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OPTIONS FOR BATTERED WOMEN :
VOCABULARIES OF MOTIVE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT FACTORS
IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

LISA ROSE LEDUC

Submitted to the Department of Criminology,
University of Ottawa, in partial fulfilment of
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts



Lisa Rose Leduc, Ottawa, Canada, 1992



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ISBN 0-315-85789-7

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest thanks to all of the women who shared their stories and opened up a painful part of their lives to me. They taught me a great deal, and opened my eyes to many injustices that I have been fortunate enough never to have experienced myself.

Much gratitude to Dr. Ross Hastings who gave me theoretical and practical guidance, and continued to assure me that I really was capable of doing this.

Thank you, as well, to Walter DeKeseredy who directed me to invaluable specific references and was always genuinely interested in how everything was going.

Without my family and friends this thesis would not have been written. Thanks to Mom and Dad whose financial and emotional support propelled me to the Master's level of education. Thanks to Jeanette who carefully followed the rules of being interested, but at the same time, knowing when not to ask how it was going. Many thanks as well to Tanya, who at times seemed to be the only person who really understood how I felt and was always willing to talk endlessly, or not at all.

And to Kevin, who supported me in every way imaginable and inspired me to keep going by insisting that my education was a priority in our lives. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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INTRODUCTION

It has been estimated that one in ten Canadian women are assaulted by their partners each year (Macleod, 1980; 1987). These women are victims of verbal and physical abuse by the person that they are closest to. What wife assault really means to the victims is probably best described by a survivor that was interviewed by a Canadian researcher working in this area;

Wife battering is the loss of dignity, control, and safety as well as the feeling of powerlessness and entrapment experienced by women who are the direct victims of ONGOING & REPEATED physical, psychological, economic, sexual and/or verbal violence or who are subjected to persistent threats & the witnessing of such violence against their children, other relatives, pets and/or cherished possessions, by their boyfriends, husbands, live-in lovers, ex-husbands or ex-lovers, whether male or female. The term 'wife battering' will also be understood to encompass the ramifications of the violence for the woman, her children, her friends and relatives, and for society as a whole. (Macleod, 1987:16)

In this context, it is often difficult for outsiders to understand why a battered woman would remain in this situation. Unfortunately that is often what occurs; many battered women endure years of abuse. But the inability to understand and/or empathize with the victims only serves to alienate them from the rest of society, and reinforces their sense of helplessness and hopelessness. To stretch the point further, it could be hypothesized that this alienation even encourages them to remain with their abusive partner.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the problem of how and why battered women leave or stay in an abusive relationship. It attempts to discover some of the situational factors, specifically the sources of social support, which are related to a

woman's decision to either stay or leave. It is essential to understand how a woman defines and constructs the situation in order to explain her decision.

The symbolic interactionist perspective on behaviour within the criminological field has traditionally focused on the deviant. This research will use the symbolic interactionist approach to understand the behaviour of the battered woman. Various symbolic interactionist concepts relating to interaction and perception will be applied to the interpretive and decision-making processes of the battered woman.

Social support theory has traditionally been applied within the areas of mental health and illness. This research will use social support theory as a base for understanding the effects of supports on the battered woman's actions. The supports that the woman receives during the decision-making process are relevant to the process of arriving at (and carrying out) a decision. After that decision is made the woman will continue to deal with the situation, and to respond to the type of support she receives. The vocabularies of motives (Mills, 1963) that the woman develops to describe and justify her decision (staying or leaving) must support that action. This thesis will explore what specific supports were available to the woman, and how they affected her reconstruction and reconsideration of the situation and her response to it.

Developing a typology of supports that facilitate and/or block different decisions by a battered woman will hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the situation of battered women. For

the purpose of this research, the term support is referred to as the responses or reactions a woman receives from individuals or institutions external to the relationship between herself and the abuser. The research will therefore focus on:

- (1) factors within the relationship;
- (2) the woman's interpretive process as she interacts with her abusive partner;
- (3) the vocabularies of motive developed during that process; and
- (4) the social support the victim receives, either positive or negative.

These factors will be examined in relation to their effect on the battered woman's decision-making processes as she constructs a course of action in response to her situation.

CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature on wife assault has come a long way. In the 1960's most authors were discussing the 'masochism hypothesis' in regards to battered women (Walker, 1984). This concept, that certain women subconsciously want to be beaten and therefore seek out violent abusive partners, is no longer considered an appropriate scientific or theoretical framework for analyzing the problem of wife assault. In the 1970's, the 'statistical school' of wife battering was developed. During this time authors like Straus and Gelles began to study the prevalence of family violence in the U.S.. These authors tend to use quantitative data collection methods that result in descriptive analyses of the extent and form of family violence. These statistical analyses serve, if nothing else, to illustrate the pervasiveness of wife assault throughout society. However, in terms of attempting to understand the decision-making process of a battered woman, such research has little to offer. These researchers mainly use telephone survey techniques to develop their statistical base (Straus & Gelles, 1990). The few interviews that they do complete consist of closed-ended questions that do not produce the kind of qualitative data required to develop an understanding of a victim's interaction with her partner and others.

By the late 1970's and early 1980's, more authors working in the field of wife battering began to do qualitative research. As

more shelters and transition homes were created, some researchers had the opportunity to conduct qualitative interviews with battered women. The data that was gathered through these interviews provided valuable insights into the previously private interactions within an abusive relationship. Through these kinds of interviews authors began to understand more fully the nature of the victimization process experienced by a battered woman. Some of the authors whose work is relevant to the issues involved in this research will be discussed here. This is not an all-encompassing look at wife assault research. Rather, it is an extraction of relevant information and perspectives on how a battered woman decides to leave or stay in an abusive relationship.

Cycle Theory of Violence

One of the foremost authors in this area is Lenore E. Walker. As a result of years of experience working with battered women in various shelters, Walker has developed a theory of marital violence. She argues that abusive relationships are cyclic in nature and have three distinct phases. These phases are: (Walker, 1984:16)

- (1) tension building;
- (2) acute battering incident(s);
- (3) loving contrition

Her Cycle Theory of Violence is a tension reduction theory. It argues that, within the recurring battering cycle, the third and

final phase serves to decrease the tension and preserve the relationship.

During the first phase, there is a gradual escalation of tension. This phase is characterized by hostile intentional behaviours, such as name-calling, that serve to increase friction between the couple. The batterer expresses hostility but not in an extreme or explosive form. The victim attempts to placate the batterer, and often she succeeds for a short period of time, thereby reinforcing her unrealistic belief that she can control the situation.

Phase two is characterized by the uncontrollable discharge of tensions that have built up in phase one, with the batterer typically unleashing a barrage of verbal and physical aggression on the woman. The victim herself is sometimes found to intentionally precipitate the acute battering incident in phase two so as to control where and when it occurs. Walker claims that the violence does serve its' purpose in that it results in a reduction of the tension in the situation. However, the tension is reduced at a great psychological and often physical cost to the woman.

During phase three the batterer may apologize profusely; try to assist the victim; show kindness and remorse; and/or shower her with gifts and promises. The batterer himself may, and often does, believe he will never be violent with his partner again (Walker, 1984). The woman as well, may desperately want to believe the batterer. This phase often serves to renew her hope that he will change. This third phase provides the positive reinforcement to

remain in the relationship. Through her interviews Walker found that during the course of most abusive relationships the third loving/contrition phase gradually became shorter and shorter, and often ceased completely (Walker, 1984:28).

Learned Helplessness Theory

Another contribution of Walker to the body of research in this area is her application of the theory of learned helplessness to battered women (Walker, 1979:528). Walker adopts the concept of learned helplessness from the social-learning perspective to explain why many women remain within a battering relationship; because they believe that they could not survive on their own. This theory has been used to explain the behaviour of prisoners of war, especially those interned in the Nazi concentration camps of the second World War. Even after they were liberated many prisoners were unwilling or unable to leave the camp. Social-learning theorists claim that these people learned that their own voluntary responses or behaviour could not produce any desired outcome and therefore motivational deficits occurred. According to learning theory, responses which are not reinforced will become extinct. These prisoners had tried for so long to change their situation with no consequence, that they eventually believed that their own actions could never effect their predicament.

The learned helplessness theory has three basic components; (1) information about what should happen (contingencies); (2) cognitive representation about the contingency (learning,

expectation, belief, perception); and (3) behaviour (Walker, 1979:528). The expectation that how someone behaves has no effect on what happens, occurs in the cognitive representation component. This is the point at which cognitive, motivational, and emotional disturbances originate. Thus, social learning theory accounts for intellectual, perceptual and feeling problems. It is also important to note that the expectation of powerlessness may or may not be accurate (Walker, 1979:530). The important point is not so much whether or not the person actually has any effect on what will happen, but rather that they perceive or believe that their actions will not have any effect, and their actions are based on that perception. This concept is important in understanding why battered women do not leave an abusive relationship; they may not believe that they can survive without their partner, or that the abuse will stop if they leave. Like the prisoners in the camps, the battered women feel that their behaviour will have no effect on their situations.

Walker proposes several possible causal factors for a woman's learned helplessness. Sex role socialization can be considered at least partly responsible for inducing a faulty belief system that supports women's feelings of helplessness (Walker, 1979:529). Data that Walker collected from her interviews supported the hypothesis that fundamental sex role socialization in childhood led women to learn that their behaviour does not effect what happens to them. It is difficult for such women to change their cognitive set to believe that their competent actions can change their life

situation (Walker, 1979:530). Similar conclusions have been found by other researchers (Ferraro, 1983; Sinclair, 1985; Macleod; 1987). Many shelter workers claim that they often become frustrated with their clients who seemingly purposely miss employment interviews simply because they believe that they cannot survive without their partner (Macleod, 1987).

The battering relationship itself may also serve to reinforce a woman's learned helplessness. It is often reported that a batterer's violence is not contingent on any behaviour patterns, good or bad, of the woman (Walker, 1984; Macleod, 1987). This unpredictability within the relationship can easily confuse the woman and convince her that her actions will have little impact on what happens to her. She does not believe that anything she does will make the batterer stop and so, as predicted by the learned helplessness model, the battered woman does not even attempt to change her situation.

"What makes them stay?": The Debate Continues

Several other authors have attempted to discover why battered women remain in an abusive relationship. There is some disagreement as to what factors induce a woman to stay or to leave their battering partners.

Gelles found three major factors that influence the actions of abused women: (Gelles, 1976:661)

- (1) the less severe and less frequent the violence, the more likely the woman is to remain in the relationship;

- (2) if the woman experienced family violence as a child then she is more likely to stay with her abusive partner; and
- (3) the amount of personal resources the woman has will effect her decision to stay or leave. The fewer the resources, the more likely she is to stay.

These findings however have been refuted by several other authors (Pagelow, 1981; Walker, 1984; Ferraro, 1983; Macleod, 1987). It is often reported by shelter workers that some women will leave after the first slap and others will endure years of life-threatening violence (Ferraro, 1983). Pagelow in particular refutes the conclusions reported by Gelles. Through her interviews with battered women in shelters she found that the severity and frequency of the violence had very little to do with the decisions to stay or leave. As well, the descriptions she received of the victim's childhood homes did not indicate that they came from violent backgrounds (Pagelow, 1981).

The decision to leave an abusive relationship is a difficult one and the process the woman goes through in arriving at that decision is very complex. This process cannot be described by three distinct causal variables as Gelles attempted to do. His over-generalization may be a reflection of his survey instrument. It has been pointed out by more qualitative researchers that one of the problems with placing heavy reliance on survey questionnaires is that they frequently provide little more than numbers to which some researchers attach meanings (Pagelow, 1981; Ferraro, 1979).

Mere numbers give little or no insight into the interactions before, during, and after battering incidents.

Some authors look to the relationship itself as a reason why women stay or leave the battering situation. Erchak uses a cybernetic model to describe abusive relationships (Erchak, 1984:247). By focusing on the interaction between the batterer and the victim he sees the relationship as a system that has been distorted. In a sense it has a disease; that disease is schismogenesis. Schismogenesis is a process of differentiation in the norms of individual behaviour resulting from cumulative interaction between individuals (Erchak, 1984:249). This situation is likely to be accompanied by three effects (Erchak, 1984:250);

- (1) a hostility in which each party presents the other as a cause of their own distortion;
- (2) an increasing inability to understand the emotional reactions of the other party; and
- (3) mutual jealousy.

Erchak claims that, once these relationships begin to escalate within schismogenesis, they become addictive for the partners. It is the addictive aspect that would then explain why abused women do not leave their partners.

Researcher Lewis Okun refuses to ask the question 'why does a battered woman stay with her abusive partner?'. He claims it is an irrelevant question that only serves to perpetuate the victim-blaming myths that are far too prevalent in our society. Okun studied battered women over a five year period of working with them

as a counsellor. He points out that many women leave and return to their violent relationships before they get out for good (Okun, 1986:25). As well, Okun found that the period when the woman is preparing to leave or actually leaving is one of the most dangerous times in the abusive relationship. It is at that time that the most serious abuse is most likely to occur (Okun, 1986:28).

Okun applies coercive control theory to the way in which abusive men keep their partners in the relationship. He claims that the batterers literally use "terrorist techniques", including: beating, confinement, threats, forced confessions, sleep deprivation, and verbal abuse. These are all used to maintain control within the relationship and ensure that the woman does not leave (Okun, 1986:56). These controlling techniques are akin to those used on prisoners of war, thus validating Lenore Walkers' theory that battered women suffer from learned helplessness.

Myths about Battered Women

It seems that many of the general public who question why a battered woman does not simply pack up and leave her partner fail to understand the complexities of power and control that exist within an abusive relationship. Okun points to the widespread myths about woman abuse that contribute to that failure to understand (1986:28).

Other authors also look to the myths surrounding wife assault that serve to entrap battered women in their relationships. Unfortunately it seems that the battered women themselves are the

biggest believers of these myths (Hilberman and Munson, 1978). It is important to note here that these 'myths' may be false, however they are a set of beliefs or rationalizations that the battered woman perceives as real. Much of the mythology is based in rigid stereotypic cultural norms for women's behaviour. The myths include: (Hilberman and Munson, 1978:467)

- (1) the violence is perceived as a norm; (this is most likely when the victim comes from a violent family of origin);
- (2) the violence is rationalized;
- (3) the violence is justified;
- (4) the violence is seen as controllable.

These myths are more aptly termed rationalizations as the victim uses them to explain and justify the battering (Hilberman and Munson, 1978). This reinforces her denial and protects her relationship with her partner by allowing her to believe that she is in control (although more likely she is totally enslaved). Even when the victim perceives the violence itself as inappropriate, there is a second group of myths or rationalizations that serve to keep her in the relationship, they include: (Hilberman and Munson, 1978:467)

- (1) she loves him;
- (2) she cannot survive without him;
- (3) she stays for the sake of the children;
- (4) he will change.

This secondary set of myths comes into play after a woman has redefined herself as 'battered'. She can no longer excuse or ignore the violence, yet she continues to stay with her partner and uses these rationalizations to explain her failure to leave. Other authors have further examined these myths and how they are used by battered woman to explain away violence or their own inaction.

Techniques of Rationalization

Ferraro has organized these myths into a set of six techniques of rationalization used by battered women to help justify both the violence and why she is putting up with it. First Ferraro points out that the battering must be put in the context of the relationship. She notes that

Women view the actions of their partners through a perceptual screen composed of emotions, expectations, shared experiences, and commitments. Violent actions do not pass through this screen without considerable interpretive work by victims. (Ferraro, 1983:204)

Battered women use the rationalizations to make sense of their situation, it is not an automatic cognitive response to violence, rather part of a process of continuous adjustment.

The six techniques of rationalization developed by Ferraro are: (Ferraro, 1983:204)

- (1) appeal to the salvation ethic;
- (2) denial of victimizer;
- (3) denial of injury;
- (4) denial of victimization;
- (5) denial of options; and

(6) appeal to higher loyalties.

Each of these will be discussed in some detail.

The appeal to the salvation ethic is an attempt by the battered woman to 'save her man'. It is a set of beliefs based on the assumption that the violent partner is really a good person and that his actions are a result of specific, resolvable problems. The battered woman using this rationalization ends up trying to constantly control her partner's environment to minimize all stress on him in the hope of avoiding the violence. This rationalization technique parallels altruistic sacrifices, but even those usually cease in the absence of any positive feedback from the recipient (Ferraro, 1983).

By denying the victimizer the woman is denying her partner's responsibility for his actions. The woman acknowledges the abuse within the relationship, but attributes it to external forces beyond the control of either partner. The violence then is viewed as a natural response to a situation or condition, and it will end when that situation changes. Often the woman assumes the responsibility for changing the situation, but the violence is always viewed as temporary (Ferraro, 1983).

The denial of injury is an especially attractive technique of rationalization when there is no obvious physical injury, as in the case of emotional abuse. It has been reported that the first instance of abuse rarely results in a redefinition of the relationship as a violent and dangerous situation requiring escape (Ferraro, 1983:207). It is important to note that denial of injury

is not strictly related to severity; the response of outsiders is important. In deciding for herself whether she is in fact a battered woman, a woman may imagine how outsiders would respond to her injuries. She may then decide that there has really been no abuse if there is no physical signs to show to others. If she is accustomed to having her statements dismissed as fantasy by her partner, then she may likely expect disbelief from others as well, especially if she has no physical evidence to show them.

Battered women often deny that they are victims, and claim that they deserved to be abused. To the outsider this rationalization may seem incredibly illogical in the face of serious violent attacks by her partner. However, it must be taken into consideration that it is the individuals within a relationship that define the personal nature and meaning of any interactions within that relationship. Within the privatized domain of a marital relationship the dominant partner has considerable power to enforce his definition of the situation (Ferraro, 1983). It is very easy for the batterer to convince the woman that she 'had it coming'.

Other researchers exploring the dynamics of marital violence have discovered the prevalence of self-blame on the part of the battered woman (Macleod, 1980; Andrews & Brewin, 1990). Of seventy battered woman assessed, over fifty percent of them blamed themselves for the violence of their partners (Andrews & Brewin, 1990). A higher degree of self-blame was found to be associated with whether the woman still lived with her abusive partner and

whether the woman had been abused as a child. As well, battered women were found to be more likely to blame themselves if there was a lack of social support for the notion that the violence was solely their partner's responsibility (Andrews & Brewin, 1990).

Ferraro points to two options, practical and emotional, that a woman has to perceive as available before she is able to consider leaving an abusive relationship. The practical options refer to how the woman perceives the possibility of surviving without her partner's income. It is the woman's perception of her options that is important; even if options actually exist, some women are unable to acknowledge them. They are convinced of their inability to survive without their partners. Many women also believe that, if they leave their partners, they will never find another man. If the woman sees her only emotional option as being permanent loneliness and celibacy, she will be more inclined to remain in the battering relationship.

Many women are socialized into putting a higher value on marriage and family than on their own personal safety, well being and happiness. As a result battered women may choose to stay in the relationship for the sake of the children or because their religion dictates that divorce is immoral and therefore not an option. Ferraro sees these kinds of rationalizations as an appeal to higher loyalties by the battered woman.

