

This is to certify that the
dissertation entitled

WOMEN SURVIVORS: TRANSITIONS AWAY FROM
ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

presented by

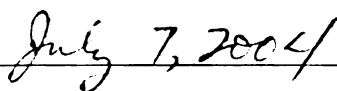
NATALIE BROHL PERELLI

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Ph.D. degree in Counseling Psychology



Major Professor's Signature



Date

LIBRARY
Michigan State
University

PLACE IN RETURN BOX to remove this checkout from your record.
TO AVOID FINES return on or before date due.
MAY BE RECALLED with earlier due date if requested.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE
AUG 13 2006		

WOMEN SURVIVORS: TRANSITIONS AWAY FROM ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

By

Natalie Brohl Perelli

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Special Education

2004

ABSTRACT

WOMEN SURVIVORS: TRANSITIONS AWAY FROM ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

By

Natalie Brohl Perelli

The following dissertation investigates patterns of development among women who leave and return to abusive relationships multiple times. Most previous research has conceptualized the process of leaving an abusive relationship as a highly rational one, with a dichotomous outcome of either staying (failure) or leaving (success). However, many women who successfully leave an abusive relationship have returned to and left the relationship multiple times before leaving for good. This research focuses on the process of leaving and returning to the relationship multiple times, and whether there are patterns of change in how they view themselves and the relationship as they physically move in and out of it. A major factor in whether women stay or leave abusive relationships is the presence of children. Therefore, this study involves women with children who are involved with abusive partners. The theoretical framework of consequential transitions was used to identify patterns of change in the relationship, and change among the women as they physically move in and out of the relationship. This study utilizes interviews with women who have left and returned to an abuser two or more times to address the following questions. Does the relationship between a woman and her abuser change during the collateral transition physically out of and returning to the relationship? If so, what is the nature of that change and how does it happen? Does the relationship between a woman and the community support change during the collateral transition physically

out of and returning to the relationship? If so, what is the nature of that change and how does it happen? How does the presence of children in the relationship make a difference in the patterns of change in the relationship between the woman and the abuser over time? Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used to identify developmental change within each individual and relationship, and to define patterns across individuals and relationships. Major findings of this study include that the number of leave/return events is not indicative of whether or not development occurs, the complexity of the influence of children in the leaving process, the positive relationship between mentions of change in the relationship and attributions of that change to self, and the positive relationship between mentions of change in the relationship and mentions of change in support.

Copyright by
NATALIE BROHL PERELLI
2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have accomplished this project without the loving support and encouragement of my husband, Alan, and my parents, Rose and Lou. They have always believed in me. My children Luke and Livia also made sacrifices so that Mommy could finish her work and I thank them for that. I certainly cannot forget all of my family and friends who prayed for me, encouraged me, cried with me, and rejoiced with me throughout this process.

I am very grateful to the two shelter programs that allowed me to recruit women to interview for my study. The staff members from both programs were incredibly supportive of my work and willingly took time out of their busy schedules to assist me in the recruiting process.

I am incredibly appreciative to the women who volunteered their time to participate in this study. Their willingness to share their experiences with me required tremendous strength and trust. Their experiences helped me in completing my research, which provides guidance to others who assist women in abusive relationships.

I also thank Dr. King Beach for all of his help, support, and loyalty. His persistence helped improve this study far more than I could have ever imagined. I am also grateful to Dr. Betsy Becker, who was also incredibly supportive and loyal throughout this process. Finally, I would like to thank the others who served on my committee at various points in time Dr. Cris Sullivan, Dr. Robbie Steward, Dr. Gloria Smith, Dr. Alfiee Breland, and Dr. Linda Forrest.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2	
EXISTING RESEARCH ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.....	8
The Cycle of Abuse.....	8
Measurements of Women’s Experiences of Battering.....	9
The Role of Shelters.....	10
Theories on Why Women Stay in Abusive Relationships.....	15
Factors Related to Returning to an Abuser.....	19
The “Stay/Leave” Decision.....	24
Trying to Stop the Violence.....	30
Women’s Experiences After the Abusive Relationship.....	34
The Presence of Children in an Abusive Relationship.....	38
CHAPTER 3	
METHODOLOGY.....	40
Theoretical Framework for Analysis.....	42
The Settings.....	46
Participants.....	48
Instruments.....	50
Procedures.....	51
Introduction.....	52
The Interview.....	53
The Demographic Information.....	54
Debriefing.....	54
Data Analysis.....	54
CHAPTER 4	
CASE ANALYSES OF INDIVIDUAL WOMEN.....	58
Women from Crisis Shelter Program.....	59
Ina.....	59
Viv.....	65
Sheri.....	69
Shawn.....	72
Dora.....	77
Carol.....	83
Women from the Advocate Shelter Program.....	87

Kay.....	87
Lea.....	92
Doris.....	97
Dee.....	101
Cora.....	106
Ann.....	111
CHAPTER 5	
PATTERNS OF CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE WOMEN.....	117
Definition and Description of the Clusters.....	120
Development, Similarities, and Differences in Change Within Each Cluster....	137
Cluster A Women (Sheri and Carol).....	138
Cluster C Women (Kay, Cora, and Ann).....	145
Cluster B Women (Ina, Doris, Dee, Shawn, Lea, Dora, and Viv).....	155
Developmental Progress Among the Three Clusters of Women.....	170
CHAPTER 6	
CONCLUSION.....	175
Discussion of Combined Findings.....	175
Metafindings.....	175
Findings.....	177
Implications for the Existing Literature.....	180
Implications for Theory.....	182
Implications for the Methodology.....	184
Implications for Practice.....	186
Future Research.....	189
The Researcher's Subjectivity.....	191
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Consent to be contacted about the study.....	194
Appendix B: Informed Consent for Interview.....	195
Appendix C: Interview Guide.....	196
Appendix D: Recruitment Advertisement.....	200
Appendix E: Coding Schema.....	201
REFERENCES.....	204

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Sample.....	50
Table 2: Ina's Summary of the Coding.....	64
Table 3: Viv's Summary of the Coding.....	68
Table 4: Sheri's Summary of the Coding.....	72
Table 5: Shawn's Summary of the Coding.....	76
Table 6: Dora's Summary of the Coding.....	82
Table 7: Carol's Summary of the Coding.....	87
Table 8: Kay's Summary of the Coding.....	91
Table 9: Lea's Summary of the Coding.....	96
Table 10: Doris's Summary of the Coding.....	101
Table 11: Dee's Summary of the Coding.....	105
Table 12: Cora's Summary of the Coding.....	110
Table 13: Ann's Summary of the Coding.....	115
Table 14: Mean Mentions of Change in the Relationship per Leave Event.....	122
Table 15: Mean Attributions of the Change in the Relationship.....	125
Table 16: Mean Mention of Change in Support per Leave Event.....	128
Table 17: Mean Attributions of Change in Support.....	131
Table 18: Types of Support.....	133
Table 19: Influence of Children.....	135
Table 20: Change in Mentions of Change in the Relationship for Sheri.....	138
Table 21: Change in Mentions of Change in the Relationship for Carol.....	139
Table 22: Change in Mentions of Change in Support for Sheri.....	141

Table 23: Change in Mentions of Change in Support for Carol.....	142
Table 24: Change in Influence of Children for Sheri.....	143
Table 25: Change in Influence of Children for Carol.....	143
Table 26: Change in Mentions of Change in the Relationship for Kay.....	145
Table 27: Change in Mentions of Change in the Relationship for Cora.....	146
Table 28: Change in Mentions of Change in the Relationship for Ann.....	146
Table 29: Change in Mentions of Change in Support for Kay.....	149
Table 30: Change in Mentions of Change in Support for Cora.....	149
Table 31: Change in Mentions of Change in Support for Ann.....	150
Table 32: Change in Influence of Children for Kay.....	152
Table 33: Change in Influence of Children for Cora.....	152
Table 34: Change in Influence of Children for Ann.....	152
Table 35: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Ina.....	156
Table 36: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Doris.....	158
Table 37: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Dee.....	159
Table 38: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Lea.....	161
Table 39: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Dora.....	162
Table 40: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Shawn.....	163
Table 41: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Viv.....	164

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Sequence of Procedures.....	52
Figure 2: Ina's Timeline.....	60
Figure 3: Viv's Timeline.....	66
Figure 4: Sheri's Timeline.....	70
Figure 5: Shawn's Timeline.....	73
Figure 6: Dora's Timeline.....	78
Figure 7: Carol's Timeline.....	84
Figure 8: Kay's Timeline.....	88
Figure 9: Lea's Timeline.....	93
Figure 10: Doris's Timeline.....	98
Figure 11: Dee's Timeline.....	103
Figure 12: Cora's Timeline.....	107
Figure 13: Ann's Timeline.....	112

Chapter 1: Introduction

Domestic violence in this country occurs at an alarming rate. Conservative estimates suggest that 2-4 million women of all races and classes are beaten each year and that 4 women die each day as a result of domestic violence (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1992). Domestic violence is defined as physical abuse such as sexual assault, hitting, kicking, slapping, and pushing, as well as emotional abuse, which involves belittling comments, threats and verbal aggression. Additionally, women survivors of domestic violence often experience some form of economic abuse where they are not allowed access to any financial information. Domestic violence occurs among women from a variety of demographic categories including different racial groups, all levels of socioeconomic status, various educational backgrounds, employed and unemployed women, and childless women and mothers (Campbell, Sullivan & Davidson, 1995).

Domestic violence has been an issue for several centuries in the United States, but has only recently been considered a societal problem. Earlier in our history, the law allowed husbands to beat their wives as long as the stick was not more than the width of his thumb, hence the “Rule of Thumb” expression (Walker, 1979; Pahl, 1985). Although it is no longer legal to abuse women, the prevalence of domestic violence has remained a serious problem in the United States.

Power and control are at the core of domestic violence. An abused woman is often stripped of the power and control over her own life in several arenas. For instance, women survivors who experience domestic violence are often isolated from family and friends, which makes the probability of leaving the violent relationship more remote.

Additionally, these women are often economically dependent on their abusers due to restricted access to financial resources by their abusers. Limited or no access to friends, family, or other supports creates great difficulty for women hoping to escape the violence by leaving the abusive relationship.

Due to the recent attention given to domestic violence, researchers have begun to learn more about the complexity and dynamics of this social problem. Although earlier studies have provided a foundation for our understanding of domestic violence, many limitations still exist in our understanding of the experiences of women survivors in abusive relationships.

Some women choose to stay in the relationship by attempting to stop the violence and abuse. Instead of viewing this as a failure, one recent article reframes this decision as choice and empowerment and suggests that mental health professionals and community resources provide support for women choosing to remain in the relationship (Peled, Eisikovits, Enosh, & Winstock, 2000). However, my research focuses on women survivors who leave and return to abusive relationships multiple times. Therefore, the literature I address focuses on women survivors who physically leave their abusers, return to them, and the process involved in these decisions.

When examining the decision to leave an abusive relationship, some studies have attended to the differences in problem-solving skills between battered women and nonbattered women (Claerhout, Elder, & Janes, 1982; Launius & Lindquist, 1988; McNamara, Ertl, & Neufeld, 1998). Also, the research suggests that more than rational, problem solving is involved in the decision to leave an abusive relationship. However, a focus on problem solving assumes that the woman is solely responsible for her abusive

situation and helps perpetuate the notion of victim blaming. Because women are not to blame and blaming the victim is damaging to survivors, my research does not focus on problem solving, but rather on the complexity of domestic violence and the process of physically leaving and returning to an abusive relationship.

Literature regarding the decision to physically leave has rarely focused on the women's actual experiences. One key element in the lives of many women survivors is the act of physically leaving their abuser. For some, this is a precursor to a longer process of ending the relationship with the abuser. Although physically leaving the abusive relationship is necessary, it is often not sufficient for leaving the overall relationship since there is an emotional component involved (Peled, Eisikovits, Enosh, & Winstok, 2000). It is this pattern of leaving and returning to abusive relationships multiple times before leaving for good that I have studied.

Many existing models of individual change have been applied to women in their decision to leave an abusive partner, such as Prochaska and DiClemente's model of change (Brown, 1997; Choice & Lamke, 1997; Strube, 1988). However, the act of leaving an abusive relationship is more complex than most instances of individual behavior change due to the presence of the abuser as well as ecological factors and the elements of power and control at the root of abusive relationships.

When existing models of change are used to explain a complex problem like domestic violence, pieces of this experience are often over simplified and sometimes misunderstood. For example, some existing models, like the investment model, assume that the decision to leave an abusive relationship is a rational one (Strube, 1988). However, many women survivors are also struggling with intense emotions, social

pressures, the involvement of children, and real concerns about survival, which complicate the decision to stay or leave and take it beyond a simple rational process. Other existing models (Frisch & MacKenzie, 1991) neglect these additional aspects in the decision to leave and try to present it as dichotomous where the decision to stay in an abusive relationship is viewed as a failure and the decision to leave it as a success. Instead of being judged as a failure, perhaps returning to the abusive relationship is part of the process of some women survivors who eventually move on with their lives and out of the relationship.

Though some researchers have chosen to apply existing models to the decision to leave or stay in an abusive relationship, little empirical work has been conducted using these models (Brown, 1997; Choice & Lamke, 1997; Strube, 1988). With little evidence that these models actually capture the dynamics of domestic violence, researchers and mental health professionals are left with a limited understanding of leaving and returning to abusive relationships and how or whether to potentially intervene.

I choose to use the term “survivor” when talking about women who currently experience domestic violence as well as those who have experienced domestic violence in their past. Women who experience abuse are frequently behaving in ways to protect themselves and keep themselves as safe as possible in a volatile and unpredictable environment. The word “survivor” also highlights the strengths within each woman. When doing advocacy or therapy with this population, these internal strengths can then be pointed out to women survivors and built upon to help keep them empowered.

We know that women do leave abusive relationships, but the majority of the literature has neglected to focus on these individuals and has highlighted the experiences

of women survivors still in abusive relationships. More specifically, the literature has not fully attended to the common occurrence of leaving and returning to the abusive relationship multiple times in the process of eventually leaving the relationship for good. By looking for developmental patterns in the process of leaving and returning, we can learn more about the longer-term processes for women who transition away from abusive relationships. With this knowledge, counseling psychologists and other mental health professionals may be more effective when assisting women in this process.

Because the majority of all clients seeking counseling are women, it is ethically important for counseling psychologists to be aware of and knowledgeable about the prevalence and nature of domestic violence. Women seeking counseling from many contexts including shelters, university counseling centers and correctional facilities are survivors of domestic violence. Therefore, counseling psychologists in a variety of settings must be competent to work with these women survivors and familiarize themselves with the processes that women survivors experience over time.

An important emphasis for counseling psychologists is the attention paid to the strengths and assets of the individual (Gelso & Fretz, 1992). Because of this emphasis, counseling psychologists working with women survivors who experience domestic violence and choose to leave their abuser may be able to assist and empower women in their transition away from an abusive relationship. With the knowledge and awareness of patterns that occur when a woman physically leaves an abusive relationship, counseling psychologists can better incorporate the strengths of the individual women to add to their transition away from their abuser and into a life with new possibilities. Also, more

models of prevention can be developed to help educate women of all ages about domestic violence and how to avoid possible abusive relationships.

Based on my review of the literature, new questions were developed. First, I wanted to understand more about how the relationship changes over time as a result of leaving and returning multiple times. Second, I wanted to examine how support changes over time in relation to leaving and returning to the abusive relationship multiple times. Finally, I sought after more understanding about the influence of children in deciding to leave and return to an abusive relationship.

This study is a first step in this process. I approached this research from a developmental perspective to look at changes in the abusive relationship over time during the process of physically leaving and returning multiple times, and to identify patterns of change in the relationship.

Because of a lack of a strong empirically justified model for the process that women survivors who choose to physically leave their abuser follow, I use qualitative methods to better understand the processes involved in leaving an abusive relationship. Sufficient descriptive information does not currently exist to propose a formal model of the process, or to test that model by aggregating quantitative data across individuals. Therefore, a qualitative methodology helps gather information regarding the leaving and returning part of the process to help build this model. Quantitative research may eventually be useful to aggregate data across individuals to further develop and test such a model.

In this study, I interviewed 12 women survivors who have left and returned to their abusive relationship two or more times. At the time of the interview, all of the

women were not physically in an abusive relationship. These women were asked about the processes they went through in the leaving and returning each time, as well as their experiences after ending the relationship with their abuser during their most recent leaving. Women were also asked to describe the changes in their relationship, support, and influence of children after leaving and returning to their abuser.

The following chapters develop this study. Chapter 2 includes a review of the domestic violence literature regarding the process of leaving an abusive relationship. Chapter 3 consists of the theoretical framework used to conceptualize this study as well as the methodology for this study. Chapter 4 discusses the case analyses of the 12 women interviewed. Chapter 5 explores the patterns of change and development in the relationship, support, and influence of children across the 12 women interviewed. Finally, Chapter 6 serves as a discussion regarding strengths and limitations of this work and ideas for future research.

Chapter 2: Existing Research on Domestic Violence

Research in the area of domestic violence has typically focused on the cycle of abuse, characteristics of abuse, and the reasons why women remain in abusive relationships (Aguirre, 1985; Schutte, Bouleige, Fix, & Malouff, 1986; Sullivan, Tan, Basta, Rumptz, & Davidson, 1992; Walker, 1979). More recent investigations have begun questioning the effectiveness of various interventions, such as shelters, in addition to exploring factors that influence women survivors who chose to leave their abuser including social support and the well being of children (Newman, 1993; Kurz, 1996). Furthermore, some research has focused on psychological characteristics of women experiencing domestic violence such as depression and locus of control (Campbell et al., 1995; Tan, Basta, Sullivan, & Davidson, 1995).

The literature review begins by exploring the research regarding the cycle of abuse, the role of shelters, and why women remain in abusive relationships. Next, more recent developments in the literature are discussed concerning the stay/leave decision faced by women survivors. The literature that focuses on trying to stop abuse is presented to provide more insight into the attempts made by women survivors to escape the violence. Finally, the limited research regarding women survivors who have physically left abusive relationships is examined for additional understanding of the experiences faced by women survivors as well as how the presence of children affects the leaving process.

The Cycle of Abuse

Lenore Walker (1979) pioneered the study of the effects of domestic violence on women survivors. Through her work with women survivors, Walker defined the concept

of “cycle of abuse” that is frequently used by many professionals who work in the domestic violence community. The cycle consists of three phases: tension-building, violent explosion, and the honeymoon phase. The length and duration of each phase is not consistent either within or between violent relationships, which further complicates the safety of abused women due to the unpredictability of the abuser’s violent behavior.

Women in violent relationships describe the tension-building phase as a period of “walking on eggshells.” During this phase, the abuser continues to become agitated and irritable with the woman. Following this phase, a violent explosion releases the tension. Over time, the violence becomes more severe and intense and can result in serious injuries that require medical attention. The honeymoon phase completes the cycle of abuse. At this phase, the abuser expresses deep sorrow for the abuse and typically begs for forgiveness. It is not unusual for the abuser to present gifts to the battered woman as well as fake promises to get help for his anger. This apologetic behavior of the abuser also brings about a brief period of relief for the abused woman from episodes of violence (Walker, 1979).

Measurements of Women’s Experiences of Battering

Researchers have been trying to assess battering among women survivors. However, this task is complicated because of the multiple factors that comprise the experiences of being in an abusive relationship. Recent research has attempted to better conceptualize this experience by first listening to the experiences of women survivors, and to then quantify them to aggregate data across individuals.

In 1979, Murray Strauss developed the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) to measure intrafamilial conflict and violence. This quantitative measurement consists of questions

regarding severity of abuse as well as frequency of it within a recent period of time.

Many researchers have used this scale of measurement when investigating domestic violence.

The CTS has been criticized by some because of its focus on isolating battering to specific, episodic periods of time. In 1995, Smith, Earp and DeVellis created the Women's Experiences with Battering Scale (WEB) to develop a more appropriate method for classifying a woman as abused based on her experiences in an abusive relationship. To develop this scale, the researchers conducted focus groups with 22 battered women, which provided qualitative data for developing the scale items. Then, 185 abused women and 204 nonabused women were surveyed to determine the final 10-item scale. The authors reported high internal reliability and good construct validity (Smith et al, 1995). The importance of this measurement is the focus on women's actual experiences of being in an abusive relationship. Instead of isolating the violent episodes, this scale attempts to capture the complexity of domestic violence and its context of the past, present, and future.

The Role of Shelters

In addition to characterizing the cycle of abuse, research has identified unmet needs of abused women including needs for material goods, services, social support, education, legal assistance, employment, child care, counseling, and housing (Sullivan, Tan, Basta, Rumptz & Davidson, 1992). These unmet needs represent barriers faced by women survivors and thus contribute to the complexity of physically leaving an abusive relationship.

