

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ADJUSTMENT OF BATTERED WIVES:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

by

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B.A., Quinnipiac College, 1980

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A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree


MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Human Development and Family Studies

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1986

Approved by:

  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Unintentionally, this project became a task of perseverance, yet the hours spent were beneficial, for through it I have learned that pushing on toward the final goal could not be accomplished without the professional instruction and guidance of my committee members, as well as the encouragement of loving family and friends. Thank you Dr. Rick Scheidt and Dr. Susan Wanska for your excellent suggestions and for your willingness to remain committed to this project despite the lengthy time lapses. Special appreciation goes to Dr. Albert J. Davis, who, I feel, devoted time, effort, and expertise far beyond the reasonable expectations--you have turned this project into a presentable document with your professional input. Thank you.

Appreciation is extended to the helpful staff of the Crisis Center and to the women who provided the data, although I wish that, for their sakes, this study need never have been conducted.

A big thank you goes to my mother and father for monetary support, and for your concern and pressure to finish. It seems inadequate, but for now, this thesis and my love are the only things I can offer in appreciation. Thanks also to my other "parents", Jack and Marge Dunham for keeping me accountable to the task; thanks Linda Cooper for your help in typing and for



encouragement; thanks Sue, my "best" sister for encouragement long distance; thanks Vienna Dunham, my BP and forever friend for steering me in the right direction; but most of all, I thank God without whose assistance neither this work nor I would have been rendered.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

It has been said that we live in a climate of violence. It is more than the bad news bombardment from electronic and print media. It is more than far-off, impersonal Poland, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Iran, assassinations, drowning refugees, murders, rapes, and muggings. For many of us it is personal. Daily it becomes personal, frightening, real.

According to Freeman (1979), wife abuse or wife battering was not publicly acknowledged until the early 1970s in the popular media and professional literature. According to Straus et al. (1980) each year about 16 out of every 100 American couples experience at least one incident in which either the husband or the wife uses physical force on the other--that is about one out of every six couples.

Gelles (1975) interviewed 80 families in his study and found that in 55% (44 families) at least one incident of conjugal violence was discussed. Walker (1979) reported that abuse affects one quarter to one half of all women in the United States--or one out of two will be victims of wife abuse. According to data for 1973, 1974, and 1975 in the National Crime Survey (NCS), of 60,000 households which were considered representative of the total population of the United States, almost 15% of all assaults against women in the United States were perpetuated by their husbands or

ex-husbands. Although the data vary somewhat from study to study, it is evident that wife abuse has become a national stigma.

The problem itself has been traced historically by various researchers (Dobash & Dobash, 1977-78; Martin in Chapman & Gates, 1978) to early primitive societies. Engels (Chapman & Gates, 1979) traced the beginning of wife beating to the emergence of the first monogamous pairing relationships, which replaced group marriage and the extended family of early primitive societies. Furthermore, according to Dobash & Dobash (1977-78),

. . . wife beating is not, in the strictest sense of the word, a "deviant," "aberrant," or "pathological" act. Rather it is a form of behavior which has existed for centuries as an acceptable and desirable part of a patriarchal family system within a patriarchal society . . . (p. 427)

In fact it has only been approximately one hundred years since men were denied the legal right to beat their wives in Britain and the United States. Dobash and Dobash also argue that

. . . much of the ideology and many of the institutional arrangements which supported the patriarchy through the subordination, domination and control of women are still reflected in our culture and in our social institutions today. (p. 427)

This insinuation is supported, according to London (1977-78) in illustrations of women being bound, gagged, whipped, chained, sexually assaulted, gang-raped, and murdered on today's record album covers, billboards, and advertisements. Furthermore, ". . . pornographic material portraying rape, torture, murder, bondage, and sadomasochistic perversions for erotic stimulation and pleasure has literally flooded the market" (London, 1977-78, p. 510).

Recognition of the reality and magnitude of the problem of violence against women has stimulated research into various facets of this phenomenon. With regard to wife abuse in particular, researchers have attempted to:

- a) estimate its incidence and prevalence in American families (i.e. Strauss et al., 1980; Gelles, 1975); b) uncover the reasons why husbands beat their wives, and why women remain in abusive relationships (i.e., Walker, 1977-78; Rounsaville, 1978; Roy, 1982); and c) identify the personal characteristics of the abusers and the abused (i.e., Davidson, 1978; Fleming, 1979; Walker, 1984).

As can be noted from the citations above, the formal study of wife abuse in the professional literature has a relatively short history, dating back only one decade. Furthermore, much of this initial work on the etiology and dynamics of wife abuse consists of clinical case analyses and clinical interpretations. While these studies have



been productive in identifying personal characteristics and victim profiles of abused women, considerable disagreement exists regarding the precise components of a profile.

Some researchers say that no profile per se exists, that is, no specific personality traits of a victim-prone woman exist (Walker, 1981). In an anonymous letter to Human Behavior magazine (September, 1977), a woman wrote, "I agree that one may end up in a personality category as the end result of abuse, but we don't start out that way . . . ." Abused wives are frequently considered to be unassertive (Davidson, 1978), or overly aggressive (Schultz, 1960; Snell et al., 1964). Whitehurst (1974) described a clash of ideologies between traditional, conservative patriarchal husbands and nontraditional, liberal wives as being the root of marital violence. Depression, helplessness, low self-esteem, and anxiety were the overall characteristics of battered women in several studies (e.g., Rounsaville, 1978; Walker, 1977-78; Frieze, 1979; Silverman, 1981; Bell, 1977; Star, 1978, Pizzey, 1974; Dutton & Painter, 1981).

But as Parker and Schumacher (1977) point out, "Because there are no controlled studies of these women, little is known about the variables that distinguish them from the general population and what might be done to reduce further abuse" (p. 760). And more recently, Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981) charged that "Few research

studies have employed standardized measures, adequate comparison groups and appropriate statistical analyses" (p. 64). In fact, a search of the literature uncovered only the research of the latter authors and that of Arndt (1980), Rounsaville (1978), Star (1978), Hartik (1982), and most recently Walker (1984), as exceptions to the general research in this area.

Star, Rosenbaum and O'leary, and Hartik all tend to agree in their between-group differences of battered and non-battered women. In general, the battered women showed lower self-esteem, displayed greater anxiety, were more affected by feelings, tended to be more reserved than outgoing, more rigid than adaptable, more distrustful, more imaginative, unconventional and given to the fanciful (and sometimes impractical).

All five research studies revealed abused women to be depressed women with low self-esteem, unassertive and generally unsatisfied with themselves and life. Rounsaville's (1978) sample of abused women, although depressed, were rather skillful in handling social and family situations. Arndt (1980) also found results which conflict with the aforementioned research. She found that out of seven factors tested, battered women scored higher on the factors depicting them as assertive, self-assured, independent-minded, cheerful, active, frank, expressive and carefree. She also found that these women had higher ego

strength, were more dominant, happy-go-lucky, bold, and self-sufficient than the norm, which Arndt claims was not predicted, and which goes against many other clinical interpretations. Thus, even in the stronger empirical studies, there are conflicting portraits of the abused woman.

The present study provides an assessment of the personal characteristics of women recently abused by their husbands who fled to the Crisis Center for protection. It is hoped that this additional data on the personality of battered women, derived from standardized instruments, will contribute to the resolution of the existing conflict, as well as provide some insight into possible prevention and intervention of the problem of abuse. Furthermore, because the Regional Crisis Center is located in a city which borders a large military Army Post, a new and different "at risk" population will be introduced in this study, that of wives of men in the military.

Several well established and psychometrically sound instruments designed to assess self-esteem (Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, 1965); level of anxiety (Spielberger's State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, 1970); feeling of control in one's life (Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale, 1966); the relative degree of masculine versus feminine characteristics (Spence & Helmreich's Personal Attributes Questionnaire, 1972); and level of personal

adjustment scale of the Adjective Check List, 1952), were administered to a group of 30 recently abused women soon after their arrival at the Crisis Center. Since most of the women were wives of enlisted military men, a comparable group of non-abused military wives was employed as a control group.

It was expected, given the previous findings of clinical case analyses and the majority of controlled, empirical studies that the abused women would manifest lower levels of personal adjustment and self-esteem, and higher levels of anxiety than the non-abused women. Furthermore, in terms of control, it is expected that abused women would perceive themselves as victims of circumstances out of their control; and finally, because previous studies have found these women to be submissive and passive, the present sample was expected to exhibit more traditionally feminine (i.e., expressive) traits than the non-abused control group.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Sifting through the numerous files filled with brutal accounts of men battering their wives or girlfriends at the Manhattan Regional Crisis Center brought an immediate, extant reality to all the "stories" and research studies found on the topic. In 1981 the center had handled over 520 cases of battered women. File after file contained portrayals similar to the following:

The County Sheriff was with the woman at the Irwin Army Hospital where the Crisis Center Volunteers had met her after she had fled from her home. Her statement to the Sheriff and PCR (Police Community Relations) officer was recorded by one of the Crisis Volunteers:

"A fight had ensued this morning when her husband had gotten her out of bed and demanded that she make breakfast for him at 6:15. She did not want to do this and so he began to hit her. She got a knife to defend herself, but was overpowered by him. He beat her on the head and legs with a shoe and she has bruises to verify this. She was taken by ambulance to the hospital."

This account, compared to many others I have read in the literature, doesn't seem as intense, given the type of

battering and weapons used; but nonetheless, it is battering.

### Definition of Wife Abuse

Several definitions of wife abuse have been offered in the research literature. Rounsaville and Weissman (1977-78) define a battered woman as "any married or unmarried woman over the age of sixteen who had evidence of physical abuse on at least one occasion at the hands of an intimate male partner" (p. 193). Parker and Schumacher's (1977) definition of wife abuse is "a symptom complex of violence in which a woman has, at any time, received deliberate, severe, and repeated (more than three times) demonstrable injury from her husband, with the minimal injury of severe bruising" (p. 760). Walker's (1979) lengthy definition is as follows:

A battered woman is a woman who is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical or psychological behavior by a man in order to coerce her to do something he wants her to without any concern for her rights. Battered women include wives or women in any form of intimate relations with men. In order to be classified as a battered woman, the couple must go through the battering cycle at least twice. (This cycle appears to have three distinct phases which vary in time and intensity . . .; the tension building phase; the explosion of acute battering incidents; and

the calm, loving respite, Walker, 1977-78). Any woman may find herself in an abusive relationship with a man once. If it occurs a second time, and she remains in the situation, she is defined as a battered woman.(p. xv)

Scott (1974) offers a fairly concise definition:

A battered wife is a woman who has suffered serious or repeated physical injury from the man with whom she lives. "Serious" may be graded as: (1) not requiring medical attention; (2) out-patient or general practitioners attention; (3) hospital admission; (4) death. 'Repeated' may be categorized as: (1) regular (habitual); (2) episodic (situational); (3) increasing (vicious circle); (4) terminal. (p. 434)

While these definitions vary to some extent in terms of the type and frequency criterion for abuse, it is clear that violence against women in marriage is a brutal and not infrequent reality. However, prior to 1971, abused wives were among the missing persons in the family research literature. Gelles and Straus (1978), two renowned researchers in this area of concern, found no articles with titles containing the word violence in the Journal of Marriage and the Family before the special issue on violence in November, 1971. It is not because the problem did not exist that no mention was made of it prior to 1971, but rather because,

Some human activities are so common they remain part of our subliminal awareness until social forces thrust forward for public scrutiny . . . Alcoholism, child abuse, and rape fall into that category. So does wife beating. (Star (1978, p. 32).

#### Historical Foundation

Historical documentation establishes that wife abuse has plagued women since history began to be recorded, and probably before that. In terms of the latter, it is quite common to think of a caveman dragging his woman by the hair behind him when we think of our early ancestors, or a burly Neanderthal man dominating his woman. According to Green (1980):

Although there is little or no statistical documentation of it, most authorities agree that violence in the family was probably more prevalent and crueler in the past than it is today . . . but then, being licit, it did not count as "violence," and rarely became a cause of public concern or social intervention. (p. 3)

The phrase "being licit" and the impact behind its connotation is the crutch upon which men, throughout history, have fueled their "right" to dominate women. There are some who trace the subordination of women most basically to the creation story, according to Thistlethwaite (1981). It appears in Genesis (2:21-23 that



woman was created second, and some would have it, as a mere by-product of the original creation of man. Both Thistlethwaite (1981) and Morgan (1982) argue that it is the story of the fall of man from God's grace that woman's subjection to man is most clearly enunciated as the will of God, and as the result of woman's own act. i.e., her giving way to the serpent's temptation and her enticing of Adam to share her sin. Both Adam and Eve are punished for eating the forbidden fruit, but God punishes the woman more severely, saying: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and the conception: in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children: and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:16). Thistlethwaite (1981) cites another Biblical verse in Ephesians 5:22-24 which was used as the undergirding of a patriarchal ideology:

Wives be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.

Levi-Strauss (1969) states that an important reason for power difference between men and women lies in the origin and history of marriage as an institution. He claims that the formal institution of marriage arose from the reciprocal exchange of women among tribal groups, i.e.,

ubiquitous patriarchy. The universally observed incest taboo served to promote exogamy, or marriage outside one's own kinship system. The functional value of exogamy was the formation of alliance between groups through the elaboration of kinship systems. These alliances were based on the reciprocal exchange of property, which included women. Thus, the giving away of sisters and daughters became an insurance against extinction. This notion of women being merely a man's property is found more clearly later in history as Helfer and Kempe (1976) recount how Nero had his mother, Agrippina, murdered, and how he also killed his first wife, Octavia, in order to marry Poppaea. He later killed Poppaea by kicking her in the stomach while she was pregnant. It is an established fact that King Henry VIII of England was rather ungentlemanly to most of his wives, having two of them beheaded. One of the earliest reported cases of wife abuse concerns Margaret Neffeld of York, England, who in 1395 produced witnesses before an ecclesiastical court to show that her husband had once attacked her with a knife, forcing her to flee into the street "wailing in tears," according to Freeman (1979, p. 128). Little came of the case because English Common Law, which was the foundation for the American legal system, gave husbands the right to physically punish their wives. In fact, today's somewhat obscure "rule of thumb" was originated by the English Common Law as giving husbands

the right to beat their wives with a stick no bigger than his thumb (Levi-Strauss, 1969).

