “isolation, not being able to leave the house or have friends, financially controlling, moved around a lot, threatened suicide if left.” These are examples of responses from five participants. Descriptive words used in each respondent’s answer were used to create four possible response categories. For this question the ultimate response categories became verbal, emotional/psychological, physical, and financial.
The process for creating response categories in this example was applied to all other open-ended questions. Categories were exhaustive, but not mutually exclusive; responses could belong to more than one category (responses not fitting into any response category were omitted.) After determining open-ended response categories, questions were separated to specifically address one of the three exploratory research questions.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

An inductive approach was most appropriate in exploring the qualitative responses of participants from an Interactionist perspective in this study. In other words, gathering the information from the specific to general was necessary to develop and identify patterns or themes in the data. The study aimed to explore three general research questions. First, does the identification of being a battered woman motivate women to leave an abusive relationship? Second, to what extent does a woman’s belief in family maintenance and obligation motivate her to remain in an abusive relationship? Third, how is the decision to leave a violent relationship influenced by behavioral changes in the child/children? To answer these questions, the participant’s responses to the specific open-ended questions were separated and examined. Once responses were applied to a specific research question, patterns and themes began to emerge. All percentages are based on the total number of responses to each question.
Research Question I

The first research question attempts to discover if the "battered woman" label motivates women to leave their abusive situations once they have identified with the label and the negative stereotypes associated with it. To explore this issue, I examined the pattern of responses to several questions from the survey (see summary tables provided in APPENDIX III). Examining this data, I began to notice a similarity in responses suggesting there was a common process of leaving the abusive relationship.

Other literature describes the characteristics of abused women, those who have left abusive relationships, and the dynamics of abuse. Although other literature has identified the emotional transitions of abused women, it has not identified a self-defined process of leaving an abusive relationship. Participant responses suggest there is a series of events involved in escaping abuse which range from the abuse itself to a triggering event. From the interview data, women appeared to transition through stages of defining themselves and their situations to find motivation for leaving the abuse. Further, the data suggests a theme of severity in identifying abusive situations and defining one's self as "battered." This led me to develop the pyramid of escape which proposes to describe the process of leaving from the victims point of view. Figure 1 shows the stages developed to represent a woman's escape.
To better understand the different stages in Figure 1, actual responses from participants will be reviewed relating to each stage.

Abuse

The words and phrases participants used in their responses to the definition of abuse were most commonly descriptive of physical characteristics, followed by descriptions of verbal characteristics, emotional/psychological characteristics, and a small proportion described financial components to abuse. Response percentages are presented in Table 2.
Table 2. Participant Definitions of Abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abuse</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/Psychological</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 85

Examples of participant’s responses to how they defined abuse are as follows:

“name-calling, hitting, pushing, degrading the partner,”

“battered, being hit-on, punched-on like a punching bag,”

“controlling where you go,”

“down-grading, low self-esteem - pulls it away from you, isolation from family,”

“being thrown up against a dresser, being kicked down a hallway, having a frozen rump roast thrown at your head, being called stupid and told your not good for anything, being pushed into a window, and being given two black eyes,” and

“striking-out in violence, emotional - saying things to knock you down, hurt your feelings, and make you feel worthless.”

The abuse stage signifies the abuse as taking place, but the woman has not necessarily identified herself as being abused. Consistent abuse may lead to the next stage of denial or loss of self. At this stage, the abuse has modified the woman’s personality and view of herself.
Denial/Loss of Self

Denial and/or the loss of self explains a woman’s defense mechanism toward the abuse occurring in the relationship. Many women interviewed described having lost themselves, control, or not knowing that what they were involved in was abusive (i.e., domestic violence.) Table 3 shows the responses to the question “what do you believe the characteristics of being a battered woman are?”

Table 3. Perceived Characteristics of a Battered Woman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics Of A Battered Woman</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Physical and Emot./Psyc.</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/Psychological</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The categories encompassed both physical and emotional/psychological characteristics of a woman in an abusive relationship, but the responses are more suggestive of a woman’s state of mind and lifestyle.

“no identity, afraid all the time, apologizes whether wrong or right, hides everything, unexplained bruises, jumpy,”

“co-dependent, wants to take care of others before herself, scared of the outside world more than the familiar of her situation,”

“timid, shy, quiet, easily moved to remorse or guilt, naive, ignorant, unnowledged, cocooned,”

“low self-esteem, visible bruises, scared little animal, quiet - keeps to herself, lies
about bruising, always has to be home and accountable, cannot have own opinion, has no life, just exists,”

“self-blame, introverted, dociled, weak, broken-down, bruised, mentally fatigued,”

“bludgeoned, treated like a dog,” and

“reclusive, shy, withdrawn, unsure, confused, dead.”