This loyalty to other authorities has been cited by other researchers studying marital violence in the Christian home (Alsdurf & Alsdurf, 1989). These authors surveyed clergy to

determine their opinions on whether wife abuse was justification to terminate the marriage, and on how they would counsel their parishioners faced with the problem. One-third of the respondents felt that the abuse must be life threatening to justify the breakup of the marital union, and one-fifth claimed that there was no justification for marriage breakup and that "physical abuse is not grounds for divorce" (Alsdurf & Alsdurf, 1989:158). As for counselling women who came to them complaining of spousal abuse, it was found that most of the respondents did not question the woman's claims of abuse but challenged her attribution of responsibility to the husband (Alsdurf & Alsdurf, 1989). It seems that the clergy preferred to define the abuse as a simple family spat with both parties being partly responsible. It is no wonder that women feel that they must stay in a violent relationship for the sake of their religious beliefs, when a clergyman, the authority that most often dictates actions within that religion, is often telling her that she must stay, or even that she is partly to blame for the violence.

Catalysts for Change

Ferraro sees these rationalizations as ways of coping with an abusive situation in which a battered woman is, for any number of reasons, trapped. The woman will not be able to leave the relationship until she rejects those rationalizations. Ferraro points out six different possible catalysts that may cause the woman to reject those rationalizations and redefine the

relationship as abusive. These catalysts are: (Ferraro 1983:331)

- (1) change in the level of violence;
- (2) change in resources;
- (3) change in the relationship;
- (4) despair;
- (5) change in the visibility of violence;
- (6) external definitions of the relationship.

The change in the level of violence does not necessarily mean the violence suddenly escalates to extreme levels. Rather it may be a relative change in the level of violence, for instance the change may be the introduction of a weapon into the battering incidents.

A change in the availability of resources may be the most effective catalyst for the woman as it may remove many of the practical constraints keeping her in the abusive relationship. It is important to note once again that it is the woman's perception of resources that will determine whether she will use them as a rationalization or whether they will serve as a catalyst. The resources may have always been available, but they will not be a catalyst until the woman perceives them as available.

Sometimes, even after a long term battering relationship a change will occur in the relationship that may serve as a catalyst for the victim to redefine the situation. Often the change is characterized by a decrease in the batterer's remorse after a battering incident. This coincides with results found by Walker in testing her Cycle of Violence hypothesis. She found that women often left a battering relationship when the third,

loving/contrition phase, shortened or disappeared (Walker, 1984). That third phase, when the batterer is loving and apologetic, serves to support many of the rationalizations that may be keeping the woman in the relationship. Therefore, as the phase shortens or ceases completely, it becomes more difficult for the woman to hold on to her rationalizations and remain in the relationship.

Ferraro also found that many battered women get to a point of such despair that they 'hit bottom' (Ferraro, 1983:332). A sense of hopelessness overcomes the woman and she realizes that the situation is not going to improve no matter what she does or does not do. This is also accompanied by the realization that things certainly cannot get any worse if she does leave.

When the violence becomes visible to outsiders, the woman may be faced with a different view of her situation. She is forced to reinterpret the violence through the eyes of others. Also, outsiders who witness the violence may not support the woman's rationalizations, and this may lead her to redefine her relationship with her partner. A change in the visibility of the violence may also produce enough shame on the part of the victim to undermine her prior rationalizations. For example, Ferraro reports that one woman interviewed had been repeatedly beaten by her husband for over a decade, but when he slapped her once in a public shopping mall she packed her bags and left (Ferraro, 1983:332).

External definitions of the relationship and the abuse will vary in their effectiveness as a catalyst for the woman's decisions. These definitions can either reinforce or undermine the

victim's rationalizations, depending on their source and the situation. The closer the relationship of the outsider to the woman, the more significant their response to her situation will be and the more likely that response will serve as a catalyst for the woman to leave.

The six rationalizations outlined by Ferraro serve to inhibit the battered woman's sense of outrage at her situation, and thereby deter her from leaving the relationship. The catalysts serve to help the woman reject those rationalizations and reinterpret the violence in a more realistic framework. After this reinterpretation the woman may decide to leave, but whatever she decides she will do it more fully aware and with greater understanding of the reality of her situation.

Mandatory Arrest Policies

More recently, Ferraro looked at how the changes in police arrest policies for domestic disputes effected actual police behaviour. Through an observational study, she looked at the on-site arrest decisions made by police officers in domestic dispute situations (Ferraro, 1989). The intent of a mandatory arrest policy is to treat domestic violence as a 'crime'; officers are supposed to arrest batterers regardless of the characteristics of the situation. That was not what Ferraro observed. Out of sixty-nine domestic dispute calls attended, forty-nine of them involved assaults on women by their intimate partners; officers did not make any arrests in forty of those assault cases, an 82% non-arrest rate

(Ferraro, 1989:64). Ferraro found that legal, ideological, practical, and political factors were involved in the officer's decisions not to make an arrest. The change in arrest policy does not seem to be helping the battered woman, and certainly does not guarantee that her spouse will be arrested and removed from the home if she calls the police. It is questionable therefore, whether wife abuse is really being treated as a 'crime'.

Problem Solving Skills of Battered Women

Other authors have studied the problem-solving skills of battered women to determine whether they have significant deficits in certain skills as compared to non-battered women (Claerhout et al, 1982; Finn, 1985; Launis and Jenson, 1987). All studies have found that battered women have a lower ability in solving problems effectively as compared with non-battered women. Through research with matched groups of battered and non-battered women, it was found that the battered women: (Launis and Jenson, 1987:151)

- (1) generated fewer total options when confronted with a problem;
- (2) generated fewer effective options; and
- (3) chose fewer effective options for use in the situation.

Non-battered women were found to generate significantly more total alternatives and effective alternatives than did battered women. Battered subjects were more likely to produce avoidant and dependent responses (Claerhout et al, 1982). One possible explanation for these findings is that, because of any number of

variables (poor role models, parental abuse, lack of experience or training), some women do not develop effective problem-solving skills and coping strategies to deal with serious problems. When faced with the problem of physical abuse, these women may often to respond with behaviours that are unlikely to lead to any realistic or long term solutions to the battering. This concept parallels Walker's Learned Helplessness theory (Walker, 1979) in that these women do not have the skills to help themselves.

Canadian Perspectives

In Canada, only in the past decade has there been more useful research conducted in the area of wife assault. The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women has funded some valuable research by Linda Macleod to enhance the body of knowledge regarding both the extent of wife battering in Canada and relevant issues surrounding it. Macleod's work spans several topics within the area of wife assault, including who is battered, where, when, how often, as well as what is being done about it and how effective those measures are. Relevant to this thesis, Macleod has developed a concept of how battered women understand the battering. Through her interviews with abused women Macleod has been able to describe the shared experiences of many battered women and how they interpret and define their situations. She stresses the importance of the balance of power within intimate relationships and how that balance effects the woman's definition of the abuse. Like Ferraro, Macleod also stresses the contextual constraints present within a

battering situation: the battered woman is in love with her assaulter, and this makes it more difficult for her to simply condemn him as an enemy.(Macleod, 1980; 1987).

Deborah Sinclair, another Canadian researcher concerned with the problem of wife assault, has described the stages a battered women goes through as she realizes that she is a victim of abuse (1985). Sinclair's description of this victimization process is a tool to be used by counsellors and advocates as they try to help a battered woman change her life situation. By learning more about the process that a battered woman goes through as she redefines herself as battered, and attempts to deal with that redefinition, counsellors are better able to help the victim in that they are more aware of her specific needs at different stages in the process. Sinclair advises advocates what battered women typically require at different times throughout the process of victimization (1985:15).

Other recent Canadian research has been conducted focusing on the public's perceptions of wife abuse (Hilton, 1989). There was an attempt to discover differences, if any, on the public's view of: (a) seriousness; (b) distribution of blame; and (c) recommended police response between instances of wife assault as compared to stranger assault. The Canadian Criminal Code does not differentiate between the two crimes (wife assault and stranger assault), and the respondents in the study were informed of that before they participated. The volunteers answering the survey were given several scenarios involving either domestic or stranger

assaults. For each story the respondents rated the assault for; (1) level of seriousness; (2) who they thought was to blame for the violence; (3) what they would recommend as a police response. The results indicated great differences between the situations. Domestic assaults were rated less serious, and the police were less often recommended to arrest. As well, the victim was more likely to be attributed some blame when her assailant was known to her (Hilton, 1989:335). It seems, then, that the Canadian public still tends to view spousal assault as more of a private matter and not necessarily a crime.

Although the current literature on wife assault is vast, there is still a great deal of work to be done. The research has progressed past the masochism hypothesis and the overly quantitative statistical school, but there are still many unanswered questions. The literature discussed here has shed some light on the research question of how a battered woman makes the decision to leave or stay in an abusive relationship. However, there remains a number of issues that require further analysis: (1) If battered women use rationalizations to explain the situation and their own inaction, then what supports are required to discredit those myths and help the woman view the situation in a different light?

(2) Does the existence of mandatory arrest policies serve as a viable support mechanism for battered women?

(3) Is the availability of counselling/shelter services a prerequisite for a victim to consider leaving her partner?

- (4) What factors, either internal or external to the relationship support and encourage a battered woman's learned helplessness?

This thesis will address these questions in an attempt to develop a better understanding of the battered woman's decision-making process and what factors effect that process.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL MODEL

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism focuses on interaction as the unit of study. It views individuals as acting and changing in relation to each other as they take each other into account. Interaction, therefore, is dynamic; each individual acts, perceives, interprets, and then acts again (Charon, 1979:130). There is an emphasis on each individual's different perspectives as guides to understanding or making sense of a situation or of the actions of another. These perspectives are dynamic and alter during interaction in response to communication with others. Often an individual's perspectives are attached to his reference group as the perspective is related to his role(s). The battered woman's perspectives may be incorrect or unrealistic as they are often learned through skewed interaction with the battering partner and others who may support the abusive relationship. Because perspectives are guides to understanding situations and the behaviour of others, the battered woman may not be able to understand or make sense of her relationship within any kind of external framework not accepted by her spouse.

To describe what happens within interaction, in this case specifically an abusive relationship, an attempt can be made to dissect the situation. It must be noted that this kind of step-by-step inspection is somewhat heuristic and artificial since symbolic interactionists describe all interaction as dynamic (Charon, 1979:34). Nevertheless, for our purposes, interaction occurring in a battering relationship can be examined in six different steps.

(1) The actress enters the situation bringing her own perspectives, reference groups, memories and expectations. A woman would begin and sustain a marriage, or any relationship, in this manner.

(2) The actress defines the situation for herself as she perceives and interprets her abusive relationship. To do this the actress does several things: she determines goals; applies appropriate perspective(s); takes the role of others in the situation; pulls out and defines for herself the objects in the situation; applies past experience; considers possible futures; and views herself in the context of the situation (Charon, 1979:135). From the research already reported on battered women, we can see that these are exactly the kinds of things a woman does when faced with an abusive partner (Walker, 1979; Ferraro, 1983; Macleod, 1987; Okun, 1989).

(3) The actress determines a line of action toward objects/others. Based on her definition of the situation, the battered woman will decide whether she wants to remain in the relationship or not.

(4) The actress acts overtly, this is defined as a "social act" (Charon, 1979:135). It is most likely at this point, that the battered woman will do something. For example, she may not actually leave, but she will at least tell someone about the abuse. Other actors, including the partner and anyone she has told (friends, family, police, counsellors), will then give meaning to her overt action ('social act') according to their own perspectives

and definitions of the situation. They then determine their own line of action and act overtly by responding to the battered woman in some way. This 'action-reaction-action' process is ongoing and the actress may continue to change her 'social acts' if she receives differing responses to them. It is at this point that the concept of social support and its effects on a battered woman's decision-making processes comes into play. These reactions of others constitute social support. According to symbolic interactionists, this will influence the woman's further interpretations of the situation and further decisions regarding lines of action she may take.

(5) The actress interprets her own acts in light of the action(s) of the others. As well, she interprets their action(s) and determines what it means to her. This is the point at which the responses (social support) of others is most likely to effect a battered woman's perceived options for action.

(6) The actress revises her perspective, as well as her definition of the situation, and chooses a course of action. Any changes at this point will include the effect of the support supplied by those she told. For instance, if a battered woman told her mother of the abuse, and her mother's response was that violence is sometimes an inevitable part of marriage, then the battered woman may be more likely to redefine her situation as 'normal' or unchangeable instead of abusive. As well, if the woman chose to talk to a shelter worker who responded by telling her that she does not have to stay with her partner, and she can be given

lodging by the shelter, then the woman's course of action may change. Once again it must be noted that this sequence of interaction and analysis is not static, and is in no way as simple and linear as it appears here. A battered woman may very well go back and forth through this progression before she even defines herself as battered, or before she chooses to leave her partner. This simplistic view serves only to illustrate what is meant by interaction and how it may effect someone in an abusive situation.

Symbolic interactionism discusses problem-solving behaviours as a very important interaction. Problem-solving is seen as

.....an attempt to consciously manipulate one's situation. The individual views herself as an object in the situation, holds back action, analyzes, and engages in lengthy discussion with self as action unfolds Deliberation means we analyze situations, interpret the ongoing action (our own and others), rehearse our acts before we commit ourselves to overt action, and recall past situations that may be applicable. (Charon, 1979:58)

If battered women have deficits in their problem-solving skill, they are revealed during this process.

Action then is seen as being constructed within the situation and guided by the actress's perceptions of the situation; "we do not release action but we construct it, we define self and situation, we establish goals and determine lines of action toward objects, then overt action takes place." (Charon, 1979:120).

Because battering occurs within an intimate relationship, the situation usually remains relatively private. As a result, the woman may interact with the batterer alone. It is on the basis of that, probably violent and skewed interaction, that the battered

woman creates her definition of the situation. The woman's further actions will be based on that definition.

C. Wright Mills - Vocabularies of Motive

C. Wright Mills, a prominent interactionist, describes the reasons people give for their actions after they have interpreted and defined the situation as their vocabularies of motive;

The avowal and imputation of motives are features of such conversations as arise in 'question' situations.....
 Motives are imputed or avowed as answers to questions interrupting acts or programs. Motives are words. Generically, to what do they refer? They stand for anticipated situational consequences of questioned conduct.
 (Mills, 1963:441)

He saw these motives as "the terms with which interpretation of conduct by social actors proceeds." (Mills, 1963:440). They are words which are spoken in anticipation of questions regarding our actions, they function therefore to explain conduct. There exists, according to Mills, whole working sets of vocabularies of motives for different situations and different actors within those situations. Battered women may have their own sets of vocabularies of motive to deal with questions of their behaviour within an abusive relationship, especially questions regarding why they are remaining in the relationship. The rationalizations used by battered women can be viewed as types of vocabularies of motive that serve to explain their action (or inaction). Mills emphasizes that these vocabularies must be socially situated in order to have any real meaning;

.....both motives and actions very often originate not from within [the actors] but from the [social] situation in with

individuals find themselves. It translates the question of 'why' into a 'how' that is answerable in terms of a situation and it's typical vocabulary of motives, i.e., those which conventionally accompany that type of situation and function as cues and justification for normative actions in it. (Mills, 1963:442)

This research will use the concepts of symbolic interactionism in an attempt to explain and understand the decision-making process of a battered woman, and how supports effect that process by blocking or facilitating different perceptions, decisions, and vocabularies of motive. The battered woman's perspective within her situation will influence her actions. As well, the problem-solving techniques that she uses to deal with her situation can be determined through the symbolic interactionist definition of problem-solving behaviour in a situation. The victim's vocabularies of motive will be described and situated within the situation, that is within the abusive relationship. As well, an attempt will be made to assess whether the woman's vocabularies of motive altered throughout the cycle of violence and through the lifetime of the relationship itself.

Social Support Theory

In the 1970's, a great deal of attention began to be focused on the ill effects of stress on an individual's mental and physical health. Medical care professionals became more and more aware that disease etiology could not always be attributed to something purely physical in origin. As a result, many researchers began to concentrate on determining the impact of stress, and on how to prevent both stress and it's harmful effects on the patient. It

was from this research that the concept of social support was developed (Cohen & Syme, 1985:3-6).

Social support has a variety of definitions, the most basic form being "the resources provided to an individual in need by others" (Cohen & Syme, 1985:5). It is important not to view 'resources' as strictly referring to material or practical aid. Indeed social support theory views resources as being divided into three distinct types; emotional support; cognitive support; and material support. Emotional support refers to behaviour by others that makes an individual feel cared for, admired, respected and loved as well as secure in the knowledge that there are people available to provide this comfort. Cognitive support refers to the knowledge, information and advice provided by others that allows an individual to better understand their situation and adjust to any changes within it. Material support refers to goods and services that aid in solving practical dilemmas faced by an individual (Jacobson, 1986).

Although social support theory has traditionally been used within the framework of health service treatment and intervention programs, it has drawn attention from other disciplines as well. Interest has been generated from professionals in fields as diverse as anthropology, architecture, environmental design, epidemiology, gerontology, health education and planning, psychology, social work, and sociology (Cohen & Syme, 1985). Social support theory has been found to be relevant in many more areas of life than strictly mental and physical health care. For the purpose of this

research, social support theory can be used to describe the factors which might affect a battered woman's decision to stay with or leave an abusive partner. The basic components of social support theory must be investigated, therefore, in order to gain a greater understanding of how supports might effect people.

Cohen and Syme (1985) raise many issues regarding the application of social support. These issues are relevant irregardless of the specific situation within which social support is being used. It is very important to note that they, along with other social support theorists (Jacobson, 1986; Wethington & Kessler, 1986), allow for social support to have negative as well as positive effects on an individual. With reference to wife abuse it can be said then that supports can serve to either encourage a woman to end an abusive relationship, or to influence her to remain with her partner. It is the buffering hypothesis of social support theory that explains how certain supports actually influence a battered woman to stay with her abusing partner by helping make the abusive situation more livable, or even less likely to be defined by the woman as abusive:

In short, resources provided by others may redefine and reduce the potential for harm posed by a situation and/or bolster the ability to cope with imposed demands, hence preventing the appraisal of a situation as stressful.
(Cohen & Syme, 1985:7)

It is suggested that there are three ways in which support may ease the impact of the stressful experience;

- (1) by reducing or altering the perception that the situation is stressful;

- (2) by calming the neuroendocrine system so that the individual is less reactive to perceived stress; and
- (3) by promoting more healthful behaviours thereby offsetting the stress (Cohen & Syme, 1985:7-8).

The strong link between the physical sciences and social support theory can be seen here. The theory was first developed in an attempt to determine what social factors effect physical well-being, but has since evolved in use to include all areas of life that create stress for an individual.

Social Support and Intervention Programs

It must be emphasized that for social support to be effective in any manner it has to be contextualized: "[the intervention]...must consider individual differences in need or desire for such support, as well as the social and environmental contexts in which support is perceived, mobilized, given, and taken." (Cohen & Syme, 1985:9). If social support is to be a successful form of intervention, successful meaning that it leads to an individual's greater well-being, then there are several issues to be considered before embarking on a full scale intervention program based on social support theory. Cohen and Syme discuss eight questions to be addressed when attempting to determine the potential for effectiveness of social support in a given situation (1985:9-12). By providing answers to these questions, the support offered can be contextualized:

- (1) Who is giving support?

The exact same support may be received favourably from one giver but rejected from another. The roles of the giver and receiver, and the norms associated with those roles based on past experience, may dictate the acceptability of the support. For a battered woman, for example, emotional support may be welcomed from her sister, but dismissed from a police officer or other stranger.