Contrary to Massachusetts law during the colonial period which required cohabitation to be peaceful, all spouses were not loving. One man in Plymouth Colony was punished for abusing his wife by . . . "kiking her off from a stoole into the fier, and another for drawing his wife in an unciveil manor on the snow. (Steinmetz, 1978, p. 1)

As evidenced by this account, this kind of behavior did not go unnoticed, but according to Dobash and Dobash (1977-78), it was not until the eighteenth century that the husband's power of correction began to be doubted, and a woman could gain security from her husband.

Yet it was not until the nineteenth century that the struggle for reform began in Britain and America and laws against wife beating were actually passed. According to Sullivan and Fascia (1981),

It was recognition of the need for fundamental changes in society and the understanding that women didn't have the legitimate power to change society which created the women's movement. The first wave of the movement began in the 1800s and fought for women's suffrage, against battering, and for greater economic equality. The second wave began in the 1960s and has focused on the ERA (first drafted in 1924),

reproductive rights, violence against women, economic inequality, lesbianism and other issues. (p. 17)

The actual movement of women against abuse and the establishment of crisis shelters was begun by 500 women in England in 1971, and was called the Cheswick Women's Aide. Dobash and Dobash (1979) recount how some of the women belonged to local women's liberation organizations and decided to put their feelings to work on various problems. This particular campaign in 1971, protested and proposed reduction of free milk to school children and rising food prices in local stores. Their efforts were not successful that time, but the solidarity created among the women by the march resulted in a movement which was to grow to international proportions within the next few years.

Despite the heroic efforts of some very industrious women, wife abuse still exists today, and on a large scale. "Wife beating is a serious and widespread problem which has been consciously ignored by society. Fields (1977-78) says that "because it occurs at night, in the family home with no witnesses present, wife beating is a hidden crime" (p. 643). Now that this crime has come more into public awareness, demographic information is being collected at shelters, in clinical programs, and by university researchers.

#### Incidence

In his review of the 1976 National Crime survey, Gaquin (1977-78) reports that spouse abuse is more likely

than other assaults to involve an actual attack rather than a threat. Furthermore, spouse abuse victims are more likely to be injured, to require medical attention and hospitalization, and to lose time from work. According to Straus et al. (1980) each year about 16 out of every 100 American couples experience at least one incident in which either the husband or the wife uses physical force on the other. Most of these violent acts are minor assaults, such as slapping, pushing, shoving and throwing things. However, over six (6.1) out of every 100 husbands and wives were involved in a more serious act of violence such as kicking, punching, etc. Applying this rate to the 47 million couples in the United States, Straus et al., suggest that serious violence occurs in almost three million American homes per year. They, therefore, speculate that the typical American husband or wife stands a much greater chance of being assaulted in his or her own home than in walking the streets of even the most crime-ridden city.

Gelles (1975) interviewed the members of 80 families, and found that in over half (55%) of these families at least one incident of conjugal violence was discussed. In ten of these 44 families, respondents discussed incidents of violence occurring while the wife was pregnant.

In a lecture based on data from an expansive survey reported in her 1979 book, Walker (1981) reported that

abuse affects one quarter to one half of all women in the United States. In their sample of 2,143 American couples, (reported in Straus, 1977-78 and Straus et al., 1980) a median of 2.4% of the couples reported a typical pattern of over two serious assaults per year; 33% reported that it occurred only once per year; 19% reported two beatings during the year; 16% who reported three to four beatings; and 33% reported five or more beatings during the year. According to the Ohio Report on Domestic Violence in 1981 (Columbus: Office of the Attorney General, 1982), law enforcement agencies received a total of 15,128 reports of violence. Among these, the wife was the reported victim in 10,449 cases.

In a study of spousal violence in Kentucky of 1,793 women, Schulman (1979) makes clear that spousal violence and abuse, contrary to myth, are not confined to those "down and out," but are found at every societal level. The survey did reveal that the highest levels of spousal violence are found among non-whites, urban families, and younger families. The survey also revealed that education levels bear little relationship to spousal violence. In fact, family violence was found to be higher in families where the husband had at least some high school than in those in which the husband dropped out of school with an 8th grade education or less. Walker (1981) found that 25% of her sample were professional women, disclaiming the

assumption that only lower SES women suffer abuse. However, Gaquin (1977-78) reports that spouse abuse is more likely to occur in households with less than a \$3,000 income.

In view of these figures, and the phenomenon of wife abuse in general, social behavioral theorists have begun the process of attempting to explain wife abuse in marriage, as well as the reasons why so many remain in this abusive relationship.

### The Theories

As with most other socially, as well as empirically investigated matters, wife abuse has come to be scrutinized by its share of amateur as well as professional investigators. In terms of the latter, Becker and Abel (1978) argued that victimization of women is tied to aggression, be it physical or verbal. Various theoretical approaches to understanding human aggression include ethological, ecological, physiological, and psychological causes (Morgan, 1982). In terms of wife abuse, social scientists have placed emphasis on psychological and sociological factors as contributors.

### Psychological Theories

In his study of battered wives, Gayford discovered that both the batterer and victim had a violent childhood. Owens and Straus (1975) in a secondary analysis of a survey conducted for the Commission on the Causes and Prevention

of Violence, reported a strong association between exposure to violence, either as an observer or a victim, during childhood and violent behavior as an adult. These patterns were found to continue over several generations in studies of child abuse--a cycle in which the battering parents had experienced abuse from their own parents (Bryant, 1963; Craft, 1969; Oliver & Taylor, 1971; Silver, Dublin, & Lourie, 1969). These observations constitute the social learning theory of modeling and imitative aggression as they pertain to violence in the family. An alternative position may be found in clinical and psychoanalytical interpretation of aggression. In this regard, Freudian theory would predict violence in marriage of persons of incomplete psychosexual development and consequent marginal or unsatisfactory psychological adjustment. Experimental psychology, on the other hand, contributes yet another psychological interpretation of aggression. Based on a theoretical connection between frustration and aggression, Dollard et al (1939) stated that frustration develops as important life goals are blocked by someone or something. The frustrated person will either attack directly what is blocking him, or attack a less threatening target (e.g., a wife), thus displacing his aggression (Morgan, 1982). Other theorists have postulated that it is the frustration of early dependency needs of the infant that predisposes humans to act aggressively (Harlow, 1979; Maslow, 1962).



Roy (1982) has an interesting summary of this hypothesis:

It has been said that it is not power that corrupts, but lack of it that does. For a deep sense of powerlessness creates a need for assertion that in most cases becomes destructive aggression that can ultimately lead to violence. Violence is the end product of pent-up frustration, denial of perceived legitimate rights over a period of time, and the constant erosion of self-esteem. It is an eruption similar to the explosive outpouring of volcanic lava following a period of dormancy. It builds, reaches a peak, and then falls, rising, then falling, ticking then exploding like a kind of human time bomb. Violence is, then, an expression of accumulated aggression that failed to be defused. It is related to power because it is a consequence of the absence of power--conceived and born of impotence. (p. 3)

### Sociological Theories

Power in the family seems to play a large role in the theoretical concepts of sociological theories of violence. O'Brian (1971), contends that the family is a social system in which dominance patterns are based on the social categories of age and sex. "At least according to the culture shared by most persons in the United States, the adult (parent) group is ipso facto superior to the young (children) group and the male (husband) is superior to the

female (wife)" (p. 694). O'Brian also stated that violence is most often seen to be constituted of actions through which the incumbants of different status positions are maneuvering for control of some decision outcome. In the process of that struggle, if the members of the subordinate status position, i.e., wives, fail to concede the decision, then the superior group, i.e., husbands, will typically exert coercive power in order to influence the outcome of the decision.

A number of other sociological theories which attempt to explain violent physical aggression in a social-structural context have emerged. An influential statement of the sociology of violence, according to Stahly (1977-78) is that of Wolfgang's (1958; Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967) subculture of violence. According to this thesis,

A violent act is not deviant but is a response to subcultural values, attitudes and rituals which define violent behavior as normative. The subculture of violence hypothesis supports the general middle-class impression that violence is connected with lower income and ethnic minorities. (Stahly, 1977-78, p. 592)

Stark and McEvoy (1970) report that in a representative sample of 1,176 American adults, one-fifth approve of slapping one's spouse on appropriate occasions. Approval of this practice increases with income and education.

Martin (1976) describes how sociologist Howard Erlanger of the University of Wisconsin found identical impressions as Stark and McEvoy. He found that 25% of his sample of American adults actually approved of husband-wife battles. More surprising, to him, was the finding that the greater the educational level, the greater the acceptance of marital violence. Approval ranged from 17% of grade-school graduates, to 32% of college post-graduate students. Borofsky et al. (1971), in a field study, found in various staged assaults on a street corner, that male witnesses came to the aid of men being assaulted by other men, helped women being assaulted by other women, and even interceded for men being attacked by women. However, not one male bystander intervened to help when a woman was assaulted by a man.

Straus's (1973) theory summarizes the theory of the socialization of violence as a normative process of society. Stereotyped imagery of family violence is learned in childhood. The use of physical punishment by parents to discipline children is an especially powerful role model of the usefulness and moral correctness of instrumental violence. Finally, Straus proposed that persons labeled as violent may be encouraged to play out that role through the development of a self concept of "tough" or "bad tempered." This proposition, according to Straus, is particularly related to the feedback system. A wife once hit, may

flinch and act frightened the next time the husband becomes angry. Her response then may serve as a cue for him to become violent again. Such a process could lead to what Straus calls the "upward spiral" of violence. Straus extended his analysis to include a flow chart hypothesizing feedback processes that may result in either an "upward spiral" or "dampening" effect on the occurrence of violence in the family.

Rounsaville (1978), on the other hand, disagrees with Straus (1975) and Gelles (1974) in their emphasis on cultural factors stating that a marriage license is also a "hitting license," with violence as a covert part of the contract. He noted that while they cite evidence of social acceptance of interpersonal violence, they don't claim it to be deviant. Rounsaville proposed the following features as very important in the genesis and perpetuation of wife abuse:

(1) Psychological sphere--(a) pathological conflicts over dependency and autonomy are important, manifested in the men by paranoid (morbid) jealousy controlling behavior and in the women by alternating dependent and counter-dependent, passive-aggressive behavior; (b) deficient impulse control in the men exacerbated by (c) alcohol or drug abuse; (d) a significant syndrome of depressive, "learned helplessness" seen as a critical paralyzing factor in many women.

(2) Sociological sphere--(a) pressured entry into the marriage; (b) distorted views of marital roles learned in childhood; (c) the continued presence of severe social stress; (d) status inconsistency.

(3) Society at large--when it fails to recognize the problem as serious and to provide adequate aid to victims.

As a general review of these theories, and relating them specifically to battered women, Walker had some interesting observations in a lecture in 1981. In her opinion, sexism is an underlying cause of all violence against women. Little girls and little boys learn sex role expectations from early socialization. Men fight to avoid any sissy image and women show passive faces while struggling to face the world and not let their men know how strong they really are for fear of destroying the masculine image. Conditioning makes little girls believe they have no voluntary control over their lives which is then accompanied by other psychological difficulties.

#### The Theorizing Continues--Why Women Stay

Thus far, theories of aggression and violence have been reviewed, with inferences to the domain of the violent American family. As Martin (1976) puts it, the door behind which the battered wife is trapped is the door to the family home.

The white-pickett-fence stereotype of the American family home still persists from the days of Andy

Hardy. The privacy of the home supposedly protects a comfortable space within which intimate and affectionate relationships among spouses, parents, and siblings become richer and protectiveness are demonstrated by the parents and learned by the children . . . In one sense, the family home is supposed to provide refuge from the stormy turbulence of the outside world. In another, it is a family factory, designed to perpetuate its own values and to produce two or three replicas of itself as the children in the family marry. (Martin, p. 17)

The family home is "supposed" to provide refuge from the stormy turbulence of the outside world, but unfortunately, often it does not.

In addition to attempting to "unravel the mystery" of family violence and to identify the characteristics of abusers, attention has also been given to the plight of the victim, and in particular, women who allow themselves to be trapped in such violent relationships. Thus the question, why do they stay?

In the classic Freudian view, the battered woman is said to unconsciously engage in self-destructive behavior because of a failure to resolve her Oedipal complex and is thus referred to as a neurotic female masochist (Gillman, 1980). The traditional Freudian view of female masochism, according to Gillman, has provided an establishment

psychiatric rationale for the treatment of battered women by law enforcement agencies and the court system. This treatment is predicated on the assumption that the battered woman instigates the man to violence and is solely responsible for her own victimization, and that the man is therefore relieved of any responsibility.

In another view, Pfouts (1978) suggested that a wife may endure abuse not because she enjoys it, but because the culture has taught her that she is somehow to blame for her predicament, and because society makes it difficult for her to do anything. In fact, Fleming (1979) states that the abused women finds herself assaulted twice, once by her assailant and again by an impersonal legal system to which she turns for help. In a lecture on the latter subject, Walker (1981) claimed that battered women had related stories to her of being treated as though they had engaged in "crazy" behavior.

Many had been institutionalized involuntarily. In some cases, they were given so many shock treatments that their memories were impaired permanently. These women were diagnosed as paranoid, evidenced by their suspiciousness and lack of trust of people. They feared they might say the wrong thing to their batterers . . . many battered women's coping techniques, learned to protect themselves from further

harm, have been viewed as evidence of severe intrapsychic personality disorders.