The responses by participants help to form an understanding of the feelings involved with being a battered woman and how they survive the abuse. At this stage, a woman may not have admitted to the abuse or recognized her lifestyle as an abusive one.

**Validation and Acknowledgment of Being a Battered Woman**

From the responses, participants were likely to identify with their abusive situations once acknowledged and validated by an outside source, through severe physical trauma, or a combination of both. That is, an outside source recognized the abusive situation and the victim received reinforcement through an abusive episode (see Tables 4 and 5).

**Table 4. Labeled as a Battered Woman**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did an outside influence inform you that you were a battered woman?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Point of Recognition of Self as Battered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At what point in the relationship did you view yourself as a battered woman?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not View Self As Battered During Relationship</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From The Beginning</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe Emotional/Psychological Reasons</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe Physical Harm</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat Of Physical Harm</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 37

This stage involves a woman's recognition of her status as abused and the point at which she begins to view herself as a battered woman. Participants explained at what point in the relationship they came to view themselves as battered:

"knocked teeth out, bruised ribs, fractured nose, blackened both eyes,"

"after surgery, picked-up the phone to call someone and realized there was no one, he had friends, not me,"

"stopped feeling natural, had to change personalities to appease him, walking on egg shells,"

"after third incident, realized it wasn’t a fluke,"

"after being terrorized, closed-up in a room, frightened, punched-on,"

"2:30 in the morning, looked in the mirror after an argument and did not recognize myself, I was all bloody, bruised, eye was swollen shut, and he stopped apologizing,"

"in the hospital for ribs being almost fractured - lied to mother - knew I was
abused because I started lying,”

“when he was strangling me - I had to break a window to get him to stop because he was killing me,” and

“one day he drove me to a road and told me to get out, that he would beat the shit out of me - I didn’t know if he was going to kill me or if I would ever see my baby again.”

**Emotional Response**

Once a woman has confronted the idea of being a “battered woman,” she will most likely struggle emotionally with that recognition. The emotional response is likely to be very different for each individual woman, but would appear to resemble the grieving process for a lost loved one (e.g. grievance, anger, acceptance.) In essence, the woman is facing the idea that she has lost herself. The amount of time an abused woman spends in the emotional response stage is unknown, but is likely to vary. The emotional response enables a woman to gain motivation for leaving the abusive relationship.

**Motivation**

Eighty percent of participants responded “yes” to the question “did the recognition of being a battered woman influence you to leave the relationship (see Table 6)?” When asked what specifically motivates a woman in an abusive relationship to leave, the most common answer involved the need to regain control of self, followed by their children, motivation out of safety and fear, and a small proportion stated they were motivated to leave their abusive relationships once they discovered there was help available. Response percentages are summarized in Table 7.
Table 6. Battered Woman Recognition and Its Influence on Leaving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the recognition of being a battered woman influence you to leave the relationship?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Motivations for Leaving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What motivates you to leave this type of relationship?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help Available</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regain Control Of Self</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety/Fear</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are examples of respondent’s answers to the question summarized in Table 7.

“fear, wanted to live - believed he had the potential to take my life,”

“peace of mind, wanted to know self instead of being controlled by the other person’s thoughts and emotions,”

“gain own identity, be own person, gain independence,”

“found out there were places to go,” and
"fear of being hit, fear of son growing-up to think it's okay to hit, fear of daughter getting into that sort of relationship."

**Triggering Event**

Once a woman has found the motivation to leave, the responses suggest there is an event that takes place triggering the actual leaving of the relationship. Table 8 summarizes participants answers to the question "when did you leave your partner?" The most common response was they finally left their partners after a severe physical episode or fear of imminent death. Furthermore, participant responses suggest the identification of the abuse is itself motivation for leaving.

Table 8. When Participants Left Their Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When did you leave your partner?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He Left/Made Her Leave</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified Abuse/He Wouldn’t Change</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost Sense Of Self</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant/Child Involved Episode</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe Physical Episode/Fear Of Imminent Death</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are some examples of the triggering event for participants leaving their partners:

"he cut me on the back of the neck, stomach - pulled knives on me,"

"when he put a gun in my mouth,"

"he beat me with a blackjack after having the baby,"
“when he said he would hunt me down like a dog and kill me,”
“he got physical and was trying to kill my unborn child,”
“choked to the point of unconsciousness,”
“able to get away safely,”
“daughter witnessed strangulation,”
“feared for own life - was threatened to be shot,”
“he dislocated my jaw,” and
“he grabbed me by the throat and pointed a gun to my head and told the baby to watch - he shot the gun four times at the ceiling.”