(2) What kind of support?

The specific type of resource being offered (emotional, cognitive, or material) must be appropriate and required given the details of the situation. An abused homemaker with children will need more material and financial support than an abused self-employed woman without any children.

(3) Who is receiving the support?

The recipient may individually determine the effectiveness of the support. In other words, different characteristics of the recipient may define the constructive usefulness of the support. These characteristics include personality, social and cultural roles, and the resources available to the receiver from alternative sources. As well, the recipient's ability, or at least perception of her ability, to attract, mobilize, and sustain support is also critical to her positive or negative reception of certain supports. For example, battered immigrant women in Canada often have difficulty receiving social support because they are culturally bound to remain silent and accept the abuse from their partners.

(4) Support for what problem?

It is important that the support offered be appropriate to the problem being encountered. In the instance of wife battering, most cases demand the same kinds of support. However, emotional and physical abuse may require different types of support, or that the support be given in different ways. Often, a woman who is emotionally battered fears that no one will see her as abused because she has no bruises or scars to prove it. Strong cognitive support is needed to help the woman define her relationship as abusive and convince her that the outside world will see it as such.

(5) When is support given?

Some forms of support may be optimally effective at one point in a situation but useless and even harmful at another point. One must keep in mind that entirely different kinds of support may be required at different times in a changing situation. A battered woman is more likely to require emotional and cognitive support after the first abusive incident when she may not even be considering leaving her partner. However, when separation becomes an issue, material supports become more appropriate.

(6) How long is support provided?

Support givers differ in their ability to maintain support over an extended period of time. Some support networks are set up only to provide short-term immediate aid. However some recipients may continue to require changing types of support beyond the short-term and the ability of the giver to sustain and change support as needed may become a relevant and pressing issue. For example, the

immediate or short-term safety needs of a battered woman can be fulfilled by police personnel. Those personnel are not equipped, however, to deliver the counselling or emotional and cognitive supports that will most probably be required by the woman. It is in this type of situation that the inadequacy of inter-agency referrals may often deny the abused woman the continuity and variety of support she requires.

(7) What are the costs of support?

The costs of both giving and receiving support, as well as the perceptions of those costs, may in themselves determine whether or not the support is asked for, given, or continued. These are not financial costs alone; they also include the emotional costs for both the giver, the receiver, and their relationship. An individual's perception of the availability of supports may very well be influenced by their estimates of the costs of receiving the support and whether they can 'afford' to request that support. For a battered woman, the cost of receiving support may simply be the public admission that she has been assaulted by her partner. For many this cost may be considered to be too high; as a result they may not seek support.

(8) How do these issues interact to determine the support?

For a model of support to be useful, it must recognize the complex interaction of all these various issues. Indeed many of these issues may be completely dependent or independent of each other, depending on the specific situation. In the case of a battered woman leaving her partner, the availability of continued

long-term support may depend on her cultural background (as some ethnic cultures would cause a woman's family to disown her for leaving her marriage). If the family, traditionally the source of long-term support, is absent, then other groups of support givers may be relied upon for continued support.

All of these issues are important and relevant to providing support to a battered woman. Through these eight questions, Cohen and Syme have provided a working agenda of social support theory, issues and concerns. However, it must be emphasized that the support or service relationship is much more complex than it might appear in this brief explanation. The scenarios given when discussing each question are basic examples only and are not meant to be a complete illustration of any support process. These examples serve rather to illustrate how social support theory can be applied to the situation of a battered woman.

Perception of Support

Wethington and Kessler (1986) focus their research on the individual's perception of support rather than actual received support. Their research provides evidence that;

.....the stress-buffering effect of social support is more strongly linked to the perception that support is available than to the effects of actual supportive behaviours.
(Wethington & Kessler, 1986:84)

Although not specifically addressed in their research, it would seem to follow that if an individual perceives that they have no social support, then that perception will have a great effect on them (whether or not it is accurate). This emphasis on perception

of support can be linked with Lenore Walker's learned helplessness theory. Walker claims that victims of wife abuse, like some prisoners of war, have lived so long with their own actions having little or no effect on their life situation that they learn to believe that no behaviour on their part will result in any change in the situation (1979:526). Whether or not the woman's inability to effect her circumstance is correct, is irrelevant. She believes that she is helpless and it is that perception that will guide her action, or more likely, inaction. The battered woman's belief that she cannot survive without her partner would be reinforced by a perception that there is no social support available to her outside the relationship. As with a woman's self perception of helplessness, the accuracy of the perception of support availability is irrelevant as well, if the woman believes it to be true, than it is true for her. Her belief in her own helplessness becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. Also discussed in the wife assault literature is the power of the abuser to control the woman's view of reality. He may convince her that she has no friends or contacts outside the relationship at all, and thus that she has no social supports. It becomes important to recognize the significance placed on perception within social support theory when applying the theory to battered women.

Types and Timing of Social Support

Jacobson (1986) attempts to add a greater specificity to social support theory. He focuses in particular on the types of

supports as they relate to different types of stressors, as well as the timing of those supports within the changing periods of stress. Jacobson points out that supports must change as a problem changes and suggests that;

- Different supports may be appropriate in;
- (1) anticipation of a stressful event;
 - (2) concurrent with that event; and
 - (3) following the event. (Jacobson, 1986:253)

This emphasis on timing is consistent with the literature dealing with stress that views it as an ongoing process with different phases. Jacobson refers to stress researcher Weiss (1976) and his three phase stressor sequence. These stages are: (1) crisis, (2) transition, and (3) deficit.

- Crisis is defined as a situation of
- (i) sudden onset and limited duration,
 - (ii) severely threatening to one's well-being, and
 - (iii) marked by emotional arousal; transition is a period of personal and relational change that involves a shift in a person's assumptive world; and deficit state is a situation in which an individual's life is defined by chronically excessive demands. (Jacobson, 1986:254)

Different types of social support, according to Jacobson, are required in each of these phases. He hypothesizes that emotional support is most necessary during the crisis, cognitive support during the transitional period, and finally material support when the individual is dealing with a deficit (1986:254). These phases lend themselves easily to the reality encountered by a battered woman. Wife assault researchers tell us that abuse is often cyclic in nature (Walker, 1984; Ferraro, 1983; Macleod, 1987). The crisis phase of stress can be equated with the actual battering incident(s), whereas the transitional phase occurs when the woman

is forced to redefine her relationship with her partner as she reconstructs what happened in the crisis stage. Based on that reconstruction and redefinition, the woman decides what to do (stay or leave). Whichever choice is made, the woman will face a deficit as there may be an imbalance between her needs and her resources.

The current phase of an abusive relationship will determine the appropriateness of different types of support; "out-of-sequence support will neither be effective nor be recognized by the distressed individual as helpful." (Jacobson, 1986:254). Once again it must be noted that support can be negative, that is to say that it can encourage a battered woman to remain with an abusive partner. For example, if a woman's mother gives her emotional and cognitive support during the transitional phase, she may influence the woman to reconstruct the crisis as a common domestic quarrel instead of an incident of battering. This may block the redefinition of the relationship as abusive. This is still considered to be social support, as the mother has attempted to buffer the stress by reinterpreting the incident as being a less stressful occurrence of a marital spat. However, in the long run it will most likely have a negative effect on the victim because, by facilitating a false definition of the situation, the mother has blocked certain options for the battered woman. If the woman does not see her partner as being an abuser she may not seek further external support and she probably will not leave the relationship.

Social Support and Battered Women - Canadian Perspectives

There are Canadian researchers who have already applied social support theory to the problem of abused women. Ellis (forthcoming) examines the relevance of social support to the problem of abuse among separated and divorced women. Although he did not specifically investigate the effect of support during an ongoing abusive relationship, Ellis' work does serve to raise certain pertinent issues regarding the linking of social support theory and the problem of wife assault. Ellis extends Wethington and Kessler's emphasis on perception one step further by discussing women's widespread fear of abuse;

....perceptions are not entirely unrelated to behaviour, if not the behaviour of individual women, then to the behaviour of women as a gender group. Thus women's past experiences with men in general certainly play an important part in influencing the perceptions of individual women. (Ellis, forthcoming:6)

Ellis claims that there is a firm empirical basis for their perceptions of both abuse and support. He points to the work of mediators as being support for the continuation of wife abuse, since the purpose of their therapy is to reinstate the relationship and encourage the partners to take equal responsibility for it's breakdown. Ellis also looks at the positive and negative effects of other supports the separated woman will encounter. These include police, lawyers, and shelter workers, all of which were found by Ellis to have the potential to have either positive or negative effects on the woman's well-being. The timing of these supports was also analyzed, however the time period examined took place after the women had separated from their partners. Although the research conducted by Ellis dealt exclusively with separated

and divorced women, it does serve to illustrate both the suitability of social support theory to research on the problem of wife assault, as well as the importance of placing an emphasis on perception and timing of social support in relation to battered women.

DeKeseredy also applies social support theory to the problem of woman abuse. However, he focuses his research on the batterer rather than on his victim, and argues that the social support that men receive from their peer group can validate and/or promote the use of violence against the females they are dating (DeKeseredy, 1988). Using social support as his theoretical base, DeKeseredy developed a support model for battering men. This model consists of a four step process:

- (1) the man is in a dating relationship;
- (2) the man experiences stress;
- (3) the man turns to his peer group and receives social support to use violence against women; and
- (4) the man abuses his partner; [return to step (2) and continue] (DeKeseredy, 1988:23).

DeKeseredy also concurs with Ellis' contention that although social support theory is primarily psychologically based, it can be applied in sociological research. The concept of the sociological effects of social support can also be seen in Durkheim's research on the relationship between social integration and suicide (DeKeseredy, 1988).

This research will attempt to determine the usefulness of social support in a battered woman's decision-making process. As well, the specific types of support and their timing will be investigated in an attempt to discover their effect on the woman's decision to stay with or leave her abusive partner.

Social support theory distinguishes between emotional, cognitive, and material support. A greater specificity will be required for this research. The sources of these supports to be looked at will be; (1) family;

(2) friends;

(3) official Criminal Justice System agents
(ie: police; lawyers; other court
personnel);

(4) trained crisis intervention counsellors
(ie: crisis hotlines); and

(5) shelter workers.

The support supplied by each of these groups will then be typed into being either emotional; cognitive; or material. For example, letting a battered woman cry on your shoulder is supplying emotional support. If you discuss the abuse with her on a more cerebral level, examining the situation, perhaps redefining it and considering possible options, then you are giving cognitive support. Supplying a place to stay and employment opportunities is material support.

The responses/reactions and the perceived usefulness of the supports will also be looked at to determine their effect, positive

or negative, on the decision-making process of the victim of abuse. For example, if you are giving cognitive support to a battered woman and you tell her that the violence is a normal part of marriage, this may have a negative effect by blocking certain options such as redefining the relationship as abusive.

Finally, the timing of these various supports will be examined to discover how it might have influenced their effectiveness. If a woman, after making the final decision to leave comes to you for help, she will most probably require a place to stay at that point rather than merely a shoulder to cry on.

It can be seen then, that a matrix has been developed to examine the specific usefulness of social support to the battered woman. The support will be looked at by;

- (1) type (emotional, cognitive, material);
- (2) source (family, friends, CJS personnel, counsellors, shelter workers);
- (3) perception of usefulness; and
- (4) timing.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review and the use of symbolic interactionism and social support theory as a theoretical base, the following hypotheses have been developed to guide this research:

(1) Battered women go through a complex process as they reinterpret their definition of the behaviour of their partner, their relationship and themselves. It is only as a result of this process that they may redefine themselves as being a 'battered woman'.

(2) As a part of that redefinition, the battered woman enters another complex process in which she attempts to choose a course of action to deal with her situation. During this decision-making process, the battered woman will develop her own set of vocabularies of motive to describe her options and support her chosen action.

(3) Social support received from sources external to the relationship will effect both the woman's interpretive and decision-making processes. This support can either help or hinder the processes, and may guide the woman toward different interpretations and/or decisions.

CHAPTER IIIRESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As illustrated in the literature review, there has been a great deal of research addressing the problem of family violence in general and battered women in particular. It could be argued that until the problem at least begins to decrease in frequency and seriousness, more research is desperately needed. However, it must be kept in mind that to simply replicate previous research may not contribute in a useful manner. Certainly this is true in the case of research focusing on the prevalence of family violence throughout the socio-economic strata. It has been sufficiently proven that violence is widespread in many different families both here in Canada (Macleod, 1987) and in the United States (Straus & Gelles, 1990).

New research should focus on more practical issues. Now that we have become more aware of the prevalence of family violence, we must address the problem of how to stop it. One approach to this problem is how to stop men from battering. Many feminists take a macro approach to the problem by concentrating on breaking down the cultural accepted patriarchal norms that support the subordination of all women. Another feminist-based approach is to focus on helping battered women make informed, practical, and healthy decisions on how to deal with their situation. This is the approach I will take.

In order to do that, we must better understand how a battered woman interprets her situation and how she then makes a decision based on those interpretations and develops vocabularies of motive to support her action. We must also discover the supports that influence her as she goes through that interpretive and decisional process. By pinpointing relevant supports, we may be able to make them more available to battered women when they need them.

This is the focus that will be taken in this research. To discover relevant supports, qualitative interviews will be conducted with battered women in an attempt to gain insight into their interpretive and decision-making processes.

Research Problem

This thesis attempts to describe the process through which battered women decide whether to leave or stay with their abusive partners, and to identify the supports that effect that decision-making process.

Research Questions

The research problem will be examined by addressing the following questions:

1. How do battered women interpret their situations, and what factors both internal and external to the relationship effect that reinterpretation?

2. How do battered women explain both their own behaviour (leaving or staying) and their partner's (the abuse) to themselves and to others? What vocabularies motive do they develop to defend these explanations?
3. Who do battered women confide in and when?
4. What factors does the battered woman take into consideration when she is making the decision to leave or to stay?
5. What does the battered woman feel she most needs in the way of supports, when, and from what source?

The fundamental assumption of this research is that as battered women make interpretations about their abusive partner's actions and their own reactions, and then make decisions based on those interpretations, there are other factors at work effecting both this interpretive and decisional process. For the purposes of this research, those factors are being identified as support. It is that support, and it's potential relevance to successful intervention to help battered women, that is the focus of this study. It is hoped that through a more developed understanding of the battered women's decision-making process, a useful typology of

relevant supports (delineated by source and timing) may be generated.

Specific Research Issues

As a result of the literature review and the theoretical model adopted for this research, there are several specific research issues that will be discussed in an attempt to organize the analysis of the data. The breakdown of the data generated by the interviews into these issues will hopefully supply more complete answers to the broad research questions outlined above. The following issues represent what the researcher expects to discover from the interview data. These expectations are based on the relevant literature reviewed in Chapters I and II.

- (1) The violence the women experience will be cyclic in nature.
- (2) The women will use various rationalizations to explain both the violence and their own inaction. These rationalizations can also be termed 'vocabularies of motive'.
- (3) There will be some catalyst(s) that precipitates the woman's reinterpretation of herself as being 'battered' and her decision to leave her partner.
- (4) The rationalizations and catalysts discovered in each individual interview will complement each other. The catalysts for change reported by the respondent will serve to disable the rationalizations used previously.
- (5) The majority of the women interviewed who have left their partners will have used women's shelter facilities.
- (6) The women will seek different kinds of support (emotional; cognitive; material) from different sources (family; friends; official CJS personnel; crisis counsellors; shelter workers).

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the definition of a "battered woman" will be a combination of definitions previously used by other studies. In Canada the fundamental definition used is that of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women in it's first report on wife battering in this country (1980):

Wife battering is violence, physical and/or psychological, expressed by a husband or a male or lesbian live-in lover, toward his wife or his/her live-in lover, to which the 'wife' does not consent, and which is directly or indirectly condoned by the traditions, laws, and attitudes prevalent in the society in which it occurs (Macleod, 1987:13).

Added to this definition will be women who experience physical and/or psychological abuse from their boyfriends. The definition will be broadened to include relationships that do not necessarily entail co-habitation because it is felt that women who are abused by their boyfriends will provide equally relevant information about their experiences.

Indeed, it can be said that this research is dealing with 'woman battering' rather than just 'wife battering', the latter term will still be used, however, as it is being assumed that the concept of 'wife' can be applied to any woman involved in an intimate relationship regardless of legalities and living arrangements.

In his work on woman abuse, DeKeseredy focused on dating relationships (1988). DeKeseredy, along with many other authors, also stresses the importance of including psychological abuse in any definition of battering. Lenore Walker (1979) argued that physical and psychological abuse could not be separated, and Linda

MacLeod (1980; 1987) contends that emotional and verbal abuse are an important element of female victimization. For the purpose of this research a woman will be considered to have been battered if she has been physically, sexually, or psychologically abused by her partner in an intimate social relationship (includes: marital, cohabitating; dating; lover).

The violence or abuse that the woman suffers will be defined by the respondents themselves, both subjectively and objectively. First the woman will be given the chance to volunteer information about the abuse she suffered. Then she will be shown a modified version of Straus and Gelles' Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus & Gelles; 1990; see Appendix C) and asked to indicate the actions her partner took against her.

The term 'support' will have a broad definitional base for the purposes of this study. The actual word 'support' was chosen because of the use of Social Support Theory in developing the hypothesis. Support will refer to the reactions/responses the battered woman receives from those persons or groups she informs of her partner's abusive behaviour; or anyone who becomes aware of the abuse, even if not informed directly by the victim. Therefore, support will not necessarily be as helpful as the common usage of the term may indicate.

The sources of the support the woman receives will be divided into five different categories: (1) friends; (2) family; (3) official Criminal Justice System agents (ie: police; lawyers; other court personnel); (4) trained crisis intervention counsellors

(crisis hotlines); and (5) shelter workers. As well the support received by the battered woman will be typed as either emotional, cognitive or material as per the hypotheses of Social Support Theory. The timing of the support received will also be given relevance. The most important definitional factor however, is that for the purposes of this research, support can be either positive or negative in both it's practicality to the battered woman and it's effect on her decision-making process.

Sample

The sample for this research was drawn from two sources: personal referral and referral from counsellors working in intervention and support agencies (womens' shelters and transition homes). Both personal friends and acquaintances of the researcher as well as crisis counsellors and directors within agencies were given a copy of the research proposal (Appendix D) and asked to briefly introduce the research project to prospective participants. Those women were then in turn given the researcher's telephone number if they were interested in being part of the study. Fourteen women were interviewed. Although the participant's demographic information was obtained for comparison purposes, achieving a sample that was representative of the general population was not a major concern in this study. The kind of qualitative information being sought in this kind of modest exploratory research does not allow for a great deal of selectivity when recruiting respondents. Basically, any woman who was willing to talk, was accepted.

The fourteen interviews were indeed gathered in a very opportunistic manner. Local shelters were extremely reluctant to allow me to even present the research proposal to anyone in the organization. In most cases, the researcher was simply told that it was not the policy of the home to allow anyone to approach their clients with questions regarding their situation. Many of the counsellors working in the shelters offered to be interviewed regarding the homes work and it's goals, unfortunately this did not come close to the kind of information that I required. In two cases however, as a result of a personal contact within the shelter organization, I was given a specific name of a former shelter client who had previously participated in similar research.