It is now believed by many that battered women do not choose to be battered because of some personality deficit but develop behavioral disturbances because of the battering and as a result of having internalized the belief that, in Fleming's (1979) words, they are considered "RESPONSIBLE for HIS anger, HIS loss of control, HIS drunken behavior, and HIS need to physically assault someone else" (p. 72). This kind of thought pattern provoked Walker (1977-78) to utilize Seligman's (1975) "learned helplessness" theory in conjunction with battered women. According to Seligman (1975):

When an organism has experienced trauma it cannot control, its motivation to respond in the face of later trauma wanes. Moreover, even if it does respond and the response succeeds in producing relief, it has trouble learning, perceiving, and believing that the response worked. Finally, its emotional balance is disturbed; depression and anxiety, measured in various ways, predominate. (p. 22)

Furthermore:

When a traumatic event first occurs, it causes a heightened state of emotinality that can loosely be called fear. This state continues until one of two things happens: if the subject learns that he can



control the trauma, fear is reduced and may disappear altogether; or if the subject finally learns he cannot control the trauma, fear will decrease and be replaced with depression.(p. 53)

Walker (1977-78) elaborated by saying that the theory has three basic components: information about what should happen (or the contingency); cognitive representation about the contingency (learning, expectation, belief, perception); and behavior. "The faulty expectation that how someone will respond will have no effect on what happens," occurs in the cognitive representation component. If the person has control over response-outcome variables, but believes such control is not possible, then the person responds accordingly (i.e., learned helplessness). If such a person believes s/he does have control over a response-outcome contingency, even if the reality is that the person does not have control, that person's behavior is not affected. So, the actual reality of controllability is not as important as the belief, expectation, or cognitive set regarding control. This concept is important for understanding why battered women do not attempt to gain their freedom from a battering relationship. They do not believe they can escape from the batterer's domination.

In conclusion, women and their reactions to external forces such as battering partners have been scrutinized in an array of theories. It is generally believed that women

in these kinds of relationships are socialized and even manipulated into the role of the helpless victim, through early socialization, cultural pressures, and/or the coercive power of domineering husband.

Speculations such as the above have the tendency to lead one to question whether abused women fall into a certain profile. Do women who endure prolonged abuse manifest similar characteristics which can be identified?

#### Demographic Profile

According to the National Crime Survey (NCS) sample of 1976 (60,000), among women under 20, marriage increases the risk of assault. Women between 20-24 have the same risk of assault whether they have married or not, but husbands or ex-husbands were the offenders in one third of the assaults against ever-married women in this age group (Gaquin, 1977-78). As for the social economic status, some researchers such as Walker (1979) and Schulman (1979) contend that abused women do not fall into demographic categories, and that battered women can be found in all walks of life. Walker reported that 25% of her sample of 403 women were professional women, not just lower SES women. In a study of spousal violence in Kentucky of 1,793 women, Schulman found that among lower income women, 11% reported some incident of spousal violence within the past 12 months, compared to 10% of women with family incomes

between \$15,000 and \$24,000, and 8% of women with family incomes of \$25,000 or above. Gaquin (1977-78) agreed with this finding indicating that spouse abuse was more likely to occur in households with less than \$3,000 income. Households with incomes between \$3,000-\$7,499, though less prone to spouse abuse than the lower income households, had a higher incidence of spouse abuse than all households earning \$7,500 or more.

Educational level, like income, age, and race, bears little relationship to spousal violence. In fact, family violence is higher in families where the husband has had at least some high school than it is in those in which the husband dropped out of school with an eighth grade education or less, according to Schulman (1979). Even more surprising, says Schulman, is that families in which the husband has had eighth grade education or less, appear slightly less prone to spousal violence than those in which the male spouse had at least some college education. Star (1978) found that battered women tended to be less educated, which may limit the field of eligible men who are available for marriage and their knowledge and sophistication of marital behavior. In their study of 52 women, Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981) found no significant differences between abused and nonabused women in terms of husband's age, years married, or religion; however, there were significantly more religious intermarriages among

abusive couples than in any of the comparison groups (satisfactorily married, non-violent, discordant couples). Rounsaville (1978) claimed that low social economic status may produce frustration, which in turn may increase violence. In his sample of 31 self-selected subjects who had chosen to receive psychiatric counseling for their abuse, the average number of stressful events was 3.8 per year, with 26% experiencing two events or fewer; 19% experiencing three and 55% experiencing four or more events in the past six months. Numerous features widely recognized to be associated with marital disharmony also contributed to strain in Rounsaville's sample. For example, the majority (58%) of women were under age 20 when first moving in with the partner, and 49% moved in after less than a year of courtship. Thirty-two percent were pregnant before marriage and 28% of both men and women had had a previous marriage.

One segment of society that fits this profile, and therefore is "at risk" for wife abuse is the military wife, a prime target of this study.

#### Abuse and the Military

According to West (1981), since the end of World War I, the number of servicemen who are married has been growing steadily and at present, approximately 55% of active duty personnel are married, while 80% of the officer corps are married. There are approximately 2,000,000

active duty personnel in the Armed Forces with more than 1,100,000 spouses and 1,600,000 children. These figures show that the majority of the military community is composed of women and children.

According to West (1981) military families are particularly vulnerable to spousal violence due to a combination of risk factors. These families experience considerable stress due to frequent relocations, long separations and erratic working hours; the average age of most military families (age 30 and younger), the large number of children in military families (80-90% have two or more children), the educational level of most members (high school), marginal family supports due to the geographic distance, and financial pressures.

No reliable statistics regarding the frequency of spousal abuse within the overall military population exist, but there is an increasing awareness of the highly structured and demanding lifestyle experienced by servicemen and their families. Curran (1983) feels that in military families:

The family is still considered the wife's sole responsibility. If the family has problems, she often feels as if she has failed her husband rather than being able to mutually share the responsibility with him. The feeling of failure can be devastating to a

marriage where blame becomes a constant and self-esteem suffers. (p. 20)

This is due, in part, to the few outlets a woman has in terms of social life. Military wives are still not expected to share the feelings of emergence that their civilian sisters do, according to Curran (1983), and they are made to feel nonsupportive if they want fulfillment outside of husband and family. Curran quoted from a 1978 article "Family Policy in the Armed Forces: An Assessment" which had as one of its findings "The traditional, supportive but subordinate role of the military wife, which has been strictly and comprehensively defined by the system, must be maintained" (p. 20). Until recently, according to West (1981),

The portrayal of the military wife was truly as the "dependent" of her husband. She was expected to find complete fulfillment in her life as a wife and mother, and was pressured to do nothing that might negatively affect his career . . .

The term "dependent" has some obvious negative connotations, but there continue to be many underlying expectations made of the military wife in addition to the routine relocations, pressure of separations, and fear of her husband being sent into a war zone (which may mean capture by the enemy, being placed into missing in action status, or even death). The other expectations include the

prohibition of any negative actions which might be detrimental to the husband's career, as mentioned above. This often inhibits a military wife from reporting abuse and her use of available military or civilian services if she fears this will be reported to the military (which is often the case).

A factor which may result in abuse, according to West (1981) is the status differentiation between spouses. The risk for abuse often increases as the husband is promoted, leading to the wife feeling like a "second class" citizen. Often the male who is gaining a more responsible career position begins to feel as though his wife is no longer in his class of lifestyle and may feel she is a social embarrassment to him.

The low status of military wives has been recognized as a problem which is slowly gaining attention. At the 1980 Army Family Symposium (Association of the United States Army and the Army Officers' Wives Club of the Greater Washington, D.C. Area), the concept of the "role and identity of Army wives was challenged. During the symposium, Army wives agreed that:

The roles and expectations of the Army wife have changed and are not clearly defined, leaving confusion and frustration on the part of both the organization (Army) and the Army wife . . . . There is a perception by many that they are powerless to make

decisions regarding significant life events that impact directly on them when their spouse is in the Army . . . . Their rights and responsibilities within the organization are usually an extension of their spouses' rank and privileges, and their potential for significant contributions to the success of the service member and the organization is often overlooked. The result is feelings of "second class citizenship," depersonalization and alienation.(p. 10)

This brief discussion of potential contributors to spouse abuse within the military couple may appear stereotypical of the average American service member. It should be noted that not every military family is subjected to these stressors; however, at some point in their marriage it is quite possible they will experience one or more of the factors previously mentioned. Wife abuse may be one of the repercussions if acceptable coping mechanisms for the encountered difficulties of the military lifestyle are not developed.

#### Personal Characteristics (Profile) of Abused Women

Many researchers offer personality sketches of battered women, but base their findings on personal or clinical observations or speculations. For instance, Silverman (1981) stated that it does not take long for the battered woman to become totally "demoralized."



As her self-doubt grows, her self-esteem is shattered and she can no longer function as well as she once had even in routine matters. She unconsciously adopts the contemptuous view of herself that her mate seems to hold. (Silverman, 1981, p. 87)

Ball and Wyman (1977-78) suggest that the battered wife has learned to be docile, submissive, humble, ingratiating, non-assertive, dependent, quiet, conforming, and selfless. Her identity is founded on being pleasing to others, being nurturant to others, but not to herself. Her dilemma has its origin in the passivity and dependence which define the traditional feminine role. Bell (1977) reports that the woman who arrives at a shelter is typically undermined in her self-esteem and self-confidence. She is in a state of fear and self-doubt, mistrusting her own decisions. Among others who agree with these conceptions of battered women are Dutton and Painter (1981), Pizzey (1974), Morgan (1982), Pagelow (1981), Finkelhor and Yllo (1982), and Frieze (1979).

In an attempt to group battered women into homogeneous subgroups, Snyder and Fruchtmann (1981) administered an extensive 119-item questionnaire to "identify differential patterns of wife abuse, each having a unique etiological profile with attendant implications for intervention." The questionnaire contained six parts including: (a) intake data; (b) basic sociodynamographic information;

(c) detailed history of domestic violence, both within the current relationship and within the family of origin; (d) current medical status, including psychological distress; (e) discharge summary; and (f) follow-up data. Cluster analyses of the responses resulted in the following five clusters of group composites into which battered women tended to fall:

Type 1 (N=33) - Relative stability of relationship; infrequent abuse, rarely rationalize abuse by attributing it to alcohol or external pressures. More likely than other groups to initiate violence.

Type 2 (N=39) - In sharp contrast to Type 1, these women are highly unstable, explosive in their relationships. Recurrent separations are common. Abuse is among the most severe. Abuse frequently involves a sexual component.

Type 3 (N=23) - Among all five groups Type 3 women are victims of the most chronic and most severe forms of physical violence. They live in fear, under constant threat of further assault, they are least likely to retaliate with violence. Children are frequently involved in abuse. They are least likely to report a history of parental abuse, etc.

Type 4 (N=13) Distinguished by two features: an inordinately high rate of child abuse by the assailant, minimal violence toward the women themselves. Abuse is

lowest of all groups in frequency, is least severe, least likely to involve sexual assault.

Type 5 (N=11) - Distinguished by an extensive history of violence in their family of origin. 100% report extensive parental neglect and actual physical abuse as a child on at least a monthly basis. Physical violence pervades their interpersonal relationships: 27% reported frequent abuse by their assailant prior to marriage and nearly half reported additional abuse by others. They've grown to accept violence and expect it as part of their lives.

Several other studies have also used the questionnaire/interview method in order to describe abused women (i.e., Walker, 1979; Labell, 1979; Coleman et al., 1980; Pagelow, 1981). On the other hand, researchers such as Rounsaville (1979), Star (1978), Hartik (1982), Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981), Arndt (1980), and Walker (1984) have attempted to construct psychological profiles of abused women using standardized psychological assessment instruments as their primary measures.

Star (1978) administered the Inventory of Feelings (a pseudonym for the Buss-Durkee Hostility-Guilt Inventory, 1957) and Cattell's Sixteen Personality Factors test (PF) to 48 battered and 12 nonbattered women. The 16 PF scores for the battered women revealed a profile of people who were reserved, easily upset, timid, apprehensive, and

dependent upon their own resourcefulness. Both groups scored low on ego strength but nonbattered women scored significantly lower. Battered women were also found to be more reserved, rigid, distrustful, and tender-minded (as opposed to toughminded) than non-battered women. According to Star, toughminded people are usually better able to endure stress, while tender-minded people are more dependent, sensitive, and over-protective. Both groups scored high on insecurity and on the factor indicating tension, frustration, and anxiety. The battered women showed no signs of being submissive people; instead, they scored in the normal range of the submissive-assertive continuum. They were, however, women who repressed anger, were timid, emotionally reserved, and had low coping abilities. Thus, they were essentially passive people, believing that any action will make a bad situation worse.

Hartik (1982) found similar characteristics with her sample of 30 women using the 16 PF scale, and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. The women were characterized as being more apprehensive, undisciplined, and tense than their nonbattered counterparts. Overall, the abused women were found to reflect higher scores in psychosis, personality disorder, and neurosis factors.

In their study of ten abused and ten control subjects, using the MMPI, Gellen et al. (1984) also found that abused women scored significantly higher on hypochondriasis,

hysteria, depression, psychopathic deviancy, paranoia, psychasthenia (an obsessive-compulsive syndrome), schizophrenia, and social introversion.

Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981) used a new approach in administering their four standardized measures. They reasoned that:

. . . since marriages characterized by physical violence are predicted to be discordant, a comparison group of satisfactorily married couples would be insufficient because it would not control for the potentially confounding effects of discord. To assess whether any differences found between abusive couples and satisfactorily married couples were a function of wife abuse rather than marital discord, a comparison group of couples experiencing nonviolent marital discord was solicited in addition to a normative comparison group of satisfactorily married couples.  
(p. 64)

The latter group of maritally discordant couples was deemed to be critical, since Rosenbaum and O'Leary feel that discord per se presumably leads to withdrawal, rigidity, and greater alcohol use in the man. Rosenbaum and O'Leary used the short Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test as one of their measures because of the fact that alcohol use has been assessed on numerous occasions as an immediate precipitant or concomitant of spouse abuse.