**Escape**

The triggering event leads to a woman’s escaping her abusive relationship. Figure 1 is a proposed example of the stages a woman may go through leading to her escape. Women may not go through all the proposed stages in leaving their relationships, but the stages suggest what might be taking place for abused women as they identify with their “battered” status through interactions with others. The self-defined battered woman appears to be a product of others definitions and actions; participant responses suggest escaping abusive relationships are resultant of the woman’s interpretation of her situation. The results of the current sample suggest the answer to research question 1 is the identification of being a battered woman is motivation for leaving an abusive relationship.

**Research Question 2**

The second question explored by the data asks to what extent a woman’s belief in family maintenance and obligation motivate her to remain in an abusive relationship. When
I began interviewing participants, I thought I would find an overwhelming consensus in belief patterns toward traditional male and female roles. Responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare are traditionally assigned to women in our society. Participant responses revealed a trend of emotional responsibilities toward their partner’s and children more than physical. Responses suggest there is a distinction in how women interviewed saw their roles in relationships. The way each woman viewed her responsibilities lends support for why she remained in her abusive relationship. Moreover, a lack of resources appeared to be a barrier to leaving the relationship. Specific questions and responses were applied to this research question (see APPENDIX IV).

Witnessing Abuse In Own Home As A Child And Its Effects On Future Abusive Relationships

Specifically looking at a respondent’s exposure to abusive relationships in childhood, showed a direct opposition in responses to other questions. Having witnessed abuse in the childhood home appears to affect a woman’s approach to gaining independence from the abusive relationship and the reason why she stayed as long as she did.
Table 9. The Differential Responses from Participants Who Did/Did Not Witness Abuse in Their Home as a Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Witnessed Abuse In Childhood Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief In Specific Resp. In A Relationship</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed Others Of The Abuse</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believed Others Would Treat Negatively If Abuse Was Known</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As revealed in Table 9, the difference between responses from participants who did or did not witness abuse in their home as a child is apparent and notably unique. The difference in responses suggests a belief pattern toward abusive relationships may be dependent on previous exposure. Respondents who had witnessed abuse in their homes as children were more likely to agree with the idea that women have specific responsibilities in a relationship, more likely to inform others of the abuse, and less likely to believe others would treat them in a negative manner if they knew of the abusive relationship. The responses from participants who did not witness abuse in their homes as children were the exact opposite from those who had. Therefore, respondents not exposed to abuse in their childhood home were less likely to believe in a woman having specific responsibilities in a relationship, less likely to have informed others of the abuse, and more likely to believe
others would treat them negatively if they knew of the abusive relationship. The responses suggest women having previous exposure to an abusive relationship are themselves less likely to attach a stigma or negative stereotype to domestic violence and therefore are more likely to report the behavior to others. In contrast, women not exposed to abuse in their homes as children may be less likely to identify with the role of being abused because they themselves attach a stigma or negative stereotype to battered women. Consequently, they may be afraid to inform others because they believe they will be treated negatively. These results lead to the idea that the more an individual has witnessed or knows about domestic violence the less barriers there are to requesting help and leaving the abusive relationship.

Participant Beliefs Toward A Woman's Specific Responsibilities In A Relationship

Question 13 from the questionnaire reads “do you think a woman has specific responsibilities in a relationship, if yes explain?” Table 10 summarizes the responses.

Table 10. Responsibilities in a Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Responsibilities?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Responsibilities</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Responsibilities</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 40

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Table 10 shows the majority of participants believing they have specific responsibilities in a relationship view their responsibilities as primarily emotional ones.

The question in the interview process was first followed by the examples cooking, cleaning and childcare. These were used to help the participants understand what I was asking. I discovered the words used as examples were prompting the exact responses from participants. I stopped prompting the participants and allowed them to interpret the question for themselves. Although some participants still spoke of physical responsibilities, the majority of participants not prompted described responsibilities relating to the emotional support and obligation in relationships or a combination of both. Example responses are:

"honest, trustworthy, caring, loving,"

"to communicate thoughts, goals, and aspirations - to be honest and open to partner - to love, honor, and respect partner,"

"to help with problems, try not to provoke/anger the person, be a good listener, compromise,"

"be loving, nurturing, and giving," and

"to be fair, honest, and truthful to her mate."