An important community resource for many women survivors is a domestic violence shelter, which may help these women deal with barriers of financial needs, housing, safety concerns, child care, lack of employment, and legal protection. In addition to providing temporary safety, shelters for domestic violence typically assist in locating affordable housing, finding employment, obtaining government aid, accessing legal advice, and continuing education. Because one facet of abuse includes isolation, many abused women have little support or knowledge of how to alter their situation. Therefore, shelters may temporarily support the woman survivor and assist her when attempting to leave the abusive situation without becoming a permanent source of assistance.

For many survivors, shelters are the mediating institution between the abusive relationship and a future out of the abusive relationship and thus facilitate the process of physically leaving. However, it is important to note that shelter can take the form of staying with family and friends as well as seeking community shelters. The first formal community domestic violence shelter to serve women survivors was only established in 1971 in London, England (Bowker & Maurer, 1985). Women who choose to access services and/or temporary residency at a domestic violence shelter have already identified themselves as being abused or have had someone else identify them as abused in order to receive services. This identification may be an important element in the longer-term process of leaving an abusive relationship.

Despite the assistance supplied by a shelter, many women still require more time and resources to resolve their abusive situation. Because most shelters offer temporary housing (typically 30 days), many women are faced with finding longer-term housing,

employment, and safety in a short amount of time. For instance, interviews with 7 abused women in a shelter revealed that a common theme involved “giving up” upon departure from the shelter and returning to the abusive situation due to a lack of social support, money, and knowledge of working with social agencies (Newman, 1993). Some of these women disclosed a willingness to allow the physical violence in return for having a place to live and food to eat. Leaving the shelter is difficult for abused women due the uncertainty of what lies ahead. For example, only 3 out of 17 women interviewed reported plans for not returning to their assailant upon exiting the shelter (Schutte, Bouleige, Fix, & Malouff, 1986). However, even the women who reported plans for not returning may not actually leave their abusive relationships due to barriers such as finances, housing, and safety.

As a result of these barriers, short-term assistance, such as a temporary stay at a shelter, may not be sufficient in satisfying unmet needs. Recent research has examined extended advocacy upon exiting the shelter in relation to life satisfaction and the risk of future abuse (Sullivan et al., 1992). The results indicated that higher life satisfaction was found for women with additional advocacy than those without. Unfortunately, future abuse was not completely eliminated for either group. However, the correlation between life satisfaction and advocacy suggests potential benefits for women survivors who have support through advocacy.

The numerous obstacles faced by women survivors frequently contribute to stress and feelings of depression. Recent research examined depression levels of abused women at three points of time: after leaving the shelter, 10 weeks later, and then 6 months later. After a 6-month period following a shelter stay, 58% of the abused women

reported being depressed (Campbell et al., 1995). Therefore, a substantial number of women are still experiencing depression, with some women continuing to be abused while others reporting no abuse. However, no assessment regarding depression levels was made while women were residents in the shelter, which raises some concerns about the experience of living in a shelter. For instance, admitting that you are abused, community living with strangers, a lack of privacy, and unfamiliar surroundings may also contribute to feelings of depression while living at a formal shelter.

Some researchers suggest that the helpfulness of the shelter depends upon the individual woman or her point in the long term leaving process. Berk, Newton, and Berk (1986) interviewed 155 abused women at 2 points in time who had accessed a local domestic violence shelter or had cases with the county prosecutor's office. Initially, 243 women participated in the first set of interviews, but only 155 returned for the second, which was conducted approximately 6 weeks later. Results suggested that abused women who were already taking control of their lives experienced the shelter to be more beneficial for them compared with women who had not starting taking control of their lives. For the women who had not started taking control of their lives, the researchers concluded that the shelter stay may have had no impact or may have triggered more violence from their abusers due to their disobedience of leaving and seeking assistance from the shelter. This study reflects the complex interplay between the community and the individual woman and how both are involved in the process of leaving. However, the researchers also assume that a shelter stay may have had no impact whereas change may have occurred in ways that were not measured or observed. Perhaps time away from the

abusive relationship is another factor in this process that should have been given consideration.

A 2-year follow-up study was conducted with women survivors who volunteered to participate in a longitudinal study and had been randomly assigned to an experimental group, which received advocacy support from volunteers, and a control group that did not receive any additional advocacy (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999). Results indicated that women working with advocates experienced less abuse over time, higher quality of life and social support, and less difficulty obtaining community resources than women without advocacy. No mention was made regarding whether women left and returned to the abusive relationship during this time. These results demonstrate the positive influences of community advocacy on assisting women survivors and may suggest the development that occurs over time. Also, perhaps time is a necessary component for women survivors to experience first hand some of the rewards of life away from the abusive relationship.

To meet the needs of women survivors, shelters have become a resource for women needing assistance and advocacy in facing the numerous barriers when physically leaving their abuser. The shelters are designed to be a temporary place for women to stay, with a focus on assisting and empowering the survivors to regain control over their lives while transitioning out of the abusive relationship. However, despite this assistance and advocacy, many women survivors often return to the abusive relationship before completing their transition away from it. Perhaps this pattern of leaving and returning is an important part of the final termination of an abusive relationship for some women survivors.

Theories on Why Women Stay in Abusive Relationships

Various theories have been used to understand why women survivors may remain in abusive relationships. However, most of these theories neglect to address the complexity of domestic violence, while other theories place responsibility upon the woman survivor for being in an abusive relationship. Because the decision to stay in an abusive relationship assumes that the woman survivor has considered leaving her abuser, this information is important to reflect on when exploring the longer-term transition of women who physically leave their abusers.

Walker (1979) applied the theory of learned helplessness to abused women as a result of numerous interviews with abused women. Through her clinical practice, Walker (1979) heard numerous accounts of women discussing abuse in their lives. She examined 120 detailed stories from women being abused, and approximately 300 fragments of women's stories of being abused. Because these women were not randomly selected, Walker decided to not use statistical analyses. Instead, she looked for commonalities expressed by the women to learn what happens to women survivors, how they are victimized, and how society can help these women (Walker, 1979). Walker (1979) revealed some new insights into the experiences of women survivors. Based on these accounts, Walker interpreted that over time the abused woman believes that there is nothing she can do to change her situation and then eventually stops trying. Once she believes that she cannot control anything, it is difficult to believe that she can ever change anything, even if a favorable event is experienced (Walker, 1979). Furthermore, when women survivors are unwilling to try new strategies to improve their situation, their depression may intensify (Walker, 1979).

For instance, Newman (1993) interviewed seven women at a shelter for domestic violence about their experience of abuse as well as their future plans after leaving the shelter. The core theme that emerged from these interviews involved their “giving up” and returning to their abuser due to a fear of the unknown and a sense of helplessness. The women frequently blamed themselves for being abused and found outside sources, like the police to not be helpful in domestic quarrels. The author stated that the participants found it easier to give up and return to the abusive relationship than to seek alternatives (Newman, 1993). This interpretation of the data can encourage victim blaming by placing the responsibility upon the individual woman for her situation. Although based on a small number of women, these interviews provided insight into the experience of some women with domestic violence. Furthermore, the focus on the women’s future after leaving the shelter helps support the need to investigate changes over time when leaving an abusive relationship as well as the ability to envision life without the abusive relationship.

Another psychological theory that has been applied to women survivors is the reasoned action/planned behavior approach (Strube, 1988). After reviewing previous empirical studies for factors that influence the decision to leave an abusive relationship, Strube (1988) discussed their methodological limitations and then proposed several theoretical models, such as the reasoned action/planned behavior approach to understanding the decision process. According to this view, the abused woman would consider the implications of her actions before deciding whether or not to engage in a specific behavior (Strube, 1988). The important components of this explanation include the woman’s attitude toward the behavior, her perceived control of the situation, and

what significant others (referred to as the subjective norm) think she should do regarding the behavior. Depending on how these three criteria are met, this theory attempts to predict whether or not the woman would be likely to leave her abusive relationship. However, it is unclear if the likelihood to leave refers to a final termination of the abusive relationship or an initial leaving in the longer-term process. Also, no empirical support exists to demonstrate this prediction on whether or not the woman would likely leave her abusive relationship. The subjective norm is composed of two parts including the woman's belief about what significant others think about her abusive relationship and the woman's individual motivation to comply with those significant others. Unlike other theories, the reasoned action/planned behavior approach attempts to consider the subjective norms of the women and how significant people may influence her decision to leave.

Another way researchers have conceptualized why women stay in abusive relationships is psychological entrapment. This approach considers that women in abusive relationships would strengthen their commitment to the relationship in order to justify their prior investments in the relationship (Strube, 1988). This theory conceptualizes that the woman survivor has a goal of nonviolence and becomes entrapped in her relationship. She then may remain in the relationship by trying harder to achieve nonviolence with her abuser based on her prior investments in the relationship (Strube, 1988). However, this goal of nonviolence does not always appear to be attainable due to the continued abuse and produces conflict about continuing toward that goal. Furthermore, it is noted that Strube (1988) applied this model to women survivors without any empirical evidence to help support his application. However, Strube (1988)

concluded that the time course of psychological entrapment needs to be more carefully explored. Closer examination of this time course could assist in learning to better understand when a person becomes entrapped rather than choosing to exit the relationship, if entrapment begets further entrapment, or if entrapment evolves into another response style at a different point in time (Strube, 1988).

Strube (1988) also applied the investment model to help conceptualize leaving an abusive relationship, again without any empirical support. According to this model, investments refer to the numerous ways that abused women become bound to their abusers and the abusive relationship. Essentially, the relationship is viewed in the rational terms of relative costs and benefits for the abused woman. It neglects any consideration to emotional, social, and cultural influences. Similarly, Exchange Theory analyzes a relationship to determine the ratio of costs to rewards, which may influence the decision to stay or to leave (Johnson, 1992). Johnson (1992) studied 426 abused women and investigated the decision to return home or not to return home after staying at a shelter. Johnson (1992) found that women were more likely to return home if the annual family income was high (defined in this study as between \$10,001 and \$20,000), if they were unemployed, if they had been victims of severe abuse, and if they had negative perceptions of themselves. Because many abused women are restricted from any access to their finances, women who are primarily responsible for the family income may not have the ability to gain access to those funds. However, no mention was made in this article about who was responsible for the family income.

Similarly, Strube and Barbour (1983) reported the importance of economic dependence and psychological commitment in the decision to leave or remain in the

abusive relationship. Data were collected from women survivors staying at a shelter through objective measures, such as demographic questionnaires, in addition to a subjective measure that asked one open-ended question of women at the shelter. The responses to the question “Why are you staying with him?” were coded into seven categories including economic hardship, nowhere else to go, staying for the sake of the children, partner promised he would change, fear, dependence other than economic, and miscellaneous responses. Analyses suggested that employed women were more likely to decide to leave their abuser as well as women who had been in the abusive relationship for a shorter amount of time.

However, the decision to leave an abusive partner and the actual act of leaving can be very different experiences. Therefore, questions still remain about the women who decide to leave and follow through with their decision. For instance, what factors assisted in the actual leaving process? Also, did the women return to their abuser before leaving the relationship and moving on with their lives? How did leaving and returning multiple times contribute to women leaving their abusive relationship for good?

Factors Related to Returning to an Abuser

Researchers have started to question what helps predict whether women survivors will return to their abuser. Hilbert and Hilbert (1984) studied 35 women who had been residents at a shelter for domestic violence. From these 35 women, the authors found that 6 out of 20 variables predicted whether or not a woman would return to her abuser. These variables included age, income, length of stay at the shelter, severity of abuse, frequency of abuse, and length of abusive relationship. Results suggested that the more severe the abuse and the longer the length of the relationship, the more likely that a

woman survivor would return to her abuser. Also, the older the woman, the more frequent the abuse, the presence of the woman's own income, and the longer the shelter stay the more likely the woman survivor would not return to her abuser. A small sample was used of women who access shelters, which raises issues of generalizing to the population of women in abusive relationships. Also, the variable regarding length of stay at the shelter suggests that more knowledge of community resources may result from more time at the shelter. Furthermore, stay at the shelter may help a woman survivor experience the potential rewards of life away from their abuser.

Aguirre (1985) also concluded that economic dependence has an influence on women survivors' decisions to return home to their abuser when he is the main source of the family income. However, women who considered the shelters useful were also more likely to return to their abusers. Aguirre (1985) asserts that this finding suggests that shelters may actually contribute to the continuation of some abusive relationships.

Analysis of the data showed that the greater the number of decisions made by the women while in the shelters, the more they tended to separate from their husbands. In addition, most of the women who decided to return were also financially dependent on their abuser since he was the sole source of income, which may explain a possible selection bias in this study. The author suggests that future research qualitatively assess how women who experience the shelter as helpful decide to return to their abusers (Aguirre, 1985). Also, Aguirre (1985) mentions that future research should consider the long-term effects of shelters on marital separation. The shelter's emphasis on empowerment and encouragement for women to make their own decisions may influence some women in their longer-term leaving process. Perhaps the decision to return to the abuser is part of

the transitional process of leaving the relationship for some, and not a symbol of failure. In this case, the shelter may be providing more options and insights for future attempts at leaving the relationship. Just because a woman returns to her abuser does not mean that the shelter or being away from the abusive relationship has not had a longer term effect on her or the relationship.

Frisch and MacKenzie (1991) investigated a total of 46 women survivors by assessing self-esteem, women's roles, education, and other areas. Women were assigned to a "chronically abused" group if they had been in an abusive relationship for four years or more and had suffered serious bodily harm at least twice a year, including one episode in the last 6 months. Women assigned to the "formerly abused" group included women who had been abuse free for the last 6 months. No indication was made regarding whether or not the women in this group were still physically in a relationship with their assailant. A one-way multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to compare group differences between chronically abused women and formerly abused women. Results indicated that chronically abused women had more traditional attitudes about women's roles, lower self-esteem, were less likely to be employed, less likely to receive counseling services, felt more controlled by outside forces, and were more likely to believe that the good outweighs the bad in their relationship. This comparison allows for a more in depth understanding of between group differences. However, it is unclear how the formerly abused women would have answered while they were being abused. More generally, it is unclear which factors are the causes or the effects of being in an abusive relationship. For example, low self-esteem may result from being in an abusive relationship while it may also contribute to finding oneself in this relationship. Also, these results can potentially

be used for victim blaming by arguing that factors under the control of the women survivors were solely responsible for their situation. Investigating potential developmental patterns in the transition away from an abusive relationship that includes physically leaving and returning to the relationship multiple times should provide a more complex and useful understanding of the process.

In 1994, Campbell, Miller, Cardwell, and Belknap investigated the relationship status of 114 women over a 2 and a half-year period. Women were recruited by newspaper advertisements and bulletin board postings. Because more abused women were needed, advertisements were posted in 2 shelters. Twenty-three percent of the final sample of abused women was from the 2 shelters. Originally, 193 women comprised the sample with 97 of these women being abused and 96 not, as determined by the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS). At the time of the second interview, only 25% of the original 51 abused women were still being abused. Various quantitative instruments were used to assess the women including the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS), and the Deynes Self-Care Agency Instrument (DSCAI). Additionally, an interview of both forced choice and open-ended questions was conducted with each woman to explore concepts of self-blame, relationship control, cultural attitudes, childhood physical and/or sexual abuse, and problem solving. A discriminant function analysis was used with these variables, but failed to distinguish between the women who were still being battered from those who no longer being abused. However, no attention was given to how the relationship changed for the women over time or to any previous history of leaving and returning to their abusers.

It is not unusual for women survivors to leave and return to their abusers several times. Bowker and Maurer (1985) sampled 973 abused women recruited from an advertisement in a Women's Day magazine. Seventy-six percent of the women sampled indicated that they had accessed some form of shelter during their abusive relationship, often more than once. Among these women, 3,018 sheltering incidents were reported with 1,503 being with relatives, 878 being with friends, and 237 with formal shelters. Although no average number of leaving and returning was calculated because pre-coded grouped response categories were used in the questionnaire (e.g., 4-6, 7 or more), the self-report data suggests that this pattern occurs frequently for abused women. Also, because the study consisted of a biased sample, generalizability is limited.

This pattern of leaving and returning to the abusive relationship does not imply that the woman survivor will not eventually leave her abuser. Schutte, Malouff, and Doyle (1987) collected information from and interviewed 117 women who had entered a shelter for domestic violence. The number of returns to the shelter was assessed for a period of 4 years. Results indicated that women who were battered as children and more educated were less likely to return to their abuser. Also, the greater number of times a woman had separated from her abuser and the more shelter stays she had, the less likely she was to return to her abuser. These findings help support the notion that changes over time may influence a woman to leave her abusive relationship for good during this process of leaving and returning to the relationship.

In a sample of 109 of abused women, Dobash and Dobash (1979) found that 88% of their sample did leave their abuser at some time. Of these women, 20% left only once, 47% left from 2-5 times, and 33% left more than 5 times. Once again, these findings

suggest it is a common occurrence for women survivors to leave their abuser multiple times throughout their relationship.

Various theories have been applied to help explain why women return to abusive relationships, yet more empirical data are needed to support these theoretical conceptualizations. Also, some studies have explored the variables that predict whether or not a woman survivor will be likely to return to her abuser. However, looking at individual characteristics of women survivors as predictor variables can suggest victim blaming, which ignores the complexity of domestic violence. The attention given to factors such as length of stay at a shelter provides useful information to shelter administration when determining policies and procedures for shelter residents. Some attention has been given to noting the common pattern of leaving and returning to the abusive relationship. However, there has been no exploration of any changes that occur in the abusive relationship as a result of leaving and returning multiple times. For those women survivors who decide to physically leave their abuser, more information is needed to better understand the process of physically leaving and returning as well as what factors may assist them in that transition.

The “Stay/Leave” Decision

At this point, there has been little empirical description of the process of deciding to leave an abusive relationship. However, researchers are beginning to put more focus upon this process instead of the characteristics and descriptions of the abuse and the abused. Additionally, researchers have recently begun to apply different theories concerning the decision-making process and how they may advance our understanding of how to provide effective interventions for women survivors.

An important factor in a woman survivor's decision to leave her abuser involves her safety. Although a woman is at risk of harm when living with her abuser, women who choose to physically leave their abuser may sometimes be at greater risk of harm. Wilson and Daly (1993) combined estimates of women victims of homicide and population-at-large estimates of co-residing and separated married women from Canada, New South Wales, Australia, and Chicago. The authors found that women in all three countries were at an elevated risk for homicide when separated versus co-residing. The elevated risk involved for women survivors who choose to leave their abuser indicates the intensity and complexity of making a decision to leave. It is therefore not uncommon for women survivors to choose to stay in the abusive relationship due to a realistic fear of losing their lives.

Despite this reality, many women survivors still consider leaving their abuser. Brown (1997) attempted to apply Prochaska and DiClemente's Transtheoretical Model of behavior change to the stay/leave decision experienced by some women of domestic violence. This model assumes that people progress through stages when trying to modify and change behavior and that there are cognitive and emotional aspects of change that can be measured (Brown, 1997). Previously, the Transtheoretical Model has been applied to individual change in cases involving smoking cessation, drug addiction, safer sex, and weight control.

To apply this model to women in abusive relationships, Brown (1997) used previous research and findings as examples of evidence for each piece of this model. New data were not collected. However, the model was designed to incorporate individual change, which does not consider the fact that women survivors are trying to

change within the context of a relationship. While the woman has control over herself and her own behaviors, she is not able to control her abuser's behavior. Since the abuser is the one abusing her, the abuser's actions need to be considered in her decision to leave. Furthermore, the influence of the larger social community toward which the woman may be headed was not considered when examining individual change within this model. Because domestic violence is a complex social problem as well as psychological problem, the elements of the relationship and the social context are necessary to understanding the process of trying to physically leave an abusive relationship instead of viewing it simply as a rational decision of individual change.

Despite some omissions in this model, such as the lack of attention given towards the individual woman changing within the context of a relationship, Brown (1997) suggests that remaining in an abusive relationship should not imply that an intervention, such as counseling or a shelter stay has had no affect. Although no empirical evidence has been collected to support this claim, this idea is important since it may reflect part of the process that women experience when trying to transition out of an abusive relationship. More specifically, the idea that women may return to their abuser with more information and knowledge may be a part of the transition from an abusive relationship to a new life away from the abuser.