Alcohol use has been reported to be associated with an attack in approximately 65% of abuse cases (Fojtik, 1977-78), but the percentages range from 5% (Bard & Zacker, 1974) to 95% (Roy, 1977). Alcoholism affects the man's behavior, but it is something the woman must develop a coping attitude toward, or else suffer the consequences. Other measures employed by Rosenbaum and O'Leary in their study to attain a character sketch of both the men and women involved, were the Short Marital Adjustment Test, the short version of the Spence-Helmreich Attitudes Towards Women Scale, and two unidentified measures of assertion. From the Spence-Helmreich scale, it was concluded that satisfactorily married women were most conservative in their attitudes. The assertion measures revealed that abused wives were significantly less assertive with their husbands than any of the other groups were. The Marital Adjustment Test revealed that abusive couples are well below the normative score indicating marital adjustment. Although this study did not reveal a very concise profile of the battered woman (it focused more on the husband), it did reveal different subgroups within the population of abused women i.e., that group of women which was seeking counseling for their marital discord individually, and those in counseling with their husband. The authors also felt that if the former group is different from the latter, "it seems safe to assume that wives who do not attend abuse

centers might also be quite different from our sample" (p. 70).

These previous studies all disclosed battered women as being low in ego strength, apprehensive, timid, etc. Rounsaville (1978) also found that 53% of his sample of 31 battered women warranted a diagnosis of depression. He speculated that if women are chronically depressed, with poor self-image and need for punishment associated with depression, the husband's behavior may have been induced to maintain the depressive state. However, he contended, if the woman had no history of depression prior to involvement with the partner, the depression could be seen as a result, in part, of being in the abusive relationship. In a different light, Rounsaville found that the women tended to see themselves as at least as capable or more capable than the men and more verbally skillful. They also seemed to have superior resources and to use them to attain some domination over the men. Also found was relative unimpairment in work, child care and relationships with family of origin in the battered women.

Arndt (1980), using the 16 PF scale in her study with 30 battered women, found that abused women were somewhat less warm, more emotionally sensitive, suspicious, guilt-prone, and anxious than the average American female in the population. However, contrary to her expectations, Arndt also found that these women were higher in

intelligence and less rule-bound than average American women. Also found, was that these women had higher ego strength, were more dominant, cheerful, active, frank, expressive, and carefree than nonabused women. In addition, Arndt's composite profile of the abused woman in her study indicated that:

. . . her capacity for abstract verbal skills appears to be somewhat above average. She is a dominant person, and probably needs to be in some position of authority in her work life in order to function comfortably. She is a cheerful, lively, somewhat immature and impulsive person who tends, on occasion, to impress others as being too spontaneous and uninhibited. (p. 8)

Arndt's conclusion is that the composite shows that women who have been in a battering situation still maintain a picture of a normal personality, and that it is reasonable to assume that when one describes a battered woman, extrapsychic factors rather than intrapsychic factors may need to be considered. Thus, both the Arndt and Rounsaville studies presented a more positive picture of the personal functioning and/or characteristics of abused wives than the Star, Hartik, or Rosenbaum and O'Leary investigations. However, it should be pointed out that both the Arndt and Rounsaville studies had no control groups; Arndt made available no demographic information,



and Rounsaville's sample consisted primarily of lower SES women.

In her most recent book, Walker (1984) describes an extensive study of 403 battered women conducted from July, 1978 through June, 1981. Pertinent demographic data were obtained through structured interviews, and four measures of personality assessment were administered, including Spence and Helmreich's Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS), Levenson's Locus of Control Scale, a "typical Likert-style semantic differential scale" to measure self esteem, and the CES-D to measure current depression. In lieu of a control group, Walker utilized the norm sample scores reported in each of the instruments. As walker contends, there were several unexpected findings, which upheld the Arndt and Rounsaville studies. The battered women's mean scores on the AWS were higher than any of the comparison norms, indicating "battered women view themselves as more liberal in their sex role views than the other groups" (p. 78). This, according to Walker, is a surprising finding, "as it was predicted that battered women would perceive themselves as having more traditional attitudes toward women's roles" (p. 78). The Levenson Locus of Control Scale, which measures three distinct types of control (internal, powerful others, and chance), also revealed several unexpected findings. Contrary to the expected low scores, the abused women scored significantly higher than

the norm on the internal scale, indicating that they saw themselves as having a great deal of control over what happens to them. The powerful others scale revealed that "while significance tests between levenson's norms and our sample confirm our prediction for the total sample and those women out of the relationship, battered women still in the relationship did not score significantly higher than the norm on this scale" (p. 79). Walker explained this finding by saying that while in a violent relationship, the battered woman is so involved in doing whatever it takes to keep her batterer happy that she perceives this as being in control. The Chance Scale revealed the predicted higher-than-the-norm scores. Walker found a surprising contradiction in the expected low scores on the self-esteem scale. The battered women in her sample reported that they saw themselves in a more positive way than they perceived either other women or men in general. They also perceived themselves as stronger, more independent, and more sensitive than other women or men.

As revealed in other studies, and hypothesized in Walker's, the sample of battered women received CES-D scores well above the high-risk cut-off scores of 16 and twice as large as the epidemiology study samples means of 9.92 and 9.13, indicating that the women were highly depressed.

Walker was puzzled by the contradictory results between the high depression scores and the high self-esteem scores, and recommended that more careful study into the self-concept of battered women be conducted. Consequently, the issue regarding the characteristic of an abused woman still remains unsolved.

This study is intended to provide new data on the personal characteristics of abused wives, and it also represents the first empirical assessment of abused wives in military families. The study is designed as an empirical study using a control group and standardized instruments in order to further illuminate the phenomenon of wife abuse, and the functioning or disfunctioning of the women involved.

Taking all literature on the subject of battered women into account, the clinical literature reveals an overall consistency in the presentation of a battered woman's profile. Empirical studies, however, convey some inconsistencies. Based on both the clinical and empirical literature, as well as various theories (i.e., the psychological process and circumstances), several hypotheses on five dimensions including anxiety, self-esteem, personal locus of control, personal adjustment, and feminine versus masculine characteristics were generated.

### Hypotheses

1. Anxiety: Lazarus (1966) says anxiety in threatening situations is intimately associated with degree of personal control, and research is generally supportive of his contention. Subjects report less stress when they believe they can terminate an electric shock, for example (Corah & Boffa, 1970) even when that belief is incorrect (Geery, Davidson, & Gatchel, 1970). Phares (1978) concluded that it appears that learning and performance are reduced and anxiety and stress levels are increased when aversive stimuli are either unpredictable or uncontrollable. Relating this to abused women, the man's unpredictable and/or uncontrollable beatings can be the aversive stimulus which serves to increase anxiety and stress levels in the woman, resulting in learned helplessness.

Hypothesis 1. Abused women will be expected to exhibit higher levels of anxiety than non-abused control women.

2. Self-Esteem: Horney (Rosenberg, 1965) contended that anxiety sets in motion a complex chain of psychological events which produces, among other consequences, self-hatred, and self-contempt. According to this theory, then, anxiety tends to generate low self-esteem or personal worth. Rounsaville et al. (1979) among others, also cite some characteristics of battered

women which support Horney's contention. They found that these women feel socially isolated, and perceive themselves as stigmatized and of low status and worth (also found in West et al., 1981 study of military wives); most are depressed and therefore feel ashamed and fearful that their needs will not be met, they are likely to view themselves as personally responsible for their partner's violent tendencies and the social stresses that contribute to them; and they are likely to be highly dependent. Rounsaville (1978) summed it up by saying that battered women frequently see their situation as hopeless. Even those who follow through on outside help express skepticism that anything could be done about their situation.

Hypothesis 2. Abused wives will manifest lower levels of self-esteem compared to nonbattered women.

3. Locus of Control: As cited earlier, Lazarus (1966) contended that anxiety in threatening situations is intimately associated with degree of personal control, and research is generally supportive of his contention. The general conclusion from the numerous studies on locus of control (see Phares, 1978 for citations) appears to be that externals are more readily persuasible, conforming, and accepting of information from others. Internals, on the other hand, seem to react negatively to subtle attempts to influence them. Phares (1978) stated that the reasons for

such differences probably reside in expectancy, values, or a combination of both.

That is, externals may be more susceptible simply because of their relatively low expectancy for the success of their own unaided efforts or perhaps because of a disbelief in their unaided ability to control outcomes. Similarly, internals may have greater confidence in their own competence. From the standpoint of values, it is possible that internals prefer personal control and abhor manipulation by others. (p. 281)

Hypothesis 3. Battered women will manifest an external locus of control personality as opposed to the non-abused women's internal locus of control personality.

4. Personal Adjustment: A woman in an abusive situation experiences what has been considered to be unpredictable and, generally in her opinion, uncontrollable circumstances. As discussed previously, several studies have hypothesized and/or revealed women with high levels of anxiety, low self esteem, and external locus of control (helplessness). Given these factors to contend with, it is conceivable that a battered woman would experience problems in personal adjustment as well. The Adjective Check List includes assessment of: (a) positive personal adjustment (e.g., positive attitude toward life, enjoys company of others, feels capable of initiating activities and carrying

them to conclusion, and ability to "love and work") and (b) personal adjustment problems (e.g., anxious, high strung, moody, avoids close relationships, worry about their lives, defensive, preoccupied, and easily distracted).

Hypothesis 4. Battered women will score in the negative range of the Personal Adjustment scale as compared to a more positive range of scores for the control group.

5. Masculinity/Femininity: According to Spence and Helmreich (1978) "sex-role differentiation is universal among human societies: women and men are assigned different tasks, rights, and privileges and are likely to be subject to different rules of conduct, particularly in interaction with each other" (p. 4). Along with such investigators as Bem, Carlson and Block (see Spence & Helmreich for citations), the authors claim that they had been particularly influenced by Bakan's formulation which proposes that:

Two fundamental modalities characterize living organisms: the sense of agency and the sense of communion. Agency reflects a sense of self and is manifested in self-assertion, self-protection, and self-expansion. Communion, on the other hand, implies selflessness, a concern for others and a desire to be at one with other organisms. He further identifies agency with "male principles" or masculinity and

communion with "female principles" or femininity." (p. 16)

The ideal woman, according to Spence and Helmreich, tends to be described by such adjectives as emotional, sensitive, and concerned with others, and the ideal man by such adjectives as competitive, active, and independent.

Rounsaville et al. (1979) found that abused women are likely to underestimate their strengths and resources and are likely to be highly dependent. Other studies by Star (1978), Ball and Wyman (1977-78), and Stahly (1977) indicated low levels of dominance, among other "typically feminine" attributes as well.

Hypothesis 5. Battered women will exhibit more feminine personal characteristics and fewer masculine characteristics than non-abused women.



## Chapter 3

### METHOD

#### Sample

A total of 60 women comprised the sample in this study, including 30 battered women and a comparison group of 30 non-abused women.

The abused sample was obtained over a period of one year at a Regional Crisis Shelter in a small midwestern city. Inclusion in the study was conditional on the woman's agreement to participate through a signed confidential statement; that she be married, or living with the abusing partner in a common-law marriage agreement; and that she be a recent victim of abuse (a week or less prior to coming to the shelter, as opposed to several months).

The Regional Crisis Center is a locally subsidized program located in a small, unobtrusive house in this midwestern city. The shelter's purpose is to provide a safe house for victims and their children, both of abuse and rape. Victims are either self-referred, referred by the military police or hospital, or by local police or social service agency. Staffing consists of a number of trained and experienced professionals, as well as an array of volunteers sought throughout the community to staff the 24-hour hotline phones, and assist in the intake and care procedures. The center also works closely with the nearby army base personnel, as that is where most of the clientele

reside. More than two-thirds of the women in this sample were army wives.

Each woman is interviewed upon arrival to the center, which includes demographic data, a descriptive account of the most recent assault, history of abuse, and a description of the assailant. Each woman is given the chance to remain at the house (provided the space is available) until she has made a decision concerning her future. While on the premises of the center, the women are given counseling (both marital and personal) and it is their choice whether to return to their spouses or not.

The comparison group of 30 non-abused women was recruited from gatherings of military wives' groups in the area. This target population was chosen so as to match the abused group as closely as possible on demographic profile. To further enhance this comparability, only wives of enlisted men were recruited. The final group of 30 non-abused women were all volunteers from these military wives' groups, or acquaintances of these women. These women reported no previous incidents of physical abuse by their spouses, and none reported any history of abuse in their families of origin.

Descriptive and demographic characteristics of both the abused and non-abused groups (women and their husbands) are presented in Table 1. As can be seen in this table, both groups of women were relatively young (20s),

predominantly white, and had at least a high school education. The spousal groups also revealed a young sample (20s), predominantly white, and a high school level education in general. In terms of family income, both groups ranged from approximately \$5,000 to \$25,000, with the control group having a slightly higher average income.

A series of one-way Analyses of Variance comparing the abused and non-abused women, and the spouses of these two groups, revealed group differences on three characteristics: (a) wife's education, with control exceeding abused ( $F=7.32$ ,  $p<.01$ ); (b) spouses' education, with non-abused spouses exceeding abused spouses ( $F=32.38$ ,  $p<.005$ ); and (c) family income, with the non-abused sample exceeding that of the abused ( $F=10.88$ ,  $p<.005$ ). Chi square analyses of the racial composition of the two respective groups revealed no difference between the wives ( $X^2=7.72$ ) or the husbands ( $X^2=9.02$ ).

As already stated, upon arrival at the center, abused women are required to provide the intake officer with information concerning history of abuse they ever experienced in their lives. Table 2 summarizes the abusive history of the abused women and their spouses, as well as their current involvement with substance abuse (alcohol, drugs).

Table 1  
Demographic Variables for Abused  
and Non-Abused Samples

Characteristics	Abused Sample		Non-Abused Sample	
	Women	Spouses	Women	Spouses
	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$
Age	26.4	26.4	26.9	28.7
Education	12.4	11.47	13.53	13.8
Income	\$10,500.00		\$15,150.00	
Race	N	N	N	N
White	21	20	29	29
Black	8	10	1	1
Other	1	0	0	0

Table 2

Abuse and Substance Abuse History

Question	Women		Spouses	
	Yes(N)	No(N)	Yes(N)	No(N)
Has problem occurred before?	21	4	---	---
How long? (average)	5.67 years			S=5.18
Violence between parents as child?	5	21	17	7
Physically beaten as child?	10	16	12	9
Sexually abused as child?	1	21	2	16
Alcohol Abuse	2	22	15	11
Drug Abuse	1	22	4	18

Note: Information not available on all respondents.