These type responses struck me as very interesting. They show the difference in a female's view of relational responsibilities and how she views her role in a relationship. Also, the idea that a woman's socialization provides her the nurturing, care giver role in a relationship may be what keeps her in an abusive relationship trying to make it work. It is possible that participants felt obligated to take care of the man and emotionally support him, and therefore stayed in the relationship to accomplish those goals. Focusing on participant views of their roles and responsibilities in relationships has suggested they
remain in relationships to achieve perceived obligations of an emotional nature. Therefore, a woman’s view of her place in the home may be structurally different from a man’s view of the woman’s place in the home.

Motivations For Remaining In Abusive Relationships

Participants were asked to explain what motivated them to stay in their abusive relationships. Responses are categorized and reviewed in Table 11.

Table 11. Participant Responses for Staying in an Abusive Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief In Male’s Authority/Family Maintenance</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believed Behavior Would Change/Could Fix Him</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blamed Self</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blames Alcohol/Drugs</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Resources/Financial/Isolation</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reviewing the response categories, most participants stated they were isolated, had no financial independence, or resources to leave the relationship. For these women, the man was most often the financial provider and left the woman completely dependent upon him. In some relationships, the woman worked, but was not allowed to keep any of the earned
income. Other motivations for remaining in abusive relationships were described as belief in the man’s authority or preserving the family unit, followed by the belief the abusive partner would change, fear of what might happen if she left, love, blaming abusive behaviors on drugs and alcohol, and blaming herself for her partner’s abusive behaviors.

Research question 2 asks if a woman’s belief in family maintenance and obligation is motivation for remaining in abusive relationships. From the responses of women interviewed in this study, there are elements of traditional sex roles based in male authority/head of household and the woman’s desire to hold the family together, but these are not exclusively the belief patterns of the women interviewed or the reasons for why they remained in their relationships. Motivations for staying in abusive relationships appear to have more to do with the woman’s individual interpretation of her situation rather than a traditional socialized obligation to stay.

Research Question 3

The third research question explores how women in abusive relationships are affected by their children’s behavioral changes and if they influence a woman to leave the relationship. Specific questions from the questionnaire were applied to this research question for participants with children in the home at the time of abuse. Of the participants with children in the home, the typical responses were “yes” to the children having witnessed abusive episodes, witnessing behavior changes in the child/children, the child/children influencing the decision to leave the abusive relationship, witnessing abuse in childhood home, and women have specific responsibilities as mothers. Response percentages are summarized in Table 12.
Table 12. Response Summary of Participants with Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>n = 40</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Witnessed Abuse</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>n = 26</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influenced Decision To Leave</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>n = 25</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Witnessed Abuse In Childhood Home</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>n = 26</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific Responsibilities As A Mother</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>n = 26</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Behavior Changes Witnessed In Children

The majority of women interviewed, having children in the home, stated they witnessed behavior changes in their children after the onset of abusive episodes. The women were asked to explain the types of behavioral changes witnessed. The categories developed from responses are summarized in Table 13.

Table 13. Witnessed Behavior Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior changes witnessed in children in abusive homes</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid Of Abuser</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Wetting</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinging To Mother</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperactivity</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimicking Abusive Behaviors</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn/Crying</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children in abusive homes were most often observed as becoming withdrawn or crying more, followed by being afraid of the abuser or mimicking the abusive behaviors, clinging to the mother, increased hyperactivity, and wetting the bed. Very few mothers responded that they saw no change in the child/children’s behavior. This means that an overwhelming

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majority of mothers were aware of the affects abuse in the home had on the children and those behavior changes impacted their decision to leave the relationship. When asked specifically how the children influenced their decision to leave participants responded: wanting a life without fear, not wanting the child witnessing the abuse, not wanting child/children engaging in abusive behaviors or thinking it's alright to abuse others, and witnessing the behavior changes displayed by the child/children (see Table 14).