Choice and Lamke (1997) implemented another conceptual approach to understanding decisions by abused women to stay or leave. In their paper, the authors conceptualized the stay/leave decision in a model consisting of two important questions: "Will I be better off?" and "Can I do it?" Within this model, the authors applied combination of four different theoretical approaches (learned helplessness, psychological

entrapment, reasoned action/planned behavior, and investment model) and how they each related to this decision-making process of staying or leaving an abusive relationship. The authors suggest that women ask themselves these questions several times and in different ways when deciding to leave an abusive relationship. Additionally, their answers may change over time in relation to any personal or structural barriers. This idea of time also supports the issue of transitioning out of an abusive relationship and into a life away from the abusive relationship. Previous studies were examined using this model, but no new empirical work has been completed using it (Choice & Lamke, 1997). Furthermore, the model did not focus on women who have left an abusive relationship, but instead highlighted the decision-making process of deciding to leave with a focus on the rational aspects involved in this decision.

Another study attempted to learn more about abused women's experiences by interviewing those who were in the process of physically leaving an abusive relationship (Campbell, Rose, Kub, and Nedd, 1998). Primarily African-American women were interviewed during three points in time over a three-year period. One important theme that emerged was the fluidity of the relationship status. For instance, some of the women described their position to be more "in flux" since some were in the process of leaving but had not made the final break while others still considered themselves as "in" the relationship. By the interview at Time 3, 53.1% of the women were physically out of their relationship (Campbell et al., 1998). However, no mention was made of differences that might have existed between those who had physically left and those who were still physically in the abusive relationship. Nonetheless, this study helps support the complexity of the process that women survivors experience when transitioning out of an

abusive relationship. For instance, several factors are involved in this decision to leave. It may require more than one attempt at physically leaving the abuser, knowledge of resources and social support, financial assistance, and time.

Another possible component of a woman's decision to leave an abusive relationship may involve social support: people or organizations who demonstrate care and concern for the woman survivor. The amount and level of social support from family, friends, clergy, or advocates may help these women to conquer the complex barriers of transitioning out of an abusive relationship. A recent investigation indicates a strong positive relationship between social support and the psychological well being of abused women (Tan, Basta, Sullivan, & Davidson, 1995). Essentially, social support may help the women cope with their stress due to numerous barriers and thus contribute to the resolution of their violent situation. Therefore, social support or prior knowledge of social support may be an important contributor to a woman's decision to leave her abusive relationship.

Erickson and Drenovsky (1990) conducted a study to explore the decision to leave an abusive relationship using simulation data. In their research, 45 college men and 68 college women participated in an experimental computer game of an abuse-like relationship based on the exchange theory to look at the costs and benefits of leaving or staying in an abusive relationship. Four differing conditions of frequency and severity of abuse were measured in relation to the tendency to leave. The results indicated that women were more likely to leave due to increasing frequency of abuse whereas men were more likely to leave due to increasing severity of abuse. Although the researchers attempted to employ an approach different from self-report measures, the computer

scenarios do not come close to replicating the experiences faced by those in an abusive relationship. Also, the dating status of the participants was not considered nor were past experiences in an abusive relationship, which could have influenced the results.

Recently, researchers have started to view leaving an abusive relationship as a process (Martin, Berenson, Griffing, Sage, Madry, Bingham, & Primm, 2000). Seventy female residents of a domestic violence shelter were interviewed regarding their risk assessment and their decision-certainty of leaving their abusive relationship. Women were asked to choose among 3 options regarding how certain they were about their futures: you really don't know what you are going to do next, you think that you know what you want but are still a little confused, or you know what you want and you're ready to make changes. Women were also asked to assess on a 4-point likert scale the likelihood that most battered women will return to their abusers and then to rate the likelihood of themselves returning to their abusers. The majority of women, 62.9% said that they were highly certain that they were unlikely to return to their abuser, with only 4.3% choosing the lowest certainty. Eighty-eight point six percent of the women assessed indicated that although most battered women would return to their abusers, they were not as likely to do so (Martin et al, 2000).

The researchers consider these findings to be support for an optimistic bias, where people tend to describe themselves as at significantly lower than average risk (Martin et al, 2000). However, by referring to the optimism as a bias, the researchers suggest that it is a detrimental occurrence when perhaps the optimism is necessary for change to actually occur. Despite referring to leaving an abusive relationship as a process, the researchers focused on only one point in time, which does not empirically acknowledge

the multiple changes that occur overtime. However, the researchers did briefly discuss the possibility that multiple leavings may increase a woman's self-sufficiency for staying away from the abusive relationship.

Current research regarding the stay/leave decision for women survivors of domestic violence consists mainly of applications of existing models borrowed from areas other than domestic violence. Furthermore, little empirical evidence exists to support the use of these models. Finally, the majority of this literature attempts to conceptualize the decision to leave an abusive relationship as a rational decision with little attention to the emotional, personal, and social aspects involved in decisions. Therefore, exploring this as an ongoing developmental process rather than a dichotomous decision would help create better models that more accurately reflect the actual experiences faced by women transitioning out of an abusive relationship. This exploration would help us consider that the decision to leave an abusive relationship is not a purely rational process or one purely of individual change. Also, this exploration examines the possibility that there are multiple rather than a single developmental pattern for women transitioning out of the abusive relationship into a different life, focusing on how leaving and returning to an abuser may be part of the overall leaving process.

Trying to Stop the Violence

Women who choose to physically leave their abusive relationship do not necessarily stop the abuse. Frequently, abusers continue to stalk, verbally abuse and physically abuse their partners even after the relationship has been terminated. A recent term, "Separation Abuse," has been coined to describe this occurrence (personal communication, Sullivan, 1999). Research has shown that women are in the greatest

danger from their abuser once they have physically left the relationship (Wilson & Daly, 1984)). For women who are aware of this reality, fear may affect them when considering physically leaving their abuser.

Instead of trying to physically leave the abuser, some women try to stop the violence within the relationship. For example, Campbell et al. (1998) found this in interviewing women in abusive relationships. These women described leaving and returning to the relationship as well as in their thinking about whether to stay or leave. Also within this theme of nonviolence, some women tried to negotiate various strategies by using themselves to decrease the abuse from their partner. For instance, some of these women tried to convince themselves that the violence was not that bad while others developed possible scenarios where “If he does this, then I will leave” (Campbell et al, 1998).

For some women in Campbell et al’s study (1998), turning points were evident which influenced the women’s decision to leave their abuser. Examples of these turning points included the woman identifying herself as abused, being hit during pregnancy, threat of death, escalating violence, realizing the effects on children, and the woman becoming violent herself (Campbell et al, 1998). For example, some women indicate that a single severe episode of violence is enough to terminate an abusive relationship (Kurz, 1996). However, it is important to remember that what specifically constitutes a serious episode of violence may vary across women.

Jacobson, Gottman, Gortner, Berns, and Shortt (1996) assessed 45 batterers and their spouse in regard to the stability of the relationship and the battering over a 2-year time period. The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) was used to determine if the abuse was

severe enough to be included in the study. The couples were assessed with psychophysiological measures to measure heartbeats, muscle activity, and sweat levels. A videotaped discussion between the couple about their problem areas was coded for verbal content, voice tone, content, facial expression, gestures, and body movement. Finally, the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI-II) and the Emotional Abuse Questionnaire (EAQ) was administered to both the husbands and wives. At the 2-year follow-up, 62% of the couples were still married and living together and 38% had either separated or divorced their spouses. Variables that contributed to those who had separated or divorced their husbands included severity of abuse and the woman defending herself assertively. Of those who remained in their relationship, 54% of the batterers decreased the frequency of violent acts over the 2-year period. However, the women indicated that even if the physical abuse decreased, the emotional abuse continued. This longitudinal research provides important insights into changes in the relationship overtime. Although the violence had decreased, the continued presence of emotional abuse still leaves questions regarding the stability and quality of the relationship for those women who chose to remain with their spouse.

For some women, one way of trying to stop the abuse involves seeking help from the legal system. For instance, women may seek a personal protection order or restraining order to prevent future abuse and implement consequences when abused again. By involving the legal system, the woman obtains a public record that she is an abused woman and that the abuse is wrong.

Fischer and Rose (1995) interviewed women survivors who were obtaining a court order to protect themselves from their abusers. Of the 287 women getting an order,

98% said at the time they got the order that they were going to stay out of the abusive relationship permanently. The researchers then interviewed 83 of these women following the hearing to learn more about their decision to invoke the legal system and their decision to leave. The women revealed a variety of reasons for obtaining a legal order of protection. First, some indicated that they could not stop the abuse alone and needed the law to support the idea that abuse is wrong. For some women, the legal order was the first step in leaving the abusive relationship. Others saw this legal documentation as a way to regain some control over their lives. Finally, some women wanted legal documentation that they were abused (Fischer & Rose, 1995).

The authors indicated some psychological benefits for obtaining protection orders. For some women, these orders symbolized strength and a better life. More specifically, the legal system interrupted the pattern of power and control implemented by the abuser. The motivating force that assisted women in beginning the process of obtaining court orders for protection from their abuser was also considered. Therefore, the involvement of the legal system may be part of the transitional process for some women survivors.

Peled et al (2000) suggested that women who choose to stay with their abusers and attempt to end the abuse should be empowered for this decision. A critical examination of the literature was conducted regarding the images of women survivors who stay in the abusive relationship by the authors. They reframed a woman survivor's decision to stay with her abuser as a "choice" rather than an "entrapment" to balance between their needs and rights. Although empowerment helps foster the autonomy of women survivors, this article neglected to consider the cultural influences that may affect a woman's decision to stay to leave her abuser. Since three of the authors are from Israel,

it is important to consider the treatment of women within a particular culture and the cultural scripts of that culture. However, this article did raise an important distinction in a woman survivor's decision to stay or leave between her physical distance from her abuser and her emotional distance from her abuser. For instance, the authors view staying and leaving as extreme situations on a continuum of options, which includes the physical and emotional distances. A woman can physically leave her abuser, but still feel emotionally connected to him. Likewise, a woman can physically stay in the abusive relationship and feel little emotional connection to her abuser. The authors also suggest that these two dimensions (physical distance and emotional distance) may change with time and not necessarily in conjunction with each other, which makes different decisions temporary (Peled et al, 2000).

Due to the occurrence of abuse after leaving the relationship, some women attempt to achieve non-violence within the relationship whether through compromises or seeking legal protection. Other women create bottom lines where they will leave if something specific happens. However, the idea of trying to stop the abuse while still in the relationship may not be a feasible option for some women. Therefore, as mental health professionals, it is important for us to focus on empowering these women to regain control over their lives.

Women's Experiences After the Abusive Relationship

Only a few studies have attempted to explore the experiences of women in the process of physically leaving their abusive relationship. Although these studies are often based on retrospective accounts, they provide more insight into the lives of women survivors who choose to leave their abuser. Furthermore, women who are currently in an

:

1

٧٧

ch

ש

५.

hi

AD

It is

Si

ns

abusive relationship and not seeking assistance are generally not accessible to researchers due to real concerns for the safety of these women.

One study investigated women who had formerly been abused. NiCarthy (1987) interviewed women who had physically left an abusive relationship for at least one year. Forty-one women from diverse backgrounds were interviewed to highlight the process of leaving their relationship. NiCarthy (1987) published the stories of 33 of the women and their advice with hopes of helping those who find themselves in an abusive relationship. The author stated that she attempted to place each woman within a series of more general descriptive categories based on their experience, but found it impossible because of the uniqueness of each woman's experience. Although each individual story is unique, at some level, there may be common patterns among women survivors at other levels of analysis. These unique experiences suggest the potential for different developmental patterns among women transitioning out of an abusive relationship.

Some common themes among the women's individual accounts were briefly discussed. First, NiCarthy (1987) stated that the actual act of leaving appeared to be a chain of events instead of one simple incident that activated the woman to leave, such as numerous violent episodes, belittling, and harassing. According to NiCarthy (1987), several women mentioned a fear for their own safety as well as the safety of their children. Others mentioned a loss of hope for change whereas others described an experience where they "hit bottom." Some women discussed the influence of positive external forces such as shelters, colleagues, friends, family, and their careers/jobs that assisted in their process of leaving. Finally, a shift in balance between fear and hope was considered to be a theme for some of the women who left their abuser.

Although NiCarthy (1987) identified themes among the women's stories, no mention was made of how these themes were derived from her data. Her book provided some useful information concerning general themes that she identified among the interviews, but appeared to be more a handbook for women in these relationships. Although this is a useful approach for reaching some women survivors, the lack of information regarding the analysis makes it difficult for researchers to generate common themes and patterns, to determine the implications, and to replicate the study.

While reading the individual accounts of women survivors in NiCarthy's (1987) book, I attended to patterns of change over time as possible indicators for a developmental process to leaving an abusive relationship. First, each woman discussed the first beating as well as the one that preceded the final act of leaving more than other incidents. Several women also talked about leaving for brief periods of time and then returning to the abuser. Some women spoke about the usefulness of other people and community resources. However, several women indicated that family, friends, religious leaders, and even some therapists gave messages that the women should not leave and that the abuse was a result of their behavior. It is noted, however, that this study was published nearly 15 years ago.

After physically leaving the abusive relationship, an important pattern started to emerge. Most of the women recounted that they felt incredibly lonely, depressed, and unsure of themselves. Many of these women did not have a steady job and were often left on their own to support themselves, their children, and assume responsibility for the financial debt created by their abuser. However, a shift in attitude and in life events appeared to occur where the women told of successes in their careers, home, children,

and financial status. Several women spoke about how they had changed and how the years of pain were years to grow. Many spoke of hope in their future and the newfound freedom of having control over their lives. One woman illustrated this idea of time when she said that while she had left before, she had not been away from her abuser long enough to experience the rewards that would enable her to choose not to return to her abuser.

The accounts of these women in NiCarthy's (1987) book suggest that a new sense of self may eventually result upon transitioning out of the abusive relationship. This process of redefining the self seems to include periods of struggle and reflection. This progression over time may lead to qualitative changes in the women's lives after transitioning out of the abusive relationship and into a new life with new possibilities.

These observations provide a hint that one or more developmental patterns may exist in transitioning out of an abusive relationship and into a new life. In their most recent work, Sullivan and Bybee (1999) indicate the importance of researching women over a 2-year period since significant differences were found between the women with advocacy versus women without advocacy during the 18 month to 2 year interval. These findings further support the idea that women's transitions out of their abusive relationship may be better understood as developmental processes rather than as dichotomous outcomes of success (leaving) and failure (staying).

There is some new evidence to suggest that advocacy and time has a positive effect on women who have left their abusers (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999). Additionally, NiCarthy (1987) has provided more insights into the unique stories and experiences of women survivors. Now, research can focus on looking at these experiences as a

developmental process by attempting to identify patterns that may allow us to understand more about this transitional experience and how clinicians may facilitate in this process.

The Presence of Children in an Abusive Relationship

An important component for women deciding to leave or stay in their abusive relationship involves the presence of children. Frequently, women consider the safety and well being of their children when deciding whether or not to remain in an abusive relationship.

Newman (1993) collected qualitative data from interviews with 7 abused women to learn more about their experiences. The principal reason stated by these women for leaving their abusive home was for the safety and mental welfare of their children (Newman, 1993). Most of the women stated that their children's school performance declined as a result of the abuse. Also, the women said that their children became more withdrawn or even violent at times in response to living in an abusive home. Despite their concerns about their children's well-being, some of the women returned to the abusive home due to little money, being unemployed, having children to support, and to stop family and friends from being harassed by the abusive spouse. The women also indicated that they had left and returned to the abusive relationship numerous times, yet no specific number was provided (Newman, 1993).

Kurz (1996) interviewed 129 divorced women with children about the ending of their marriages. Of this sample, 70% reported violence during their marriages, with 19% of these women stating that the violence was the reason that they left their spouses. The two principle reasons women provided for leaving their marriages included a particularly violent episode and concern that observing the violence was harming their children's

emotional well-being (Kurz, 1996). Although focusing on women with children adds important understanding to the leaving process, no comparison was made to women without children in regards to their decision to leave an abusive relationship. More exploration into the presence of children and the decision to leave and return to an abusive relationship multiple times is necessary to better understand the longer term process of leaving an abusive relationship.

Previous research has increased our knowledge regarding the cycle of abuse as well as the role of shelters for women survivors of domestic violence. Research on women who stay in an abusive relationship also provides some information regarding women's decision-making processes. Unfortunately, some studies still encourage victim blaming. Current research has begun discussing the stay/leave decision that women survivors repeatedly face and attempt to resolve. However, these recent articles have applied existing models to the decision to leave an abusive relationship without any empirical support, which leads us to question the validity of these models.

Other aspects of the literature attempt to conceptualize the decision to leave an abusive relationship as one that is rational with a dichotomous outcome of either stay or leave. I believe that an exploration of the actual process that women survivors experience when leaving and returning to an abusive relationship multiple times will reveal a more complex understanding about this transition and the qualitative changes that may occur over time. At the same time, it may reveal patterns of change and development that have thus far been unexamined. Therefore, patterns of change will be explored in regard to relationships, support, and the influence of children in the following chapters.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study begins with descriptions of the experiences of women survivors to gain better understanding and insight into the complex process of physically leaving an abusive relationship. A second goal is to present an initial description of the developmental process. Particular attention was given to how the abusive relationship changes when a woman chooses to physically leave her abuser and then returns, perhaps multiple times.

Sufficient descriptive information does not currently exist to use or test a formal model of the process of leaving an abuser by starting with the aggregation of quantitative data across individuals. Consequently, this study began with the individual women by using interview-based descriptions of the process of physically leaving abusive relationships. Once the experiences of the individual women were presented, I then aggregated the data across the women.

The following questions were explored in this study.

- 1.) Does the relationship between a woman and her abuser change during the collateral transition physically out of and returning to the relationship? If so, what is the nature of that change and how does it happen?
- 2.) Does the relationship between a woman and the community support change during the collateral transition physically out of and returning to the relationship? If so, what is the nature of that change and how does it happen?

- 3.) How does the presence of children in the relationship make a difference in the patterns of change in the relationship between the woman and the abuser over time?

The first research question focuses on the changes in the relationship across the multiple leave/return events. Because it is common for women to physically leave and return to their abuser multiple times, I wanted to investigate how the multiple leave/return events are part of the longer term process of leaving an abusive relationship, as opposed to viewing returning to the abusive relationship as a failure. I wanted to explore the changes that occur in the relationship over time to see whether or not development occurred for each of the women.

The second research question looks at the changes in support that occur across multiple leave/return events. The literature has shown that support from others and outside sources can be helpful to women when physically leaving an abusive relationship. Therefore, I wanted to focus on the changes in support across the multiple leave/return events to see if and how these changes may be part of the longer-term process of leaving an abusive relationship.

The last research question focuses on the role that children play in the process of leaving an abusive relationship. In addition to exploring how the presence of children influences women in the process of leaving an abusive relationship, I attended to how this influence may or may not change across multiple leave/return events.

The retrospective account of the experience of leaving and re-entering an abusive relationship focuses on each woman's experiences when making the transition away from the abusive relationship and how the abusive relationship changes. A prospective

account was also included in this study to explore women survivors' visions of their futures.

Theoretical Framework for Analysis

Some current models of the stay/leave decision view physically leaving an abusive relationship as a dichotomous process where the woman survivor either stays or leaves. However, it is common for women survivors to physically leave the abusive relationship and return several times before moving towards a life away from their abuser and the abusive relationship (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Moving away from an abusive relationship also involves multiple steps, not a single one. These models do not look at physically leaving an abusive relationship as a developmental process. Instead, these models tend to focus on the short-term implications of returning to an abusive relationship without considering the larger time frame that may include multiple leave/return events as part of the longer-term process.

What makes an analysis developmental? First, change over time is the focus of the analysis. Second, the analysis is concerned with where patterns and/or behaviors come from --their origins-- rather than explaining them at the moment. For instance, physically leaving and returning to an abusive relationship may be part of the longer-term process for women survivors who eventually choose to physically leave their abuser. The origins of leaving the abusive relationship for good may be in the earlier "back and forth" movement in and out of the relationship. Finally, the change over time needs to be associated with one or more notions of progress.

Few existing developmental theories are appropriate to studying changes during movement from one social activity to another without supposing generic processes that

are understood as independent of the activities. In the field of psychology, development is often associated with individual changes in specific areas such as Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, social-emotional development, Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories of cognitive development, and Kohlberg's moral development (Woolfolk, 1998). However, most theories of individual development neglect the fact that environments are also developing by changing across time often from the actions of individuals and collectives (Kindermann & Skinner, 1992).

Cognitive psychology uses the concept of transfer to describe generalization from one situation to another, yet this is not appropriate for understanding physically leaving an abusive relationship, since the nature of the abusive relationship works against generalizing knowledge and skills from the relationship to a life beyond it. One social organization (e.g. the abusive relationship) is left behind to gradually create another one as a woman survivor physically leaves her abusive relationship and moves toward a life without her abuser.