The referrals received from personal acquaintances were, however, something of a surprise. Indeed Linda Macleod's estimate of one in ten Canadian women being abused by their partners was graphically illustrated by the fact that so many people knew someone who had been battered. These first interviews led to more and more contacts as some of the women participating had stayed in shelters and thereby developed friendships with other battered women who they referred to the researcher as well.

A total of fourteen women were interviewed, most from the local area, but three from Toronto. The interviews lasted about one and a half hours with the extremes being one forty-five minute and one three hour session. Most of the interviews were conducted in a neutral location, with a few of them being done right in the participant's home. The majority of the participants were

relatively willing to discuss the details, some seemed even anxious to talk about what happened to them. Two of the interviews were more difficult however, as a result of the participant's reluctance to talk at length about their situation. As one might expect, the closeness of the event (in time) seemed to make it more difficult to talk about.

All in all, the interview process was both painful and incredibly enlightening for the researcher. The stories related by these women were horrific and all too similar, as many of them reiterated each others fears and realities. Although these women may represent an incredibly small group of survivors, their stories serve to illustrate the complexity of the problems faced by battered women as they are forced to redefine themselves and their relationship with the man they love, and then attempt to choose a course of action.

Data Collection

As mentioned, the data for this research was collected through qualitative interviews. Because of the nature of the information being pursued, interviews were considered to be the only viable tool. Other alternatives such as questionnaires or telephone surveys seemed unlikely to be able to obtain the kind of intimate material that is necessary here. For a battered woman to divulge details of how she dealt with her situation, there must be some degree of trust between her and the researcher. It was felt that a bond of trust could only be achieved through a face-to-face

interview, if at all. Most major researchers working with battered women, specifically dealing with the issue of leaving the abusive partner, use interviews to collect their data (Walker, 1979; Ferraro, 1983; Okun, 1986; Macleod, 1987).

Once the prospective participant contacted the researcher, she was given some brief introductory information regarding the study and what would be required of her if she choose to volunteer. As well the research supervisor's name, position, and telephone number was supplied to verify the researcher's affiliation with the Criminology Department at the University of Ottawa. The subject was then invited to meet with the researcher at a location of her own choice for the actual interview. Before the interview took place, the participant was introduced more fully to the research (Appendix A - Introductory Statement), and the consent form (Appendix B) was given and explained to her. If the subject then chose to sign the consent form and participate, the interview began.

The interviews were not taped. This decision was made for the comfort of the participants. It has been noted by other researchers working with battered women that the subjects often feel ill at ease with a tape recorder during an interview (Macleod, 1987). Often these women fear reprisals from their abusive (ex)partners, and the recording of the interview raises questions of anonymity and protection. I took notes during the interviews and transferred those notes into complete and detailed form within twenty four hours after the interview to maximize accuracy.

The interview schedule (Appendix C) is divided into five parts. The first part contains the basic demographic questions that serve to place each respondent in comparison to the others and the population as a whole. The second part is the descriptive questions aimed at procuring some brief details of the abuse the subject suffered (length, type and frequency of abuse). The details need only be brief because this research is not so much concerned with exactly what happened to the battered woman, but rather, how she dealt with it. The woman was asked to briefly describe the abuse and the researcher prompted her for specific details regarding how long the abuse went on and how often it occurred. The subject was asked to relate what happened both subjectively, in her own words, and objectively, by choosing the applicable actions from the adapted Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus & Gelles, 1990):

- (A) Insulted or swore at you
- (B) Did or said something to spite you
- (C) Threatened to hit or throw something at you
- (D) Threw, smashed, hit, or kicked something
- (E) Threw something AT you
- (F) Pushed, grabbed, or shoved you
- (G) Slapped you
- (H) Kicked, bit, or hit you
- (I) Hit or tried to hit you with something
- (J) Beat you up
- (K) Choked you
- (L) Threatened you with a knife or gun
- (M) Used a knife or fired a gun

This scale has been adapted for use in this research. The original Conflict Tactics Scale developed by Straus and Gelles (1990) includes the more 'normal' conflict tactics such as "talking it out" or "leaving the house"; as well as behaviours considered

'controlling' such as "sulking" (1990:3). Because this research is focusing on the more abusive tactics used in social conflict, only those have been included in this adapted scale.

The third part of the interview consists of questions probing at the woman's interpretive process. These questions deal with when and how the woman begins to define herself as a battered woman; with her interpretive process up to that point; and the vocabularies of motive she develops to explain her situation both before and after the redefinition. The researcher probed the interviewee in an attempt to pinpoint her redefinition of herself in time, both within the lifetime of the relationship (after how many incidents?; after which particular incident?), and within the cycle of violence (during which phase?: tension building; acute battering; loving contrition (Walker, 1979)).

The fourth section of the interview was aimed at discovering what social support the woman received. The support is divided by source (friends; family; official Criminal Justice personnel; trained counsellors; shelter workers), and by type (emotional, cognitive, material). The timing of the support was also determined to assess its importance. To obtain this information the participant was simply asked who she confided in or told about the abuse, when she told them, what was their reaction/response and was it helpful to her. Once again, the researcher attempted to pinpoint the support received within the lifetime of the relationship and the cycle of violence (Walker, 1979).

The fifth part of the interview probes the subject regarding her decision on a course of action to deal with the problem. The information being sought here is tied into the information received in Part IV regarding the support she received. The interviewer asked when and how she made her decision (either to stay or leave) and whether any of the responses/reactions she received had an effect on the decision. That last point was examined in more detail, asking which specific responses effected the decision, how did they effect it and why. As well, the subject was asked whether the timing of any of the reactions made them more or less useful to her when she was making her decision about what to do. It is recognized that the decision-making process is not a static one, and does not happen overnight. It has already been discussed by other researchers that battered women often leave and return to abusive relationships many times before they leave for good (Okun, 1986; Macleod, 1987). I attempted to obtain information on the woman's first decision to leave, her decision(s) to return, and her last and final decision to leave. It was felt that these are the most pertinent points for the purposes of this research. The first decision is important because it a major change in her chosen course of action. The choice to return symbolizes a completely different course of action (the choice to stay) and may therefore carry with it different factors contributing to the decision, including the effects of different support sources and types (or the lack of support). As well, the final decision to leave is

likely to be monumental in the woman's interpretive and decision-making process as it will be different than the other departures.

In the fifth part, dealing with decisional issues, the woman was also asked what other supports would have facilitated her decision. This question, which deals with both support and decisional matters, is aimed at pinpointing the resources that are available to battered women who are considering whether to leave their partners. The timing of the supports needed will also be determined. This may be an important point because it is possible that the supports are available, but they are not being offered at the appropriate time to be useful to the women who need them. A final question that does not really fit into any section was added to further identify what supports or resources are most needed by battered women. The interviewee was asked what she would do for a battered woman who confided in her.

Ethics

Because this research is dealing with human subjects, a copy of the research proposal, including the interview schedule and consent form, has been presented to the Ethics Review Committee at the School of Graduate Studies and Research, of the University of Ottawa. They approved the proposal and gave permission to proceed with the research on behalf of the University.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The fourteen women interviewed for this research had all experienced abuse from their partners. All of them had also, at some point, redefined themselves as 'battered', and acted on that redefinition. They discussed with the researcher the process that led up to that redefinition and the ensuing action that they took.

Demographics

For a small population, the sample proved to be varied demographically. The interviewees ranged in age from 23 to 52, with the average age being 30. Most of the women were at least second generation Canadian with the exception of two East Indians, one Jamaican, and one British subject. Eight of the women interviewed had children.

Their yearly income ranged from nil to \$48,000, with an average of \$26,000; their partner's incomes ranged from \$10,000 to \$100,000 and averaged \$31,000. Both the interviewee's and their partner's academic background ranged from some high school to university degrees.

Six of the fourteen women lived on their own. Of the rest, two of them were still living in a shelter or transition home, while the other six lived with some family member. The small number of women depending on some social agency for living arrangements is probably a reflection of the sample, the researcher was unable to directly contact women living in local shelters. As

a result, most of the participants had been separated from their partners for at least one year.

There was only one interviewee still living with her partner (who was no longer abusive), and one other woman wanted to return to her violent husband but his whereabouts were unknown. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, I had hoped to interview both women who had left an abusive relationship and women who were still in such situations. As it turns out, this goal was rather naive. Although a few women still living with abusive partners were referred to the researcher, they were unwilling to participate. It was difficult for women who had left more recently to discuss the abuse, and it is probably next to impossible for women still in the situation to discuss it. As well, it is possible that they have not begun to identify themselves as being battered. Without that redefinition of the relationship, the woman might not see herself as relevant to this research. Indeed, the one participant who wants to return to the abusive relationship spent most of the interview defending her husband's actions.

Severity of Abuse

The women suffered a wide range of abuse and victimization. All of the participants were verbally abused. The minimum physical abuse received was a slap and/or having things thrown at them. At the other extreme, some interviewees were threatened with weapons and some of them required hospital care for broken bones and knife wounds. The following bar graph (Table 1) illustrates

how many of the women interviewed suffered each of the thirteen abusive variables found in the Conflict Tactics Scale (adapted).

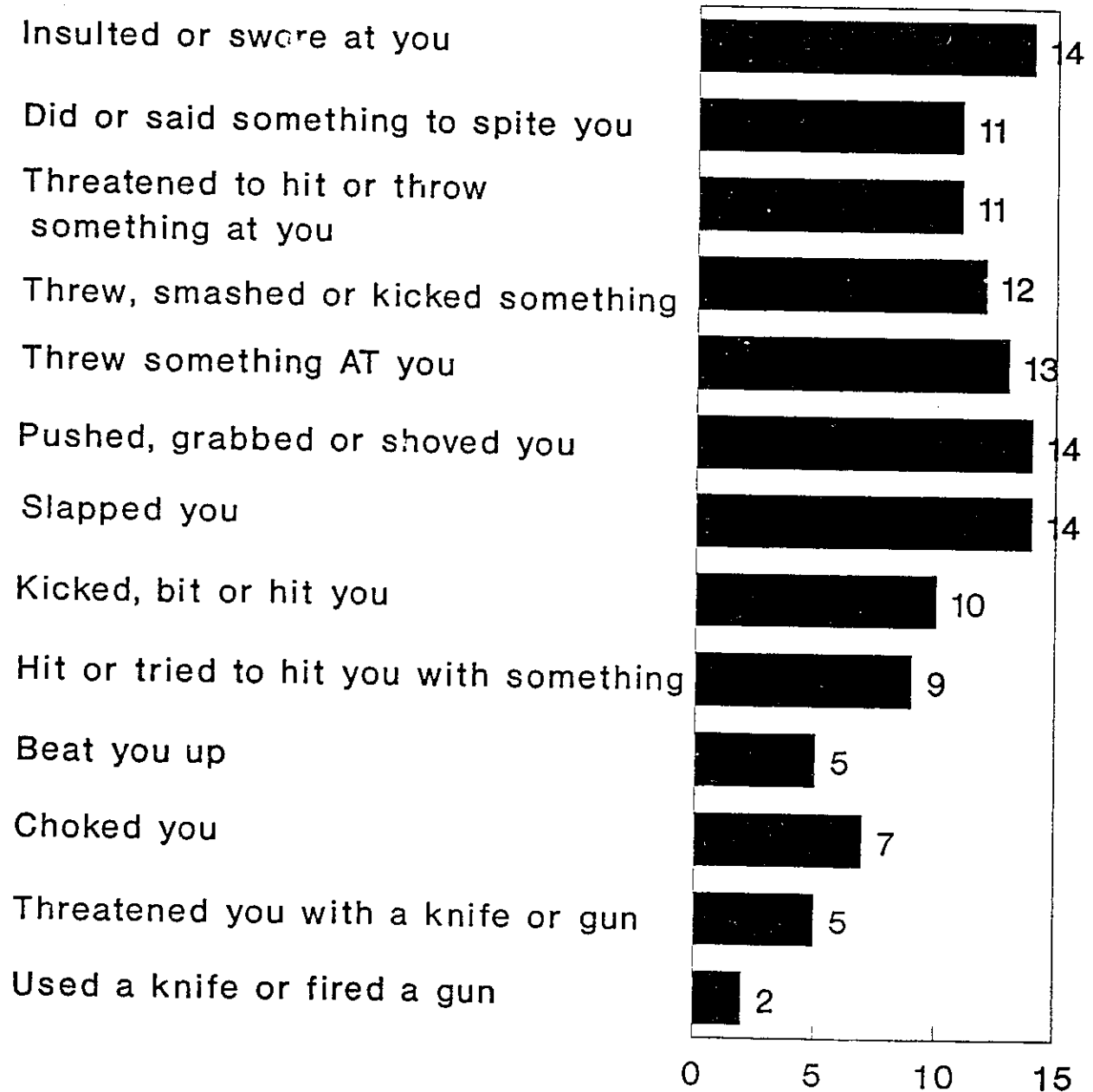
It is important to note that four of the participants reported that they were also repeatedly raped by their partners. This is a serious area of abuse that is not covered by the Conflict Tactics Scale. For that matter, there is little in the literature on spousal assault which deals specifically with sexual abuse. Some of the incidents of the sexual abuse that were related were the most terrible of all; "....eventually he was doing it [rape] every night, usually with a knife to my throat." One respondent finally left her husband when a nurse at the hospital told her of other options available and brought a shelter worker to talk to her. She had been hospitalized because her husband had raped her repeatedly and then taken a knife and cut up her vagina so severely that she required 24 stitches. Another victim related;

He would rape me and make my daughter watch, when he was done he would tell me how bad I was at it [sex] and say that he was going to have to start doing it with her [the daughter] instead.

For the most part, the abuse occurred throughout the entirety of the relationship, and escalated in frequency and in the level of violence as time went on. A 'typical' case would involve the woman being verbally abused from the start of the relationship, with the partner beginning to throw things at her and/or slap her at some point. Eventually, this would happen more and more frequently (often spilling into 'sober' incidents rather than the previous drunken assaults), and in most cases the violence would become more overt and physically harmful.

Table 1
Severity of Abuse

Conflict Tactics Scale (Modified)*



* From Strauss and Gelles (1990: 3).

However, it must be noted that a minority of the interviewees did experience extreme random physical violence from the moment the relationship began.

As mentioned in the research methodology, the specifics of the abuse these women suffered is not the focus of the research. Rather the women's response to that abuse, both in terms of interpreting it and acting on that interpretation, is what is being studied. This brief summation of the abuse that the participants incurred serves only to illustrate that all of the women who were interviewed did indeed represent cases of spousal assault. These women did not just 'argue' with their partners, they were not simply 'insulted' by them once or twice, all of these women were victims of some degree of physical violence from the man they loved.

It is probably the in the severity of abuse that this sample proves to be unrepresentative. As discussed in the definition of terms, a battered woman was to be considered any victim of psychological, emotional, and physical abuse by her intimate partner. These women seem to represent victims of the most extreme types of behaviour (serious physical assault). This lack of representation of women experiencing more subtle and less obvious types of abuse (psychological and emotional violence) is most probably a function of the data collection method. To be eligible for recruitment for this research, a woman had to be identified by herself or others as a victim of spousal abuse. Unfortunately, the majority of society still views the more tangible physical assaults

as abuse but not the less obvious psychological torture. This distinction is reflected in the types of victimization suffered by the women recruited opportunistically for this research.

Specific Research Issues

As discussed in the research methodology, the data generated by the interviews will be organized into five themes or issues that emerged from the review of the literature. To analyze whether and how the data supports these issues, each will be discussed separately (a brief explanation of how each issue was developed will also be presented). A more general explanation of how the data from the interviews relates to broad research questions and hypotheses will be found in the next chapter.

(1) Cycle of Violence

Lenore Walker argues that spousal abuse is cyclic in nature, and involves three distinct phases. The three phases are: (1) tension building; (2) acute battering incident; and (3) loving contrition (Walker, 1984). As is fairly evident from the titles of each phase, the first is characterized by hostile tension between the partners; the second is the physical violence itself; and the third consists of the abusive partner apologizing profusely. This is a tension reduction theory that proposes that within the repeated battering cycle the final phase serves to decrease the tension and help to preserve the relationship. Walker notes that the batterer himself may, and often does believe during the third

phase, that he will never be violent with his partner again. The woman as well, desperately wants to believe his promises, and this phase often serves to renew hope as well as to provide the positive reinforcement to remain in the relationship. Through her interviews, Walker found that this third loving/contrition phase gradually became shorter and shorter, often ceasing completely (1984).

Generally, Walker's Cycle Theory of Violence was supported by this research. Only four of the fourteen participants reported no pattern to their partner's violence. It is interesting to note that these were four of the worst cases, in that the violence suffered was very extreme and more frequent and random. All of the other ten claimed that their partner was, in the beginning anyway, very apologetic after each incident and repeatedly promised that it would never happen again. The women who reported a pattern of several departures and returns to the relationship, also reported that, in all instances, the batterer's promises of reform were a precipitating factor in the decision to return to him. As well, most of these women stated that it was their partner's eventual lack of promises, or their own disbelief of them, that were also a factor in their final departure from the relationship. One woman relates that her mother wanted her to return to the relationship for religious reasons and "in the end I think she believed his promises more than I did".

It is more difficult to determine if the women interviewed experienced the first phase (tension building). The question of a

cyclic nature to the violence was not asked directly, but most of the participants referred to different stages or phases. These references were made when the women discussed the frequency of the abuse and the factors precipitating both the realization that they were battered women and their decision to leave. Two women mentioned that in the beginning they often felt that they could "control" the abusive behaviour. Walker mentions that often during the tension building phase the victim will force an acute battering incident in order to control where and when it happens (1984:36). One interviewee related that she would spend as much time in the bedroom as possible so that would be where the rape would occur, rather than having her children witness it somewhere else in the house. Another participant discussed how her husband would simply ignore her in between the violent episodes; "it was like I didn't even exist, sometimes this was worse than the violence I was always waiting for it to happen". This illustrates the tension that epitomizes the first phase, prior to the violent episode (the second phase).

It seems then that the majority of the women interviewed experienced at least the second two phases of Walker's cycle (acute battering incident and loving contrition), while the first tension building phase can be inferred from a few of the interviews.

(2) Techniques of Rationalization/Vocabularies of Motive

Another prominent author in the field of spouse abuse research, Kathleen Ferraro, has identified a set of specific

techniques of rationalization that battered women use to justify both their partner's violent behaviour and their own inaction (Ferraro, 1983). Ferraro points out that in order to understand these rationalizations, a non-battered observer must keep in mind that the violence occurs within the context of an intimate relationship. This intimacy must be taken into consideration, without it, many of the rationalizations may seem flippant or naive to an observer, but the battered women use them to make sense of their situation.

These rationalizations can also be viewed more technically as 'vocabularies of motive'. Noted sociologist C. Wright Mills designated the reasons people give for their actions after they have interpreted and defined the situation as their 'vocabularies of motive' (Mills, 1963). These motives are words that are spoken in anticipation of questions regarding our actions; they serve therefore to explain our conduct. According to Mills, there exists whole sets of vocabularies of motive for different situations and different actors within those situations.