Table 14. Child Influence on Leaving an Abusive Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did the child/children influence your decision to leave, explain?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Changes</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Want Child To Abuse/Think It Is Alright</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Want Child To Witness Abuse</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Without Fear</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants with children in the home were influenced by their perceived responsibilities as mothers to leave the abusive relationship. The obligation toward the child/children took precedent over any obligation towards the abusive partner. Witnessing changes in behavior allowed participants to recognize the ramifications of the abusive
lifestyle and its ability to cross generations. In an attempt to stop the abuse for herself and in her child/children's future relationships, leaving became the only viable option. Participants left their abusers to salvage personal ideas of what a family is supposed to be. Abuse violated participant beliefs in child-rearing duties and escaping offered an alternative. Behavior changes in children were influential in leaving the abusive relationship.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Relevance of this Study

The purpose of this study was to understand what motivates women to leave or remain in their abusive relationships. The nonprobability sample and small sample size do not allow the findings to be generalized to the population of abused women. The qualitative analysis of interview data is only representative of the current sample, but offers insight about women who have left abusive relationships and their process of leaving.

After exploring the interview data, I was able to better understand a battered woman’s struggle with identifying her status as abused, that previous exposure to abuse is a likely indicator of informing others when in an abusive relationship and less likely to attach a stigma to the abused status, lack of resources is the primary motivation for staying in the relationship, severity in abusive episodes is most often the reason for leaving the relationship, and the role of mother/care-giver urges women to leave abusive relationships to fulfill perceived responsibilities. It is possible that the most relevant and unique contribution of this study is the process of leaving derived directly from the responses and impressions received during participant interviews (see Figure 1, p. 22.)
The first research question asked if the identification with the battered woman status motivates women to leave abusive relationships. In exploring this question, participants responded to what they considered abuse and attributes of battered women. The responses of participants were consistent with forms and characteristics of abuse identified by Hamner (1996) in which he described physical, emotional, and economic controls; and, physical and emotional violence.

The pyramid of escape describes a stage of acknowledgment and validation. This is the stage that a woman identifies herself as battered through validation of an outside source, acknowledgment from a severe physical episode, or a combination of both. Further, the triggering event that actually caused the women to leave was also most often due to severe physical harm or fear of imminent death. These responses are similar to a study conducted by Jacobson and Gottman (1998). They reported that external validation and an increased risk of assault are determinants of leaving an abusive relationship.

The second research question aimed to understand if traditional beliefs in family maintenance and obligation would hold a woman in an abusive relationship. The results of this study suggest women who witnessed abuse in their childhood home were more likely to tell others of the abuse and less likely to attach a stigma to being abused. Conversely, women who had no previous exposure to abuse were less likely to inform others of the abuse because they thought they would be treated negatively if others were aware of it. Schneider (1991) suggests to speak out would violate what she believes is her role. This suggests that women exposed to abuse are less likely to associate themselves with traditional ideas of the female role holding them responsible for maintaining the family. Also, mothers were more likely to leave the relationship because of the effects abuse had
on the children rather than staying to preserve the family. In fact, when asked if women had specific responsibilities in a relationship, most often the answer was "no." Of those women who did believe they were responsible for a particular role in the relationship, they most often described emotional responsibilities to their partners such as, love, honesty, and respect. Although women had motivations for maintaining the family, participants were more likely to remain in the abusive relationship due to financial dependency, a lack of resources, and isolation from the outside world.

The third research question explored how behavioral changes in the children influenced participants leaving their abusers. Participants discussed witnessing modifications in their children’s behaviors such as withdrawal/crying, fear of abuser, imitation of abusive behaviors, clinging to mother, and hyperactivity. These responses were consistent with other studies revealing the effects of abuse on children. They describe such behaviors as depression, anxiety, disruptiveness, impulsiveness, irritability, jumpiness, nervousness, and fright (Hershorn and Rosenbaum, 1985; Hughes and Barad, 1984). Children were not mentioned as the primary reason for leaving the abusive relationship, but served as the motivator for leaving in order for the woman to regain control of herself and life. Mothers described their children as influential in their leaving the relationship because they wanted to have a life without fear, they did not want the child to witness more abuse, they did not want the child to become an abuser or think abuse is appropriate, and they wanted to counteract the changes witnessed their children’s behavior.
A Call for Increased Action Among Community Agencies and the Criminal Justice System

Labeling theory helps explain how victims of abuse become attached to their role as victims and lose their sense of self-identity. This is most likely the process of how women come to feel trapped in their relationships and unable to leave. This study suggests that escaping violent relationships is partially influenced by identifying with the “battered woman” label because women do not want to see themselves as the negative stereotype associated with battered women. Others are inhibited from seeking help because of the stigma they feel will be attached to them if their victim status is known.