The concept of consequential transition has been used to identify developmental patterns that exist over time in the generalization of knowledge and identity (Beach, 1999). For example, consequential transition has been used to look at generalizations between work and school and between job training and work. I believe that this concept is amenable to use in locating and studying the developmental patterns that may exist for women physically leaving and returning to an abusive relationship multiple times due to the changes that occur in the abused woman's identity and the knowledge learned across the multiple leave/return events. According to Beach (1999),

“the concept of consequential transition involves a developmental change in the relation between an individual and one or more social activities. A change in relation can occur through a change in the individual, the activity, or both. Transitions are consequential when they are consciously reflected on, often struggled with, and the eventual outcome changes one’s sense of self and social positioning.” (1999)

Consequential transitions involve one or more notions of progress and are best viewed as part of a developmental process over time across contexts. Consequential transitions involve changes in identity as well as knowledge and skill, which are defined as a change in the relationship between the person and a social organization (here the abusive relationship), rather than a change in the person.

Four types of consequential transition have been identified including lateral, collateral, encompassing, and mediational transitions (Beach, 1999). Lateral transitions are linear and unidirectional, for example, the move from school to work, such as a student becoming an accountant. Collateral transitions are more complex than lateral ones because they are multidirectional. Here, the person is participating in two or more related activities within the same time frame, such as participating in part-time graduate courses and working. Encompassing transitions occur when individuals participate in a social activity that itself is changing over time. An example of this type of transition would be a change in counseling practice due to managed-care companies emphasizing short-term therapy, and clinicians changing their therapy skills as part of this change. Individuals participating in an encompassing transition tend to adapt and change with the purpose of continuing to participate in the activity. Mediational transitions involve the creation of and participation in an activity that stands between or mediates two already existing activities. For instance, a university counseling center may serve to aid in the transition of a student between the university and the workplace.

The concept of consequential transition has been applied to instances where transitions between activities occur when one activity serves as preparation for the next activity (e.g., a lateral transition from school to work) or at least do not stand in conflict to each other (e.g., collateral transition between home and school) (Beach, 1999). However, consequential transition away from an abusive relationship is different because the first activity (the abusive relationship) actively works against participating in the second (a life away from the abusive relationship). More specifically, women survivors face a transition with many obstacles, such as the presence of strict boundaries and tight control while being in the abusive relationship, which work against seeking a life away from it.

The transition away from an abusive relationship and into a life without it is complex and multifaceted. Two possibilities over time exist for women physically leaving an abusive relationship. The first possibility and ideal type of transition would be a lateral one where the woman survivor physically leaves the abusive relationship and enters into a life with no abuse and without ever returning to the relationship. This possibility is considered to be ideal only because one would hope that the frequency and severity of abuse experienced would be minimal. Another type of lateral transition would be for the abuse to stop and for the relationship to continue. However, it is difficult to know how common these types of lateral transitions are since these women may leave the abusive relationship only once without the awareness or support from others.

Due to the complexity of domestic violence, however, women survivors seeking a life away from the abusive relationship may instead experience collateral transitions.

For instance, women survivors may be moving between the shelter and the abusive

relationship multiple times (collateral transitions). Although returning to the abusive relationship has been traditionally viewed as a failure, perhaps for some women this occurrence contributes to the final transition away from the abusive relationship and into a life without it. For some women these collateral transitions may need to occur due to the numerous concerns involved in physically leaving an abusive relationship such as needs to stabilize finances, rely on social support, and be sure of safety.

The lateral and collateral transitions experienced by women survivors are two different experiences that women may encounter when leaving an abusive relationship. Progress can potentially occur for both lateral and collateral transitions. Therefore, it is important to not view lateral transitions as the goal, but instead as a possible situation where a woman survivor might experience less abuse.

The Settings

Six of the participants were recruited from a shelter program for women and children who experience domestic violence in a mid-size Midwestern city. Because the women were recruited from the residents of the shelter, this study refers to this resource as the Crisis Shelter Program. This particular shelter program was founded in 1977 and provides service to roughly 4,000 individuals each year. This shelter program works from an empowerment philosophy, which involves input and cooperation among staff, residents, ex-residents, and volunteers. Women survivors and their children in need of immediate safety can seek temporary shelter from this agency, typically averaging 30 days in the shelter. The shelter location is kept confidential and requires people to identify themselves before entrance is allowed. In addition to providing temporary safe housing, the shelter program also provides various services to support women in areas

such as housing, employment, finances, legal issues, advocacy services, and a 24-hour crisis line. Free individual and group counseling are also available for both residents and non-residents. A “Stage I Support Group” focuses on women who are in crisis. Stage II is for women who have been out of an abusive relationship for at least one year. When staying at the shelter, women are required to attend the Stage I Support Group. Free childcare is provided during all support group meetings. All of the women from this shelter program were in Stage I.

I first became familiar with the shelter program during my Masters in Counseling practicum and internship experience for one year. I participated in various activities including facilitating group counseling, providing individual counseling, crisis intervention in person and on the phone, and outreach into the community about domestic violence. Because of my extensive involvement with this shelter program, I was interested in pursuing my research there as well as volunteering my time in exchange for this opportunity. Through volunteering as a Stage I Support Group facilitator, I was able to become more familiar with the struggles and issues faced by many women survivors. My volunteer time at the shelter also contributed to my credibility and respect among women survivors and staff. Notes were kept during my volunteer time to record any observations of women survivors, their experiences, and my reactions to their observations.

For logistical purposes, the remaining six participants were recruited from another Midwestern shelter program that serves a large suburban area. Because the women were recruited from the shelter’s advocacy program, this study refers to this resource as the Advocate Shelter Program. This shelter program began in 1978 and serves

approximately 6,000 individuals each year. According to this shelter program, domestic violence and sexual assault are seen as community problems that call many organizations to work together towards effective solutions. Major services of this shelter program include a temporary shelter, a 24 hour crisis line, individual and group counseling, legal clinics, 24 hour response teams, community education programs, and training for professionals in mental health, criminal justice, medical, and legal settings. Women often become familiar with the advocate program once they have accessed another organization, such as the legal system or the police. Advocates often accompany a woman to the police or to the courts as well as offer emotional support to clarify options. Initially women were recruited from this shelter program because the location was convenient and accessible to me. However, the inclusion of women from this shelter program proved to be very valuable by adding more variation in the sample.

Women recruited from domestic violence shelters are not representative of all women survivors. However, shelters are community resources that are known to provide many services for women experiencing domestic violence. Recruiting participants from shelters increased the feasibility of completing this research and the probability of finding women who were willing to participate in this study. Therefore, the results from this study are not intended to be generalized to all women who experience some form of domestic violence.

Participants

Participants were recruited from two shelter programs for domestic violence. Flyers were posted around the shelters, distributed at support groups, and distributed by advocates with a brief announcement about the study and various ways to participate if

interested (Appendix D). Consent forms were also available from shelter program staff members for women to sign who wanted to hear more about the study. Women who were interested in participating or in hearing more about this study either called the researcher or gave permission to be contacted by the researcher. This form stated that the woman was under no obligation to participate and asked how to contact her safely (Appendix A).

Participants were screened over the phone once they expressed interest in participating in the study. Screening criteria included that the woman saw herself in a difficult relationship, had a history of leaving and returning to her partner two or more times, and was willing to be tape recorded during the interview. Interviews were arranged according to schedules and childcare needs.

Twelve women were interviewed who had left and returned to an abusive relationship two or more times in order to look for patterns across multiple leave/return events. The women interviewed included 1 Hispanic woman, 1 Native American woman, 3 African-American women, 1 Western-European woman, 1 South Asian woman, 1 African woman, and 4 European-American women. All of the 12 women had children or stepchildren. No women without children volunteered to participate. Children ranged in age from 2 months – 25 years old during the time of the interview. One woman had 4 stepchildren from the marriage to her abuser. As noted in Table 1, the women from the Crisis Shelter Program were younger than the women from the Advocate Shelter Program. Also, the women from the Advocate Shelter Program had spent more time with their abusers than the women from the Crisis Shelter Program.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

	Crisis Shelter Program n=6			Advocate Shelter Program n=6			Overall n=12		
	Range	Mean	St. Dev.	Range	Mean	St. Dev.	Range	Mean	St. Dev.
Age	20-30	26.20	3.39	36-48	43.80	4.22	20-48	35	9.63
Time with Abuser (years)	.67- 7	3.74	2.39	5-22.5	16.60	5.70	.67- 22.50	10.16	7.77
Number of Abusive Relationships	1-5	2.33	1.37	1-2	1.33	.47	1-5	1.83	1.14
Total Number of Leavings	2-8	4.33	1.89	2-5	3.17	.90	2-8	3.75	1.59

Instruments

I developed two instruments to use in this study: the interview guide and the demographic questions. Because I wanted to hear the women's experiences, I constructed a guided interview to insure that I would gather the necessary information while allowing for the individual woman to have some freedom in the sharing of her experiences. I first developed the questions by reviewing other studies that investigated domestic violence using a qualitative interview. Next, I consulted with committee members to help refine the questions. Finally, a pilot study provided an opportunity for me to test out the interview guide and refine the questions used in the actual study. Please refer to Appendix C for the interview guide used in this study.

The second instrument was administered at the end of the interview and consisted of demographic questions. I chose these questions as a way to better identify and describe the sample of women interviewed for this study. Again, I consulted with my

committee members to better refine the demographic questions and then tested them in a pilot study. Please refer to Appendix C for the demographic questions that were used in this study.

The pilot study consisted of 6 women who were shelter residents from the Crisis Shelter Program. By conducting this brief pilot, some procedural issues were refined. For instance, one woman from the pilot study had left her abuser 20 times. From this interview, I was better able to separate the woman's experiences at the beginning, middle, or end of the relationship when she had left numerous times. Also, these pilot interviews helped me realize the importance of exploring the woman's vision of her future if she did not see her abuser in it.

Procedures

Research with abused women is an important way for the community to learn more about this complex social problem and how to address it. However, meeting with women who are currently being abused or who have previously been abused can create dangerous situations due to the uncertainty of their abusers' behavior. Therefore, it was essential to consider how to best protect the woman survivor who chose to participate in my research.

Langford (2000) developed a safety protocol when doing qualitative research with battered women. Some of his recommendations include providing a safe place for the interview, providing day care for women with children, having the interview last less than 2 hours, having only one interview, and providing a cash compensation for participation. To better protect the women participants in this study, these safety protocols were employed by conducting the interviews at the shelter or another safe

location, conducting interviews when day care was available, attempting to complete the interview in approximately 2 hours, and by providing a cash compensation for their participation. Figure 1 provides the sequence of procedures used to collect data in this study.

Figure 1: Sequence of Procedures

1. Introduction
2. Interview
3. Demographic Information Collection
4. Debriefing

Introduction

The interviews were conducted at the shelter or another safe location with a tape recorder and microphone on a table between the participant and the interviewer. Notes were also taken during the interview. I introduced myself as a doctoral candidate who had worked with women survivors of domestic violence and wanted to use my research towards continuing to help women in this area. Following this brief introduction, the women who volunteered to participate in this study completed a consent form, which included permission to tape record our interviews and use quotes in the final report without any identifying names (Appendix B). An overview of the study was provided to women participants and the opportunity for them to ask any existing questions. I informed participants that this interview did not ask about child abuse, but that I was mandated by law to report it to the proper authorities if I was told about it. Tapes, field notes, and consent forms were kept in a locked cabinet and tapes were erased after 1 year.

Women who chose to participate in the study received \$20 in cash in exchange for their time and willingness to share their stories. In the event that any participant had difficulty reading due to illiteracy, disability, or effects from physical violence, I read aloud the consent form as well as any other printed materials. Participants were offered a copy of the signed consent form. I also reminded the participants that all interviews would remain confidential. Participants were reminded that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and could refuse to answer any questions, which would not affect any services they received from the shelter program. Finally, additional referrals were presented if any participant wanted further assistance or displayed any signs of distress.

The Interview

The interview was used to collect information regarding the individual experiences of women survivors when leaving and returning to their abusive relationship. This interview provided some framework of necessary areas to cover, but also allowed for freedom for each woman to adequately describe her experiences. Participants were asked to describe their relationship before leaving and after returning to their partner (Appendix C). Next, participants were asked to describe how having children impacted their decisions to leave and/or return to the abusive relationship. Finally, the women were asked to describe the present as well as their view of the future.

Immediately following each interview, I made notes about the interaction and recorded things such as voice and other nonverbal behaviors that may not be evident from the audiotape (Kvale, 1996). These field notes were also kept in a locked cabinet, along with the audiotapes and the consent forms. Additionally, I relied on my clinical skills

and ethical training to provide an atmosphere that protected the participant from possible harm while participating in my study.

The Demographic Information

Following the interview, all participants were asked to orally provide demographic information. The demographic questions were designed to provide information regarding participants' income, partner's income, age, race, ethnicity, marital status, children, religion, employment, educational level, number of abusive relationships, and whether or not their partner was currently receiving or had ever received any treatment for his behavior. The demographic questions were asked at the end of the interview once a rapport had been established between the researcher and the interviewee. The demographic questions can be found in Appendix C.

Debriefing

Following the interview and demographic questions, interviewees were asked to comment on their reaction to the interview. The women were also asked if there was anything that was not asked that they thought might have been asked, and how they might have answered that question. I also asked the women to provide any feedback to help me improve the interview with other women. I offered to answer any questions that they had about the interview and/or the study. In closing, I again thanked the women for their willingness to share their experiences with me and paid them the \$20 as an additional thanks for taking the time and emotional energy to talk with me.

Data Analysis

According to Kvale (1996), both qualitative and quantitative approaches interact in the area of social research. These interactions occur throughout the research process,

including the data analysis. Also, qualitative approaches of collecting the data can then be reported quantitatively through the use of tables and calculations and qualitatively through the use of narratives and interpretation of tables (Kvale, 1996).

The overall process for analyzing the interview data consisted of several steps that included both qualitative and quantitative methods. First, the interviews were transcribed in their entirety. Detailed phonetic codings were not done, but significant pauses, hesitations, and exclamations were noted because they helped with interpretation. Once all of the interviews had been transcribed, I read through each transcript. Next, I began the preliminary coding of the transcripts for information that pertained to my research questions. The coding, or meaning categorization helped reduce long statements into categories that could then be used to look at quantitatively (Kvale, 1996). For example, long statements that described a change in support were coded as a mention of change in support. See Appendix E for the coding schema used in this study.

The first research question attended to the relationship between the woman and her abuser and was coded for change in the relationship. Change was coded as either stated, inferred, unknown, or none. Next, the instances were coded by how the participant attributed the change, either to self, her abuser, both, or unknown. A written description of the mention of change was included to use text to better describe the change involved. Each instance was also coded as either having been prompted by the interviewer and having been interpreted by the researcher. Finally, each instance was coded for when the event occurred, such as during the 1st time leaving or at the end of the relationship.

The second research question focused on the relationship between the woman and her community support and was coded for the type of social support received such as use of a shelter program, or support from the police, a church, family, or friends. For each instance, the researcher coded whether or not the support was aware of the abuse with an answer of yes, no, or unknown. Next, the participant's reaction to the support was coded as either helpful, not helpful, neutral, or unknown. A written description was also included to further detail the incident. Similar to the coding for the first research question coding, each instance was coded yes or no for researcher prompt and researcher interpretation. Change in support was also coded either as stated, inferred, unknown, or none and the attribution of the change in support was coded as self, abuser, both, or unknown. Finally, when the instance of support occurred was also documented.

The third research question focused on the influence of children in the relationship. How the children influenced a decision to stay or leave was written, such as when a woman returned to her abuser because a young child missed living with her dad. Also, what the children influenced was noted, such as a decision to return to the relationship and abuser, or a decision to leave the relationship. Instances were coded as for whether there was a change in the influence of children and, whether there was interpretation. Finally, I recorded when the instance of influence of children occurred.

Following the coding, I constructed a narrative vignette for each woman to summarize each individual interview. Kvale (1996) refers to this narrative structuring as a way to bring out the meaning by including the temporal and social organization of a text. I included the individual vignettes in order to bring the analysis back to the individual woman and her experiences. Each vignette began with a timeline to help

organize the sequence of events for that particular woman. Next, a narrative was included that summarized, for each woman, each of the leave/return events and briefly touched on the areas of change in the relationship, change in support, and influence of children. Finally, the vignettes concluded with a summary table of the coding and a brief description of the patterns found within each woman.

Once the individual vignettes were completed, I began to look for patterns of change and development across the multiple leave/return events. I calculated the means and standard deviations for average mentions of change over time in the relationship, attributions of the change in the relationship, change in support, attribution of the change in support, and influence of children. Women were then separated based on commonalities according to breakpoints that occurred from the calculations regarding average change in the relationship and average attribution of the change in the relationship. I looked at the breakpoints that separated the women and grouped them to see how the areas of support and influence of children played out. Then, whether or not development had occurred within the clusters was explored as well as similarities and differences among the women.

Chapter 4 presents the individual vignettes for each of the 12 women interviewed. Following the vignettes, Chapter 5 describes the patterns of change and development within and between the groups of women.

Chapter 4: Case Analyses of Individual Women

This chapter consists of case analyses of each of the 12 women interviewed for this study. Pseudonyms are used to protect the privacy of the women interviewed. The case analysis for each woman provides a capsule description of her experiences with her most recent abusive relationship. The case analyses are then used to explore patterns across women in the following chapter.

Each summary begins with a timeline to depict the sequence of each woman's experience of being in and leaving the most recent abusive relationship. Although the timelines are not scaled, they provide sequential information of events. Events listed on the left hand side of the timeline include information pertaining to children and support whereas events listed on the right hand side of the timeline refer to the start of the abusive relationship, the specific leavings and returns, and the time of the interview. A narrative vignette follows each timeline and summarizes the multiple leavings and returns in relation to each of the three research questions. Quotes are used throughout the narrative vignettes and marked with this notation (L: 2-7), which refers to the individual's transcript and to the line numbers of the quote. A table of the codings relevant to each of the research questions is included for each woman and is described. The first research question regarding change in the relationship was coded for mentions of change, and its attribution to the woman, her abuser, both, or unknown. The second research question regarding change in support was coded for mentions of change in support, and its attribution to the woman, her abuser, both or unknown. The type of support mentioned was also included. The various types of support are then discussed as formal support, consisting of community organizations and informal support, such as family and friends.

Finally, the third research question regarding influence of children was coded for mentions of whether children influenced the woman to stay in the relationship, leave the relationship, both, or unknown. Frequently, each coding is broken down by each leaving of the abusive relationship. In some cases, few details were gathered for specific leavings. Columns were then separated into beginning, middle, and end of the relationship to demonstrate the sequence of time in those cases. When reading the table of coding, please note that the number of changes refers to the number of times a change was mentioned in the interview by the interviewee, not how many changes actually occurred in the relationship. However, I make the assumption that the mentions of change in the relationship relate to the amount of actual change that occurred in the relationship.

The summaries begin with the 6 women interviewed from the Crisis shelter program, followed by the 6 women interviewed from the Advocate shelter program.

Women from the Crisis Shelter Program

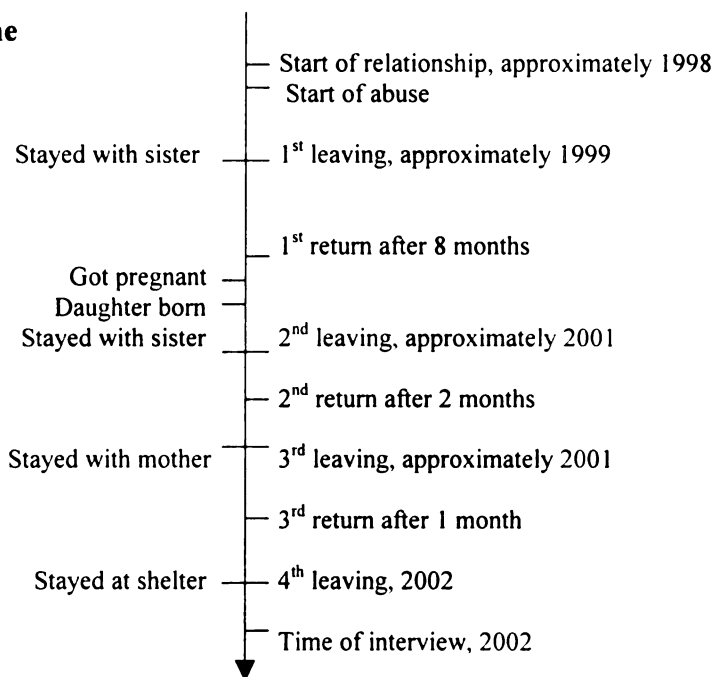
Ina

Ina is a 20 year-old African-American woman from the Crisis shelter program. Ina has taken some college courses, held part-time minimum wage jobs, and currently relies on her family to make ends meet. She has been in only one abusive relationship during the past 4 years and has left her abuser a total of 4 times. Ina and her abuser were not married. Three of the 4 leavings occurred after the birth of their daughter who was 9 months old at the time of the interview, as seen in Figure 2. It was not stated at the time of the interview how long Ina had been away from her abuser during her most recent leaving. She described the abuse as emotional and physical, yet tried to minimize it

during the interview. Ina reported that her abuser had always been possessive, controlling, and bad-tempered from the start of their relationship. However, these behaviors increased once she got pregnant with their child.