As can be seen in the table, the women on average have endured abuse for quite a few years. In several cases, women have remained in the abusive relationship for more than ten years; and in one case, abuse had been experienced for 29 years (range=4 months to 29 years). The statistics

also reveal that a majority of abusing husbands (70%) witnessed violence between their parents as children, and 57% were themselves physically beaten as children. Alcohol was an abusive factor in 57.7% of the men, thereby implicating it as a possible contributor to the problem.

### Instruments

Five self-administered instruments designed to assess anxiety, locus of control, masculinity or femininity, self-esteem, and level of personal adjustment respectively were employed in this study. These instruments are identified and described below:

1. Spielberger's (1970) State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). The STAI is comprised of separate self-report scales for measuring two distinct anxiety concepts: State Anxiety (A-State) and Trait Anxiety (A-Trait). The test manual states that:

The concepts of state and trait anxiety may be conceived of as analogous, in certain respects, to the concepts of kinetic and potential energy in Physics. State anxiety, like kinetic energy, refers to an empirical process or reaction taking place at a given level of intensity. Trait anxiety, like potential energy, indicates differences in the strength of a latent disposition to manifest a certain type of reaction. Where potential energy denotes differences between physical objects in the amount of kinetic

energy which may be released if triggered by an appropriate force, trait anxiety implies differences between people in the disposition to respond to stressful situations with varying amounts of A-State. (p. 3)

Put more simply, Buros (1978) defined state anxiety as "a transitory condition of perceived tension," and trait anxiety as "a relatively stable condition of anxiety proneness" (p. 683).

The STAI consists of 40 brief items--20 to assess "how you feel right now, that is, at this moment" (Form X-1), and 20 to assess "how you generally feel" (Form X-2). It was designed to be self-administered, and complete instructions are printed on the test form for both the A-State and A-Trait scales. The inventory has no time limits, but it is estimated to take less than fifteen minutes for both forms. The manual claims that although many of the STAI items have face validity as measures of "anxiety," the examiner should not use this term in administering the inventory. Rather, he should consistently refer to the inventory and its subscales as the Self-Evaluation Questionnaire, the title printed on the test form" (p. 4).

Subjects respond to each STAI item by rating themselves on a four-point scale. The four categories for the A-State scale are: (1) not at all; (2) somewhat; (3) moderately so; and (4) very much so. The categories for

the A-Trait scale are: (1) almost never; (2) sometimes; (3) often; and (4) almost always. Some items (e.g., "I am tense") are worded in such a manner that a rating of (4) indicates a high level of anxiety, while other items (e.g., "I feel pleasant") are worded so that a high rating indicates low anxiety. The scoring keys reverse the direction of the non-anxiety items. The scores range from a minimum score of 20 to a maximum score of 80 on both the A-State and A-trait subscales.

Buros (1978) claimed that the STAI is one of the best standardized instruments of anxiety, if not the best (p. 1097). Katkin (found in Buros, 1978), in his review of the STAI found test-retest reliabilities for the A-Trait scale for male and female college undergraduate students over a six month period were .73 and .77 respectively, "indicating that the trait measure is quite stable" (p. 1096). Test retest reliabilities for the A-State measure are low, as might be expected (Katkin, 1978), since the state measure conceptually does not measure a persistent characteristic of the individual. However, internal consistency of the A-State, as measured by K-R 20, ranges from .83 to .92.

The validity of trait scores had been estimated by correlating the scores with the IPAT Anxiety Scale, the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale, and the Zuckerman Affect Adjective Check List. For 126 college women, Dreger (found



in Buros, 1978) reported that coefficients of .75, .80, and .52 were found. According to Katkin (found in Buros, 1978), "the validity of the A-State scale has been demonstrated in a wide variety of studies" (p. 1094).

2. Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (1966). Rotter (1966) defined internal-external locus of control as follows:

. . . an event regarded by some persons as a reward or reinforcement may be differently perceived and reacted to by others. One of the determinants of this reaction is the degree to which the individual perceives that the reward is controlled by forces outside of himself and may occur independently of his own actions. . . . a perception of causal relationship need not be all or none but can vary in degree. When a reinforcement is perceived by the subject as following some action of his own but not being entirely contingent upon his action, then, in our culture, it is typically perceived as the result of luck, chance, fate, as under the control of powerful others, or as unpredictable because of the great complexity of the forces surrounding him. When the event is interpreted in this way by an individual, we have labeled this a belief in external control. If the person perceives that the event is contingent upon

his own relatively permanent characteristics, we have termed this a belief in internal control.

The I-E scale consists of 23 forced-choice I-E items, e.g.:

a. No matter how hard you try, some people just don't like you (external control).

b. People who can't get others to like them just don't understand how to get along with others (internal control).

along with six filler items to disguise the nature of the test, e.g.:

a. Heredity plays a major role in determining one's personality (internal).

b. It is one's experiences in life which determine what one is like (external).

In each case, internal statements are paired with external statements (as in examples above), and one point is given for each external statement selected. Scores can range from zero (most internal) to 23 (most external). Phares (1978) reported test-retest reliability estimates of the scale ranging from 0.49 to 0.83 depending on the time period and particular population. Other researchers, according to Phares, claim similar results. In terms of validity, performance on the I-E scales has been found to correlate with a number of human performance variables. For example, Organ (1976) reported that "internal subjects

exhibit more effective use of information, and more sensitivity to subtle or peripheral stimulus cues than external subjects" (p. 1091). Organ also stated that Rotter's I-E scale has been found to correlate with a number of other personality measures, the most consistent of which seems to be the construct of trait anxiety. According to Organ (1976) external subjects score higher on the Manifest Anxiety Scale, the Alpert-Haber measure of Debilitating Anxiety, and Eysenck's Neuroticism Scale. Discriminant validity has been found to correlate with the Edward's Social Desirability scales in the range of  $-.23$  and  $-.70$ .

3. Spence and Helmreich's (1972) Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ). The PAQ is a self-report instrument consisting of a number of trait descriptions, each set up on a bipolar scale. For example:

Very little need						Very strong need
for security	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>		for security

Items describe characteristics stereotypically believed to differentiate the sexes. The questionnaire is divided into three separate scales, labelled Masculinity (M), Femininity (F), and Masculinity-Femininity (M-F). According to Spence and Helmreich:

Masculine items were defined as characteristics socially desirable in both sexes but believed to occur

to a greater degree in males. An item was considered to meet this definition if the mean ratings of both the ideal man and the ideal woman fell on the same side of the scale midpoint and toward the stereotypically masculine pole (i.e., independence). Twenty-three items exhibited this pattern and were therefore assigned to the Masculinity (M) scale. Feminine items were similarly defined as socially desirable characteristics said to occur to a greater degree in females. Mean ratings of both the ideal man and woman fell on the stereotypically feminine side of the midpoint for eighteen items, which were thus assigned to the Femininity (F) scale (i.e., gentleness). For items assigned to the third scale the mean ratings of the ideal man and woman lay on the opposite sides of the midpoint, suggesting that what was socially desirable for the one sex was not socially desirable for the other. The thirteen items exhibiting this pattern were assigned to a separate scale, identified as Masculinity-Femininity scale. (p. 33)

Respondents rate themselves on the five-point scale provided between the two bipolar extremes (scored from zero to four). A high score on items assigned to the M and M-F scales indicate an extreme masculine response and a high score on F scale items indicating an extreme feminine

response. Total scores are obtained on each scale by adding the individual's scores on the eight items. The range of possible values is 0 to 32 for each scale.

Reliability was obtained by Spence and Helmreich (1978) by giving one sample of college students the full PAQ, and correlating it with the eight-item short version given to the same students. Correlations revealed scores of .93, .93, and .91 for M, F, and M-F respectively. Cronbach alphas for a sample of students given the short form were .85, .82, and .78 for M, F, and M-F respectively, thus revealing that the scales are "satisfactorily reliable."

The Bem Sex Role Inventory (Spence & Helmreich, 1978) was compared to the PAQ in order to test validity-- correlations between the two M scales were .75 and .73 for males and females respectively; while for the two F scales, correlations of .57 and .59 were attained. The lower correlations between the two F scales were probably due to two differences between the scales, (i.e., Bem's inventory respondents are given a trait description--e.g., independent, and asked to rate how characteristic it is of them; the PAQ consists of bipolar scales, and respondents are asked to specify the point on the bipolar scale most descriptive of themselves. This factor, the authors believed, could conceivably lower the correlations between the two measures, p. 24).

4. Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale. This scale measures the self-acceptance aspect of self-esteem, described by Rosenberg (1965) as an attitude toward an object, including "facts, opinions, and values with regard to the self, as well as a favorable or unfavorable orientation toward the self" (p. 5). In order to assess self-esteem, Rosenberg developed a self-administered scale consisting of ten Guttman scale-type items e.g., "on the whole, I am satisfied with myself." Scale scores range from zero (indicating a very low sense of self worth) to six (indicating frequent agreement with the positive thrust of the statement). "Positive" and "negative" items are presented alternately in order to reduce the effect of response set.

Robinson and Shaver (1973) contend that the scale probably measures the self-acceptance aspect of self-esteem more than it does other factors, since all the items revolve around liking and/or approving of the self. While important, Rosenberg (1965) claims that such "logical validation" or face validity is not sufficient to establish the adequacy of the scale. Silber and Tippet (1965) found that the scale correlated from .56 to .83 with several similar measures and clinical assessments. A Guttman scale reproducibility coefficient of .92 was obtained according to Robinson and Shaver (1973). In terms of reliability,

Silber and Tippet (1965) found a test-retest; correlation over two weeks of .85.

5. Gough and Heilbrun Adjective Check List (ACL): Personal Adjustment Scale (1980 Edition). The Adjective Check List as a whole assesses twenty-four personality traits, and includes 300 adjectives that are typically found in describing attributes of a person. The Personal Adjustment scale was selected for this study because the format was different from the other instruments in that the stimuli and instructions are designed to "increase the 'projective' element in an individual's responses" (Buros, 1978, p. 76). Vance (found in Buros, 1978) claimed that the ACL has more to offer than just being another device for assessing manifest needs. "The most interesting aspects of the ACL," he stated "are its potential for development in line with any user's special needs or theoretical preferences" (p. 77). Basically, it evaluates a person's self-perceived sense of well-being.

The scale contains 34 items, of which 18 are scored one if checked, e.g., enthusiastic, and 16 are scored -1, e.g., moody. According to the ACL manual (1980 edition), in order to obtain data on psychological implications of the total number of adjectives checked, scores on the scale were first correlated with the Q-sort descriptions contained in Block's (1961) California Q-set. Q-sort descriptions correlating most positively with personal

adjustment scores for both males and females were: "Is turned to for advice and reassurance;" "Emphasizes being with others; gregarious;" "Is subjectively unaware of self-concern; feels satisfied with self;" "Has social poise and presence; appears socially at ease;" "Is productive, gets things done;" and "Behaves in an assertive fashion." Items with largest negative correlations included "Feels a lack of personal meaning in life;" "Gives up and withdraws where possible in the face of frustration and adversity;" "Is vulnerable to real or fancied threat, generally fearful;" "Has a brittle ego-defense system; has a small reserve of integration; would be disorganized and maladaptive when under stress or trauma;" "Is self-defeating;" "Is basically anxious;" "Feels cheated and victimized by life, self-pitying;" "Tends to ruminate and have persistent, preoccupying thoughts;" and "Reluctant to commit self to any definite course of action; tends to delay or avoid action." Thus, the high scorer on this scale has a positive attitude toward life, enjoys the company of others, and feels capable of initiating activities and carrying them through to conclusion, according to the ACL manual. Furthermore, "high-scorers may not possess psychodynamic self-understanding, but they do appear to possess the ability to 'love and work,' proposed by Freud as the critical criteria of personal



adjustment" (ACL Manual, p. 17). Low scorers, on the other hand, are:

. . . anxious, high-strung, and moody, avoid close relationships with others, and worry about their lives. Others see them as defensive, preoccupied, and easily distracted. (ACL Manual, p. 17)

Aiken (1971) found that the ACL yielded test-retest coefficients for the separate scales of .54-.85 over ten weeks and .31-.75 over six months. The ACL has been extensively used in research on personality, according to Aiken, and appears to be as valid as many instruments of greater complexity.

### Procedure

Upon receiving approval from the director of the Crisis Center, data collection began in March, 1982. The Center was visited at least once per week to meet newly arrived battered women. In addition, the investigator received calls from staff members whenever new women arrived for help.

The sequence of events for each potential subject is described below.

Upon arrival at the center, the subject(s) was identified as an abuse victim, as opposed to a rape victim, by the staff. The victim was interviewed within a few days of arrival at the center, to determine if she fit the interviewer's criteria, i.e., preferably white, and a

victim of physical rather than psychological abuse. The study was explained to the woman, ensuring complete confidentiality, and she was invited to participate. Upon agreement, they signed an informed consent statement, and a time for the interview and assessment was agreed upon (usually immediately). A place in the shelter which would offer the most privacy possible was used and assistance in reading the items was offered. The majority of the subjects responded to the instruments alone, although on occasion, several women were assessed in a small group with the understanding that no discussion would take place. The women were encouraged to ask questions, although they could not be aided in arriving at an answer. A brief interview was conducted following the administration of instruments, seeking pertinent demographic information including income, age of subject and spouse, and educational levels for subject and spouse. To supplement these data, the subject's files were reviewed with permission from the center staff. Additional data consisted of a history of abuse, including victimization as a child in the history of the woman and her spouse; description of most recent incident, and future plans.