Participant responses suggest domestic violence awareness is instrumental to defining one’s self and situation as abusive. It has become apparent in this study that the sooner a woman comes to view herself as battered, she is likely to find motivation for leaving the abusive relationship. Most participants described leaving the relationship due to a severe physical episode or fear of death. Acknowledgment from outside sources (friends, family, and community agencies) are likely to expedite the process of leaving if recognized early and may reduce the likelihood of suffering increased physical trauma before leaving the abusive relationship. Greater awareness of domestic violence appears to reduce the stigma attached to the “battered woman” label and abusive situations. A reduction in negative associations with domestic violence will most likely break down current barriers to getting help.

Research suggests that current practices in the criminal justice system have deterred abused women from seeking help and/or lowered victim trust of the system due to a lack of response (Goldman, 1991; Baker, 1997). The importance of this study shows that
women who have left abusive relationships most often were identified as abused by outside persons; interactions were most likely to increase awareness and understanding of domestic violence and therefore reduced the perceived stigma placed on victims. This means, the support of the criminal justice system and community is imperative to removing the stigma placed on battered women to help them leave their abusive relationships faster. A review of literature on domestic violence and the criminal justice system helps establish why there is a need for reform and increased education among agencies.

A Review Of Literature on the Criminal Justice System’s Response to Domestic Violence

The number of 911 calls classified as “domestic disturbances” far exceeds the number for rape, murder, and all other aggravated assaults combined (Litsky, 1990). However, police have been reluctant to respond to domestic violence calls in a manner that would support the serious nature of such offenses. The reluctance is said to derive from the difficulty in gathering proof of abuse and few to no witnesses (Goldman, 1991). The police response is also said to be affected by the non-interventionist perspective that took place during the 1970’s. At this time, theories were offered to support alternatives to the punishment of batterers such as mediation and on-site counseling (Goldman, 1991). Police reluctance to get involved has in turn, affected victims’ willingness to seek police help during abusive episodes.

According to Goldman (1991), “battered women often do not call the police when battering is imminent or occurring because they perceive that the police are ineffective in stopping the abuse (p. 96).” Another study shows the same feelings of domestic violence victims toward police. Baker (1997) reports, in her study of why women go back to abusive relationships, that victims of abuse were disappointed and angered by the way
police responded to them and their situations. Many victims stated they did not call for police help due to previous experiences with rudeness from police. The official police response often experienced is quieting the batterer, seeking medical help if required, and persuading the couple to end the fighting.

Prosecutors have shown a great deal of discretion in prosecuting domestic violence cases. The fact that prosecutors do not take such offenses seriously enough is a leading cause of released offenders and low penalties for violations. Litsky (1990) claims there are two reasons why prosecutors are reluctant in prosecuting abusers. First, prosecutors often view domestic violence complaints as marital/relationship problems that have no place in the judicial system. Second, prosecutors are frustrated with abused women refusing to press charges or dropping charges.

Schmidt and Steury (1989) conducted a study focusing specifically on discretionary practices used by the prosecution in filing domestic violence cases. They found several variables likely to predict charges being filed: severity of injury, instrument used to attack, the defendant’s prior record, and failure of a defendant to attend the charging conference. These variables discriminate against the majority of women who do not sustain major physical injuries and offenders who have previously escaped formal sanctions. All victims and offenders require equal treatment from the criminal justice system to stop the message that spousal abuse is not a priority. The message currently sent by the prosecutorial system is likely to support the subordination of women by allowing many intimate abusers off easy.

Judges are often opposed to using the courtroom as a place of settling family/relationship disputes. Therefore, domestic violence cases may not be taken as
seriously as their acts warrant. Judges use discretionary measures to perform their duties of sentencing; if the cases are not viewed as serious, historical prejudice may lead judges to consider both victim provocation and abuser excuses as mitigating factors. Judges commonly practice allowing first offenders to go free or setting low to no bail (Litsy, 1990). Ignorance in the judicial system may place victims in more danger and show offenders they can violate the law and get away with it. Weak penalties for offenders may increase repeat offenses.

Thistlethwaite, Wooldredge, and Gibbs (1998) looked at the relationship between severity of sanctions and recidivism. They found that “suspects who received qualitatively less severe sentences were more likely to recidivate compared to suspects who received more severe sentences (p. 394).” The study concludes that the “type” of sentence imposed, not simply a sentence or its length, is the best deterrent to future recidivism.

Conclusion

To be a victim of domestic abuse in this country is said to be stigmatizing for women because they come to recognize their subordinate role through interacting with others (Schur, 1984). If society does not effectively address the issue of domestic violence through a committed criminal justice system and prevention programs, the victimization of women is likely to continue. The mixed messages of inappropriate behavior between intimates that currently exists does not appear to support women in their struggle to stop the violence.