Ina and I met at the shelter for our interview. I experienced Ina as very talkative during the interview and willing to disclose information about her relationship. Ina stated that she had difficulty talking about her emotions because she was not fully in touch with them. Ina’s 9-month-old daughter was also present at the interview. Two cell phone calls with Ina’s mother interrupted the interview because Ina needed to arrange a ride with her mother following our interview.

Figure 2: Ina’s Timeline



Ina left the 1st time because she needed space from her boyfriend. Ina said, “The 1st time I left him, I wanted him to wake up and see what was going on, that was before our daughter.” (L: 199-200) She said that she and her abuser talked while she stayed at

her sister's. She felt like she had some control in their relationship for the first time, had more freedom when there was a physical distance between them, and was motivated since she was working and continuing to go to school. When she returned to him that first time after staying with her sister for 8 months, she became pregnant with their daughter. Because she had a difficult pregnancy, Ina was totally dependent on her abuser and that's when he became more controlling by demanding to know where she was going and who she was with at all times. His controlling behaviors of needing to know where she was at all times continued after the birth of their daughter.

Ina left the 2nd time and again stayed with her sister who was aware of the abuse, which provided a physical distance between her and her abuser. The reason she gave for leaving him the 2nd time was that he cheated on her. She re-enrolled in school, but after being away for 2 and a half months, returned to him. She said that it was easier financially and that she feels guilty when her daughter isn't being raised by both parents together. She said that the abuse and name-calling started again. She said that she quit school and felt depressed and disappointed when she returned to him. "[While I was gone from my abuser, I was] re-enrolling in school, finding a place, you know, securing residency. I was totally doing stuff. I don't know. When I'm with [my abuser], I'm totally isolated and I can't do anything, so when I'm out on my own, I'm like so productive and then I end up giving up and returning." (L: 266-269)

Ina left for the 3rd time and stayed with her mother for a month. She left because one of his friends made a rude comment about their daughter. Ina said, " We were out to eat and his friend made an off comment about our daughter. She was sitting and playing with her feet and said you want her to get used to stuff like that, you know, and I'm

sitting here thinking, you're having this guy sleep in our house? And so he went to take his friend somewhere and me and [my daughter] hopped a train and left." (L: 589-593)

Ina interpreted this comment as sexual and wanted to protect her daughter from her abuser's friend. She thought that the relationship was over for good and started a romantic relationship with a friend. Ina returned to her abuser after a month because it was financially easier and because she didn't feel guilty about her daughter when they were together. Ina felt embarrassed that she returned this time. He said he would change by trying to refrain from always needing to know where she was and what she was doing, but made no effort to change his behavior.

Ina left this 4th and most recent time because he was accusing her of cheating on him and she came to the shelter. This is the first time that she has made child visitation arrangements for her abuser with her daughter. She described herself as emotionally detached from him, yet still is confused about a future with him. She currently describes her relationship with her abuser as cordial. In regard to changes in her relationship with her abuser overtime, Ina said, "It was more because I was with my abuser not because I wanted to, but out of necessity. So, I mean, no relationship can survive out of necessity." (L: 624-625)

Ina stated that she stays with her abuser more out of necessity for financial support and to alleviate the guilt of not raising her daughter within a family. She seems to switch from feeling unproductive and depressed when with him to motivated when she's not with him. Currently, she described herself as unhappier without him but does not necessarily see him as part of her near future. Ina did not provide any more details regarding her future. Throughout the interview, Ina gave many mixed messages about

her current and future relationship with her abuser, which seems to revolve around her confusion about what is best for her daughter. Ina stated, “I’m really unhappier without him. It’s just different. I’m totally detached from the situation because that’s the only way I can keep it together for [my daughter], so my emotions are completely nonexistent. I broke down and cried one night and [my daughter] didn’t quite understand, but she saw a tear and I was holding her and she put her little finger on it and was tracing it down and I was like, I can’t do this!! That really tore my heart out, so I’m definitely not happier, but in the long run, I can totally see it. Once things are, you know, once we’re not in the shelter, or I’ve got a job...” (L: 712-718)

In regard to support, Ina stayed with her sister when she left the 1st and 2nd times and her sister was aware of the abuse. She stayed with her mom the 3rd time she left and claims that her mom doesn’t know about the abuse. She did mention that her abuser’s mom told her the 3rd time that she could do better than him. Finally, she was staying at the shelter with her daughter for the first time during the time of our interview.

Ina talks about how it was easier to leave the 1st time before they had a connection through their daughter. Her daughter didn’t influence her 2nd leaving, but did influence the return because she was strapped financially and wanted her daughter to have both parents raise her together. Her daughter influenced her leaving the 3rd and 4th times because she started to notice the effects on her daughter, such as her daughter not wanting her abuser to touch Ina and crying when he gets near Ina. Her daughter did influence the 3rd return as well due to finances and to alleviate the guilt Ina feels when she’s apart from her abuser.

of

co

sl

re

Li

me

me

sup

In r

Table 2: Ina's Summary of the Coding

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	4 th Leaving	Don't Know When
Change in Relationship	8	5	5	5	2
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 5 Abuser = 1 Both = 2 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 2 Both = 2 Unknown = 0	Self = 4 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 4 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Change in Support	0	1	1	1	0
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 1* Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 1 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 1 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 4 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 4 Leave = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Stay = 0 Leave = 3 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 2 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 3

When looking at the mention of change in the relationship in Ina's summary table of the coding, Ina mentioned slightly more change occurring during the 1st leaving when compared to the other leavings. During her 2nd, 3rd, and 4th leavings, Ina mentioned slightly less change in her relationship. In regard to the average mention of change in her relationship, Ina reported moderate change compared to the other women in the study. Little change occurred in her attributions of change in the relationship over time with most of the attributions being made to self, except for the 2nd leaving where Ina attributed more of the change to her abuser. Throughout her 4 leavings, Ina mentioned minimal support. When she did mention support, Ina attributed that change in support to herself. In regard to type of support mentioned, Ina mentioned informal support from family

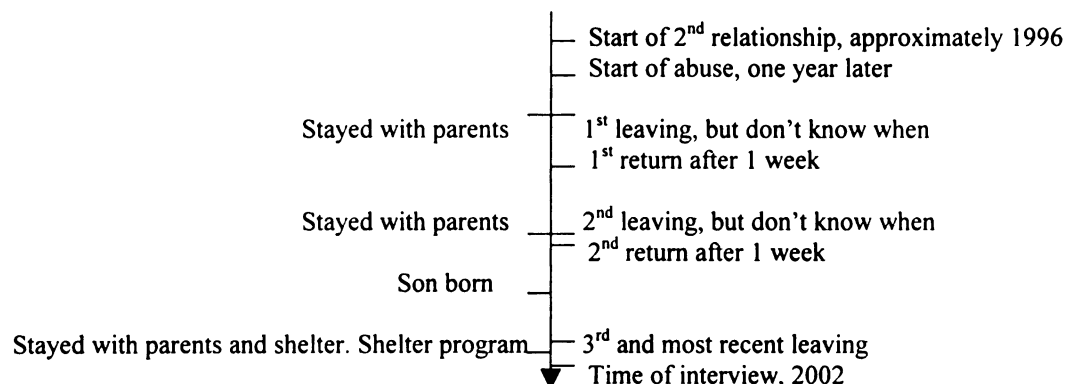
during her 2nd and 3rd leavings, yet only mentioned formal support during her most recent leaving. When looking at influence of children, Ina mentioned staying in the relationship more during her 2nd and 3rd leaving compared to the other leavings. Ina also had a change over time where her daughter began to influence her more in her decision to leave her abuser, with the most mentions of this influence occurring during her most recent leaving. On average, Ina mentioned that her child influenced her to return to the abusive relationship more than leave the abusive relationship.

Viv

Viv is a 30-year-old African-American woman from the Crisis shelter program. During the time of our interview, Viv was not working and was making ends meet through welfare. When asked about her highest level of education, Viv stated, “I don’t know. I was in Special Ed and they don’t tell you.” (L: 666) She has been in 2 abusive relationships. Her most recent abusive relationship lasted for 6 years and she left her abuser a total of 3 times during that 6-year period, as seen in Figure 3. Viv and her abuser were not married. At the time of the interview, Viv had been away from her abuser for approximately 3 weeks. Viv described the abuse as emotional, physical, and sexual, with an emphasis on her abuser always pressuring her to have sex, even immediately following the birth of their son. Viv stated that the abuse started one year after they had been together. They have one son together who was 4 months old at the time of our interview. Viv also has one daughter, age 11, from her first abusive relationship.

Viv and I met for our interview at the shelter. During our interview, Viv was willing to openly discuss her relationship with her abuser. Her four-month-old son was present during the interview and slept throughout our time together.

Figure 3: Viv's Timeline



Viv said that she left with her children the 1st time and stayed with her parents because her abuser would not let her talk to her daughter's dad, who was her ex-boyfriend from her 1st abusive relationship. She returned after a week to give the relationship another try for her children's sake because she wanted to make this relationship work.

After being with her abuser for a month, Viv left with her children the 2nd time and went to her parents' house again. She left because her abuser was fighting with her daughter's dad. It was unclear how long she stayed away from her abuser. Again she said that she returned to her abuser to give it a try for the children's sake.

Viv left a 3rd and most recent time and stayed with her parents for a week, went to a shelter in her hometown, and then came to this shelter. She brought her son with her, but let her daughter stay with her parents. Viv left her abuser this time because he stole

her welfare money and used it to buy drugs. Viv stated that she was angry that he stole from her kids saying, “You don’t steal from my kids. That ain’t right!” (L: 114)

Over time, Viv said that her abuser became more jealous and started to try to control her more by telling her what to do. Viv stated that she does not want any romantic relationship with her abuser, but will have to see him because of issues regarding their son such as visitation and child support. Viv said, “But I’m not going back to him. I’m just saying, just because of him [points to baby], we’re going to have a connection.” (L: 202-203) She said that she was unhappier without her abuser because he used to help her out financially by buying things for the children. When asked to describe her future without her abuser, Viv said, “I hope I find a good man, be married, be married help me out to help them (kids). Don’t be scared of my baby’s fathers and stuff. I want me a house. I don’t want no apartment. Big family.” (L: 600-603)

In regard to support, Viv said that she did not confide in anyone about the abuse, but that one time her abuser’s sister saw him hit her and the sister told her abuser to leave. It was unclear whether or not her parents were aware of the abuse. Viv said that she has a Personal Protection Order on her daughter’s dad, but not for her current abuser. Viv stayed at a shelter in her hometown before coming to this shelter. Because they no longer had an opening for her, the hometown shelter paid for her bus ticket to this shelter.

In regard to her children, Viv said that they did not influence her decisions to leave the 1st or 2nd time, but did influence her decision to leave this 3rd and most recent time because her abuser stole her welfare money, which Viv used to support her children. Her children did influence her decision to return to her abuser the 1st and 2nd times because she wanted to give it another try for their sakes.

Table 3: Viv's Summary of the Coding

	1st Leaving	2nd Leaving	3rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Change in Relationship	2	1	12	4
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 0 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Self = 0 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 10 Abuser = 1 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 2 Both = 2 Unknown = 0
Change in Support	0	0	1	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 1* Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 1 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 1 Leave = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 1

When looking at change in the relationship in Table 3, Viv made minimal mentions of change during her 1st and 2nd leavings, but had a large increase in the number of mentions of change during her most recent leaving. Viv's average change in the relationship was moderate compared to the other women in the study. More of the change in the relationship was attributed to her abuser during her 1st and 2nd leavings, but a shift occurred during her most recent leaving where Viv attributed most of the change in the relationship to self. Viv made minimal mention concerning change in support over time with a slight increase during her most recent leaving. This change in support was also attributed to self. Viv received formal support during her most recent leaving, which

was different from her previous leavings. Regarding influence of children, Viv mentioned minimal change over time for staying with her abuser as well as minimal change in leaving her abuser. However, there was a slight decrease in influence for staying in the abusive relationship during Viv's most recent leaving. In regard to the average influence of children, Viv's children slightly influenced her to leave the abusive relationship more than return to it.

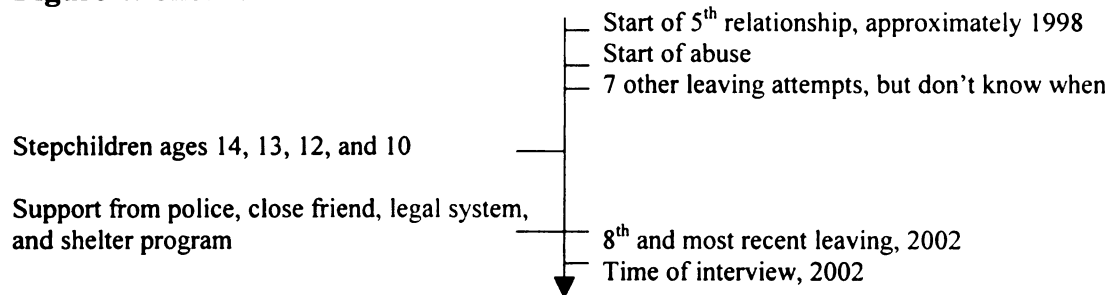
Sheri

Sheri is a 26-year-old Native-American woman from the Crisis shelter program. Sheri's highest level of education was half a semester of college. Prior to leaving her abuser, Sheri had worked occasionally as a waitress and as a housecleaner. She has been in 5 abusive relationships with the most recent one lasting 4 years. It was unclear how long Sheri had been away from her abuser at the time of our interview. Sheri was married to her most recent abuser and described the abuse as emotional, physical, and sexual. Sheri said that the physical abuse started about 1 year before her most recent leaving, but that the emotional and mental abuse started before that, as seen in Figure 4. Sheri did not have any children of her own, but her abuser had 4 children ages 10, 12, 13, and 14 at the time of our interview.

Sheri and I conducted our interview at the shelter. During our interview, Sheri cried very dramatically when talking about her abuser and their relationship. Although Sheri was willing to talk openly about her relationship, she often had difficulty in providing details when asked specific questions. Also, there was some confusion during the screening when Sheri agreed that she had left and returned to her abuser two or more

times. In essence, she had attempted to leave her abuser eight times, yet had never physically left and returned to him.

Figure 4: Sheri's Timeline



Sheri stated that she attempted to leave her current abuser approximately 8 times, but that he would always catch her or follow her. Sheri said that she left this most recent time because their relationship got to a point where he was going to kill her. Sheri stated, “I was scared and afraid. I didn’t know what he was going to do and I would always pray to God. God is the only one who saved me. I don’t know how I managed to get away from him. If I hadn’t, he probably would have shot me.” (L: 333-335) She came to Michigan by herself and left her abuser and 4 stepchildren at home in another state. However, no details were provided about their last encounter.

Over time, Sheri said that her abuser changed quickly and became more demanding. Her abuser would threaten her if she was going somewhere and would make her wear clothes that he approved of. She also said that her abuser would chase her, hit her, and call her names. Sheri said that she does not want anything to do with her abuser now or in the future. When asked if she was happier without him, she replied, “I am. It’s like a huge, black stress cloud is gone, but lots of fear, constantly.” (L: 498-499)

In regard to support, Sheri said that she never confided in anyone about the abuse because she was fearful of her abuser. She did say that her abuser would abuse her in

front of the children. Sheri never called the police, but did walk to the police station when she left this most recent time. She filed a Personal Protection Order in the state where her current abuser resides, and was in the process of filing one out in Michigan during the time of our interview. Sheri did mention a good male friend who has been a tremendous support to her, but it was unclear whether or not he was aware of the abuse. Sheri was staying at the shelter during the time of our interview.

Sheri said that her stepchildren never influenced her attempts to leave. If anything, her stepchildren somewhat influenced her to stay since she became attached to them and often protected them from their father. Sheri stated, “They never wanted me to leave. They loved me.” (L: 448)

Sheri’s summary of the coding is divided into beginning, middle, and end of the abusive relationship due to the lack of information regarding specific leaving attempts, as seen in Table 4. When looking at change in the relationship, Sheri mentioned minimal change at the beginning and middle of the relationship, with an increase during her most recent leaving. Attributions for these changes in the relationship were often made equally to her abuser and to self. On average, Sheri mentioned little change in support compared to the other women in this study. Sheri mentioned little changes in support at the beginning and middle of her relationship with a slight increase during her most recent leaving. The support mentioned during Sheri’s most recent leaving was attributed to self and consisted of formal support, including the police and the shelter program. Concerning influence of children, Sheri did not mention change in influence over time, perhaps because the children were her stepchildren and she did not have legal custody of them.

S

hi

Si

ab

Fig

an

app

that

Table 4: Sheri's Summary of the Coding

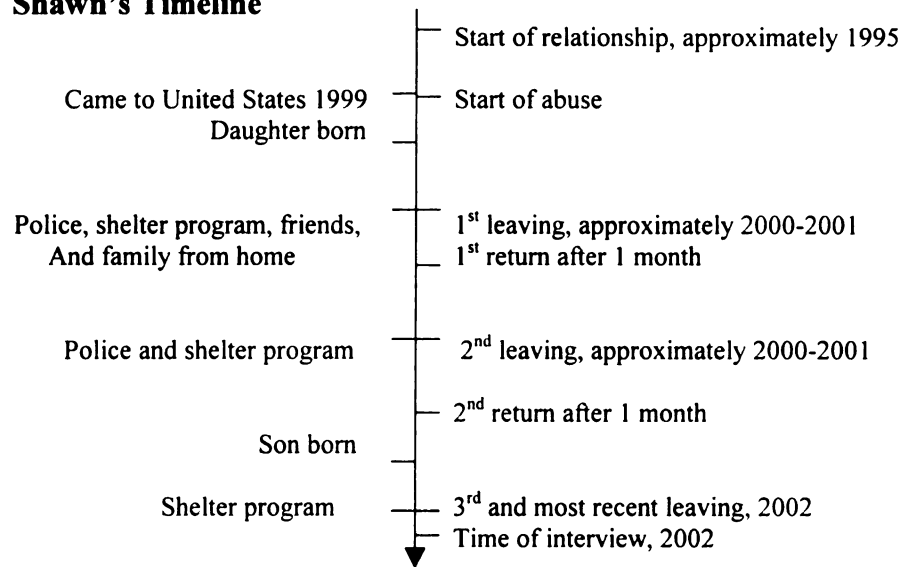
	Beginning	Middle	End	Don't Know When
Change in Relationship	2	0	7	3
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 0 Abuser = 1 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 3 Abuser = 3 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Change in Support	0	0	3	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 1* Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 2* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 1 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0

Shawn

Shawn is a 25-year-old African woman from the Crisis shelter program. Shawn's highest level of education was a degree in Home Economics and Population Studies. Shawn was not working during the time of our interview. She has been in only one abusive relationship for 7 years, and left her abuser 3 times during this period, as seen in Figure 5. They have been married for 3 years and have 2 children together, ages 3 years and 2 months. At the time of our interview, Shawn had been away from her abuser for approximately 5 weeks. Shawn described the abuse as emotional and physical, and said that it began once they came to the United States.

Our interview took place at the shelter. Shawn was very cooperative and open to discussing her abusive relationship. Shawn had a very calming personality despite grappling with her decision to either remain in this country and leave her abusive husband or to return to her country while remaining married to her abuser.

Figure 5: Shawn's Timeline



Shawn said that she left her abuser the 1st time with her daughter and went to the shelter. Her son was not born yet. She had called the police after an argument because she expected them to help her reconcile with her husband like the people helped her in her country. Shawn stated, “I called the police. I was new here and I didn’t know anything about the laws and how to deal with domestic violence, so my thought was that they would talk to him and they would talk to me and try to bring us together. That’s what I had in mind” (L: 124-127) Instead, the police referred her to the shelter program. She went to the shelter and was surprised to hear talk of divorce and work from the staff. Shawn said that she wasn’t expecting the relationship to be over or for others to respond in this way. Shawn stayed at the shelter for one month and returned to her abuser

because he apologized and she assumed that it was normal to fight. During this time together with her abuser, Shawn became pregnant with their son.