On the whole, the women approached to participate in this study were very cooperative, yielding very few refusals. The data collection was slow however, because many of the women either stayed at the shelter for several

weeks, which suspended the intake of new women due to lack of room, or they were in and out within one day, making it difficult to enlist them in the study.

The control sample, composed primarily of a military wives group, was "recruited" through the help of one of the staff members at the crisis shelter. Permission was granted to visit the group at one of their weekly meetings. At this time, the study was explained, and they were asked to serve as a comparison group, i.e., military wives of enlisted/drafted soldiers with no previous history of spousal abuse. Agreement to participate was requested at this meeting, and informed consent forms were signed. The following week's meeting time was agreed upon for administration of the instruments, and the women present were encouraged to ask their friends to attend the meeting in order to get more participants. These women, representing over 50% of the total control group sample were assessed at two of these meetings in group format. Each woman was given a folder containing the battery of five instruments, informed that questions were welcome, but discussion amongst each other was not. Since personal interviews with each of the women was not feasible, a demographic data sheet was included in the packet of instruments for the women to complete during the session.

The remaining women in the control group consisted of friends of the military wives group members who were

contacted by phone or on rare occasion, by mail. The purpose of the study was explained, and a time set up at their home after agreement to participate had been granted. The procedure for administration of the tests was identical to that of the abused women. Each individual was asked to sign a statement of informed consent and then given a folder containing the five scales. The women were very obliging and completed the battery of tests in one sitting.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS

The hypotheses to be tested in this investigation concerned predicted differences in the personal characteristics and adjustment of abused and non-abused wives. Due to the number of dimensions under study (7 dimensions) and their relatively small sample (N=30 per group), multivariate statistical procedures were not justified. Consequently, a series of independent one-way ANOVA's were originally planned to determine differences between the groups in each dimension. However, as revealed earlier, significant differences were found between the abused and non-abused groups in Subject's education, spouse's education, and family income.

In order to control for the potential confounding effects of these SES-related differences on the analysis of group differences for each of the 7 target dimensions, an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) strategy was adopted. This strategy included the following procedures in each of the 7 repsective analyses:

Step 1 - All three covariates were entered into the analysis.

Step 2 - The least significant covariate (i.e., covariate contributing the least variation to group differences) was identified via F and probability values and removed.

Step 3 - Examine the contributions of the remaining two covariates in the new model, and remove the least significant of the two, again on the basis of F and probability values.

Step 4 - The final model is tested, including an analysis of group differences, effect of remaining significant covariate, and in addition, an analysis of group X covariate interaction (i.e., comparison of the abused-nonabused group slopes as a function of covariate level).

Table 3 contains the Means and SDs for each of the seven target dimensions for the abused and nonabused groups. As these figures show, the largest Mean differences between the two groups were in Anxiety and level of Personal Adjustment (ACL), with all the figures favoring the nonabused group. The other point of note in this table are the substantial group differences in the variability in scores in these same dimensions, with the nonabused scores exhibiting consistently less variability in each case.

Table 3

Means and SDs for Each of the SevenDependent Variables by Group

Variables	Abused Wives		Nonabused Wives	
	X	SD	X	SD
Self Esteem	3.97	1.88	4.73	1.01
Anxiety-State	50.30	15.13	36.73	9.94
Anxiety-Trait	46.10	16.40	40.23	9.64
ACL	54.67	20.22	62.70	15.26
MASC-P	18.67	6.85	19.40	4.77
FEM-P	24.60	4.62	24.37	3.37
SRI	10.13	3.17	9.80	4.03

In order to test for the hypothesized differences between the two groups, independent Analyses of Covariance were run on each of the seven dependent variables as described above. Results of those analyses follow.

Self Esteem

The preliminary series of analyses described in Steps 1-3 resulted in a model in which subject's education was the only covariate reaching statistical significance. This model was then tested in Step 4, yielding a significant Main Effect for Group, significant covariate (thus subject's education is making a significant contribution to

Table 4

ANCOVA: Self Esteem

Factor	df	SS	F	P
Group	1	11.1118	6.32	.01**
Subject's Education	1	27.6561	15.74	.0002***

<u>Analysis of Slopes</u>				
Group X Subject's				
Education	1	10.3118	5.87	.0187*

Mean Comparisons:	Grade	t	P
Abused vs. Non-abused	8	-2.57	.019*
A vs. NA	10	-2.53	.0142*
A vs. NA	12	-1.91	.061 NS
A vs. NA	14	.60	.55 NS
A vs. NA	16	1.71	.09 NS

\*p<.05    \*\*p<.01    \*\*\*p<.005

the variation in self esteem scores in the two groups), as well as a difference in slopes of the abused and non-abused group scores as a function of level of education. As shown in the Mean Comparisons, the self esteem of the abused wives was significantly lower than the non-abused wives only at the 8th and 10th grade levels. Thus, the lower the educational level of the abused group, the lower the self esteem of that group.



### Anxiety-State

The unadjusted Mean scores of the abused group was substantially below that of the non-abused group (Table 5). The ANCOVA preliminary analysis of this dimension yielded one significant covariate, i.e., spouse's education. The subsequent ANCOVA analysis, presented in Table 5 shows a significant Main Effect, a significant covariate effect, but a non-significant interaction effect. Thus, the abused wives exhibited a greater amount of State Anxiety than the non-abused wives regardless of the level of the covariate.

Table 5

#### ANCOVA: Anxiety-State

Factor	df	SS	F	P
Group	1	587.2711	3.89	.0525*
Spouse's Education	1	889.9952	5.89	.0284*
<u>Analysis of Slopes</u>				
Group X Covariate	1	189.0086	1.26	.2670 NS

\*p<.05

### Anxiety-Trait

The unadjusted Mean scores for Anxiety-Trait (Table 3) showed a difference between the two group scores for this dimension. The preliminary analysis of adjusted scores (ANCOVA) failed to yield a single significant covariate.

As a result, the lone remaining covariate (Spouse's Education) was entered into the final ANCOVA, and this analysis is summarized in Table 6. As shown there, no Main effects, covariate effects, or covariate X group interactions were obtained. Thus the Mean difference is not reflective of a reliable difference between the two groups on this dimension.

Table 6

ANCOVA: Anxiety-Trait

Factor	df	SS	F	P
Group	1	516.267	2.85	.0966 NS
Spouse's Education	1	475.855	2.03	.20561 NS
<u>Analysis of Slopes</u>				
Group X Covariate	1	435.43	1.21	.3050 NS

Level of Personal Adjustment (ACL)

As in the case of Anxiety-Trait, the preliminary ANCOVA analysis failed to yield a significant covariate. Therefore, the covariate making the greatest contribution to group variation in ACL scores, i.e., Subject's education, was entered into the final ANCOVA. This analysis, presented in Table 7 shows a non-significant Main Effect, non-significant covariate effect, but a significant Group X Covariate Interaction.

Table 7

ANCOVA: ACL

Factor	df	SS	F	P
Group	1	882.3251	2.89	.0945 NS
Covariate	1	964.6525	3.16	.0807 NS
<u>Analysis of Slopes</u>				
Group X Covariate	1	1523.8095	5.08	.0280*
Mean Comparisons:		Grade	t	P
Abused vs. Non-abused		8	-2.81	.007**
A vs. NA		10	-2.88	.006**
A vs. NA		12	-2.18	.033**
A vs. NA		14	-.07	.94 NS
A vs. NA		16	1.03	.31 NS

\*p&lt;.05 \*\*p&lt;.01

Thus, the abused wives exhibited lower levels of personal adjustment at the lower grade levels, i.e., high school level or below, similar to the results on self-esteem.

Masculine-P Attributes

The preliminary ANCOVA resulted in a significant covariate in this instance, i.e., Subject's education, and this covariate was entered into the final analysis. Table 8 presents the results of this analysis, showing a

significant Main Effect, a non-significant covariate effect, and a significant Group X Covariate interaction.

Table 8

ANCOVA: Masculine-P

Factor	df	SS	F	P
Group	1	118.0944	3.61	.0527*
Covariate	1	89.7983	2.74	.1033 NS
<u>Analysis of Slopes</u>				
Group X Covariate	1	186.6667	5.80	.0193*
Mean Comparisons:		Grade	t	P
Abused vs. Non-abused		8	-2.39	.0203
A vs. NA		10	-2.14	.0369*
A vs. NA		12	-.94	.3517 NS
A vs. NA		14	1.05	.2969 NS
A vs. NA		16	1.82	.0737 NS

\*p<.05

Once again we see lower scores for the abused group, in this case perceptions of self as possessing fewer positively valued masculine characteristics than non-abused women are revealed only in those abused women with lower levels of education (less than high school).

### Feminine-P Attributes

The preliminary analysis on positively valued feminine attributions yielded a significant covariate, in this case, family income. When this factor was entered into the ANCOVA (Table 9), the results revealed a non-significant Main Effect, but significant covariate and covariate X group interactions.

Table 9

#### ANCOVA: Feminine-P

Factor	df	SS	F	P
Group	1	2.6228	.17	.6818 NS
Covariate	1	73.5762	4.77	.0332*

#### Analysis of Slopes

Group X Covariate	1	74.0471	4.62	.0359*
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Mean Comparisons:	Income	t	P
Abused vs. Non-abused	5,000	-1.10	.2764
A vs. NA	10,000	.08	.9328
A vs. NA	15,000	1.32	.1937
A vs. NA	20,000	1.84	.0713
A vs. NA	25,000	2.02	.0482*

\*p<.05

Interestingly, as income levels of the abused group increase, so also does their perception of themselves as possessing positively valued feminine characteristics. These feminine perceptions also exceed those of the control group only at the highest income level.

#### Locus of Control (SRI)

The preliminary analysis of internal-external locus of control yielded a significant covariate-family income. The subsequent ANCOVA (Table 10) however, revealed a non-significant Main Effect, a significant covariate effect, but a nonsignificant Group X Covariate interaction. Therefore, although family income contributed significant variation to the level of internal locus of control experienced by both groups, there were no reliable differences between the abused and non-abused groups on this dimension, regardless of the level of income in the groups.

Table 10

ANCOVA: SRI

Factor	df	SS	F	P
Group	1	9.6725	.85	.3583 NS
Covariate	1	115.7333	10.04	.0025**
<u>Analysis of Slopes</u>				
Group X Covariate	1	.2164	.02	.8915 NS

\*\*p&lt;.05

Dependent Measures: Intercorrelations

The differences revealed between the abused and non-abused samples in this study in self-esteem, state anxiety, personal adjustment, masculine and feminine attributions resulted from seven univariate Analyses of Covariance. With multiple dependent measures, a multivariate analysis is generally recommended, for it takes into account the number of comparisons being made and tests the significance of them all taken as a whole. A significant multivariate F value attests to the reliability of the univariate comparisons, thereby avoiding the spurious identification of chance effects, i.e., Type I error. However, such an analysis was not justified in this instance due to the small sample size (number of observations) relative to the number of dependent measures.

Unfortunately, this creates a problem for the interpretations of the univariate results, given the increased probability of chance effects. Further, it is also possible that several of the variables share common variance. If so, this raises questions of regarding the extent to which univariate results reflect truly independent effects? Although multivariate analysis is precluded here, it is possible to determine if the variables share common variance through correlational procedures.

Table 11 presents the intercorrelational matrix of the seven measures for the abused sample (upper right sector) and the non-abused sample (lower left sector). As shown here, there are considerable number of significant  $r$ 's in both groups, indicating substantial interrelationships among the variables. For the abused group, four variables were highly correlated with one another--self esteem, trait anxiety, level of personal adjustment, and masculine attributions. Given the previous research findings on the personality profiles of abused women, this cluster of intercorrelated dimensions is not very surprising; in fact, we may have expected to find an even larger cluster of related dimensions. In addition to the cluster of four variables, the table also shows significant positive relationships between trait and state anxiety, and between personal adjustment and feminine attributions. Highly



correlated variables indicate the possibility of a common underlying dimension (or factor).

Table 11

Intercorrelational Matrix:

Dependent Measures

Non-Abused Group	Abused Group						
	SE	ANX-S	ANX-T	ACL	M+	F+	SRI
SE	---	-.34	-.63***	.64***	.64***	.31	-.14
ANX-S	-.47**	---	.58***	-.30	-.16	-.17	.28
ANX-T	-.66***	.77***	---	-.69***	-.55***	-.31	.33
ACL	.56***	-.46*	-.55***	---	.62***	.48**	-.24
M+	.29	-.18	-.48**	.17	---	.14	-.26
F+	.26	.04	-.03	.32	.24	---	-.01
SRI	-.60***	.37*	.64***	-.45*	.46*	-.15	---

\*p<.05    \*\*p<.01    \*\*\*p<.005

A somewhat similar, albeit more pervasive, picture emerged among the variables in the non-abused group. That is, five variables were found to cluster here, including self-esteem, trait and state anxiety, personal adjustment, masculine attributions, and locus of control. Again, this finding and the direction of the relationships, should not be too surprising given a presumably psychologically healthy

group (or healthier group) and at least the theoretical possibility that these dimensions comprise part of a profile of psychological health or "well-being." The present intercorrelations certainly indicate the possibility of at least one principal underlying dimension or factor accounting for the individual results, and as in the case with the abused group, raise questions about the independence of each of the univariate results. Therefore, barring a Multivariate Analysis of Covariance controlling for intercorrelations among the seven variables, a Factor or Discriminant Function Analysis, the univariate results presented here must be interpreted with caution.

#### Psychological Functioning and

##### Duration of Abuse

It was pointed out earlier in Table 2 that the abused women had been living in an abusive situation for an average of 5.67 years. Furthermore, there was substantial variation in the duration of the group's experience of abuse, evidenced by the range of 4 months to 29 years. This variability raises an interesting question about the relationship between the psychological functioning of these women at the time of assessment and the length of time that they have been experiencing abuse.