A study by Jolin (1983) found decreasing rates of domestic homicide when stricter legislation regarding the level of threat to offenders was enacted. New legislation has the
possibility of providing victims with needed services to maintain safety, deter batterers with stiffer penalties, reduce repeat offenses, and provide rehabilitation and counseling. The dedication of state legislatures may set an example to other agencies that domestic assault is not to be tolerated.

Although legislation is an option, the impact could be minimal without the support and resources of other community programs. The availability and awareness of legal and extralegal resources offered to families, victims, and offenders of abuse increases the likelihood they will seek alternatives to their violent relationships. Browne and Williams (1989) found the key to inhibitory effectiveness is awareness, accessibility, and utilization of resources.

Offering increased education for all members of the criminal justice system, social service agencies, and community members may raise the level of awareness and decrease the social stigma for victims of abuse. Most importantly, the school systems should attempt to counteract traditional socialized gender norms for both females and males, and provide instruction on appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. If youths can be exposed to the dynamics of abusive relationships, traditional ideologies about gender norms and domestic violence may reduce and decrease the occurrences of future violence in the home. Increasing preventative efforts can have a strong impact on the current rates of abuse, set standards for future handling of such incidents, and encourage victims to acquire services at the onset of abuse.

Once criminal justice agencies and community organizations are committed to working together, standard and distinct messages will be sent throughout the community in support of ending domestic abuse. Little is known about abuse prevention and the benefits such
programs have to offer, but the number of incidents occurring every year serve as evidence that more research should be conducted in the area of domestic violence prevention.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX I

CONSENT FORM

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Department of Criminal Justice
Consent Form

My name is Lora Kirn and I am a graduate student at UNLV in the Department of Criminal Justice. I am conducting research to attain knowledge about what motivates a woman to leave or stay in an abusive relationship.

As a woman residing in a domestic violence shelter, your experiences are highly beneficial to understanding what factors effect your decisions and self-concept. I respectfully request your participation by completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire should not take more than 15 minutes.

Your participation in this study is both voluntary and confidential. My affiliation with S.A.F.E. House (as a staff member) has no effect on your willingness to participate and does not affect your status as a resident. No names will be used on the questionnaires to assure you of your anonymity. Some questions may be sensitive in nature and make you uncomfortable, but you have the right to refuse to answer any and all questions.

For more information regarding the rights of research subjects, you can contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, UNLV at 895-1357. If you have any questions regarding the research, you may contact Lora Kirn, at S.A.F.E. House, Inc., 320-1812.
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

GENDER IDENTITY OF A BATTERED WOMAN: How children in the home and the self-concept of a battered woman motivate her to leave or remain in a violent relationship.

Domestic violence is a growing concern in American society. Although we are aware of the problem, we have little knowledge about what motivates women to stay or leave such an environment. As a woman residing in a domestic violence shelter, your experiences are highly beneficial to understanding what factors effect your decisions and self-concept.

The following questionnaire will examine factors that may effect a woman in a violent relationship. The questions will be sensitive and may make you uncomfortable. Your participation is both voluntary and confidential, but I hope you will help to further the understanding of such an important issue.

Thank-you for your participation.

1) How long have you been in a relationship with your current partner?
   _____ months       _____ years

2) What is your definition of abuse?
   Explain
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________

3) Were you living with your partner at the time abuse occurred?
   _____ yes          _____ no

4) How long have you been abused (physically, verbally, emotionally, sexually) by this partner?
   _____ months       _____ years

5) How much time elapsed between the onset of abuse and identifying yourself as being abused?
   _____ days         _____ months       _____ years
   Did you leave the relationship?  _____ yes          _____ no
   If so, when?________________________

54
6) Did you have children living in your home at the time of abuse?
   _____ no. go to question # 12
   _____ yes

7) How many children were living in the home?
   _____ boy(s)  _____ girl(s)

8) Did the child/children witness abusive episodes?
   _____ yes  _____ no

9) Did you witness behavior changes in the child/children after the onset of abusive episodes?
   _____ no
   _____ yes. please explain

10) How old was the child/children when you left your abusive partner?
    _____ boy(s)  _____ girl(s)

11) Did the child/children influence your decision to leave?
    _____ no
    _____ yes. please explain

12) Did you witness abuse in your home as a child?
    _____ yes  _____ no

I’m going to ask some questions about you. Please be as honest as possible even though they may be uncomfortable.