Within the context of an abusive relationship, for example, the victim might have a set of vocabularies to explain both the violence and her own inaction; and the batterer himself might have a set explaining his violent behaviour. Ferraro has pinpointed six techniques of rationalization, or common vocabularies of motive used by battered women. Just as Ferraro pointed out that the rationalizations must be given relevance within the state of intimacy between spousal partners, Mills too emphasized that the

vocabularies of motive must be situated in order to have any real meaning (Mills, 1963). It must be realized that these vocabularies of motive are not necessarily spoken. They are developed in anticipation of questions from others regarding one's behaviour, and they serve to justify the behaviour to the actress herself, even in the absence of overt questions from others.

The six techniques of rationalization identified by Ferraro (1983) are (more detailed explanations of each rationalization can be found in the Literature Review - p. 14):

- (1) Appeal to the Salvation Ethic;
- (2) Denial of Victimizer;
- (3) Denial of Injury;
- (4) Denial of Victimization;
- (5) Denial of Options; and
- (6) Appeal to Higher Loyalties.

The women interviewed were not asked directly how many of Ferraro's six techniques of rationalization they used because the explanations required would have greatly slowed down the interview. However, questions number 9 and 10, dealing with the interpretive process of the battered woman (When did you begin to see yourself as a 'battered' woman and what prompted this redefinition? Before that, how did you explain your situation both to yourself and to others?), provided the necessary information to determine which of the rationalizations the participant used. To illustrate how this determination was made, each rationalization will be discussed with

examples and quotes from the interviews that disclosed which techniques were being used.

(1) An Appeal to a Salvation Ethic, where the victim remains in the relationship in an attempt to 'save her man'. She believes that she can solve her partner's problems (which are causing the violence) and return the relationship to normal (non-abusive). This rationalization was used by half of the sample (seven participants) and in most cases, it involved the abusive partner's drinking habits. The women often felt he had a drinking problem, a disease, and it was their job to cure him. One interviewee claimed that; "I always thought that if I kept him entertained, then he wouldn't drink, and then he wouldn't hit me." One of the most disturbing interviews was with one woman who still wanted to return to her husband, but could not find him. He hated children and usually became violent when their baby was fussing or crying. She felt that she could convince him to love their child, then everything would be fine; "when the baby gets older and cries less, he'll like him better." Many of the participants used to see their partners as simply having a 'bad temper' that was controllable as long as they (the woman) kept him happy; "I thought he was a good man with a bad temper"; "The first time he slapped me I knew I had a problem, but I thought it was just that, MY problem, so I had to solve it myself, I had to make him happy". Ferraro states that women using this rationalization usually end up trying to constantly control their partner's environment to minimize all stress. It is very similar to altruistic sacrifices, but like

those, it is usually seen to cease in the absence of any positive feedback from the recipient (Ferraro, 1983). That is what occurred with the interviewees who had used this rationalization, eventually they were forced to realize that they could not 'save' their partner.

(2) The Denial of Victimizer occurs when the woman denies her partner's responsibility for his actions, attributing it instead to external forces beyond either partner's control.

Six of the participants used this technique to explain their situation. Once again, many of them saw the alcohol as the source of the violence and therefore did not blame their partner for his own actions. In three cases, the husband was chronically unemployed and the victims saw the lack of work as the external force that caused the violence. As expected, this rationalization breaks down when the violence continues independent of any external variables. One woman echoed the reports of others when she said "When he hit me sober, I knew I had a problem".

(3) The Denial of Injury is an attractive rationalization for women who incur no physical signs of injury, as in the case of emotional abuse or some sexual assaults. The victim simply denies that she has been assaulted.

This rationalization was also used by six interviewees. It seems that it is usually used early on in the abusive relationship when the abuse is verbal or only slightly physical. Many women claimed that, at the time, they did not see themselves as being abused but looking back they realize that he had always been

abusive to some degree. Often the emotional abuse is only identified when the woman leaves the relationship and learns more about spousal assault. Two of the women interviewed reported that there was some violence (hitting and/or slapping) in their first marriages, but they never thought of that as being abuse. It was not until the extreme violence in their second marriages did they begin to examine their relationships and redefine them as abusive. As one respondent reports;

He [her first husband] used to slap me and push me alot but I never had any bruises so I never thought of myself as abused. I certainly never saw the insults as abuse.
{reconstructed from interview notes}.

Another victim who was repeatedly sexually assaulted related that she did not think of it as abuse because her husband told her that it was her 'duty', as his wife, to perform these acts.

(4) The Denial of Victimization is one of the most frightening rationalizations as the woman claims that she deserves all of the abuse. This may seem illogical, but within the privatized domain of the marital relationship, the husband often holds most of the power and therefore he defines the nature of any interactions. The abusive partner, in his dominant role, is able to impose his own definition of the situation onto the victim and she accepts it as her own as well. The woman then develops her own set of vocabularies of motives based on that definition. Unfortunately it is often easy for the batterer to convince his wife that she 'had it coming'.

The researcher found that nine of the fourteen participants had used this rationalization. Basically what they were saying to

themselves was that they deserved what was happening to them: they were not victims, rather they were being justly punished for some indiscretion. Those indiscretions ranged from the inability to have children; to allowing a baby to cry; to not cleaning the house properly; and even to simply being female. One East Indian woman whose husband routinely beat her (often using a knife) felt that it was her fault because she could not bear him a son. Three other women whose first marriages were abusive, although less so than their second ones, always thought that they brought on the violence because they were too young to be good wives. A typical response to the question of how she explained the situation was "I knew this wasn't how things should be, but I always thought it was my fault". Another woman's husband convinced her that all women, specifically her, were evil. He raped her almost nightly, but convinced her that it was her duty to have sex whenever and however he wanted to, and if she did not want it [sex] as well then there was something wrong with her.

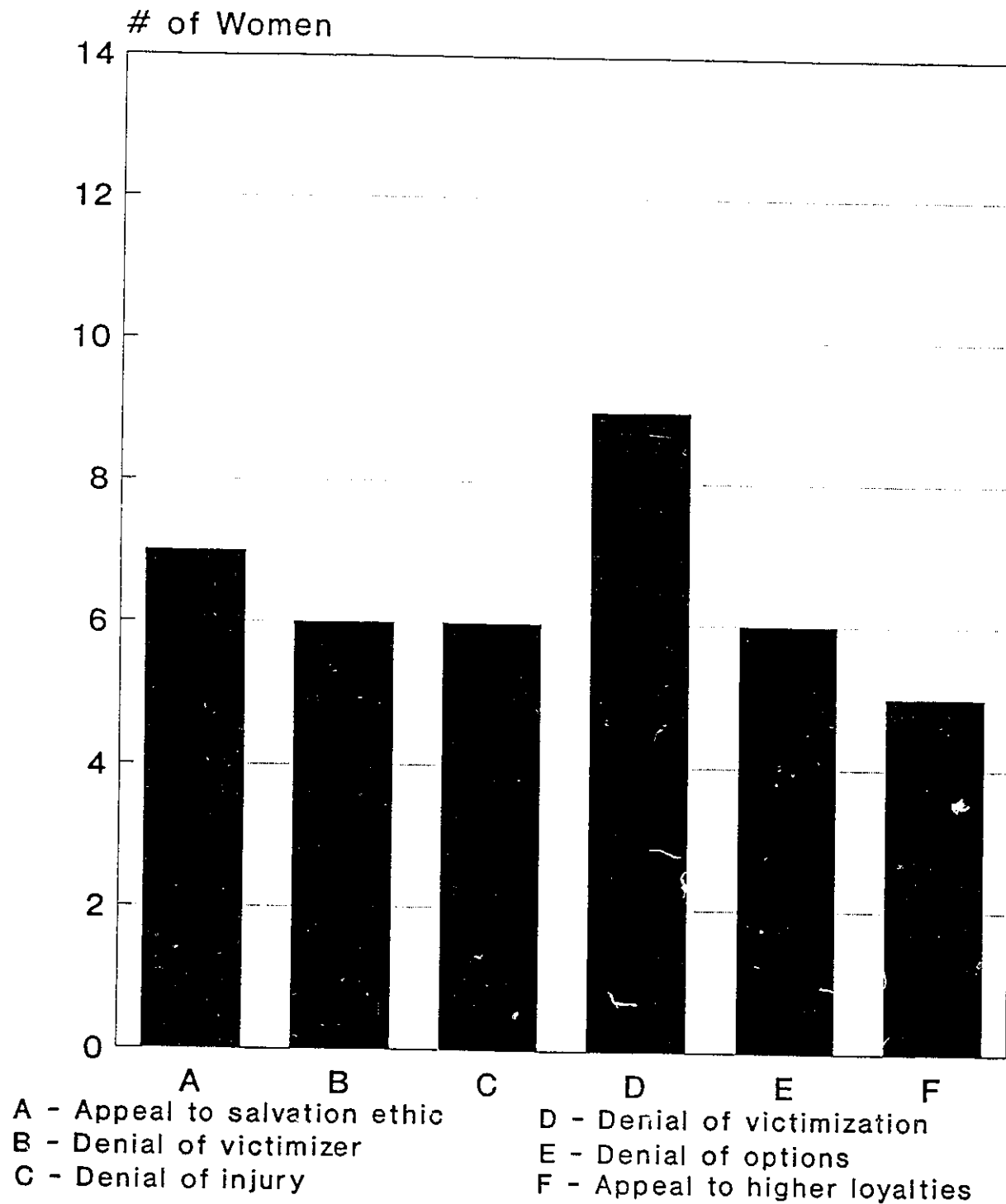
(5) The Denial of Options occurs when a woman perceives that she really has no choice but to remain in the relationship as she literally has no where else to go. The importance of the perception in using these rationalizations is pertinent here. Although there may be other options available to the battered woman, it is her perception that there are none that are suitable or relevant to her, (regardless of the reality) that will guide her actions.

Even with the large amount of outreach campaigns organized by women's shelters in an attempt to educate victims of wife assault about their options, six of the women in the sample perceived no other choice than to remain with their abusive partners. It should be noted that the three East Indian women and the one Jamaican participant were in this group. These women were relatively cut off from society, thereby limiting their knowledge of the social agencies/networks available to help women in their position. It is important to keep in mind that this is a perceived lack of options. Even if help is available; and the woman is aware of it, if she believes that she cannot make it without her partner then that help will be perceived as useless to her. That was the case with the other two interviewees using this rationalization: they had counsellors urging them to leave and offering shelter and emotional support, but the women felt that they could never live without their husbands.

(6) An Appeal to Higher Loyalties occurs when the victim's religious beliefs dictate that the marital union must not be broken under any circumstances. Basically the woman believes that marriage and family has a higher value than her own personal safety.

Five of the respondents reported that their religious commitment to the institution of marriage was a major reason for remaining in an abusive relationship. Once again the three East Indian women make up the majority of this group.

Table 2
Techniques of Rationalization



Indeed, all of them were forced to abandon their entire families in order to escape the abuse. Marital breakup simply could not be tolerated in their culture. Two other interviewees tried to remain in the relationship 'for the sake of the children', these women believed that it was important to keep the family unit together at any cost.

Ferraro sees these rationalizations as ways of coping with the abusive relationship when the woman is, for any number of reasons, not ready or able to leave. The data obtained from the interviews in this research support her view. All of the women interviewed used at least two of the rationalizations to explain their partners' behaviour and/or their own inaction before they finally left. The preceding graph (Table 2) illustrates how many women in the sample used each of the six rationalizations.

(3) Catalysts for Change

Ferraro did not stop at identifying the rationalizations that battered women use to cope with the abuse. She felt that these women would not be able to leave until they rejected those rationalizations. To achieve that Ferraro feels that there must be some catalyst(s) that precipitates the rejection (1983:331). The six catalysts for change she identified are (a more detailed explanation of the catalysts can be found in the Literature Review - p. 19):

- (1) A change in the level of violence;
- (2) A change in the perceived availability of resources;

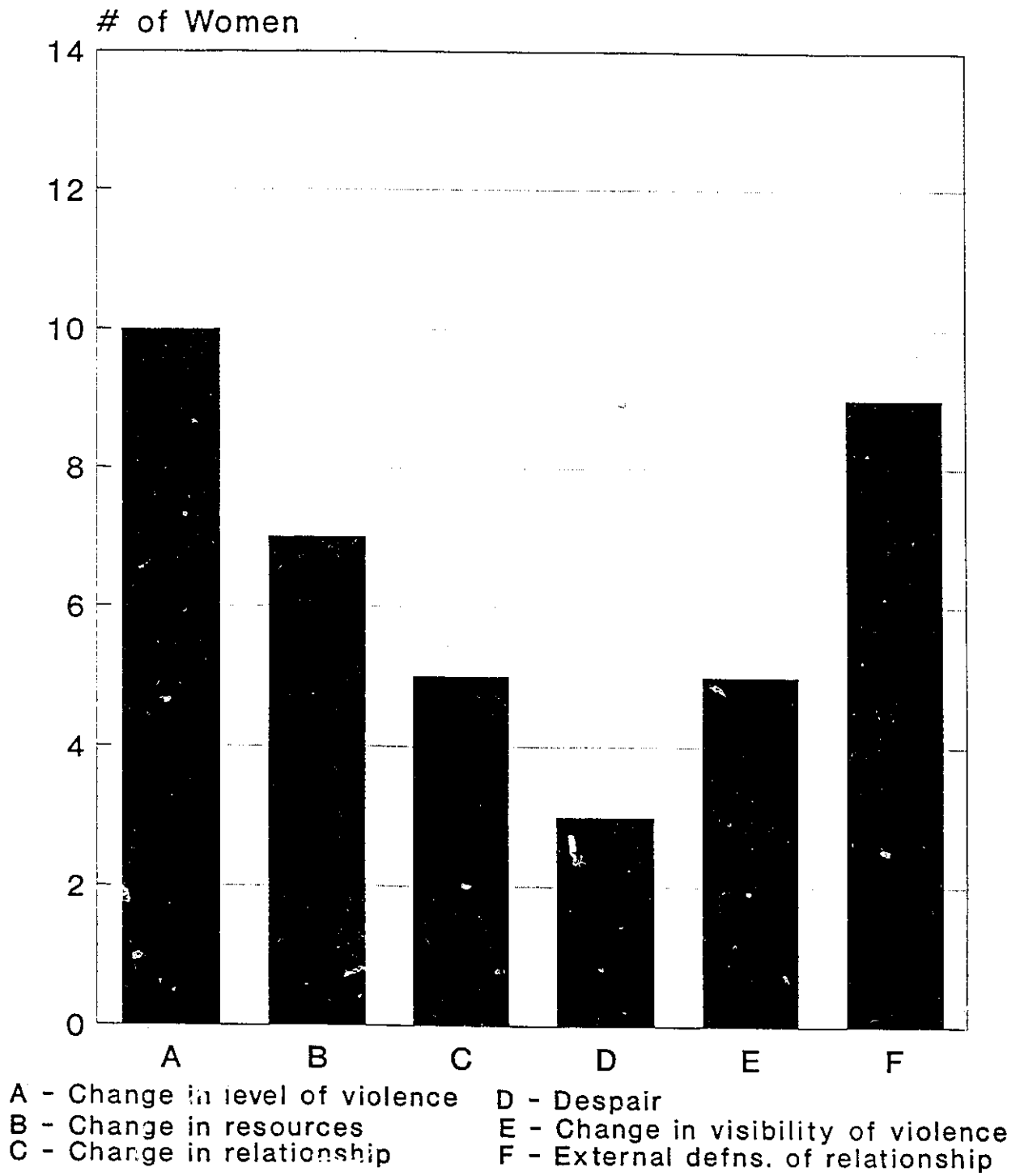
- (3) A change within the relationship itself (i.e. less remorse);
- (4) Absolute despair (also known as 'hitting bottom');
- (5) A change in the visibility of the violence (to outsiders);
- (6) External definitions of the relationship (when outsiders see the woman as being battered).

All of the participants reported at least two catalysts that precipitated both their reinterpretation of the relationship as abusive and their decision to leave their partners. The graph on the following page (Table 3) illustrates how many women interviewed reported each catalyst as a precipitator for change.

The most commonly reported catalyst was a change in the level of violence, with ten respondents citing it. The level of violence seemed to gradually escalate in many of the relationships, and often it reached a point where the woman could no longer tolerate it, or she was simply frightened for her life; "the night that he choked me and I almost passed out, I knew I had to leave". Also included in this category are four women who decided to leave when their partner's violence was turned on the children.

In four other cases, a change in the level of violence precipitated a reinterpretation and redefinition of the relationship itself. In these cases, the participants reported that they did not see themselves as 'battered' until the abuse became more physical or more personally threatening.

Table 3
Catalysts for Change



Half of the sample (seven) reported that it was partly a change in perceived resources that prompted them to leave. In four of these cases, the women were not even aware that there were social agencies that could help them start a new life. Once again, these cases involve the three East Indian women and the Jamaican immigrant; these women had, to a large extent, been alienated from mainstream society by their partners and families.

Five of the women interviewed inferred that it was a change in the relationship itself that prompted their decision to leave their partners. Much of this parallels Walker's Cycle Theory of Violence. When the third remorse/loving contrition phase decreases or disappears altogether, the battered woman has nothing left to pin her hopes on and often nothing blocking her from leaving. If the partner is no longer apologizing, it becomes more and more difficult to rationalize the violence and the failure to leave him. In the cases reported here, that is often what occurred: "He didn't even bother to apologize anymore"; "I knew his promises weren't worth anything". Also included in this catalyst group are the women who were forced to realize that their partner was abusive even when sober.

A small number of interviewees (three) related despair as a catalyst precipitating their departure. This figure is misleading, certainly it could be said that all of these women experienced despair. As with the techniques of rationalization, the women interviewed were not asked directly which catalysts for change precipitated their reinterpretation and decision to leave. Rather,

the catalysts that effected them were inferred once again from their answers to questions 9 (What prompted your redefinitions of yourself as being battered?) and 13 (What factors did you take into consideration when making the decision [to leave]?). From those answers, many catalysts were easy to distinguish. However, despair was not. It could be said that any woman who has survived an abusive relationship, probably experienced some degree of despair as she decided how to deal with the problem. However, from the interview data only three cases of despair as a contributing catalyst for change could be distinguished. For example;

That last night was no worse than any other, but something just snapped inside of me - everything just seemed so hopeless - all of a sudden it was over. I knew I was going to leave the next morning when he went to work - I knew that this time I was never going to come back.

The 'snapping' described here is similar in concept to Ferraro's 'hitting bottom' (1983:332). Only when the interviewee specifically related the concept of desperation or hopelessness were they considered to have experienced despair as a catalyst for change.

A change in the visibility of violence was a catalyst for both redefining the relationship, as well as for deciding to leave, for five women in the sample. For all of these women, it was not until people external to the relationship labelled it as abusive that they came to see it as such themselves. This relates strongly to the rationalization technique of denying victimization. The victim believes her partner's attribution of blame to her and sometimes this belief can only be shattered by confrontation with someone

else who rejects it. In the case of these women, the bruises became so obvious that some friend or family member questioned them more seriously about it, and refused to accept their explanations. These outsiders denounced the violence as abuse and encouraged the women to leave their partners. Even if they did not leave at that point, the reactions served to help them redefine the situation and remove the blame for the violence from themselves.