The 2nd time she left her abuser, Shawn left with her daughter and again went to the shelter. Shawn said that her abuser started to treat her differently than before and was ashamed of her. Shawn said that she called the police and they took her abuser away. She called her family at home because she was worried about being deported and they were angry with her for getting her abuser in trouble. Again, Shawn stayed at the shelter for about a month. She decided to return to her abuser because she was pregnant and felt like she needed his presence in her life. Also, she said that she didn't know of anywhere else to go.

Shawn reported that she left the 3rd and most recent time because her abuser had some obsession or affair with one of his students and he asked her to leave. Shawn said, "this time, he has this student who he compares me to. I found a letter he wrote to the girl and said lots of bad things about me and then one day he said that he wanted me to leave." (L: 248-250) Shawn also said that he refused to come to the hospital when their son was born. Again, Shawn left with her children and came to the shelter. At the time of our interview, she said that she wanted to start her own life, but didn't know where that would be since if she returned to her country, she would probably still be with her abuser. If she chooses to stay in this country, she would not have any relationship with him. Shawn said, "If I stay here, I can be independent. If I go back home, then I may need to be with him since it is the expectation. When I call my mother, she says that is what marriage is all about. But then when I hear from my friends and family, they also have problems but they stay together. So it's like I hear from them and then I come to the

shelter and they talk about being independent, so it's confusing." (L: 506-510) Shawn stated about this most recent leaving, "Like now, if I go back, I'll be even more stupid because now I know I can't change him." (L: 328-329)

Shawn said that their relationship became more abusive after they came to the United States. At first, it was more emotional, but then became more physical. Shawn stated that now there is little emotional connection between them. When asked if she was happier without him, Shawn stated, "Yes. I feel free. I feel good. I feel normal." (L: 468) In regard to her future, she was confused about which path to take, whether it be in this country or her own.

In regard to support, Shawn stated that her mom, friends, and sister were aware of the abuse and that it was helpful talking with them. However, family and friends from home were angry with Shawn when she called the police and when her abuser was arrested because they feared that her abuser would be deported. Shawn also sought help from the police after fights with her husband, which led her to the shelter program both the 1st and 2nd time she left her abuser. Again, the shelter program assisted Shawn in her 3rd and most recent leaving. It is apparent that her use of the shelter program from her first through her most recent leaving relates to the reality that Shawn's support system consisting of family, friends, and her church are not within close proximity to be of immediate help to her and her children.

Shawn stated that her daughter slightly influenced the 1st time she left her abuser because he was not buying her daughter appropriate clothes for the winter. Shawn said, "He just didn't care for us. I forced him to buy clothes for the kids in the winter and it was very cold. He's not caring. She had sandals for the winter." (L: 413-414) When

Shawn left the 2nd time, she was concerned about children being raised in a home without love. “I see when children are raised in a house where there is no love, it affects them. It is not good for the children. I think that if I’m a single mom and they are growing up in a place with love, that’s all they need. People say it’s good for kids to be raised in a house with the same mother and father, but when they are always arguing or fighting, it’s not good.” (L: 418-422) Shawn did not indicate whether her children influenced her most recent leaving. Shawn was influenced to return the 1st time because her daughter had regressed while being in the shelter and she didn’t have anywhere else to go. Shawn returned the 2nd time because her daughter wanted to go home and because she was pregnant with her son and felt like she needed her abuser’s presence in her life.

Table 5: Shawn’s Summary of the Coding

	1st Leaving	2nd Leaving	3rd Leaving	Don’t Know When
Change in Relationship	6	10	9	0
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 3 Abuser = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Self = 4 Abuser = 2 Both = 3 Unknown = 1	Self = 6 Abuser = 1 Both = 1 Unknown = 1	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Change in Support	2	2	1	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 2 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 1 Unknown = 1	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 1* Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 1* Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 1	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 1 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 0 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 2 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 2	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 1

When looking at change in the relationship in Shawn's summary table of the coding, Shawn mentioned change throughout her leavings, with a moderate increase during her 2nd and most recent leavings, as seen in Table 5. Regarding attributions of the change in the relationship, there was a small decrease in attributions made to her abuser and a slight increase in attributions made to self over time. On average, more of the attributions of change in the relationship were made to self rather than her abuser. Mentions of change in support were consistent throughout her leavings, with a slight decrease at Shawn's most recent leaving. Most of the attributions of change in support were made to self over time. Formal support was the only type of changes in support mentioned, including the police and the shelter program. Shawn mentioned that on average, her children equally influenced her to leave and return to the abusive relationship. The influence of children changed over time with the children influencing Shawn to stay in the relationship during her 2nd leaving, but not during the others. The children also slightly influenced Shawn to leave her abuser during the 1st and 2nd leavings. Although her children continued to influence Shawn during her most recent leaving, it was unknown about how.

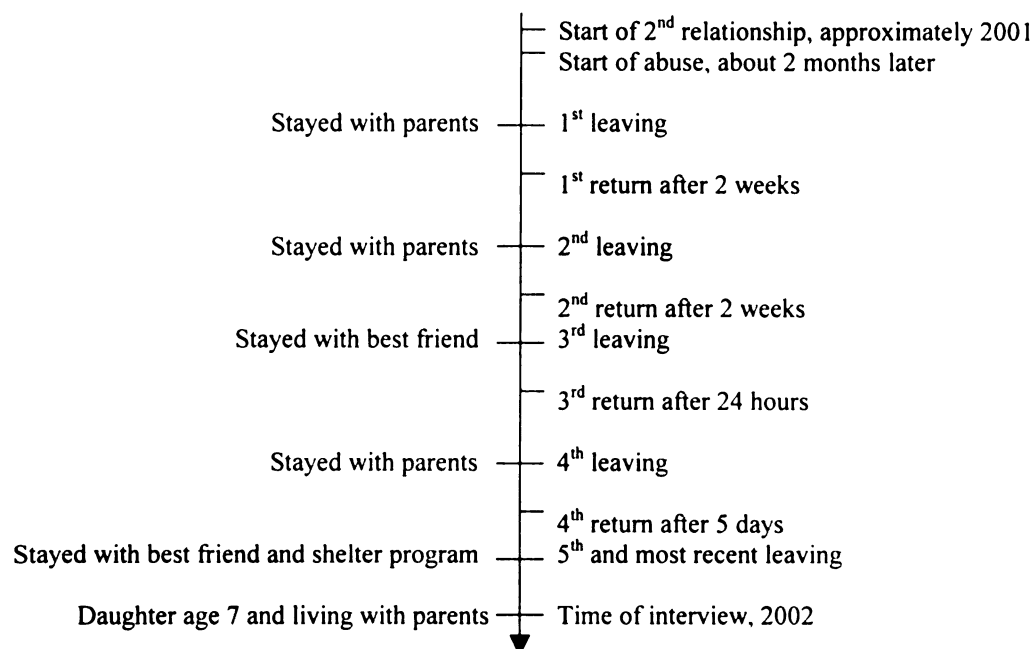
Dora

Dora is a 26-year-old Hispanic-American woman from the Crisis shelter program. Dora has a 10th grade education and had recently gotten a new job as a housekeeper during the time of our interview. She was not certain how she made ends meet, but did say that her current abuser was dealing drugs. She has been in 2 abusive relationships with the most recent one lasting 8 months. Dora and her most recent abuser were not married. Dora has a daughter who was 7 years old from her first abusive relationship

who was living with her parents at the time of our interview. Dora described the abuse with her current abuser as emotional, physical, and sexual. Dora stated that the abuse started about 2 months after they started dating. During the 8 months that they had been together, Dora left her abuser 5 times, as seen in Figure 6. At the time of the interview, Dora had been away from her abuser for approximately 6 weeks.

Dora and I met for our interview at the shelter. During our interview, Dora was very willing and open to discussing her experiences with her abuser and their relationship. Dora responded thoughtfully to each questions, especially those about each specific leave/return event. Dora's abuser was extremely and violent and only 2 hours after our interview, Dora was asked to leave the shelter because she was no longer safe at that location since her abuser had found out she was there.

Figure 6: Dora's Timeline



Dora left her abuser the 1st time because she was tired of not having any money or food. Dora said, “I had a car, but he was always using it and leaving me at the motel. He would be gone most of the day and when he would come back, I would be mad cause, you know, I didn’t have anything to eat or drink and had no money because he had all the money. I don’t know, I just didn’t want to live like that anymore so I just left. I just took off one day.” (L: 305-311) She stayed with her parents for 2 weeks. Her abuser continued to call her and Dora said that it was as if she had never left. Her abuser finally convinced Dora to return to him because he said that he would change. Dora stated that the abuse started up again about a month after she returned and that her abuser punished her for leaving by threatening to kill her.

Dora left her abuser a 2nd time because she got into a fight with his ex-girlfriend and her abuser left Dora with the ex-girlfriend once the police came. Her abuser also hit Dora so severely that she had to go to the hospital. Again, Dora stayed with her parents for 2 weeks and decided to return to her abuser because he promised to change his behavior.

Dora left her abuser a 3rd time for 24 hours and stayed with her best friend. Dora said that she decided to leave her abuser that time because she was tired of him and of not having any money. While she was staying at her friend’s house, her abuser kept calling her and threatening to shoot at her parent’s house and kidnap her daughter if she did not return to him. Dora decided to return to him to protect her family. She stated that the abuse started up an hour after she returned to him and that this time, her abuser made no promises to change. When asked how she felt about the relationship at that time, Dora

replied, “There wasn’t a relationship that time and there was no promises or nothing.” (L: 487)

Dora left her abuser the 4th time because he was still abusing her and he was angry with her for letting her parents know where she was staying since the police wanted her abuser. Again, Dora went to her best friend’s house and stayed there for about 5 days. Dora decided to return to her abuser because he said that he would stop bothering her best friend’s Grandma if she returned to him. About the relationship at that time, Dora stated, “ I didn’t really want to be in one, but I didn’t have a choice.” (L: 508)

Dora left her abuser the 5th and most recent time because her abuser was accusing her of cheating on him and beat her so badly that she saw her life flash before her eyes. Also, it appeared to be the first time that Dora had some awareness of the seriousness of the situation and that her abuser was threatening her life. Dora said,

“He said we should start the new year together. So, I went with him and we stayed at a room and it was all fine for the whole day and night, then the next day, he was like, I know that you’ve been with somebody, I know that you’ve been seeing other people and whatever and he just started getting real mad and I was like no, no, you know. And he’s had a gun for like 3 months already before that and he was like pointing it at me and saying, don’t you know that I’ll kill you. You’re mine, you’re mine and I’ll kill you. And he hit me on the back of my head with the gun and my head was bleeding, he was kicking me in the back, he was choking me. And that was the first time that I felt, I mean, it was like my life flashed before my eyes. I saw black and it was just like, I was very very scared that day. I thought that he was going to kill me that day.” (L: 384-396)

When Dora first left, she went to her parent’s house and stayed there for about 3 weeks. Because her abuser started to stalk her at her parent’s house, Dora needed a safe place to protect herself, her daughter, and her family, so she called the shelter. Dora said that she is scared to return to her abuser because she thought that she was going to end up dead from the last violent episode.

Overall, Dora said that the abuse got worse over time, where it started off as controlling behavior and then evolved into severe violence, especially once he had a gun. Dora said that she tried her hardest to stay away from him, but that it was easier for her to stay away from her abuser when he is not physically around her or calling her. About the present, Dora stated, “I am happy, but I’m lonely. It’s like I need him for comfort. I miss having him around, but I’m much happier and less stressed out and depressed. I’m just all around better.” (L: 745-747) Dora said that she does not see a future with her abuser and that she recently got a job and hopes to get her life back together so that she can take care of her daughter.

In regard to support, Dora said that her friends and family were aware of the abuse. Dora stated, “yeah, [it was helpful that my best friend and parents knew about the abuse], but it didn’t keep me away from him.” (L: 68) She stayed with her parents the 1st, 2nd and 4th times that she left her abuser and stayed with her best friend for the 3rd and 5th times she left her abuser. Dora said that she had contacted the police 6 months ago and had not heard from them by the time of our interview. During this most recent leaving, Dora stayed at the shelter and said that she found the individual and group counseling sessions to be very helpful since they helped her talk and communicate better with others.

Dora said that her daughter did not influence her decision to leave her abuser any of the times. However, Dora said that her daughter did influence her to return to her abuser after the 3rd time she left him because he was threatening to kidnap her daughter from school if Dora didn’t return to him. Dora said that this was the only time her

daughter influenced her to return to her abuser, yet it was in an attempt to keep her daughter safe.

Table 6: Dora's Summary of the Coding

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	4 th Leaving	5 th Leaving	Don't Know When
Change in relationship	5	4	6	5	13	1
Attribution of Change in relationship	Self =1 Abuser =3 Both =1 Unknown=0	Self =1 Abuser =3 Both =0 Unknown=0	Self =2 Abuser =4 Both =0 Unknown=0	Self =2 Abuser =2 Both =1 Unknown=0	Self =7 Abuser =3 Both =3 Unknown=0	Self =1 Abuser =0 Both =0 Unknown =0
Change in Support	0	0	1	0	4	0
Attribution of Change in Support	Self =0 Abuser =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Self =0 Abuser =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Self =1 Abuser =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Self =0 Abuser =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Self =3 Abuser =0 Both =1 Unknown=0	Self =0 Abuser =0 Both =0 Unknown =0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police =0 Legal =0 Family =0 Friends =0 Shelter =0 Church =0 Job =0 Unknown=0 General =0	Police =0 Legal =0 Family =0 Friends =0 Shelter =0 Church =0 Job =0 Unknown=0 General =0	Police =0 Legal =0 Family =0 Friends =1* Shelter =0 Church =0 Job =0 Unknown=0 General =0	Police =0 Legal =0 Family =0 Friends =0 Shelter =0 Church =0 Job =0 Unknown=0 General =0	Police =0 Legal =0 Family =0 Friends =1* Shelter =3* Church =0 Job =0 Unknown=0 General =0	Police =0 Legal =0 Family =0 Friends =0 Shelter =0 Church =0 Job =0 Unknown =0 General=0
Influence of Children	Stay =0 Leave =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Stay =0 Leave =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Stay =1 Leave =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Stay =0 Leave =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Stay =0 Leave =3 Both =0 Unknown=0	Stay =0 Leave =1 Both =0 Unknown =0

When looking at mentions of change in the relationship in Dora's summary table of the coding, Dora made a consistent mention of change overtime, with a considerable increase during her most recent leaving, as seen in Table 6. On average, Dora mentioned moderate change in the relationship compared to the other women in this study, with

more of the attributions being made to her abuser than to self. Attributions to self for the change in the relationship were minimal over time, until an increase during Dora's most recent leaving. Attributions made to the abuser were consistent over time. Minimal mentioned of changes in support were made throughout Dora's leavings. However, an increase occurred during her most recent leaving, with the majority of the attributions made to self. The type of support mentioned consisted of informal support with the addition of formal support at Dora's most recent leaving. On average, Dora mentioned that her daughter slightly influenced her to leave her abuser more than to return to him. Influence of children slightly changed in Dora's decision to stay with her abuser during her 3rd leaving when she returned to her abuser in order to protect her daughter from his threats. No influence of children in Dora's decision to leave her abuser occurred over time, except for an increase that occurred during her most recent leaving.

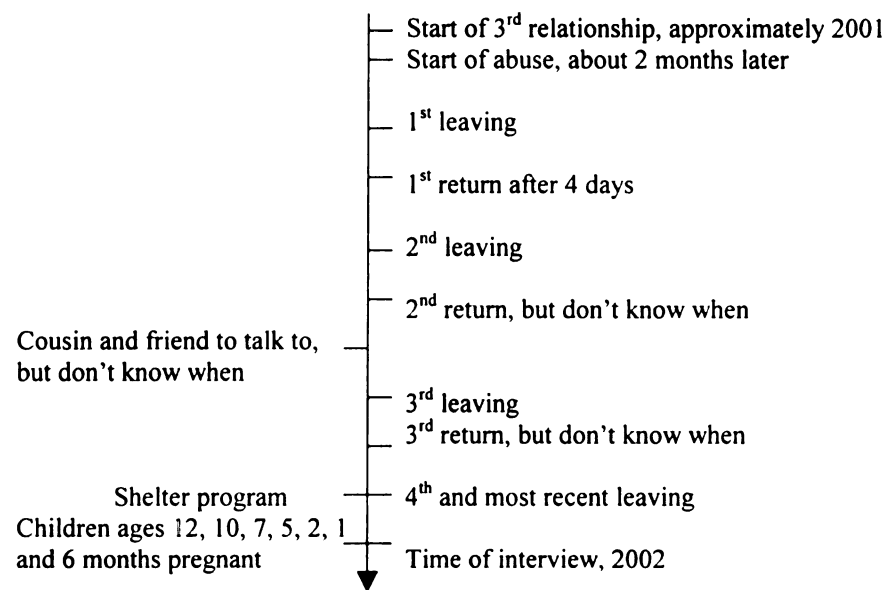
Carol

Carol is a 30-year-old African-American woman from the Crisis shelter program. Carol has an 11th grade education and wants to go back for her GED and then become a correctional officer. At the time of the interview, Carol said that she had just lost a job, but made ends meet with government assistance and money from her current abuser. She did not provide any details about her current's abuser's job, but said, "He has his own business." (L: 750). She has been in 3 abusive relationships with the most recent one lasting 9 months. Carol and her most recent abuser were not married. During their 9 months together, Carol left her current abuser 4 times, although her abuser would often be the one to leave since it was difficult for Carol to leave with herself and 6 children. At the time of our interview, Carol had been away from her abuser for approximately 5 days.

Carol described the abuse as emotional and physical. Carol reported that the abuse started about 2 months into the relationship, as seen in Figure 7. At the time of our interview, Carol had 6 children ages 12, 10, 7, 5, 2, 1, and was 6 months pregnant with her abuser's child.

Our interview took place at the shelter. During our interview, Carol was very talkative and at times, would stray off the topic. She was very willing to talk openly about her relationship, yet did not want to provide details about her encounters with the legal system or about her abuser's profession.

Figure 7: Carol's Timeline



Carol left her abuser the 1st time by making him leave her house, but did not provide any details about why she made him leave. Her abuser stayed away for 4 days and then came back to her begging for another chance, professing his love, and apologizing for hurting her. Carol decided to give him another chance, but said that the abuse started up after a week of being back together.

Carol left her abuser a 2nd time after a violent episode. She stated that she promised God that if she saw her kids again, she would never return to her abuser. Carol did not provide any details about how long she was gone, if she had left with her children, or if she had left her house or made her abuser leave her house. However, she did return to him.

Carol left her abuser a 3rd time, but did not provide any specific details about this leaving. However, Carol said that she returned to her abuser the 3rd time because she felt obligated to him since he is the father of her unborn child and because he didn't testify against her in court. No details were provided regarding Carol's court appearance. Carol left him a 4th and most recent time and came to the shelter with all of her children because she thought that her abuser was going to kill her. Again, no details were provided regarding the incidents that preceded her leaving this most recent time.

Overall, Carol said that her relationship with her abuser has not changed much over time, except that her abuser has been less physically abusive since she became pregnant with his child. About the present, Carol said, "[I'm happier without him] in a sense. There's a part of me that misses him. I mean, he was also a friend, someone I could confide in, talk to." (L: 643-645) Carol said that she is uncertain about whether or not she has a future with him since he did ask her to marry him and she is considering it. Carol stated, "I can't really say [if I have a future with him]. It's like part of me wanted to because he had asked me to marry him. The more and more I think about it, I don't know. He would have to go to counseling and I see a change and I'm talking like a month or 2 change, 6 month change or something and then I'd consider it." (L: 702-705)

It appears that Carol was conflicted about her relationship with her abuser and what the future holds for her.

In regard to support, Carol said that she would sometimes talk to her friends and family about the abuse, but that they thought she was crazy for staying with her abuser. Carol also stated, “I used to tell him that I was going to call the police. But at the time, um, I didn’t due to personal reasons.” (L: 83-84) During this 4th and most recent leaving, Carol stayed at the shelter with her 6 children, but did not provide any details about how she decided to access services.

Carol said that her children did not influence her to leave her abuser any of the times, except when she left him the 2nd time. Carol said that her children did not influence her returning to her abuser the 1st and 2nd time, but that they did influence her to return to him the 3rd and 4th time because some of them missed him and saw him as a father figure. Carol also said that being pregnant with her abuser’s baby influenced her decision to return to him the 3rd time.

When looking at change in the relationship in Carol’s summary table of the coding, Carol mentioned minimal change occurring over time, except for a slight increase during her most recent leaving, as seen in Table 7. Initially, attributions for the change in the relationship were made to her abuser. Over time, there was a slight decrease in attributions made to the abuser and a consistent number of attributions made to self. In regard to support, Carol mentioned little change compared to the other women in the study. Minimal changes in support were made, except for one mention during Carol’s most recent leaving, which she attributed to self. The type of support Carol mentioned during her most recent leaving was the formal support provided by the shelter program.