13) Do you think a woman has specific responsibilities in a relationship (e.g., cooking, cleaning, childcare, etc.)?
    _____ no
    _____ yes. please explain
14) Do you think a woman has specific responsibilities as a mother (e.g., holding the family together, making sure there is both a mother and father figure in the home, etc.)?
   _____ no
   _____ yes, please explain
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

15) Did you inform others (i.e., friends or family) of the abusive relationship?
   _____ yes  _____ no

16) Did you believe that others (i.e., friends or family) would treat you in a negative manner if they knew of the abusive relationship?
   _____ yes  _____ no

17) Who or what first prompted you to seek help (e.g., family member, friend, police officer, information card, etc.)?
   Explain________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

18) What do you believe the characteristics of being a “battered woman” are?
   Explain________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

19) At the onset of abuse, did you view yourself as being a “battered woman?”
   _____ yes  _____ no

20) Did an outside influence inform you that you were a “battered woman?”
   _____ yes  _____ no

21) At what point in the relationship did you see yourself as a “battered woman?”
   Explain________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

22) Did the recognition of being a “battered woman” influence you to stay in the relationship?
   _____ yes  _____ no

23) Did the recognition of being a “battered woman” influence you to leave the relationship?
   _____ yes  _____ no

24) Do you consider yourself to be a “battered woman?”
   _____ yes  _____ no
25) What motivates you to stay in this type of relationship? 
Explain

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

26) What motivates you to leave this type of relationship? 
Explain

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

The following questions are for statistical purposes only.

27) In what month and year were you born? 
   _____ month     _____ year

28) What is your race? 
   ____ Asian   ____ Black   ____ Caucasian   ____ Hispanic 
   ____ Native American   ____ Multi-Race   ____ Other

29) What is your religious affiliation? 
   ____ Catholic   ____ Christian   ____ Jewish   ____ Mormon 
   ____ Other   ____ None

30) What was your total household income before taxes in 1998? 
   ____ $0 - $15,000   ____ $15,001 - $30,000 
   ____ $30,001 - $45,000   ____ $45,001 - $60,000 
   ____ above $60,000

31) What was your highest year of school completed? 
   ____ less than High School   ____ some High School   ____ High School 
   ____ some College   ____ College 
   ____ more than College

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### APPENDIX III

#### SUMMARY TABLE FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abuse</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emot/Psyc</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>n = 85</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>When Did You Leave</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He Left/Made Her Leave</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified Abuse/He Wouldn't Change</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost Sense Of Self</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant/Child Involved Episode</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe Physical Episode/Fear Of Imminent Death</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>n = 41</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics Of A Battered Woman</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Emot/Psyc</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emot/Psyc</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>View Self As Battered At Onset?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informed Battered By Outside Influence?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When Viewed Self As Battered?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not View Self As Battered During Relationship</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From The Beginning</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe Emot/Psyc Reasons</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Severe Physical Harm</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat Of Physical Harm</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Recognition Influence

**You To Stay?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Recognition Influence

**You To Leave?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Do You Consider Yourself A Battered Woman?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What Motivates You To Leave This Type Of Relationship?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help Available</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regain Control Of Self</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety/Fear</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 50</td>
</tr>
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</table>
APPENDIX IV

SUMMARY TABLE FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living With Partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children In Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witnessed Abuse On Own Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does A Woman Have Specific Responsibilities In A Relationship?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Emot. &amp; Phys.</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phys. Responsibilities</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emot. Responsibilities</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does A Woman Have Specific Responsibilities As A Mother?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurture</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Family Structure</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Physical Needs</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed Others Of The Abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believed Others Would Treat Negatively If Abuse Was Known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What Motivates You To Stay In This Type Of Relationship?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief In Male's Authority/Family Maintenance</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believed Behavior Would Change/Could Fix Him</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blamed Alcohol/Drugs</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blamed Self</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Resources/Financial/Isolation</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>n = 61</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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VITA

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Lora Ellen Kirk

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Honor Roll
Alpha Kappa Delta Sociological Honor Society
Chancellor’s Mentor Leadership Program
Gamma Beta Phi Honor Society
Golden Key National Honor Society
Psi Chi Honor Society in Psychology

Thesis Title: Battered Women: Exploring Motivating Factors To Leave Or Remain In Violent Relationships

Thesis Examination Committee:
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Committee Member, Dr. Kriss Drass, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. N.H.A. Karuarante, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Lynn Osborne, Ph. D.