Tied in with the visibility of the violence to others, is the last catalyst of external definitions of the relationship. Nine of the participants related how friends, family, and/or counsellors explained to them that they were the victims and that they did not have to live in fear. One woman, who had suffered indiscriminate beatings by her husband since the day they were married, first heard the term 'battered woman' on a radio talk show. She called in and described what she was going through and asked the host if that meant she was 'battered'. It may seem absurd to outside observers that this woman needed someone to tell her that she was the victim of abuse, but once again it must be noted that within the dynamics of an intimate relationship, the dominant partner will define the interactions and in many cases the submissive partner accepts these definitions.

Once again the theories of Ferraro have been supported by the analysis of the interview data. By organizing the data into the different rationalizations and catalysts described by Ferraro, one achieves a better understanding of why and how these battered women

stayed with their partners, as well as why and how they eventually left them.

(4) Rationalizations versus Catalysts

Another way to analyze this qualitative data is from the reverse angle. This would be an attempt to determine which rationalization(s) each individual respondent used to explain the violence and their own inaction; and which catalyst(s) precipitated both their redefinition of themselves and their relationships, as well as their decision to leave or stay. By looking more specifically at the sets of rationalizations used by each victim, a more detailed view of how women develop working sets of vocabularies of motives may be generated. As well, a more specific discussion of the catalyst(s) effecting each interviewee's actions will allow a comparison of both groups (rationalizations and catalysts) to determine any links between them. This kind of correlation was inferred by Ferraro when describing the various catalysts (1983:330), however, she did not attempt to make any direct links between the two groups from data obtained in her research. This case-by-case examination will also serve to illustrate how the specific rationalizations and catalysts were inferred from the answers to the more general, open-ended interview questions.

The first interviewee used four of the six rationalizations identified by Ferraro. She denied the victimizer by telling herself that her husband was a "good man with a bad temper", by

attributing the violence to one character fault in her partner (his temper) the victim relieves the batterer of any responsibility for the abuse. In this case, the abuser always apologized profusely after a battering incident;

He would be so sorry, he would say that he just couldn't control himself.....It was like he became another person when he got mad.....It wasn't really him hitting me - it was the anger. Sometimes he would say he didn't even remember what happened. But in the end I didn't believe him.
{reconstructed from interview notes}

The interviewee also felt it was her responsibility to control her husband's temper. She felt that she could change him by being caring and understanding. This attempt to alter the partner's character is an example of an appeal to the salvation ethic being used as a rationalization to justify remaining in an abusive relationship.

This woman endured years of verbal abuse from her husband; "not when we were dating, but from the wedding day on he would insult me and continually yell at me....telling me how stupid I was". During that time however (the first five years of marriage) she did not identify the verbal attacks as abuse. She thought that because she had no physical injuries that she was not a victim of spousal abuse. This denial of injury is a common rationalization used by women who suffer verbal and psychological abuse from their partners (Ferraro, 1983:207).

This victim had three children. She often rationalized her own failure to leave by claiming that she wanted the children to have a father. This appeal to higher loyalties often fails when the children themselves begin to be in danger of abuse from the

partner. Although this woman's children were never assaulted by their father, it was his threat to "kill all of us" [wife, children, and mother-in-law], that destroyed the victim's belief that she should stay for the sake of the children, and eventually resulted in her permanent departure from the marriage.

There were four catalysts that precipitated this victim's decision to leave her husband; a change in perceived resources; a change in the relationship; despair; and external definitions of the relationship. The respondent related her husband's temper was getting completely out of control, "he wasn't the same man I married; I guess he hadn't been for a long time I just didn't want to see that". During the last two years of the marriage, he began to rape her repeatedly. This constituted a major shift in the nature of their relationship, and forced the woman to realize that she was a victim of abuse.

The woman finally called a crisis hot-line for help after seeing a poster in the supermarket advertising the service. That first call opened up options that she did not think were available before, namely a place to stay without her husband finding out. Previously she had left him and stayed at her mother's but he would always threaten her into returning. It is important to note that the poster with the crisis hot-line number may have been at that store for some time, but that only on that day did it mean anything to the victim;

He had been on me every night that week.....It [hotline #] seemed like my last chance I knew things were only going to get worse and going to my mother's just wasn't enough anymore.

The counsellor who answered her call was the first person to condemn her husband's behaviour as abuse and tell her that she did not have to put up with it; "I just needed someone to actually say that this was wrong, that I didn't have to stay with him, no one had ever said that to me." By providing an external definition of the relationship as abusive, the counsellor served as a catalyst precipitating the woman's departure.

The four catalysts effecting this woman's interpretations and actions served to quash the rationalizations she had used previously. The change in the nature of the relationship as well as her absolute despair caused her to see her husband in a different light. She could no longer blame his violence on something else or deny her own injuries. As well, she could no longer deny the availability of options as they were opened up to her by the hotline counsellors.

The vocabularies of motives used by the second respondent included four of Ferraro's techniques of rationalization used in two abusive marriages. Two of the rationalizations she used, an appeal to the salvation ethic and the denial of the victimizer, were related to her second husband's alcohol abuse. This woman denied her husband's responsibility for his own violent behaviour by telling herself that "it was the booze hitting me, not him". She also felt that it was her responsibility to help cure him of his drinking problem;

I used to really believe that if I loved him enough, if I gave him what he needed, then he wouldn't have to drink anymore. It was my job to end the drinking, never his..... He would always tell me that if he was happy then he

would'nt have to drink, so I thought it was up to me to make him happy. {reconstructed from interview notes}

This interviewee also suffered verbal and psychological abuse for many years before the violence became more physical in both marriages. At the time, the abuse was never seen as such by the victim; because she was not physically injured she did not think she was being battered. This abuse included more than just insults;

He was always throwing things, soon he began to break My things, stuff he knew I loved; things I'd had since I was a little girl....He liked to pretend he was going to break something just to make me beg him not to; then just when he promised not to and was going to put it down he would turn around and smash it against the wall.... He would laugh for hours about how he had 'tricked' me again {reconstructed from interview notes}

During her first marriage, this interviewee was insulted and slapped almost daily. She always thought she was at fault; that she was not a good wife and therefore her husband's behaviour was justified. Even after the breakup of this marriage (she left him after he beat severely on one occasion), she did not see it as having been abusive. Rather she felt she had been too young to be married and did not know how to handle him properly. Only well into her second marriage did she begin to view the violence as unacceptable. Three catalysts stimulated this change in her view of both relationships.

During the second marriage the violence escalated well past that experienced in the first. At one point, her husband broke her jaw and she then realized that the situation was "getting out of control". It was the change in the level of violence that caused

her to reinterpret her situation and begin to view herself as a battered woman. The denial of injury rationalization was no longer available to her.

The catalysts that precipitated her departure from the marriage were more than the extremity of the violence. He began to abuse her verbally and physically in public places. Eventually this became so common that all of her friends were aware of the abuse. When they came to her and encouraged her to leave him she realized that she was not the only one that thought his behaviour was wrong; "it sounds funny now, but I really needed someone else to say 'hey - that's wrong - he should'nt be doing that'".

The combination of a greater visibility of the violence and the external definitions of the relationship as abusive, as well as a general escalation in the severity of the violence led the woman to leave her husband permanently. These catalysts served to disable the rationalizations she had used previously. She could no longer deny her own injuries, and she was forced to place the responsibility for the violence onto her husband instead of herself.

Only two of the six rationalizations were used by the third interviewee, denial of victimization and appeal to higher loyalties. This woman was severely abused physically and psychologically throughout her entire marriage. Her husband convinced her that it was all her fault because she could not bear him children. As well, being East Indian, she felt that she had to

stay with him for religious reasons (her family told her this consistently).

The last battering incident ended in hospitalization as her husband took a knife and severely cut up her vagina. It was the nurse at the hospital who told the woman that she did not have to put up with this kind of violence. A shelter worker was brought to visit her and ended up helping her leave permanently. It was the change in the level of violence and the accessibility of resources that caused this woman to abandon her rationalizations and leave her husband. She knew that if she left him, she would be leaving her whole family as they would consider the divorce a disgrace. The availability of resources helped her make that decision to leave by ensuring that she would have support other than her family.

The fourth volunteer described two rationalizations that she used to justify the violence to herself. Because her boyfriend did not hit her personally at first she felt that it was not abuse because she was not really injured; "I thought we just had normal arguments - physical - but normal". She also blamed the violence on her partner's employment problems; "when he wasn't working it [the violence] was always worse".

Eventually, even when he was employed he was violent and he began to blame her more and more for their 'problems';

It just wasn't fair; it couldn't be all my fault - I knew that. He used to say he was sorry too, but he stopped doing that. I think that bothered me more than the punches.
{reconstructed from interview notes}

As the violence became more directed at her specifically, the bruises became more difficult to hide. On one occasion she required stitches. One of the victim's coworkers did not accept her excuses for the bruises and figured out the real story. This coworker had once been abused as well, she talked to the interviewee endlessly and helped her to realize that this was his problem, not hers.

In this case, the change in the relationship (the batterer's refusal to accept blame) and external definitions of the relationship precipitated the victim's redefinition of the relationship and her decision to leave permanently.

In the fifth interview the victim described daily indiscriminate beatings and rapes that began the day they were married. It may seem difficult to believe that this kind of behaviour could be rationalized, but this woman did it. First, she denied her own victimization, she thought she was to blame for the violence; "I knew this wasn't how it should be, but I always thought it was my fault. I wasn't a good wife.". This woman also felt she should stay with her husband for the sake of the children. She had been brought up to believe that the family unit was very important and should not be broken apart. She was not allowed to have any friends, and her family lived very far away. This isolation contributed to her belief that she did not have any options other than to stay with her husband.

After a few years of marriage, the victim heard a radio talk show about abused women. She called the number and explained what

was happening to her and asked if that meant she was abused. She was given a crisis hotline number to call and she used that number for the next few years. She did not leave her husband at that time, but she would call just to talk; "sometimes I would call just to hear someone talk to me without yelling". The counsellors tried to encourage her to leave, they attempted to challenge her belief that she could not survive without her husband. However, it was not until he turned his abuse toward the children that she began to consider the options they had opened for her. It was a combination of the external definitions of the relationship; the change in available resources; and the escalation in the violence to include the children that led up to the victim's decision to leave. These catalysts ended the rationalizations used previously. She could no longer deny her own victimization or deny the availability of options because of the information supplied by the counsellors. As well the appeal to higher loyalties (staying for the sake of the children) was no longer realistic when her children were in danger.

The sixth respondent is still living with her boyfriend who was previously abusive. During the time that he was abusive she rationalized his violence by blaming it on alcohol (denial of victimizer); denying her own injuries; and taking responsibility for the abuse herself (denial of victimization). She felt that she was at fault because she would nag him when he was drunk. Eventually she just avoided him as much as possible when he had been drinking, she felt this was a solution to the problem.

One night he threw her across the room, she hit her head and required seven stitches. He was completely sober at the time. This change in the level of the violence and in their relationship itself caused her to move out. She could no longer blame the violence on the alcohol, and she realized that she was at risk of being seriously injured. Eventually, they both attended counselling through which it was realized that the alcohol was only a small part of his problem. They have been living together 'abuse-free' for almost three years.

The seventh interviewee endured verbal abuse from her husband before they were even married. This abuse included insults, threats, and "constant degradation of my integrity, self respect, and self esteem as a woman". Often the abuse was aimed at women in general, with the victim becoming the epitome of everything that was wrong with the world. This abuse was not physical in nature, and therefore the victim did not identify it as abuse because she was not physically injured. As mentioned previously, the denial of injury is an attractive rationalization to the victims of verbal abuse. Through this kind of psychological torture, this man convinced his wife that all women were indeed evil and deserved to be degraded in every way. Because she believed this, this victim saw herself as totally responsible for the violence she was enduring.

Eventually the abuse became much more physical, usually taking the form of violent rapes;

Before I even realized it, those threats [of violence] had become reality....they [the rapes] became so rough that I

could not leave the house because of the bruises.....I was living with a monster.

When the rapes first began she continued to deny her own victimization and take responsibility for her husband's actions. She thought it was her fault because she did not want to have sex when he did. But when the violence escalated to the point of him choking her, she knew that it was not her fault and that she had to get out. After the night he choked her she 'hit bottom'; "I began to fantasize about killing him and then committing suicide.". It was this despair that propelled her to leave him permanently.

The eighth interviewee is an immigrant from Jamaica where she was battered by her husband for seven years. In Jamaica, there are very few support services for the victims of spouse abuse. This woman stayed with her husband because she really did not have any other options. As well, in her town, family violence was very common, she did not see her own situation as abuse because compared to other women she was never severely injured.

These justifications for remaining in the marriage were disrupted by the victim's sister who often visited from Canada. She denounced the violence as abuse and gave the respondent an opportunity to leave her husband and move to Canada. By redefining the relationship as abusive and supplying required resources, the victim's sister was able to usurp the rationalizations and allow the interviewee to start a new life.

In the ninth interview, four rationalizations were inferred from the answers given by the respondent. This woman endured twenty years of abuse from her husband, starting with verbal

assaults and escalating to serious physical attacks and rape. Her husband was an alcoholic and she often blamed the violence on the alcohol. She also felt she should stay with him in order to help him stop drinking. These two rationalizations, a denial of the victimizer and an appeal to the salvation ethic, were reported by all of the respondents with partners who had drinking problems. This victim also felt that she had nowhere else to go. She also reported that when the abuse was mostly verbal, she blamed herself;

He would constantly remind me that I was incredibly stupid and that I would be completely nothing without him. I really believed him....I certainly did not think I could survive on my own.....I always thought that I deserved the insults, that I was stupid.....if I was a better wife - if I could keep the baby quiet - then he would stop.
{reconstructed from interview notes}

Eventually the physical abuse became obvious to her sons. On one occasion, her eldest son tried to intervene and fight off his father. The husband turned his violence on his son and beat him severely. Shortly after that, the woman left her husband permanently. The escalation and visibility of the violence became so great that she could no longer accept the rationalizations she had used to justify staying. Her husband had also started to become violent when sober, so she could no longer blame his behaviour on the alcohol.

The tenth interview was a difficult one. This victim still does not totally accept that her partner is a batterer. She still believes in the rationalizations she used while still living with her husband. She feels that he is a "really good man, but he has no patience". She feels that she can change him. The abuse

escalated when their child was born. He did not want children, and he did not like the noise and bother the baby created. As a result, he became violent. The woman still blames herself for the violence; "I know that if I try harder I can make him happy, then he won't get mad anymore". These three rationalizations (appeal to the salvation ethic; denial of victimizer; denial of victimization) are still actively being used by the victim.

She did not leave her husband, he abandoned her and the baby. Her parents convinced her to move in with them for financial support. During the last three months she was with him he began to abuse the baby as well, and the woman was concerned about this type of escalation in his violent behaviour. Three catalysts were recorded for this interviewee; change in the level of violence, despair, and external definitions of the relationship. However, these catalysts have not yet caused the victim to abandon her rationalizations for the violence. She moved in with her parents for practical reasons, but still hopes to reconcile with her husband;

They [her parents] don't know him like I do....they can't see that he loves me, and one day he'll love ----- [the baby] too - when he's [the baby] older and less of a bother.

The eleventh respondent used two rationalizations to explain the violence and her own failure to leave her first husband. She used to think that she was not being a good wife and that was why he was constantly angry with her;

When we were first got married, I was very young and I really believed he was always right and I was the one who kept screwing up, so I never talked back to him. I always felt so guilty.

Even as the violence got worse and she knew it wasn't all her fault, she still felt that she did not have anywhere else to turn. She was too ashamed to tell anyone, therefore she believed that she would just have to put up with it.

One catalyst, a change in the level of violence, precipitated her reinterpretation of her marriage as abusive. When her husband became violent more regularly, often without any provocation from her, she could no longer take responsibility for the abuse. Three other catalysts however were the precipitators of her decision to leave her husband. Her mother came over to visit and saw the bruises. She immediately insisted that the respondent leave with her that very day; "she [the mother] really made the decision [to leave] not me, I don't know how long I would have stayed without her, she gave me the strength to leave as well as a place to live". This represents three different catalysts at work; a change in the resources, a change in the visibility of the violence, and the external definitions of the relationship. The victim could no longer rationalize that she had no other options.

The twelfth interviewee claimed that she placed so much importance on family and the church that she remained with her abusive husband for five years. She felt that it was her responsibility to keep the family together. She also felt at fault for much of the abuse because she got pregnant and her husband was pushed into marrying her at a very young age. She thought that it was the early marriage that was the cause of most of his anger, and his drinking. Because he was most violent when he was drunk, the

victim thought that if she could stop his alcohol abuse then the physical abuse would stop as well. As reported by other wives of alcoholics, this woman felt it was her responsibility to 'cure' her partner.

The violence expanded to include the use of weapons and became more often directed at the children. This forced the woman to abandon her belief that she should keep her family together at any cost. As well, her strict Catholic parents became aware of the abuse and condemned it as unacceptable regardless of the social and religious consequences of divorce. Eventually, the woman became so afraid for her life, and those of her children, that she decided to leave the marriage.

The thirteenth respondent saw the verbal abuse as 'normal' and felt she was responsible for most of the less serious physical violence;

The first time he slapped me I knew I had a problem, but I thought it was just that, MY problem, so I had to solve it myself, I had to make him happy.

Even after the violence became so indiscriminate that she could no longer blame herself, she felt that she had nowhere else to go. She did not believe that she could make it on her own.

The increase in the level and frequency of the violence crippled her justification of the violence as being her own fault. After that, it was a change in the perceived availability of resources that propelled her to leave her husband. One night she was so afraid that she ran to a neighbour's for help. That

neighbour looked up a local crisis hotline number and gave it to the interviewee. She left shortly after calling them.

The last interview revealed the use of two rationalizations by the victim to explain the violence. This woman thought that her boyfriend "just had a bad temper", and she could change him. Eventually the violence became so severe that she was forced to realize that this was more than a simple temper-control problem. However, by this point she had no friends left because he had offended so many people. With no family in the city, the victim felt she had nowhere to go.

During their last night together, he began to choke her and she became so frightened that she went to an old friend's house. There she was consoled and convinced to leave him permanently. Her friends insisted that her boyfriend was a batterer and not worth the trouble of trying to 'save' him. These external definitions of the relationship along with the provision of support led the woman to decide to leave her boyfriend.

This case-by-case examination has revealed that certain rationalizations are usually disabled by specific catalysts. The appeal to the salvation ethic fails in the face of despair and changes in the relationship. The denial of the victimizer's responsibility for his actions no longer seems plausible when the frequency of the violence increases, or when the relationship is defined as abusive by outsiders. To continue to deny one's own injuries becomes impossible when the violence escalates past verbal abuse into serious physical assaults requiring hospitalization.

This rationalization is also discredited when the violence becomes more visible and individuals external to the relationship begin to define it as violent. The most common rationalization, denial of one's own victimization, is also often abandoned when faced with those same catalysts; change in the level of violence, change in the visibility of the violence, and external definitions of the relationship. The most obvious link is between the denial of options rationalization and the change in resources catalyst. Finally an appeal to higher loyalties seems to fail, like many others, in the face of an increased level of violence. This is especially true when the victim rationalized remaining in the relationship for the sake of the children (an appeal to higher loyalties), and then the abuser turns his violence on those same children (an escalation in the level of violence).

Many of these links make common sense without the support of this data. However, as mentioned previously, such a direct comparison was not made by Ferraro, the researcher who developed the six techniques of rationalization and six catalysts for change. This research has served to further her theories therefore, by adding a greater specificity to the victimization process experienced by battered women.