On average, Carol mentioned that her children slightly influenced her to return to her abuser more than leave him. Over time, Carol mentioned a slight increase in the influence of her children regarding her decision to stay in the abusive relationship. No mentions were made regarding the children's influence in her decision to leave her abuser, except for one mention that occurred during Carol's 2nd leaving.

Table 7: Carol's Summary of the Coding

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	4 th Leaving	Don't Know When
Change in Relationship	2	2	2	4	3
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 0 Abuser = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 1 Both = 1 Unknown = 1	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Change in Support	0	0	0	1	0
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 1

Women from the Advocate Shelter Program

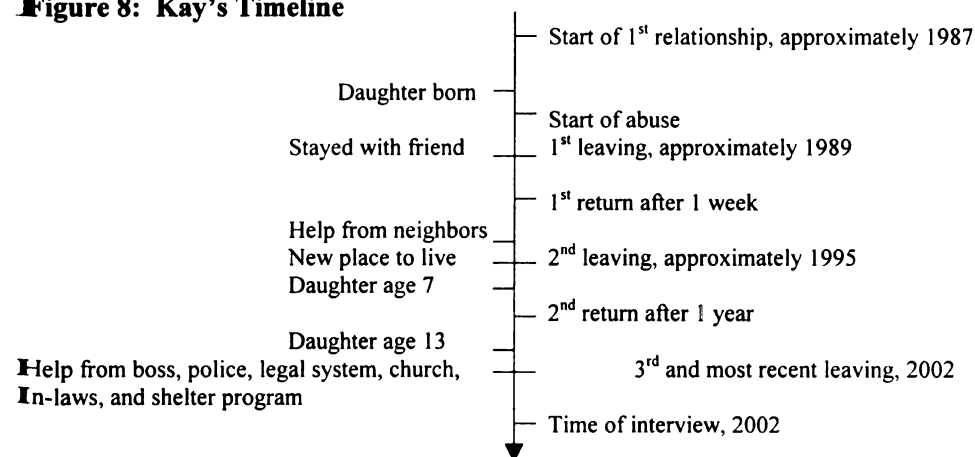
Kay

Kay is a 47-year-old European-American woman from the Advocate shelter program. Kay has an 8th grade education and currently makes ends meet with a retail job

She has had for the past 3 years. She has been in only one abusive relationship for 15 years and has left her abuser 3 times, as seen in Figure 8. At the time of the interview, Kay had been away from her abuser for 3 months. The abuse was described as emotional, physical, and sexual. Kay said that the abuse started when her daughter was under 1 year of age. They were not married and had one daughter together who was 13 at the time of our interview.

Kay and I conducted our interview in a private room at a college library. Kay was very tearful at times during our interview. She was open to discussing her relationship and expressed several times that she wanted to participate in this study to give something back since people had been so helpful and provided so much support to her.

Figure 8: Kay's Timeline



Kay left with her daughter the 1st time when their daughter was one year old and stayed with a friend. Her abuser did not abuse her when she was away. Kay left so that her abuser could reflect on how he was treating her. Kay returned to him because their daughter got sick, she didn't have a job, didn't have a car, and he was sending flowers. She had hoped he had changed and went back.

Kay left a 2nd time when their daughter was 7 years old with no intention of returning since they both needed space from each other. Kay also indicated that the abuse was starting to get more physical at this time. She and her daughter moved down the street from her abuser, so her daughter had her same friends, school, and regular contact with her Dad. He did not abuse her when she was away. She returned to him after one year because she was financially strapped since she had to pay for a babysitter for her daughter. Kay stated, "I was more questionable if I was making the right decision [returning to her abuser]." (L: 641) She said that he was less controlling when she was gone and that he didn't intimidate her anymore.

Kay reported that she left the 3rd time after a physical fight with him. Because her daughter was 13, she did not require childcare arrangements. Kay called the police and decided to prosecute for the first time. Kay and her daughter remained in their house and her abuser was made to leave the house. This time he has been abusive towards Kay by stalking her and has been withholding child support. Kay stated, "Yes, he is [stalking me] and I think now because last time I think he was sure of himself that eventually I would come back because I did the time before. But I think this time now his family is aware of the situation, his daughter is aware of the situation that he realizes that there is no coming back this time." (L: 517-520) Kay describes herself as more confident this time than the 2nd time she left.

Kay said that the abuse became more physical over time. She also stated that he used to verbally degrade and demean her, but then started to physically degrade and demean her as well. Kay also changed over time in her confidence and her views on how the abuse was affecting her daughter. She currently describes herself as happier without

Her abuser and does not see a future with him. Kay said, "I feel a lot better about myself. A lot better. I can't believe I let this happen for so long." (L: 555-556) Kay also mentioned the current confusion of dealing with work, her daughter and 3 different courts. She stated, "I feel like I'm used to handling and juggling from the abuse, but now it's more of a positive energy kind of thing." (L: 882-884)

In regard to support, Kay talked about staying with a friend the 1st time she left her abuser. It is unknown whether or not the friend was aware of the abuse. The 2nd time she left him, she didn't mention any support, except occasionally from neighbors when she needed to borrow money or send her daughter to their house when he would turn off the heat. However, Kay's support system changed dramatically during this most recent leaving. Because she decided to prosecute, she was informed about the shelter program and began working with an advocate there. She had no idea about the existence of this service before. Also, she had been working at the same job for 3 years and described her boss as very supportive. Finally, she said that her daughter and her abuser's family were aware of the abuse and were supporting her with food from a church pantry and money if needed. Kay said, "That's what's making the difference this time around, you know, all of the little things add up." (L: 363-364)

Kay said that it was easier to leave now that her daughter is 13 years old because she does not have to spend money on childcare. She also talked about how she thought she had been protecting her daughter from the abuse, but her daughter has now told her that she has been aware of it. Her daughter didn't influence her 1st leaving when she was an infant, but did when she was 7. She left the 2nd time because Kay was concerned that the abuse was getting more physical. Her daughter is aware of the current situation and

angry with her dad for abusing her mom and lying about it in court. Kay said, “I waited until the next day and I told her [Kay’s daughter] everything [about her abuser being arrested] and she wrote him a note. She said she would tell the judge that she didn’t see him hit me, but I heard him hit me because she couldn’t believe that he lied under oath when he pled not guilty. I can’t believe, she wrote in her note, how I used to look up to you, but now I know how not to be like. She was losing a lot of respect for him.” (L: 750-754) Her daughter said that for something so bad to happen, a lot of good things are happening, too.

Table 8: Kay’s Summary of the Coding

	1st Leaving	2nd Leaving	3rd Leaving	Don’t Know When
Change in Relationship	5	13	26	6
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 4 Abuser = 0 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Self = 6 Abuser = 4 Both = 3 Unknown = 0	Self = 19 Abuser = 4 Both = 3 Unknown = 0	Self = 2 Abuser = 3 Both = 0 Unknown = 1
Change in Support	1	0	16	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 12 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 3	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 1 * Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 2 * Legal = 1 * Family = 2 * Friends = 1 * Shelter = 5 * Church = 1 * Job = 1 * Unknown = 2 General = 1	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 1 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 2 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 8 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0

Kay's summary table of the coding shows that over time, Kay mentioned significant change in the relationship, with the most changes occurring during her most recent leaving, as seen in Table 8. Kay's average mention of change in her relationship was large compared to the other women in the study, with most of the attributions made to self rather than her abuser. Attributions for the change in the relationship made to self increased over time, with the majority of the changes being attributed to self during Kay's most recent leaving. There was a slight increase in attributions made to the abuser during Kay's 2nd leaving, but the number of attributions made to the abuser stayed the same during her most recent leaving. Minimal mentions of changes in support were made during her 1st and 2nd leaving. However, a huge change in support was mentioned during Kay's most recent leaving. Throughout her leavings, Kay attributed the majority of the changes in support to self. Kay's support consisted of both formal and informal support, with the majority being from formal support. On average, Kay mentioned that her daughter influenced her more to leave her abuser than to return to her abuser. Over time, there was a slight decrease in the influence of children to stay in the relationship. However, there was a considerable increase in the influence of children for Kay to leave the relationship during her most recent leaving, which coincided with her daughter getting older.

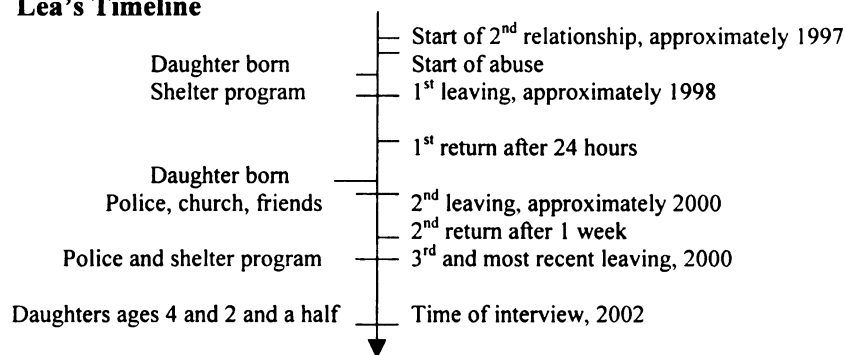
Lea

Lea is a 36-year-old Western-European woman from the Advocate shelter program. Lea has a bachelors degree and is currently working full-time, although no details about her current place of employment were provided. She has been in 2 abusive relationships with the most recent one lasting 5 years. Lea and her abuser were married

for 5 years and had 2 daughters together who were ages 4 and 2 and a half during the time of our interview, as seen in Figure 9. Lea described the abuse as physical and emotional. Lea reported that the abuse start at the beginning of their relationship. She left her abuser a total of 3 times over a 3-year period. At the time of the interview, Lea had been away from her abuser for 2 years.

The interview with Lea took place in her home following a long day of work. Lea had arranged for a neighbor to watch her children while we conducted the interview and needed to complete the interview before her children's bedtime. Lea appeared to be exhausted, both mentally and physically. Lea willingly talked about her abusive relationship, but was tangential at times.

Figure 9: Lea's Timeline



Lea left her abuser the 1st time with her oldest daughter because Lea was scared of her abuser's behavior and wanted him to wake up and realize how he was treating her. She called the shelter program and stayed at the shelter for one day. She returned to her abuser after 24 hours against the staff's recommendations. Lea decided to return to her abuser because she thought that her leaving would show him that she could leave him even if she didn't have family nearby. Lea also wasn't pleased about being in a shelter with her daughter who was just starting to crawl. When she returned home, Lea said that

her abuser did not seem concerned by her leaving and that the abuse started up shortly after returning. Lea stated, “[her abuser said about her leaving] don’t think that I missed you or that I stayed home by myself wondering where you were. I was out with my friends.” (L: 227-228)

Lea left her abuser a 2nd time with her 2 daughters because he had been physically and verbally abusive toward her. Lea planned to return to the shelter, but women from her church insisted that she stay with them instead. Lea stayed with her church friends for about a week and decided to return to her abuser to give the relationship one more try, and because she didn’t feel like she had any place else to go permanently. Her abuser also promised to change his behavior by going to counseling. While she was gone for that week, Lea said, “I just felt devastated. I felt used and stuck in a hole and prayed for things to change and nothing changed.” (L: 581-582)

Lea left her abuser a 3rd and most recent time about a week after returning to him after her stay with the women from church. Her pastor had advised both Lea and her abuser to call the police if things got physical. Based on this advice, Lea called the police after a physical argument with her husband and the police took him away. No details were disclosed about the incident, but it is suspected that it was a serious episode due to the police’s response. Lea and her daughters remained in the house and her abuser was not allowed to return. Since that time, Lea returned to work full-time to support her daughters and relocated to a different house that she could better afford.

Overall, Lea said that although her relationship was bad in the beginning, it got worse over time. Lea also stated that she knows that she can’t return, but that she is often

exhausted from working full-time, having full custody of the children, and running back and forth to the courts for issues regarding her divorce, child support, and child visitation.

In regard to support, Lea had accessed the shelter during her 1st time leaving her abuser and had planned to return there when she left her abuser the 2nd time. Lea has also worked with an advocate from the shelter program for the past 3 years. The women and pastor from her church also provided support by watching her children, doing counseling with her and her abuser, prayers, and by inviting Lea and her daughters to stay in their homes. Lea stated that the police had helped her when she called during their last physical incident. They also drove Lea and her daughters home from the library once when her abuser left them there because he was angry at Lea. It was unclear whether or not her family was aware of the abuse since her family lives in another country and was not readily available for help.

Lea said that her oldest daughter did not influence leaving her abuser the 1st time, but that her daughter did influence the return since she was starting to crawl and the shelter was not as clean as she would have liked it. Lea also said that there were other children at the shelter who were sick and that she didn't want her daughter to get sick as well. Lea stated that her oldest daughter did influence the 2nd and 3rd leavings because she was getting older and Lea was concerned about the effect that the abuse was having on her daughters. Lea stated, "I'm ok when I'm not in a relationship. I can establish boundaries. But when I get into a relationship, those boundaries just kind of seem not very clear and I just felt that [my oldest daughter], I can see she's sensitive and her personality is very much like mine. She's a follower." (L: 895-899) Lea said that her youngest daughter was not as influential because she was an infant at the time. Lea did

not specifically say whether or not her daughters influenced her returning to her abuser the 2nd time.

Table 9: Lea's Summary of the Coding

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Change in Relationship	4	9	7	1
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 1 Abuser = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Self = 4 Abuser = 2 Both = 2 Unknown = 1	Self = 2 Abuser = 1 Both = 3 Unknown = 1	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Change in Support	3	2	4	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 2 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 3* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 1* Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 1* Legal = 2* Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 1* Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0

When looking at Lea's summary table of the coding, mentions of change in the relationship for Lea were made throughout her leavings, as noted in Table 9. There was an increase during her 2nd leaving and then a slight decrease that occurred during her most recent leaving. However, her 2nd leaving occurred very close to her most recent leaving, which may account for the most changes mentioned during her 2nd leaving. Compared to the other women in the study, Lea mentioned moderate change in her relationship. On average, more attributions of the change in the relationship were made to self than to her abuser. Attributions for the change in the relationship to self had an

increase during Lea's 2nd leaving and a slight decrease during her most recent leaving. Attributions made to her abuser slightly decreased during Lea's most recent leaving. Lea mentioned a consistent change of support throughout her leavings, with most occurring during her most recent leaving. Whenever changes in support were made, Lea attributed those changes to self. Throughout her leavings, Lea mentioned formal support, with an increase in formal support during her most recent leaving including the police and legal system. On average, Lea mentioned that her children slightly influenced her to leave her abuser more than to return to him. Lea did not mention when the children influenced her to stay with her abuser. However, there was a slight increase in the change of influence of children to leave the abusive relationship during Lea's most recent leaving.

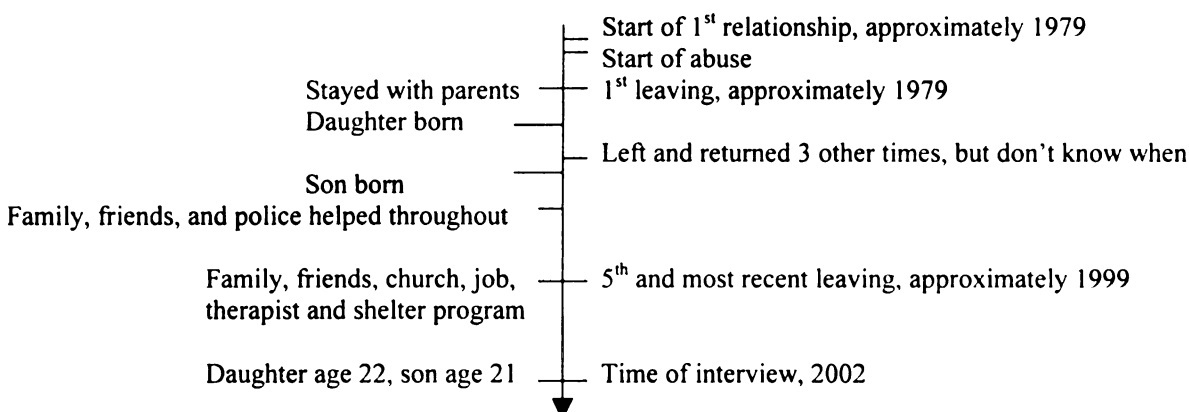
Doris

Doris is a 47-year-old European-American woman from the Advocate shelter program. Doris said that she completed a couple years of college and was currently working at a fitness club and was starting her own home business. She has been in only one abusive relationship for 20 years and had left her abuser approximately 5 times throughout their marriage, but was uncertain about the specific number of leavings. Doris described the abuse as emotional, physical, and sexual. Doris reported that the abuse started at the beginning of their relationship, as seen in Figure 10. Doris and her abuser were married and had 2 children together: a son, age 21 and a daughter, age 22 at the time of our interview. When we met for our interview, Doris and her abuser had been divorced for 3 years.

Doris and I met for our interview in a private room at the library. Doris was very upbeat, energetic, and talkative during our interview. She said that she wanted to share

her stories and experiences as a way to give back for all of the help and support she had received during her leaving process. At times, Doris was unable to provide specific details about her past, but was very excited and optimistic about her present and future without her abuser.

Figure 10: Doris’s Timeline



The only specific leaving that Doris talked about was the 1st time she left her abuser before they were married. After her abuser hit her in the head, Doris left and stayed with her parents for a few weeks. Her abuser kept calling her parent’s house and she finally talked to him. According to Doris, her abuser staged being beaten up so that she would come back to him. About the other leavings, Doris did say that when she would leave her abuser for a brief period of time, she would return to him because she missed him and was hopeful that things would get better. She also mentioned that she and her abuser had been legally separated before, but did not want to provide any details regarding those instances. Her relationship finally ended when her abuser left her because he was having an affair. Doris stated that she felt weak at first, but eventually started to feel stronger. Doris said, “I didn’t see anything ahead of me either! I just thought that I would get up in the morning, go to work, come home, go to sleep, wake up, etc...I mean, I just thought it was just like a nothing life.” (L: 409-411) About the

present, Doris said, “I’m back to myself. I could feel myself coming back. It was like I lost myself. I was so lost and for so long.” (L: 134-136)

Overall, Doris said that her relationship became worse over time. Her abuser had several affairs and even had another child from one of his affairs. Doris stated, “I can’t believe I put up with it, especially now that I’m healthier.” (L: 847-848) Doris described herself as much happier without him and said that she does not see a future with him, except for talking about issues regarding their children. In regard to why women stay in abusive relationships, Doris stated, “ That’s why I think it’s easy to stay because you just think, well, tomorrow will be another day and it’ll be nicer, you know, maybe tomorrow will get better and maybe he’ll have some big revelation or something and tomorrow never came in that respect. But you know, I never thought, maybe I’ll be healthier and I can leave, you know.” (L: 378-382)

In regard to support, Doris stated that she stayed with her parents when she would leave her abuser. Other times, she stayed with a best friend who Doris also mentioned was a great support to her when she left her abuser this most recent time. Doris said that her family and friends were aware of the abuse. When asked if it was helpful for her, she stated, “Yeah it was, but it didn’t get me out of there, but it had me questioning.” (L: 89-90) Doris said that she did call the police before and that they usually responded by removing her abuser from the house for a brief period of time. Doris also said that she filed a Personal Protection Order against her abuser, but that it wasn’t enforced since the system claimed that it wasn’t on file. During the most recent leaving, Doris mentioned several support systems including her church, her friends, her new co-workers, therapists, and the shelter program.

Doris said that her children did not directly influence any specific times she left her abuser. Doris also stated that her children did not directly influence her decision to return to her abuser. However, she did say that her son would miss his father when he was younger, but that her daughter did not. Doris stated, "When they were little, [my son] would scream and yell that he wants his dad. Oh my God, it was heartbreaking!" (L: 1039-1040) Doris stated that now, her children are often disrespectful towards her because they witnessed their father being disrespectful towards her.

Doris's summary table of the coding was divided into beginning, middle, and end of the abusive relationship due to the lack of information regarding specific leaving attempts, as seen in Table 10. In regard to changes in the relationship, significant changes were mentioned at the end of her relationship, particularly during Doris's most recent leaving. On average, more of the attributions of this change were made to self than to her abuser. At the beginning of her relationship, most of the changes were attributed to her abuser. However, there was a dramatic increase in attributions of change in the relationship made to self during Doris's most recent leaving. Minimal changes in support were mentioned at the beginning and middle of the relationship. The end of the relationship included a considerable increase in the mentions of change in support. Attributions of the change in support made to self increased over time, where attributions made to the abuser slightly increased at the middle of the relationship and then stayed the same towards the end of the relationship. In regard to type of support, Doris mentioned both formal and informal support with more informal support, such as friends, family and her job. On average, Doris did not mention much change in influence of children in her decisions to leave and return to her abusive relationship. Throughout the relationship,

Doris's children influenced her to both leave and stay in the relationship towards the end of the relationship.