In a preliminary attempt to provide an answer to this question, product-moment correlations were run between the total duration of time of abuse and the personal

characteristics and adjustment of the abused women as assessed in this study. The seven resulting correlations are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Duration of Abuse and the Psychological  
Functioning of the Abused Woman

Dimension	r
Self Esteem	-.32
State Anxiety	-.01
Trait Anxiety	-.03
Personal Adjustment	-.21
Masculine Attributes	-.29
Feminine Attributes	+.02
Locus of Control	+.11

n=21

Although none of these  $r$ 's were significant, and several were zero level, there were three low to moderate  $r$ 's of interest. The longer the women had been living in an abusive relationship, the lower her self-esteem, level of personal adjustment, and her perception of herself as an instrumentally competent person. Given the small  $n$ 's involved, and the non-representative nature of the sample in this study, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions

regarding these relationships. However, they certainly make conceptual sense. On the other hand, one would have also expected to find stronger relationships involving state anxiety, feminine attributions, and locus of control as well. Thus, there is a mixed bag at this point, but one worthy of further investigation.

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION

Since the beginning of this decade, investigations of wife abuse have sprung forth similar to the upsurge of concern over the battered child in the 1970s. These days, the subject cannot escape the scrutiny and/or exploitation of any media, whether it be articles and "true confessions" in popular journals, novels, the theater, the recording industry, or the presentation of docudramas on television. Battered women are finally emerging from forced seclusion with stories to tell.

The scholarly literature reveals historical analyses; epidemiological surveys on incidence of wife abuse; demographic profiles; varying theoretical explanations of the abused, abuser, and violence in the family; and a host of clinical and impressionistic studies profiling the abused woman. But as Scott (1974) advised, ". . . generalizations about broad social problems should never be made on the basis of clinical findings" (p. 434). Searching further, only a "handful" of researchers took the data acquisition process to the empirical sphere. But even these studies have disclosed contradictions and inconsistencies in their descriptions of the abused woman.

Several researchers have posited that the battered wife has learned to be docile, submissive, humble, ingratiating, non-assertive, dependent, quiet, conforming,

and selfless. Her identity is founded on being pleasing to others, being responsible for others, being nurturant to others, but not to herself.

Taking a realistic attitude, it is unlikely that all battered women would exhibit identical personal characteristics or personality types. On the other hand, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that these women will have some things in common, whether they be personal histories, socioeconomic status, or personal characteristics.

Comparing this study to the seven exemplary studies which used standardized assessment instruments (Star, 1978; Hartik, 1982; Gellen, 1984; Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981; Rounsaville, 1978; Arndt, 1980; Walker, 1984), it is apparent the present sample as a whole is generally consistent with results of the majority of the prior studies. That is, findings revealed a higher level of anxiety in abused women, lower levels of self esteem or ego strength, and a low level of personal adjustment. However, the self esteem and personal adjustment group differences, as well as those in masculine and feminine attributions were found to be contingent on educational and/or financial resources, with differences limited to the lower levels of the SES scale. Therefore, a different slant is shed on the findings of previous research which claimed that educational level bears little influence on being a victim

of abuse (i.e., Schulman, 1979), or that socioeconomic level is not a factor in abuse (i.e., Walker, 1979). Further, the fact that this study's abused sample consisted mainly of women married to men in the military who had fled to a crisis center for help may have a bearing on the results obtained, in that it reflects data from a select population.

Kerr (1972) claimed that women who attend a crisis shelter are usually those who have nowhere else to go due to lack of social networks, funds, etc. Wives of men in the Armed Services are usually isolated from family or friends, and since they do not have access to a vast quantity of money to escape to family when in need, they have no alternative but to turn to a crisis shelter for help. Thus, one might expect a sample from this group to consist of lower SES women.

#### Personal Characteristics

This study revealed a higher level of State Anxiety in abused women than in the control women. This finding is not and should not be surprising. The A-State Anxiety Scale measures the individual's level of personal anxiety at the present moment in time. A woman who has just recently fled from her home and a husband who has, with all probability, severely beaten her and has done so on several previous occasions, will naturally manifest a significant level of anxiety. A-State norms for 648 female incoming

freshman college students, as provided in the STAI Manual, reveal a mean score of 39.39 ( $SD=8.62$ ). The battered women's mean score of 50.33 is clearly higher than the national norm. This mean is even above that of 45.69, the mean for patients with psychiatric complications listed in the Manual.

The A-Trait Scale, on the other hand, revealed no difference between the two samples, indicating a similarity in overall level of anxiety-proneness in both groups. Star (1978), Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981), Arndt (1980), and Hartik (1982) all reported that abused women manifest relatively high levels of anxiety soon after being abused. It is quite feasible that these assessments reflected A-State anxiety as found in this study. On the other hand, this study revealed no group differences in A-Trait anxiety. However, the lack of A-Trait differences is not consistent with those of Hartik (1982) and Gellen et al. (1984) who reported deep-seated psychological disturbances in their sample of abused women, including psychosis, neurosis, hypochondriasis, hysteria, paranoia, and social introversion. It would not be unusual to find anxiety of a more systemic form in these chronic disorders, and thus, A-Trait anxiety. However, Rosewater (Walker, 1984) cautioned about making false assumptions. She found that her sample of over 100 battered women appeared to have profiles similar to other emotionally disturbed women



(based on the MMPI), particularly those with schizophrenia and other diagnoses. But when using a subscale analysis, substantial variation prevented clear and consistent differentiation between battered and non-battered women. Rosewater concluded that it is easy to misdiagnose battered women as having a serious mental illness if one doesn't take into account the realities of the battering experience and associated coping strategies. "For example, it is reasonable for a battered woman to believe that someone is out to get her without it being indicative of paranoid ideation" (Rosewater, 1984, p. 76). Assuming for the moment the absence of personal psychopathology in the sample of abused women in this study, there is no compelling reason to expect high levels of A-Trait anxiety in this group.

In absolute terms, it is interesting to note that although the two groups did not differ in A-Trait anxiety, each of their respective levels were generally high. Comparing the mean of 46.10 for the abused sample and 40.23 for the non-abused sample, to the normative mean of 38.22 ( $SD=8.20$ ), they are both higher than the norm. A possible explanation could lie in the consideration of the lifestyle of both groups. According to West et al. (1981), most military families experience combinations of difficulties at different points in their lives, including serious financial pressures, frequent moves, family separations,

isolation from peer and family support systems, and strong pressure on the wife not to jeopardize her husband's career as a serviceman. Since the control sample consisted almost exclusively of military wives, as did the abused group, it is quite possible that both groups of women have been living for some time in a continuous state of anxiety. An alternative possibility concerns the type of woman attracted to the military. The woman who chooses to enter into the military lifestyle by marrying a serviceman may be predisposed in character or values to be attracted to a lifestyle rich in unknown adventure and perhaps hardship. In this event, she has already brought with her a natural tendency to be excited or anxious, thus explaining the high A-Trait scores for both the abused and non-abused women.

An interesting result was revealed in the dimension of self esteem. The prediction that abused women would manifest lower levels of self esteem was upheld, thus agreeing with Star (1978), Hartik (1982) and Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981), as well as many clinical studies. However, it was found upon closer analysis that self esteem level depended on subject's educational level, i.e., only abused women with less than a high school level of education exhibited low levels of self esteem. In other words, self esteem may be contingent upon the woman's knowledge, and perhaps the intellectual ability. It is conceivable that the abused woman who has not attained a high level of

education is ridiculed by her husband, steadily dampening her self-perceived sense of worth. In the military situation, this is especially dangerous, where most servicemen have at least a high school education (73% in 1980, according to statistics quoted by West et al., 1981). For most of these men (who rarely attain any higher level of education), it would seem that the only acceptable, non-threatening type of woman to take as a wife is one with less education than they, according to West et al. (1981). Eventually say West et al., in trying to attain a higher social status within the ranks of the military, the man begins to ridicule and abuse his wife because of her inadequacies. The woman internalizes her husband's low conception of her and consequently manifests a low self-image. This is in keeping with observations made by investigators such as Frieze (1979), Silverman (1981), and Finkelhor and Yllo (1982). Frieze has suggested that when the battered woman internalizes the blame for the abuse (i.e., blaming herself for being a poor wife), her self esteem is lowered. Silverman contended that it doesn't take long for the battered wife to become "totally demoralized." Even in routine matters her functioning deteriorates because of her growing self-doubt. Unconsciously, she adopts the contemptuous view of herself that her mate seems to hold.

The pressure on military wives not to harm their husband's career has kept many from reporting abuse to military service providers (West et al., 1981). She cannot go to the commanding officer (who takes a very strong personal interest in the lives of his employees) without his filing the offense in her husband's personal record, possibly jeopardizing promotional chances or causing a reduction in rank.

In attempting to shed some light on the inconsistencies in the previous research on the battered woman's perceived control or lack of control over her life, this study revealed no significant difference in locus of control between the two groups. It has been the contention of many that battered women become helpless as a result of external circumstances. This theory of Learned Helplessness as applied to battered women was proposed by Lenore Walker in her early studies on battered women. The theory seemed plausible considering the ineffectiveness of a woman experiences under the jurisdiction of her spouse. However, in 1984, Walker was confronted with the unexpected finding of abused women scoring significantly higher than the norm on the internal locus of control scale, indicating that they saw themselves as having a great deal of control over what happens to them. Walker makes the following conjecture:

Perhaps for those women still in a battering relationship to acknowledge that their lives are chiefly controlled by powerful others (the batterer), the woman would also have to accept the fact that they will not be able to change him or the environment to prevent further beatings. While in a violent relationship, the battered woman is so involved in doing whatever it takes to keep her batterer happy that she perceives this as control. (p. 79)

Furthermore:

It may be that battered women do believe they control their own lives. Battered women often manipulate the environment in order to minimize the opportunity for the batterer to find reason to be angry.

For example, Walker related how on a day-to-day basis, most of the women would keep the kids quiet so as not to disturb him; made sure the house was clean when he came home; cooked something he liked; avoided subjects he did not like to discuss; and waited until he started a conversation. "It may be that this sense of internal control," Walker concluded, "that is the hope which allows the battered woman to believe she will be able to change the batterer or the environment in such a way that things will get better" (p. 79).

Perhaps this control accounts for the present study's finding of no difference between the abused and control

women in locus of control. Both groups have felt in control of their lives to the point of being similar. The results may be accounted for by another possible reason. Since the sample of abused women in this study was obtained at a crisis shelter, the sample may be composed of special kinds of people. They have chosen (even if it is sometimes upon urgent recommendation) to escape to the shelter. While there, they are given the opportunity to review their situation and given the freedom of choice as to their next step. Awareness of this freedom could conceivably emit a feeling of internal control. If nothing else, the woman at least gains knowledge that she is not alone in her situation. There are others like her, manifesting in her a sense of oneness in control.

Using the means reported for a variety of samples, and those from samples not reported by Rotter (for a total N of 4,4333), Owens (1969) computed the overall means for all groups combined; and found the mean for males to be 8.2 (SD=4.0); and for the females, the mean was 8.5 (SD=3.9). Comparing these means to those in this study (10.13 for the abused sample; 9.80 for the non-abused sample) reveals the means to be higher than the norm. This indicates that although the two samples were not found to be significantly different from each other, they did tend toward the external range of scores on the scale, compared to the norms. The military lifestyle, again, could play a role in

the higher scores. It is conceivable that external influences are continuously "invading" the woman's conception of environmental control. Thus, the departure from the norm, yet the similarities between the means in this study.

The Personal Adjustment Scale of the ACL, which basically measures a person's flexibility in dealing with everyday life, was found to be contingent upon the subject's level of education, similar to self esteem. The more education the woman had, the higher the scores on personal adjustment. This is actually not surprising since personal adjustment and self esteem are related dimensions. Since the abused sample had less education (high school or less) than the control women, and perhaps less ability and sense of well-being, their ability to cope with the unpredictable violence in their lives was impaired. The mean for female high school students as given in the ACL Manual is 46.27. Interestingly, the mean ACL scores of both groups in this study exceeded this norm--54.67 (abused) and 62.70 (non-abused). Again, living in military community may lead the woman to believe that she is able to adjust to changes more so than the normative sample of high school students.

According to Spence and Helmreich (1978), the Masculinity Scale contains items which are considered to be socially desirable characteristics for both sexes but that

males are believed to possess in greater abundance than females (e.g., independence). The PAQ results showed that the abused sample exhibited significantly fewer masculine attributes than the control sample, particularly at the lower educational levels. This finding ties in with the general consensus in the literature that the battered woman is passive, dependent, and conforming. This seems to be true in this study in the women with lower education because, as discussed earlier under self esteem, the woman perceives herself as having little worth due to her husband's behavior. Dutton and Painter (1981) asserted that the abusing husband attempts to restrict his partner's independent existence, which is a constant threat to his security; and the woman, in hopes of avoiding arguments and reducing the accompanying violence, organizes her life completely around her partner and his demands. This compliance makes her counter-dependent on her partner. In relation to the military wife, West et al. (1981) reported on the concept of the "role and identity" of Army wives portrayed at the 1980 Army Family Symposium. Army wives agreed that:

. . . There is a perception by many that they are powerless to make decisions regarding significant life events that impact directly on them when their spouse is in the army . . . . Their rights and responsibilities with the organization are usually an



extension of their spouses' rank and privileges and their potential for significant contributions to the success of the service member in the organization is often overlooked . . . (p. 12)

The view that women in abusive circumstances are more submissive than men are in contrast to those of Arndt (1980) and Walker (1984), who found that abused women were more dominant, carefree, and more liberal in their sex role views than other groups. More than likely, sample differences, particularly in SES characteristics and the military concept, account for these discrepant findings. On the other hand, in families where the wives exhibit more masculine-like sex role characteristics, does this kind of attitude make any difference in a man's abusive behavior? Whitehurst (1974) described a clash of ideologies between traditional, conservative patriarchal husbands and non-traditional, liberal wives as being the root of marital violence. This statement could be interpreted as one person's biased opinion, but it would be interesting as a topic for further research.