(5) Use of Counselling/Shelter Agencies

It has long been purported that without emotional support as well as the provision of viable alternatives, battered women will not leave their abusive partners. Simply put, they need someone to

talk to, and somewhere to go. Many of the authors discussed in the review of the literature echoed this claim (Walker, 1979; Macleod, 1987; Ferraro, 1983). It is agreed by most researchers working in this area that there is a need for more resources like crisis hotlines and shelters to be made available to battered women. Although the number of shelters in Canada has tripled since 1971 (Macleod, 1987), many women living in rural areas still do not have shelters within commuting distance (Macleod, 1985). Women in urban areas are still often turned away by overcrowded shelters; "...four nights in each week up to half of the women seeking lodging are being turned away due to overcrowding." (The Montreal Gazette, November 12th 1989). It seems obvious then that we still have a long way to go in providing adequate community support for the victims of wife assault.

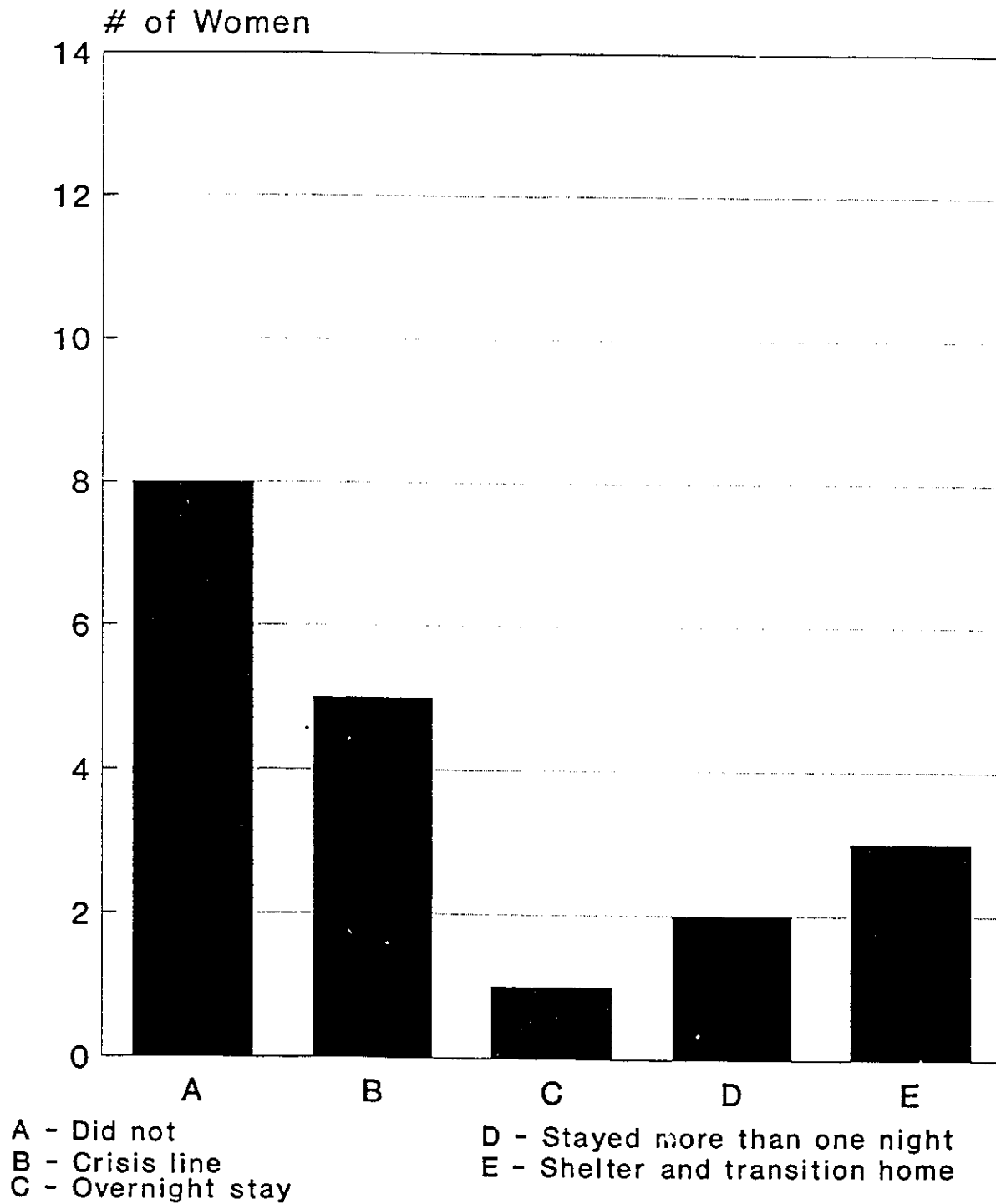
It would seem probable that the majority of battered women who have successfully left their partners would have made use of some sort of counselling or shelter agency (crisis hotline; shelter; transition home) during the decision-making and departure processes. The following graph (Table 4) illustrates how many women interviewed in this research used these facilities. Over half of the sample (eight women) did not use any of the social agencies designed to help battered women deal with their situation. On the surface, this result may seem surprising. However, a closer inspection of those eight cases reveals why they did not provide the expected outcome. All of these women turned to either their family or friends for shelter and counselling when they were in the

process of leaving their partners. They were all fortunate to have someone close to them that provided them with the emotional support and practical backing which they required. It must be noted that many battered women do not have this luxury, and must turn to people outside of their own circle of relationships for help. Perhaps they do not have anyone close (in either location or intimacy) that they can turn to, or very often those close to them refuse to help.

The reason this sample does not indicate a majority of the respondents obtaining outside help may be a reflection of the data collection. These interviews were procured in a very opportunistic manner, mostly through personal referrals, since the local shelters were not open to a researcher contacting their clients. This may be why the women interviewed over-represent survivors who did not make use of any counselling or shelter services.

Of the six women in the sample who did use these services, five of them called a crisis hotline and all of them used a shelter for at least one night. Three of them stayed in a transition home which provides extended living arrangements for women who still have nowhere to live months after their departure from the relationship. Certainly it must not be said that this data illustrates a lack of need for shelters and other counselling agencies.

Table 4
Use of Counselling/Shelter Agencies



Almost half the sample used such resources, and they all claim that the counsellors saved their lives, and that they probably never would have left without them;

Without them [shelter workers], I would still be with him....No I would probably be dead. If he didn't kill me, I would have killed myself.

It was like it was fate, I saw the poster [advertising a crisis hotline for victims] and it seemed like my last chance. I don't know how long that poster was there, but that day it meant something to me.

Many of these women had nowhere else to turn, with their families telling them that "[violence] was sometimes the price of marriage" ; and their friends "looking the other way when I had visible bruises". The importance of these services should not be minimized in any way by this data.

(6) Types and Sources of Social Support

Social Support theory was discussed at length in the Theoretical Model chapter, but there are a few points that deserve reiteration. Firstly, the term resources does not denote only material or practical aid. Social support theorists divide the concept of resources into three distinct types: emotional support; cognitive support; and material support. For the purposes of this research, emotional support was defined as simply allowing the victim to confide her fears in an empathetic environment, being a good listener and supplying a shoulder to cry on. Cognitive support involved more of a talking out process, where the support giver would discuss the situation with the battered woman on a more intellectual level in an attempt to help the victim reinterpret

what was happening to her and make a decision on how to deal with it. Obviously, material support involves supplying a battered woman with more practical supports like shelter, employment and financial aid. It is also critical to note that support does not necessarily have a positive effect on the individual receiving it. Although it seems at odds with the very term 'support', in this theory social support can be either negative or positive. The last significant component in this theory is that the source of the social support given to an individual must be relevant and credible. Even if an individual requires a certain type of support at a certain time, if it is offered by the wrong person/group it may not have the intended effect.

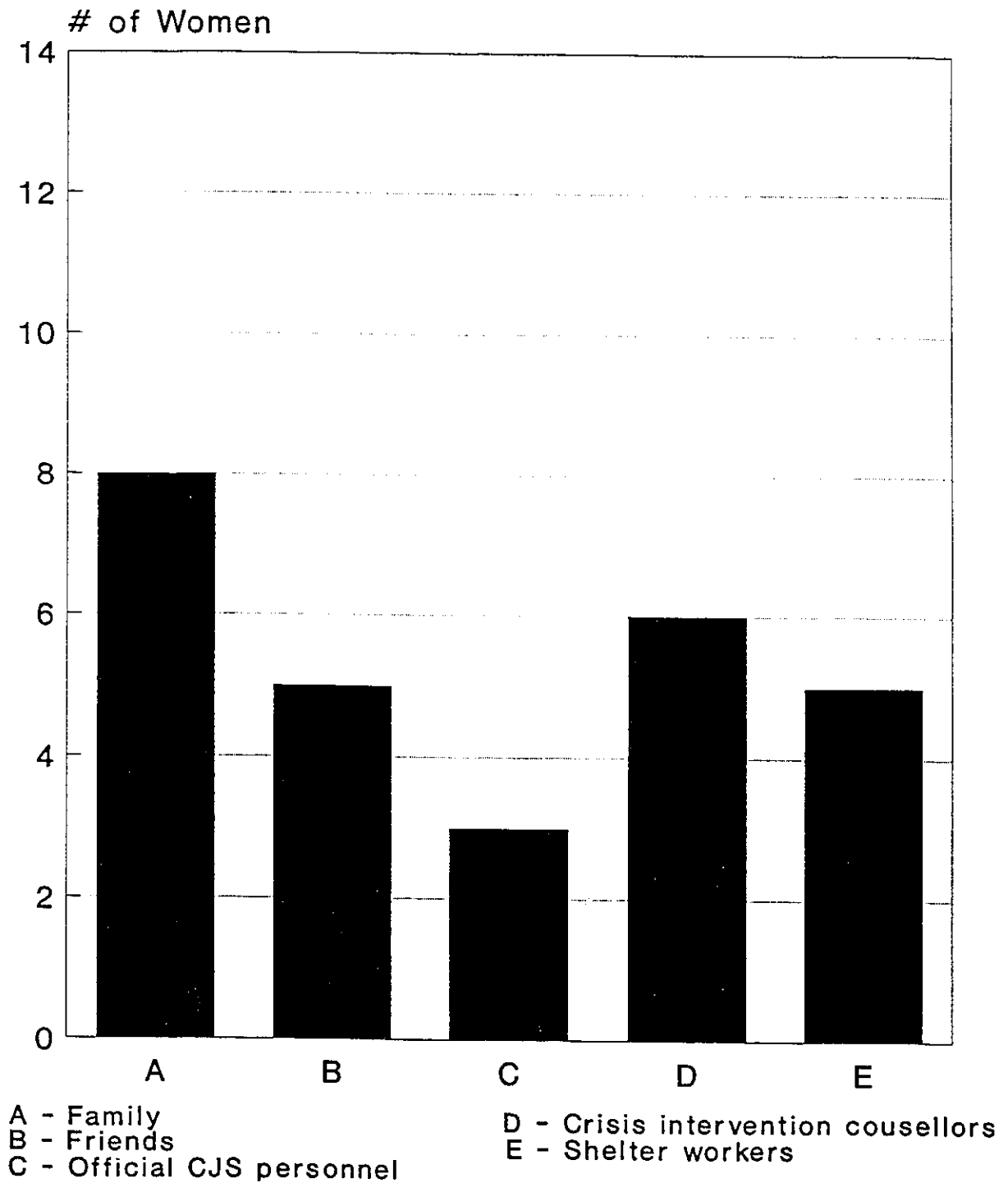
One of the main objectives of this research is to determine what sources of social support are most useful to the victim. The participants in the study were asked directly who they told about the abuse, what reaction they received, and what the usefulness of that response might have been (questions 11 and 12).

The sources that the women turned to were divided into five groups: family; friends; official Criminal Justice System personnel (police and courts); crisis intervention counsellors (crisis hotlines); and shelter workers (including the secondary phase - transition home workers). The graph on the following page (Table 5) illustrates how many women in the sample confided in each of the five sources. Over half the sample (eight women) sought help from family members, and thirteen of the fourteen confided in family and/or friends. As well, trained counsellors working on crisis

hotlines or in shelters were sought out by eleven women. It is the Criminal Justice System that seems to have been the most unlikely choice as a source of support, with only three participants naming them as a group that was turned to. All three of these women told their stories to the police, none of the interviewees pursued any charges in the court system.

Some of the women that turned to their families for support provide an example of how social support is not necessarily a positive thing. Four of the eight participants who told some family member about the abuse were told by that member (in three cases it was their mother, in one it was a sister) that the abuse was one drawback to marriage. Once again the three East Indian women interviewed fall into this group; all of their families refused to actively respond to their pleas for help. All of these women now have little or no contact with their families. Since they have left their husband they have basically been disowned by their deeply religious and traditional relatives. The other woman who turned to her mother for help was also told that "sometimes men are just like that", and when she tried to explain further about the severity of the violence, her mother refused to listen saying that it was a private matter that was really none of her business. All of these women claim that the response they received from their family was detrimental as it served to keep them in the abusive situation longer.

Table 5
Sources of Social Support



One interviewee related that near the end of the relationship, when she was deciding to leave her husband permanently, her mother tried to convince her to remain; "In the end I think she [the mother] believed his promises [of reform] more than I ever did".

The other half of the women who turned to their family received a great deal of help in terms of all three types of social support. These women used their sisters and parents as a shoulder to cry on (emotional support); as a sounding board to talk out their problems (cognitive support); and as providers of basic shelter and financial support. For this, they all claim to be forever grateful. When asked how she arrived at the decision to leave her abusive husband, one woman stated; " I didn't really make the decision, my mother did. She just saw the bruises, packed up my stuff and took me home". Indeed this kind of extreme intervention is not right for every battered woman, many of whom need a great deal of time to arrive at a final permanent decision, but for this interviewee; "she [the mother] turned my life around".

The support that the participants received from friends that they confided in was very similar to what was received from the families. Two of the five women who designated a friend as a source of support claimed that little or no meaningful support was given. One interviewee complained that her friends and co-workers were very judgemental of her decision to return to her abusive boyfriend (several times) and she ended up becoming very alienated from them. The remaining three women received at least emotional

and cognitive support from their friends, with one receiving material support in the way of shelter.

Unfortunately most of the support received from the police by the three women who turned to them was negative. Although one respondent did claim she was often glad to see them because they ensured her immediate safety, all claimed that the police did nothing to constructively help them deal with their situation in any permanent way. The stories ranged from bad to worse, with one woman stating that all the police ever did was separate her from her husband temporarily; another claiming that they simply told the couple to be quieter; and a third women related that a police officer actively dissuaded her from pursuing assault charges and told her that if she really wanted the abuse to stop she should simply divorce him. At the very least, the function of the police in a domestic violence situation is to ensure the safety of the victim. Of the three cases related here, only in one was that achieved. The police should also be following the mandatory arrest policy that is now in place for all police departments nationwide. In this small sample that is far from what was reported. Indeed, one woman was convinced by the police officer on the scene not to demand her husband's arrest. These results concur with those of Ferraro, in her study of police arrest procedures in domestic disputes she found an 82% non-arrest rate (1989:64). The woman who was encouraged not to insist on her husband's arrest related that she felt betrayed and abandoned by society when this happened. Her husband laughed at her attempt to obtain justice and "he told me

that no one would ever take my side, after that [lack of arrest] I really believed him".

It is more reassuring that all of the women who sought support from trained counsellors on hotlines and in shelters received positive social support of all three types. This is to be expected, since providing constructive support for battered women is the sole mandate for these agencies. It is important to note that two respondents mentioned that some of the counsellors they talked to tended to be judgemental when the woman decided to return to her spouse. Indeed it must be difficult to provide a victim with complete sustenance only to have her return to be victimized again. But the role of these counsellors is one of advocacy, they cannot make the decision for the woman. They can only supply any required resources or support and then back up any decision the victim herself makes whether or not they agree with it themselves.

CHAPTER VDISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

This study focused on the problem of how and why battered women decide whether to leave their abusive partners, and attempted to identify the supports which influence that decision-making process. In order to obtain this information, fourteen women who had suffered spousal abuse were interviewed regarding their interpretive and decision-making processes. Based on a review of the literature, six pertinent issues were identified. The interview data was analyzed by discussing its support for these issues. From this discussion, we learned that the abusive relationships examined in this research were not all cyclic in nature, as some were characterized by indiscriminate beatings on a daily basis.

It was also discovered that women in this sample used various rationalizations in developing vocabularies of motive to explain both their own behaviour and that of their partners. As well, there were identifiable catalysts that precipitated a change in the women's view of themselves and their relationships, as well as stimulating the decision to leave their partners. These catalysts served to quash the rationalizations used previously to explain and justify the violence as well as the victim's failure to leave the relationship.

Less than half the women interviewed used community based support services like crisis hotlines and women's shelters.

However, closer examination revealed that those who did not, received the same type of support from family and friends. The respondents who did make use of these agencies did not receive support from those other sources, and they all claimed that they could not have survived without the help of the organized women's support network.

The women in this sample sought out support from family, friends and trained counselling agencies (crisis hotlines; women's shelters/transition homes). All three types of support, emotional, cognitive and material, were received from these sources. Little or no support was sought out or received from any official Criminal Justice agencies (police, courts).

The most important detail that develops when examining the importance of support is that it must be relevant not only by source and type, but it must also be provided at the appropriate time. If the support is not timely, then it will not be useful to the recipient. A support may be required, but if it is not offered at the correct time, it will be useless. The importance of the timing of support was emphasized by social support researchers (Jacobson, 1986:253).

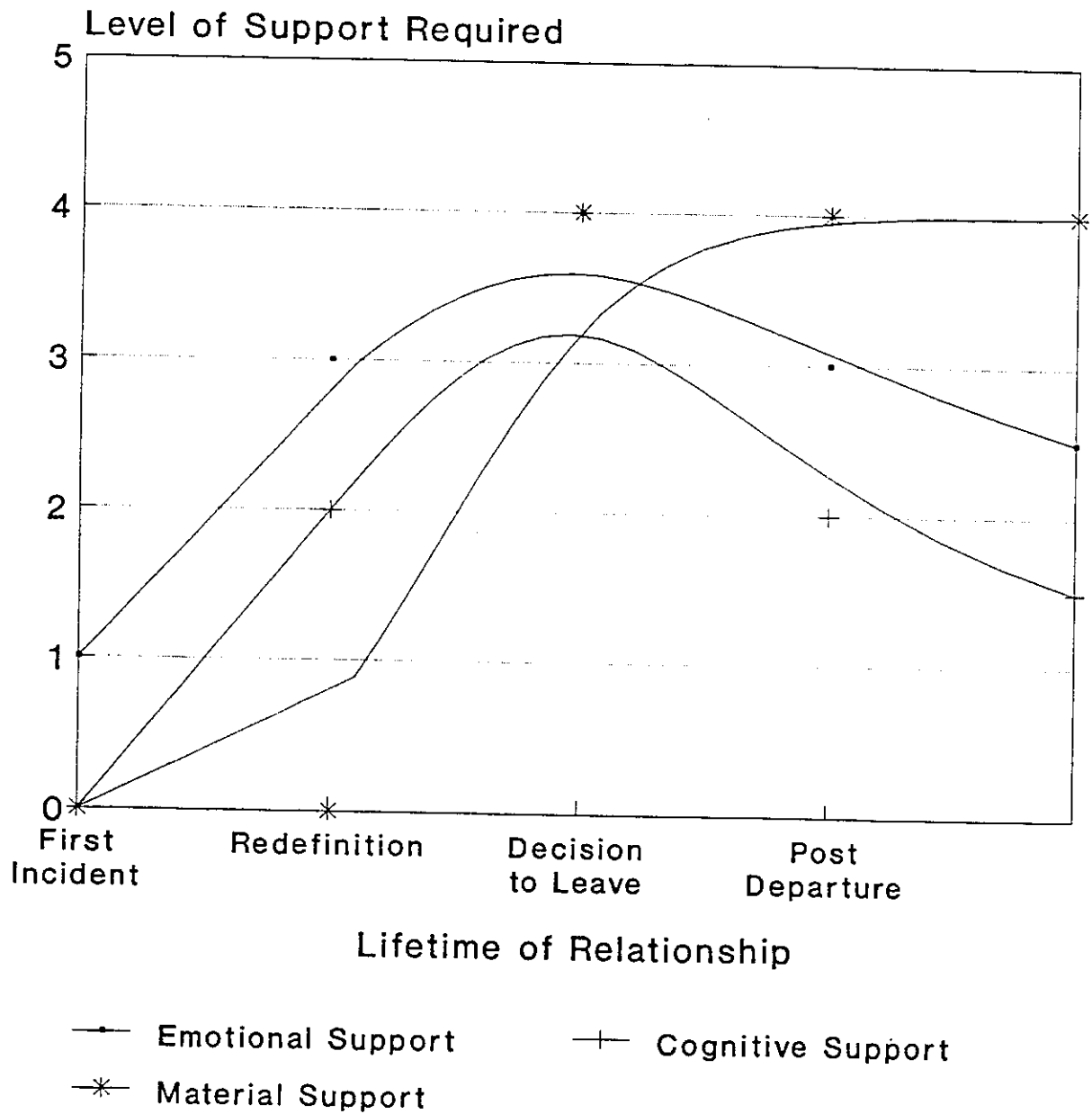
In this research, the timing of the social support was also identified as relevant by the battered women. Participants were asked about the timing of the support they sought (both in terms of the cycle of violence and the lifetime of the relationship). Unfortunately, the timing of support within the cycle of violence

was difficult to establish, since not all of the women in the sample experienced a cyclic form of victimization.

The types of support (emotional, cognitive, and material) required at different times in the lifetime of the relationship was determined in an attempt to discover when the women need what kinds of support. The multi-line graph (Table 6) on the following page is an illustration of how the level of each type of required support changes over the lifetime of an abusive relationship. For convenience the amount of support has been artificially rated on a scale of five, zero being no support, five being complete support (everything the victim requires). As well, the lifetime of the relationship has been divided into four phases; first incident; redefinition process; decision to leave; and post-departure. This division is artificial also, as no relationship is this linear. In reality, most abused women leave their spouses several times before making a permanent departure. The numerical delineations on this graph are not meant to represent an exact amount or type of support. Rather, they serve only to provide an illustration of a general trend that was inferred from the responses of the interviewees.

As can be seen by the graph, the same amount of each support is not required at each point in the lifetime of the relationship. Emotional support, like having a shoulder to cry on, is usually required from the first incident on, escalating until post departure when the need begins to decrease.

Table 6
Types of Support Required
Over Lifetime of Abusive Relationship



Some respondents related that once they confided in someone else they were happy just to have someone to talk to and cry with.

I used to call them [crisis hotline] just to talk to someone other than him. They would want to discuss how I was going to leave, but I wasn't ready for that, I just wanted someone to listen to me and that's all. Later we would talk about specifics, like how I could leave, where I could go...
{reconstructed from interview notes}

This quote illustrates how this woman needed emotional support at first and cognitive support later in the relationship when she was beginning to make decisions.

Cognitive support most commonly is not sought until further into the abusive relationship as the woman begins to reinterpret her situation and redefine herself as a victim of spousal abuse. At this point she needs more than a shoulder to cry on, she needs someone to talk things through with her. This requirement for cognitive support continues to increase, peaking at the time of the decision to leave and slowly decreasing afterward.

After it's happened [abuse] a few times you really need someone to tell you it's not your fault....someone to be on your side. That's what I would do for a battered woman coming to me for help. I'd make her understand that this is HIS fault, it's HIS problem not hers. She has to realize that before she can do anything else

Conversely, material support, like a place to stay and employment opportunities, is typically not required until the decision to leave is made, at which time a large amount of material support will be sought.

.....she [victim's sister] was there for me at every step; when I needed to talk, to cry, and when I needed a roof over my head. She never pressured me to leave. I probably wouldn't have anyway, I wasn't ready until that last night. But when I decided it was over she gave me a place to stay and even got me a job. {reconstructed from interview notes}

Another interviewee also related that she did not need material support until she made the decision to leave, to leave her husband and her country as well. She moved here from Jamaica to escape the abuse and the material support provided by her sister was invaluable and timely. As well, the requirement for material support continues to be high during post-departure. Two of the women interviewed were still living in transition homes, relying on a women's collective for shelter and help finding employment. These women no longer needed a high level of emotional or cognitive support but still required material aid; "I think I've talked this out enough. Now I want to get on with my life".

Once again it is important to note that this graph does not represent any exact measure procured through the interviews, and it should not be seen as a direct portrayal of any of the cases studied. Instead, it is an illustration, or ideal type of the common trend of support sought by the women interviewed. In general, the majority of women followed this trend. To obtain this trend, each interview was examined to determine who the women turned to and in what way at different stages in their situation.

As well, the final question in the interview, what would you do for a battered woman who came to you for help?, revealed a great deal of what the participants felt was required to truly provide viable social support to a battered woman. It was this kind of information that allowed the researcher to develop a trend of required support.

This discussion of the data analysis as it relates to the specific research issues addressed in this thesis, as well as the proposed typology of types and timing of supports, summarizes my attempt to address my research problem.

Battered women proceed through a complex process of reinterpretation as they begin to see themselves as victims and then choose a course of action to respond to their victimization. During this process they develop changing sets of vocabularies of motive that serve to justify their actions and choices. These choices are influenced by various elements including the power exercised over her by her partner; her perception of her chances to make it on her own; and the responses of others when they become aware of the abuse. It is the responses of others, the social support she receives, that is of particular importance to this research. The support that she receives, positive or negative, can alter all other elements that may be guiding her course of action. Responses of others will effect her own rationalizations, the power of the batterer, and her perception of available options. These responses will have a greater impact if they are supplied by a relevant source at a relevant time. It is important to remember again that the impact of these responses will not necessarily result in the woman abandoning her partner, they may very well serve to maintain the relationship.

This research has been an explorative study of how battered women come to leave their abusive partners. To better understand how this occurs the supports the women received were examined in an

attempt to develop a typology of supports that would be relevant to the battered woman. The supports must be relevant by type, source and timing. Table six is a graphic illustration of the results of this examination of how supports affect a battered woman's decision-making process.

The most important contribution of this research is the emphasis on the need for increased outreach programs to help battered women. From the sample interviewed here, it becomes obvious that many of these women would have left sooner if they had somewhere to go. Indeed it is naive to think that with a shelter on every corner, every women would leave her partner after the first slap. But it seems from the experiences related by these victims, when they are ready to make the decision to leave, there must be material support available or they will not abandon their partner. This need for counselling and shelter agencies is especially urgent for those battered women who have a weak network of support from their family and/or friends. Perhaps the weakness is due to distance and unavailability, or may be a result of an unwillingness to help with such a 'private' problem. The point is that it must be recognized that a vast number of abuse victims do not have someone they know that is willing and able to help them with relevant and timely supports.

Future research may use the typology of timely supports developed here to perform a more indepth examination of the requirements of the victims of spousal abuse. With a larger sample, this typology could be tested and validated in an attempt

to determine the importance of making certain support mechanisms more available to battered women at specific periods in their victimization.

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APPENDIX A
-----INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

First I would like to thank you very much for agreeing to talk with me. I'm going to tell you a little about myself and this project as well as explaining more specifically what I would like to talk to you about. Then I will get you to read over a consent form and sign it if you still wish to participate. If at any time you have any questions please feel free to interrupt and ask. Also if at anytime you change your mind and decide you do not want to talk to me about this subject, I assure you I will understand and we can end right then.

I am a criminology graduate student at the University of Ottawa. I am doing this research project to complete my Master's Degree. Although my university specialization has been in criminology, my main interests within that field have focused on victimology and women's studies. It is for that reason I chose the subject of battered women for my thesis topic.

My research focus is how battered women interpret and define their situations; how they make decisions on what to do based on those interpretations and definitions; and how external supports they do or do not receive effect both those interpretations and decisions.

Because of this focus, I'm going to be asking you questions not so much about exactly what happened to you, but more about how you dealt with it. Questions about what you thought was happening at different periods during your relationship. As well as questions about who you talked to about your situation, what their response was, and how that response effected you. I realize that many of these details may be painful for you to discuss and once again I want to tell you that we can stop at any time if you wish.

I think this research is important as it may produce valuable insight into how battered women make critical decisions and what supports external to the relationship are needed to make those decisions. This kind of information could be very useful when developing family violence intervention techniques as more practical support systems can be targeted to be made more easily available.

Do you have any questions?

APPENDIX B
-----INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

(A) Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research is to determine how battered women develop interpretations and decisions about their situations, and what factors, specifically the responses of others, effect those interpretations and decisions. By identifying the supports most required by battered women, it is hoped that those supports can be targeted in policy decisions in order to make them more available to all women who need them.

(B) Nature of Participation

Your participation in this research will require you to answer several questions regarding the abuse you received from your partner. The questions will only briefly deal with the actual details of the abuse, but more specifically ask how you dealt with the abuse. Mainly you will be asked questions about what you thought about the abuse; who you told; what their response was; and how you decided what you were going to do.

(C) Time Required

Your participation will require an interview lasting approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

(D) Right of Refusal

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate, as well you may exercise your right to refuse at any time during the interview by simply requesting that it be terminated. Any information you may have provided up until the point of termination will not be used for any research purposes. As well, if there are any specific questions that you would prefer not to answer, but you are willing to continue with the rest of the interview, those questions can be omitted.

(E) Confidentiality

All information being gathered is for research purposes only and the results will only be published in general classifications. Any specific references contained within the final publication will not be connected to any relevant information allowing for identification of any participants. Any and all information you supply will remain completely anonymous. Your signed consent form will be kept locked and in a separate location from any other documents related to this research. No documents containing information supplied by participants will have any names or other identifying delineations to connect the document to any participant. All documents will be kept locked in a secure location.

INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby consent to participate as a volunteer in this research project.

The purpose of this study has been explained to me and I understand that explanation.

I understand that I am free to refuse to participate and may choose not to answer any of the questions or end the interview and withdraw my participation at any time.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and the information gathered will be kept completely confidential and be used for research purposes only.

Signature of Participant

Date

I hereby certify that I have fully explained the above to the participant, and to the best of my knowledge it was understood and consent was given voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher

Date

For information regarding the validity of this research and it's expressed association with the University of Ottawa, you may contact my thesis supervisor Dr. Ross Hastings at 564-7849.

APPENDIX C
-----INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Part I - DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Age -
2. Ethnic Group -
3. Marital Status - (a) - married/common-law
 - separated
 - divorced
 - (b) - how many marriages/c-l
 - (c) - how long married
 - how long divorced/separated
4. Employment - income level - (a) self
 - (b) partner
5. Education - highest level achieved - (a) self
 - (b) partner
6. Dependents (a) number
 (b) age(s)
7. Current place of residence - with partner (abusive/non)
 - with friends/family
 - in shelter/transition house
 - on own

Part II - DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

8. Could you briefly describe the abuse you received from your partner? [prompt subject if necessary]
- length and frequency of abuse
 - degree of violence used - subjectively (without prompting)
 - objectively (supply Conflict Tactics Scale - Appendix D)

Part III - INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS

9. When did you decide you had a problem, that is, when did you begin to see yourself as a 'battered woman', and what prompted this redefinition?

[pinpoint within the lifetime of the abusive relationship
- after how many incidents, after which particular incident;

and within the cycle of violence (Walker, 1979)
- during which phase: tension building; acute battering; or loving contrition]

10. BEFORE you began to see yourself as a battered woman, how did you explain your situation, both to yourself and to others. What excuses, if any did you have for you partners behaviour?

Part IV - SUPPORT QUESTIONS

11. Did you tell anyone about your partner's abuse? When did you tell them?

[each person/group told - pinpoint within the lifetime of relationship and the cycle of violence (Walker, 1979)]

12. How did they react/what did they do? Was this helpful to you at the time? [record for each person/group told]

Part V - DECISIONAL QUESTIONS

13. When did you make the decision on how you were going to deal with your situation (leave or stay), and what factors did you take into consideration when making this decision?

[pinpoint within the lifetime of the relationship and the cycle of violence (Walker, 1979)]

14. Did any of the responses you received from those you had told effect your decision in any way (help or hinder)? Which helped and which did not, and why? Did the timing of any of the responses make them more or less useful?

15. What kind of responses do you wish you had received and did not? When did you most need these responses?

16.If someone came to you as a battered woman, what would you do for them?

CONFLICT TACTICS SCALE

- (A) Insulted or swore at you
- (B) Did or said something to spite you
- (C) Threatened to hit or throw something at you
- (D) Threw, smashed, hit, or kicked something
- (E) Threw something AT you
- (F) Pushed, grabbed, or shoved you
- (G) Slapped you
- (H) Kicked, bit, or hit you
- (I) Hit or tried to hit you with something
- (J) Beat you up
- (K) Choked you
- (L) Threatened you with a knife or gun
- (M) Used a knife or fired a gun

from: Straus, M.A. and R.J. Gelles, PHYSICAL VIOLENCE IN AMERICAN
FAMILIES - RISK FACTORS AND ADAPTATIONS TO VIOLENCE IN
8,145 FAMILIES. London:Transaction Publishers, 1990. p. 33.

APPENDIX D

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

OPTIONS FOR BATTERED WOMEN: VOCABULARIES OF MOTIVE
AND SOCIAL SUPPORT FACTORS IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

LISA LEDUC

JUNE, 1991

INTRODUCTION

The problem of wife battering has received a great deal of attention in the past decade. With an estimated one in ten Canadian women being assaulted by their partners each year (Macleod, 1980; 1987), the issue of wife battering has become a very political one. As a result of the importance now being attributed to this issue there has been a great deal of research done in the area. The focus of the research is widely varied. There have been attempts to discover factors in men that predispose them into being batterers, as well, the role of women in their own victimization has been looked at. The effectiveness, or lack thereof of different societal responses to wife assault has also been measured in many different ways. The literature on the topic of wife assault is exhaustive, but unfortunately it has not yet provided any concrete solutions to the widespread problem it is addressing. One conclusion that has been agreed upon in all of the literature is that wife battering is not an individual problem of certain men or women in certain socio-economic conditions. Wife battering occurs across the country in all different kinds of relationships and at all different social and economic levels (Macleod, 1987).

The purpose of this research is to explore the battered woman's interpretations and definitions of her situation and her decision-making process as she chooses a course of action to deal with that

situation. As well this research is attempting to determine what supports a battered woman receives and how those supports (or responses of others) effect both her interpretive and decisional process. The main focus therefore is on the woman's decision to stay or leave an abusive situation and what factors, both internal and external to the relationship, effect that decision.

By developing a better understanding of a battered woman's decision-making process and what supports most effect that process we will be more able to make the most useful supports more readily available when they are needed. It is recognized that the process is neither static nor one-dimensional, supports received will be given relevance based both on their source and on their timing within the lifetime of abuse. Indeed it is likely that a battered woman will require different kinds of supports from different persons/groups at different phases of her interpretive and decision-making processes.

The results of this research may therefore aid in the development of more practical and timely intervention techniques by providing specific supports and support sources that battered women will be more likely to use to their own advantage. It is not that there are not any supports available now. The question is whether they are available and applicable to the right women at the right time, when she needs them.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this research will consist of indepth qualitative interviews. Because of the nature of the information being pursued, interviews are the only viable tool. Other alternatives such as questionnaires or telephone surveys seem unlikely to be able to obtain the kind of intimate material that is necessary here. For a battered woman to divulge details of how she dealt with her situation, there must be some degree of trust built between her and the researcher. It is felt that a bond of trust will only be achieved through a face-to-face interview, if at all.

The sample for this research will be drawn from two sources: personal referral; and referral from counsellors working in intervention and support agencies (women's shelters and transition homes). Both personal friends and acquaintances of the researcher as well as crisis counsellors will be given a copy of this proposal and asked to briefly introduce the research project to prospective participants. Those women will then be given the researcher's telephone number if they are interested in being part of the study. It is hoped that between fifteen and twenty subjects will be recruited in this manner. If those numbers are not achieved, there remains a third possible source, advertising in the newspaper. A short advertisement describing the study would be placed in the personal section and interested parties would be invited to call the researcher for more information. Although other researchers

studying wife abuse have used this technique to recruit battered women for interviews (Bowker, 1987), because of the lack of control of responses and verification of participant authenticity, it remains a secondary avenue to be pursued only if the original sources prove fruitless.

Once the prospective participant contacts the researcher she will be given some brief introductory information regarding the study and what would be required of her if she chooses to volunteer. As well the research supervisor's telephone number will be supplied to verify the researcher's affiliation with the University. The subject will then be invited to meet with the researcher at a location of her choice for the actual interview. Before the interview takes place, the participant will be introduced more fully to the research (see Appendix A), and the consent form (Appendix B) will be given and explained to her. If the subject then chooses to sign the informed consent form and participate, the interview will begin and is expected to take approximately one to one and one half hours (Appendix C).

The interviews will not be taped. This decision has been made for the comfort of the participants. It has been noted by other researchers working with battered women that the subjects often feel ill at ease with a tape recorder during an interview (Macleod, 1987). Often these women fear reprisals from their abusive (ex)partners and the recording of the interview raises questions of

anonymity protection. The researcher will take notes during the interview and will transfer those notes into complete detail within twenty four hours of the interview to ensure accuracy.

No notes or other documents connected with this research, with the exception of the consent forms, will contain any names, numbers, or other identifying delineations that may link any participant to the study. The consent forms with the participant's signatures will be kept locked in a secure location separate from the rest of the research data. All research data will be kept locked and secure under the researcher's complete control at all times.

The data collected from these interviews will be analyzed on a qualitative basis. That is to say that each interview will be looked at as a case study and the information obtained will not so much be compared to the other cases as it will be combined with the them. All of the data together will provide an illustration of how battered women interpret their situations, make decisions on those interpretations, and also how supports available to them vary in their usefulness according to the timing and the source of the support being offered.

In recent years a great deal of public funds have been put into creating more available aid and resources for the victims of family violence. Perhaps it should be recognized that to be useful that aid need not only be available but be 'appropriate' in time and

place for the battered woman. If the support is not appropriate, or at least it is not viewed as such by the victim, then it is useless. By developing a better understanding of how battered women both interpret their situation, and decide what to do about it, we will be more able to provide them with relevant support.