The Feminity Scale contains items describing characteristics considered to be socially desirable in both sexes but that females are believed to possess to a greater degree than males (e.g., gentleness). In the present study, the feminine self attributions of the abused women increased with income level, and exceeded the non-abused

women at the highest levels of income (and therefore, higher military rank). This is interesting because it relates strongly back to contentions made by West et al. (1981) about the military wife, in that wives are reluctant to report abuse in fear of jeopardizing their husband's promotional chances. Threatening her husband's military future is a serious consideration for a battered military wife whose husband is making the Armed Forces his career. Further, a reduction in rank or a fine that sometimes results from a report would only add to financial pressures. As rank increases among servicemen, the impact of abuse charges would be more pronounced than on lower ranked men, making it more difficult for the wife to go to her husband's commander. With such consequences to consider, the woman is likely to manifest more characteristics which are considered to be socially desirable in both sexes but that females are believed to possess to a greater degree. Spence and Helmreich (1978) established normative values of 20 for the M+ scale and 23 for F+ scale using a sample of high school students. The M+ mean scores of both groups in this sample are slightly below this norm (more so in the abused group), while both F+ means are slightly above the norm.

### Limitations

The design employed in the present study is the Static-Group Comparison Design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963),

one with several problems in both internal and external validity. Included in, but not limited to, what Campbell and Stanely refer to as internal validity (which refers to the possibility that the conclusions drawn from experimental results may not accurately reflect what has gone on in the experiment itself) are: lack of a pretest; selection biases; response sets; and sampling error.

The fact that no pretest was conducted (which in this case was impracticable), hinders an actual cause-effect conclusion. Without a pre-test, there is no way of knowing if the abused sample and the control sample differed in ways other than the presence or absence of an abuse experience. They may have differed by virtue of differing histories, differences which may have contributed to obtained group dissimilarities, e.g., different family history of violence (social learning); or there may be differences between groups in personality dimensions, e.g., identification with authority--abused women may be different personality types in this regard, which may have affected the type of husband chosen, and the willingness to remain or the inability to leave the abusive situation. Both groups were primarily military wives, but may have differed in this regard as well. The control group was part of a military wives group, therefore they may be different in the sense that they either sought out, needed or desired support from others; or the fact of being in the

group indicated that they had more outside support. Thus, the two groups were not matched on several factors, other than the presence or absence of abuse, factors which may contribute to group differences. As the woman in her letter to Human Behavior magazine wrote, "We may end up in a personality category as the end result of abuse, but we don't start out that way." Verification of this would be difficult, but merits further investigation.

Selection bias is virtually inevitable in a study such as this, because as Scott (1974) stated, "It cannot be too much stressed that being sent to or choosing to attend a social or medical agency probably selects a special sort of person . . ." (p. 434). For reasons of convenience, the sample of abused women in this study was drawn from an abuse crisis center. Reiterating Scott's assertion, women who come to a crisis center are a select group of individuals for varied reasons: (a) the woman who has absolutely no where else to go and no one else to turn to; she is the down and out woman who is most likely referred to the center by an external influence; or (b) the woman who has convinced herself to finally seek an alternative to the abuse, she is reaching out; or perhaps (c) the woman who comes to the center for a short respite, hoping to arouse a certain remorse in her husband, and perhaps gain a new perspective for herself. Similar sample restrictions exist for the control group. The women included in this

sample are conceivably outgoing and motivated enough to have sought the company of other women who share an almost identical lifestyle. They were virtually self-selected, just by the fact that they attended this particular women's group meeting. Their selection for inclusion in the control sample as opposed to the abused group, was based solely on their honesty, i.e., whether or not they experienced abuse was not empirically verified, a definite confounding variable.

Selection bias and limited sample size (which increases sampling error) tends to result in what Campbell and Stanley (1963) refer to as external validity. External validity limits generalizability of the findings to the population. Together, small sample sizes and select samples (one crisis center, and primarily one military wives group meeting in a small midwestern city) raise questions about the representativeness of the groups and the generalizability of the results to all battered women. Additional problems in generalizability result from the fact that almost all of the battered women in this sample were military wives. The comparability of this unique group with abused women in the general population is unknown.

According to Cliff (1968), a number of responsive sets in personality research have been identified. The two most prominent being acquiescence (Aq) and social desirability (SD). Acquiescence refers to a more or less consistent

tendency on the part of the respondent to agree with the inventory statements, particularly to accept them as true of oneself. Social desirability as a responsive set means that the probability of endorsement is correlated with the desirability of the item (Cliff, 1968). It is certainly possible that the battered and vulnerable women in this study, in a state of crisis, may be particularly prone to exhibit these biasing response sets. The need to gain approval and the desire to please the person doing the research, like the need to please their batterers, may override their ability to accurately know and label their feelings. Battered women, knowing they are in a study about their reaction to their situation, might tend to over-dramatize their plight (although the results of this study do not indicate such). Likewise, the control group, knowing they are being compared to a sample of abused women, could lean toward the positive side of responses.

These methodological problems not only indicate the need for caution in the interpretation of these results, but they also highlight the need for additional research as well. In terms of the latter, if the goal is to identify the personal characteristics and adjustment of abused wives, or abused military wives, then the sample should not be limited to those women who escaped the home and seek the protection of a crisis center. There are many women enduring abuse who for one reason or another do not seek

shelter or help. These women need to be identified and included in the sample. Perhaps posting notices in public areas, including military bases, or advertising in local newspapers, would reduce the problem of select, non-representative samples.

In terms of the comparison or control group, using the technique of testing a third group (spouses experiencing non-violent marital discord), as Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981) did, is also to be recommended. According to Rosenbaum and O'Leary.

Since marriages characterized by physical violence are predicted to be discordant, a comparison group of satisfactorily married couples would be insufficient because it would not control for the potentially confounding effect of discord. To assess whether any differences found between abusive couples and satisfactorily married couples were a function of the wife abuse rather than marital discord, a comparison group of couples experiencing non-violent marital discord would be appropriate.(p. 64)

### Conclusion

The domain of the Armed Forces and its impact on human lives is a well-kept secret, one which was only touched upon in this study in terms of incidence of wife abuse, and the conditions ripe for its propagation. Perhaps a study on one small facet of the turmoil within military life,

such as this one, will focus attention on it and highlight the need for family support, educational, and therapeutic services.

According to Lesse (1979) violence against women, namely rape and wife beating, is likely to increase in frequency during the next two decades. It will become less frequent, he feels only when men assume a greater psychological status and become the equal of women in society in terms of a reduction in the need for power and ego strength. He feels, and I agree, that Mankind must evolve a method which rejects aggression and the propensity to use coercive power to dominate.



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Kansas State University  
Department of Family and Child Development

INFORMED CONSENT

I have been informed of the details of the research project being conducted at the Crisis Center by Sabina Levsen, under the direction of Dr. Albert J. Davis, Associate Professor of Family and Child Development at Kansas State University. This project has been approved by Judy Davis, Director of the Regional Crisis Center in Manhattan.

I have been assured that everything I say will be completely confidential, and that no one outside of the research team and Judy Davis will know of my participation in the research. My name will never be used in any public or private report of the results.

I hereby indicate my willingness to participate in this research.

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Signature

Department of Family and Child Development  
Kansas State University

INFORMED CONSENT

I have been asked to participate in a research project as part of the control group (comparison group) in a study designed to investigate the personal and social adjustment of battered women. This project is being carried out under the direction of Dr. Albert J. Davis, Associate Professor of Family and Child Development at Kansas State University, with the support of Judy Davis, Director of the Regional Crisis Center in Manhattan.

I have been fully informed of the intent of the study, and the procedures to be followed with the control group. I understand them, and hereby indicate my willingness to participate in this research as part of the control group.

---

Signature

Project Staff

Sabina Levsen

Closing Interview Items

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ years

Age of husband \_\_\_\_\_ years

Children:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Sex</u>
_____	_____	M F
_____	_____	M F
_____	_____	M F
_____	_____	M F

Your education (circle one)Your husband's education

Years: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12

9 10 11 12

13 14 15 16

13 14 15 16

Is your husband in the service? If so, what is his rank? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years has he been in the service? \_\_\_\_\_ years

If not in the service, what does he do? \_\_\_\_\_

Family Income

\_\_\_\_\_ under 7,000

\_\_\_\_\_ between 7,000-12,000

\_\_\_\_\_ between 12,000-17,000

\_\_\_\_\_ between 17,000-22,000

\_\_\_\_\_ more than 22,000 per year

Do you belong to any clubs or community organizations? If so, identify:

Is there anyone in whom you confide or talk to about your problems?

Yes No

If so, who is that? \_\_\_\_\_ Child \_\_\_\_\_ Relative \_\_\_\_\_ Friend

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Have you had this problem before? How often? \_\_\_\_\_

Over what period of time? \_\_\_\_\_

Closing Interview Items

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ years  
 Age of husband \_\_\_\_\_ years

Children:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Sex</u>
_____	_____	M F
_____	_____	M F
_____	_____	M F
_____	_____	M F

Your education (Circle one)

Years: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12

13 14 15 16

Your husband's education (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12

13 14 15 16

Is your husband in the service? If so, what is his rank \_\_\_\_\_  
 How many years has he been in the service? \_\_\_\_\_ years  
 If not in the service, what does he do? \_\_\_\_\_

Family Income

\_\_\_\_\_ under 7,000

\_\_\_\_\_ between 7,000-12,000

\_\_\_\_\_ between 12,000-17,000

\_\_\_\_\_ between 17,000-22,000

\_\_\_\_\_ more than 22,000 per year

Do you belong to any clubs or organizations (in addition to the Military wives group)? Identify \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a victim or have you ever been a victim of spousal abuse?

Explain \_\_\_\_\_

Is there anyone in whom you confide or talk to about your problems? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is that? \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse \_\_\_\_\_ Child \_\_\_\_\_ Relative

\_\_\_\_\_ Friend/Neighbor \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

February 15, 1983

Dear

Let me introduce myself and the purpose of this letter. My name is Sabina Levsen and I'm a graduate student at Kansas State University in the Family and Child Development program working on my Master's degree. My research involves work with battered women at Manhattan's Regional Crisis Center. I am in need of some women to be in a control or comparison group to complete my research. Since many of the women at the Crisis Center are Military wives, I need the control group to be as closely matched in all possible areas except for the abuse. I got your name from Carolyn Anderson of the Military Wives group and would greatly appreciate your help in my research. What it would involve is filling out five short questionnaires about yourself and a short personal data sheet. I guarantee complete confidence in the use of your data. I will gladly come to your house at your convenience, and will be calling you in a day or two in order to set up a day and time, should you decide to participate.

Thank you in advance,

*Sabina Levsen*



PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT  
OF BATTERED WIVES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

by

SABINA ALEIA LEVSEN

B.A., Quinnipiac College, 1980

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Human Development and Family Studies

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1986

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ADJUSTMENT OF BATTERED WIVES:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Abstract

Recognition of the reality and magnitude of the problem of violence against women in the professional literature has a relatively short history, dating back only one decade. The problem itself has been traced historically to early primitive societies and it remains a serious and widespread problem today, as evidenced by national incidence figures. It is a "hidden crime" in the family home. However, much of the initial research on battered women consists of clinical case analyses and clinical interpretations, with relatively few empirical studies with standardized measures, adequate comparison groups, or appropriate statistical analyses. In both the clinical and empirical literature, there are conflicting profiles of the abused woman.

The present study was designed to provide an assessment of the personal characteristics and psychological adjustment of women who fled to a crisis center for protection as a result of being battered by their husbands. Furthermore, this study represents the first empirical assessment of abused wives in military families, one of the

principle populations served by the Regional crisis Center in this community. Based on the findings of the previous research, it was predicted that abused women would manifest lower levels of personal adjustment and self esteem, higher levels of anxiety, traditional feminine (i.e., expressive) as opposed to masculine (i.e., instrumental) personal attributions, and perceptions of themselves as victims of circumstances (i.e., external locus of control) than a comparable group of non-abused wives.

The sample consisted of 30 recently abused wives from primarily military families and a comparison group of 30 non-abused military wives. Preliminary group comparisons on demographic characteristics of the samples revealed several SES-related differences between two groups, with the non-abused group exhibiting higher levels of education, spouses' education, and family income than the abused group. The women in each group were individually administered five standardized psychological instruments tapping the targeted dimensions including:

- 1) Spielberger's (1970) State-Trait Anxiety Inventory;
- 2) Rosenberg's (1965) Self Esteem Scale; 3) Gough and Heilbrun's Adjective Check List of the Personal Adjustment Scale; 4) Spence and Helmreich's (1972) Personal Attributes Questionnaire; and 5) Rotter's (1966) Internal-External Locus of Control Scale.

Univariate Analyses of Covariance, with subject's education, spouse's education, and family income as covariates, yielded the following results: 1) The abused women exhibited significantly higher levels of State-Anxiety (Group Main Effect), as predicted; and 2) contingent on the level of education or income, significantly higher self-perceived feminine attributes, and significantly lower levels of self esteem, personal adjustment, and masculine attributions. The latter Group X Covariate interactions generally revealed differences between the non-abused group and those abused women with limited personal and financial resources, i.e., women with limited education or income. Finally, no differences were found for locus of control, contrary to expectations; nor for levels of Trait-Anxiety, perhaps reflecting the absence of deep-seated psychological or psychiatric disturbances in the abused sample.

The group differences revealed in this study were generally consistent with the hypothesized expectations derived from the previous empirical and clinical research in this field. Further, this study also contributed some new information in that for the most part, obtained group differences were contingent on the abused women's educational and/or financial resources. That is, with the exception of the level of state anxiety, the poorer

psychological functioning of the abused group was restricted to those women who were poorly educated and without much in the way of financial resources. Thus, SES status was directly implicated in the results of this study, perhaps indicating its role in mediating the impact of abuse on women. Furthermore, this study also highlighted the unique circumstances of being a military wife, in conjunction with socio-economic conditions and the psychological status of the abusing husband, as a potential contributor to the pattern revealed in these results.

Shortcomings in the design and methodology are discussed, as well as the implications of the findings for research and intervention.