Table 10: Doris's Summary of the Coding

	Beginning	Middle	End	Don't Know When
Change in Relationship	4	2	19	4
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 1 Abuser = 3 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 16 Abuser = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 1
Change in Support	0	1	9	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 8 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 1* Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 1* Legal = 0 Family = 1* Friends = 2* Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 3 Unknown = 0 General = 1	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 1* Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 3

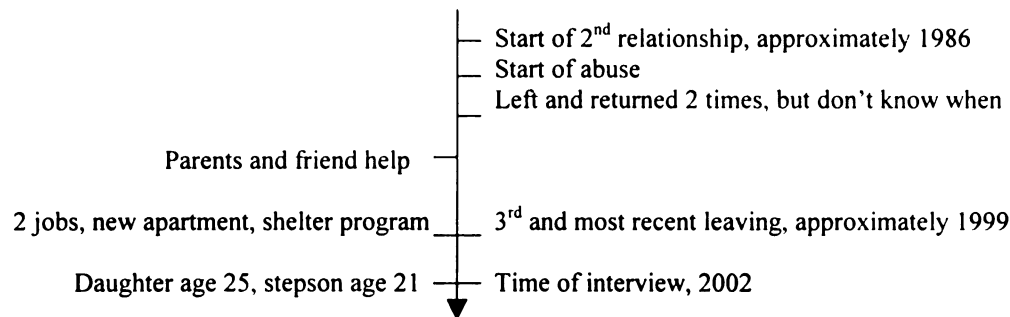
Dee

Dee is a 44-year-old European-American woman from the Advocate shelter program. Information regarding Dee's highest level of education was not obtained during the interview. She was working 2 jobs as a nurse to make ends meet. She has been in a total of 2 abusive relationships with the most recent one lasting 17 years. Dee

and her most recent abuser were married. Dee has one daughter from her first abusive relationship who was 25 at the time of our interview. Dee gained a stepson who was 21 at the time of our interview from her second abusive relationship. Dee described the abuse as physical and emotional. Dee did not provide any specific information regarding when the abuse started. During their 17 years together, Dee left her abuser 3 times, as seen in Figure 11. During the time of our interview, Dee and her abuser had been apart for 3 years. She stated that she could not locate him to divorce, but said “Emotionally, I’m divorced, but I’m working on the paperwork.” (L: 21) Dee also said that she left her first abusive relationship after being hospitalized for 6 weeks with a skull fracture as a result of a violent episode with her ex-husband. Dee said that she waited 8 years until she got into another relationship because she didn’t want to be in another abusive relationship.

Dee and I met for our interview in a private room at the library. Dee began our interview by talking about the recent loss of her parents, which relates to her experiences in her abusive relationship. Because of these recent losses, Dee was very tearful while discussing her grief. Dee expressed that it was important to her to participate in this study as a way to help other women in abusive relationships and to give back to others in return for all of the assistance she had received. Dee was very open in talking about her most recent abusive relationship and was very hopeful about her future. Initially, Dee did not want to accept the \$20 from me. However, I insisted that \$20 was a small token for her willingness to share her story with me in the effort to help other women in abusive relationships.

Figure 11: Dee's Timeline



Dee did not provide many details about the specific times she left her abuser, but did say that one time she stayed at her parent's cottage for a few days. Another time she stayed with a friend for a few days. Dee said that her abuser would leave her occasionally for 3-4 days at a time and would not tell her where he was. During the interview, Dee focused most on the events that led up to her most recent time leaving her abuser as well as her present situation. Dee stated that she experienced tremendous emotional abuse from her abuser after both of her parents died and that she decided that she wasn't going to take his abuse anymore. Although she stood by her abuser when his own mother died of cancer, Dee's abuser offered no emotional support when her parents were dying and instead took her wedding rings to pawn for liquor, then went camping without her.

Overall, Dee said that relationship got worse over time. At the time of our interview, Dee had secured her own apartment and was working two jobs to help get her life back together. Dee was adamant about not having any future with him, and said that she was currently working on being a whole person again. Dee stated, "I have to live for myself." (L: 289)

In regard to support, Dee talked about learning not to tell others about the abuse because she learned that you don't burden others with that information. While they were alive, Dee said that her parents were a tremendous support to her, even though she never told them about the abuse. Dee also mentioned a friend that she stayed with and used to talk to about some of the problems in her relationship. Dee did mention that 20 years ago she told the doctor in the hospital about what her first husband did to her. The doctor patted her on the head and told her that he wouldn't do it again, he wouldn't report it, and that she should return to her abuser. About the most recent time Dee left her current abuser, she accessed the shelter program, which helped her with donations and by arranging her to work with an advocate. Dee spoke very highly of her experience with the shelter program, which is what encouraged her to participate in this study as a way to give something back in return for all of the help, and kindness she received. Dee said, "They told me it wasn't my fault, but you do have the power to change it." (L: 760)

Dee stated that her daughter influenced her leaving her 1st abusive relationship, but that she did not influence any of the times she left her second abusive relationship. Dee said that one time when her daughter was 10 years old, she saw Dee ask her most recent abuser to leave after an argument and her daughter said that she hoped that Dee never got that mad at her. Dee said that this comment influenced her to stay in the relationship longer. Dee also said that she thought that she was protecting her daughter and stepson as long as her abuser was not harming them. However, Dee said that she currently has a strained relationship with her daughter because she tends to be emotionally abusive towards Dee as a result of watching her stepdad mistreat Dee. About having children, Dee stated, "Yeah, it's hard and it's very scary [to leave] and I'm

lucky I don't have any little children right now. And now, there is a lot more support than there was 20, 23 years ago.” (L: 770-771)

Table 11: Dee's Summary of the Coding

	1st Leaving	2nd Leaving	3rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Change in Relationship	1	1	15	2
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 15 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 2 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Change in Support	0	0	6	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 6 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 1* Shelter = 5* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 1* Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Stay = 1 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0

In regard to Dee's summary table of the coding, Dee mentioned minimal change in her relationship during her 1st and 2nd leavings, as noted in Table 11. However, Dee mentioned a significant number of change in the relationship during her most recent leaving. When making any mention of change in the relationship, Dee attributed those changes to self throughout her relationship. In regard to support, no support was mentioned until her most recent leaving, which was again attributed only to self. On average, Dee mentioned moderate to large change in support compared to the other

women in the study. The type of support that Dee mentioned during her most recent leaving largely consisted of formal support, with one mention of informal support. The influence of children to stay in the relationship slightly decreased over time, whereas the influence to leave the relationship due to influence of children slightly increased over time. On average, her child slightly influenced her to leave her abusive relationship more than return to it.

Cora

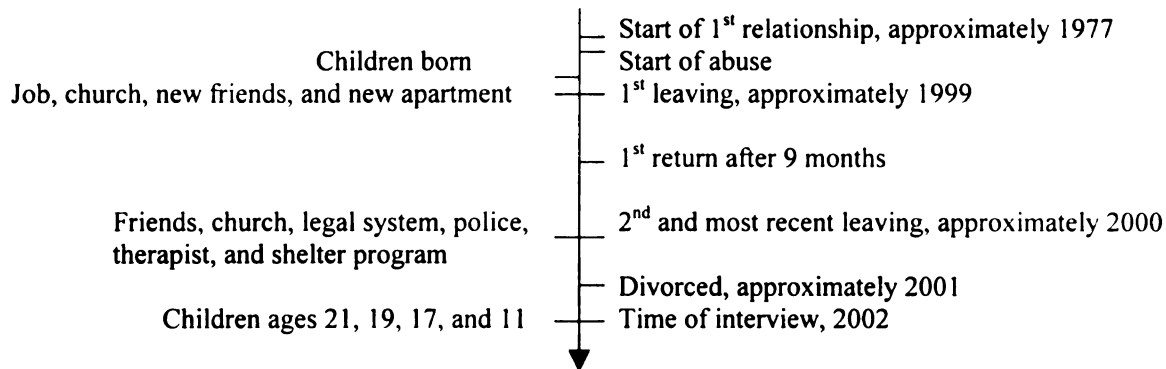
Cora is a 41-year-old European-American woman from the Advocate shelter program. Information regarding Cora's highest level of education was not obtained during the interview. Cora was working full-time as a computer programmer to make ends meet. She has been in only one abusive relationship that lasted 22 and a half years. Cora was married to her abuser and together they had 4 children ages 21 (son), 19 (daughter), 17 (son), and 11 (daughter) at the time of our interview. Cora said that her own parents had been divorced and remarried several times and that she was always determined to make her marriage work. Cora described the abuse as emotional, physical, and sexual. Cora said that the abuse started right after they got married. During the 22 and a half years they were together, Cora left her abuser 2 times towards the end of their marriage, as seen in Figure 12. At the time of our interview, Cora was divorced from her abuser and had been apart from him for 2 years.

Cora and I met for our interview in a private room at the library. Cora revealed that she wanted to participate in this study as a way to challenge herself to become more in touch with her emotions. She had been in individual therapy for one and a half years and was at the point where she needed to begin dealing with her emotions. Cora was

soft-spoken, but very willing to talk about her experiences in her abusive relationship.

Cora said that she found the interview to be helpful to her.

Figure 12: Cora's Timeline



Cora left her abuser with her 4 children the 1st time after almost 20 years of being with him. She said that she decided to leave because she could see that it was starting to affect her children and that she was getting tired of the abuse. Cora told her abuser that she was going to move out 2 weeks before she did and chose his payday to insure that her abuser would not be home that day. Cora moved to an apartment, got a job, joined a church, and made new friends for the first time in several years. She stayed away from her abuser for 9 months, but said that he was still calling her and manipulating her even though they did not live together. Cora said that she decided to return to her abuser because she felt pressured to give him another chance because her abuser was acting like he had changed in front of her new friends from church. After returning to her abuser, Cora said, “When I returned, things were still the same. I just felt more trapped than I was before. I felt like he had the upper hand because I had returned and he had won.” (L: 615-616)

Cora left her abuser a 2nd and most recent time after staying with her abuser for 2 years. Cora decided to leave her abuser because her youngest daughter was having nightmares which led Cora to find counseling services for her daughter. Instead of trying to cover up the abuse, Cora told the counselor everything with hopes of helping her daughter. The counselor informed Cora about the shelter program that previously she had not known existed. Cora then left with her youngest daughter since her other 3 children did not want to move with her because they did not want to change schools and wanted to be near their friends. About this 2nd leaving, Cora stated, “I did not see how I was going to do it without going back. I mean, in the beginning, I thought it was impossible, but by the 2nd time, it felt even more impossible. I was afraid that it would be harder if I returned again.” (L: 1140-1143)

Overall, Cora said that in the beginning, she wanted her marriage to work and then tried to keep it together for the children’s sake. Cora said, “Once I got married, I wanted it to work. I mean, I wanted us to be [a family], and then I think as time went on it was just how I wanted to keep it together for the kids’ sake and then I think it just turned into I just lived my life in fear. I think I just went through the motions. It was just kind of a survival thing.” (L: 620-623) Cora said that she is happier without him and does not see a future with him romantically, but only to discuss issues regarding the children. About her future without him, Cora said that she is still focusing on her children and that she can’t imagine being in another relationship in the near future.

In regard to support, Cora said that she did not confide in anyone about the abuse until the 2nd time she left her abuser because she had learned as a child that you don’t burden others with your problems. However, neighbors would call the police sometimes

due to the abuse. The 1st time she left, Cora said that she made new friends from the church, but that she didn't tell them about the abuse and felt like she was living 2 separate lives. Once Cora left the 2nd time, she had support and help from her friends, her church, a shelter program, the court system, the police and her individual therapist. Cora stated, "I don't know that the 1st time I moved out and even if I had known about them [shelter program], I don't know if I wouldn't have gone back because you are all the time hoping he will change. Now the 2nd time, I saw reality. But the 1st time...even if I had had the help the 1st time, I don't know that I wouldn't have still returned the 1st time. I think that some of it takes time to get your courage up. It takes time to learn and to see reality I guess and not what you want it to be." (L: 990-995)

Cora said that her children did influence her to leave her abuser both the 1st and 2nd time because she saw that the abuse was having an effect on the children. Cora said that her children did not influence her returning to her abuser the 1st time. Her youngest daughter especially influenced her to leave her abuser the 2nd time. Cora said that it was difficult to choose among her children since the older children did not want to move with her, but wanted Cora to stay with them to protect them from their dad. Cora stated that her middle two children have had difficulty with drugs and staying in school as a result of the abuse. Cora said, "I have a hard time dealing with the effect it's had on my kids. I'm kind of mad at myself for not moving out. I feel like it's me, 100% responsible. I feel responsible probably because he doesn't take responsibility. I think that's one of the hardest things." (L: 949-952) About having children, Cora stated, "If I didn't have kids would I have left sooner? I can't say. But, it was my kids that kept me there until it got

to the point I could see what it was doing to my kids and then it was the kids that forced me to leave where I would have continued to take it for their sakes.” (L: 661-664)

Table 12: Cora’s Summary of the Coding

	1st Leaving	2nd Leaving	Don’t Know When
Change in Relationship	10	16	4
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 7 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 2	Self = 14 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 2	Self = 4 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Change in Support	6	7	2
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 6 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 7 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 2 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 1* Family = 1 Friends = 2 Shelter = 0 Church = 2 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 1* Family = 0 Friends = 1 Shelter = 3* Church = 2 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 2
Influence of Children	Stay = 0 Leave = 3 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 3 Both = 2 Unknown = 1	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 3

According to Cora’s summary table of the coding, Cora made many mentions of change in the relationship during both of her leavings, with an increase during her most recent leaving, as seen in Table 12. On average, Cora mentioned large change in the relationship compared to the other women in the study. Attributions of change in the relationship were made primarily to self throughout the relationship with a slight decrease in attributions made to the abuser. A consistent level of changes in support was made throughout Cora’s relationship with all of the attributions for those changes in support

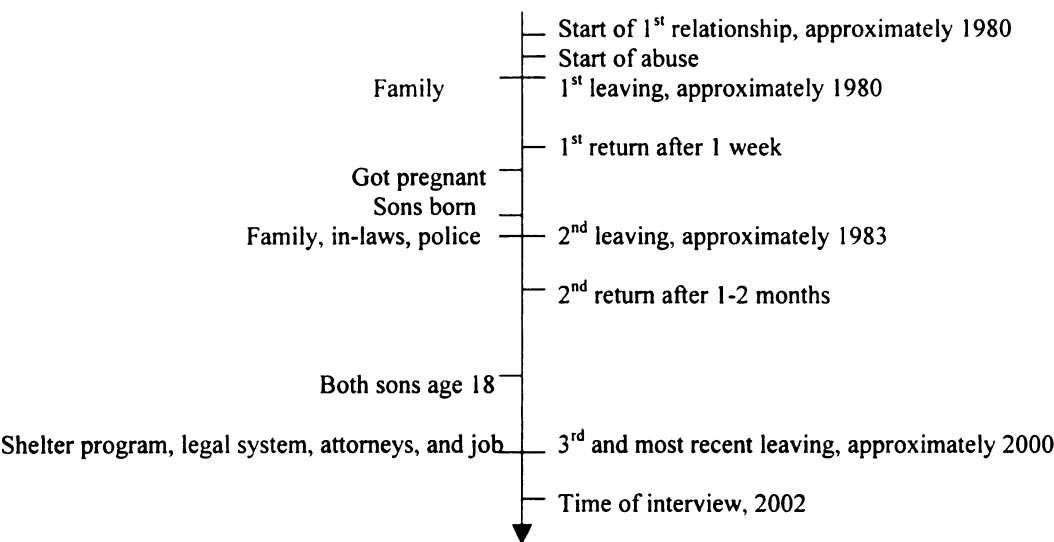
being made to self. Although Cora received both formal and informal support at both of her leavings, there was an increase in formal support during her most recent leaving. In regard to influence of children, Cora did not make specific mention of the children's influence to stay in the relationship. Cora did mention a consistent level of influence from her children to leave the abusive relationship. However, Cora consistently mentioned times when her children influenced her to both leave and stay in the relationship. On average, Cora's children slightly influenced her to leave her abuser more than return to him.

Ann

Ann is a 48-year-old South Asian woman from the Advocate shelter program. Ann has a high school education and is currently enrolled to begin college courses. At the time of the interview, Ann was working full-time in an agency doing data entry. She has been in only one abusive relationship and was married to her abuser for 20 years. Together, they had 2 sons, ages 21 and 19 during the time of our interview. Ann described the abuse as emotional and physical, and said that the sexual abuse is still difficult to talk about. Ann stated that the abuse started once they got engaged. During the 20 years she was with her abuser, Ann left him a total of 3 times, as noted in Figure 13. At the time of the interview, Ann had been apart from her husband for 2 years.

Ann and I met for our interview at her home at Ann's request. Ann was extremely insightful about her experiences and was ready to share her story with me since she had used her time at the shelter for self-reflection. The interview was very emotional with laughter and tears from both of us.

Figure 13: Ann's Timeline



Ann left her abuser the 1st time before she had any children. Her abuser beat her and she threw her wedding necklace at him and stayed with her parents for about a week. Ann said that her abuser came crying and begging to get her back and that her family pressured her to go back to him. Ann decided to return to her abuser and got pregnant with their first child during the honeymoon phase. Ann said that she enjoyed 7 months abuse free, but that her abuser hit her in the stomach when she was 7 months pregnant.

Ann left her abuser a 2nd time with both of her sons after her abuser beat her in front of his friends for no reason. Ann stated, “Yeah the 2nd time I really, I mean, that was the incidence and til today, I don’t understand why he did that. He was having drinks with his friends, you know, some kind of festival and we had another apartment in the next building and all of his friends had gathered and they were having drinks. And I’m sure they were talking about their wives and I’m sure he must have told his friend, oh, my wife is under my control, I’ll prove it to you. And, they came back, I opened the door for him, and slap, he hit me in front of my friends. No rhyme or reason! Just

opened the door. Even his friends were taken aback. Why, for what reason? And then after his friends left, picking up where he left. The next morning I said, no, I'm not going to take this. There has to be some reason for his getting angry. I mean, just open the door and slap a person for what!?! There has to be a reason for why you're slapping. I said I'm not going to take this and I went to the police." (L: 904-914) Ann went to the police with her 2 sons and they told her to return to him. She stayed with her parents for 2 weeks and then started to feel pressured by them to return to her abuser. After staying with her parents, Ann stayed with her abuser's aunt and uncle for a month. They begged her to return to him and promised that he wouldn't abuse her anymore. She eventually returned to her abuser and the abuse resumed after a couple of months. Ann stated, "I wasn't madly in love with him. It was a compromise I had made." (L: 1196-1197)

Ann left her abuser the 3rd and most recent time once both of her sons were 18 years of age. Ann was in the United States because of her son's medical condition. Her abuser beat her and she decided that since her sons were old enough to not need their father's financial support, she was done with the abuse. Ann stayed at a shelter, became a resident of this country, and started a new life for herself. Ann stated, "It was safe [at the shelter]. I had my own time. I could think, I started my own therapy and I said, this is the only time when you're going to get time to heal yourself. Take advantage of it! Cause once you get out in the open world, you're going to think of only paying the bills. You won't get time for yourself. I used to tell the other ladies in the shelter, take care of yourself. Cause once you heal, you know, you will be stronger. Every woman is not at that level, you know, to make that choice. I know that every woman is not at that position." (L: 621-624)

Overall, Ann said that she lost her identity over time as a matter of survival. She would do whatever he wanted her to do in order to try to prevent him from getting angry. Ann stated, “I never existed as a human being in that house.” (L: 459) Ann was adamant about being happier without him now that she has the freedom to do what she wants with her life since she is in the United States and her abuser is in another country. Ann stated that she is excited about her new life, but often feels tired and lonely since she does not have a support system here in this country and because she is different from others who are part of her culture in this country. About her future without her abuser, Ann stated, “[it looks] beautiful. Even if I don’t have anything, at least I’m enjoying my freedom.” (L: 1555)

In regard to support, Ann stayed with her parents when she left her abuser the 1st and 2nd time, yet also felt pressured by them to return to her abuser. The police were also not helpful when she left her abuser the 2nd time because they told her to return to him. When Ann left her abuser the 3rd and most recent time, she received a lot of support from lawyers, the legal system, and the shelter program in the United States. Ann is an incredibly resourceful woman and was able to find the appropriate supports for herself even in a foreign country.

Ann stated that her children did not influence the 1st time she left and returned to her abuser because they had not been born yet. Ann said that her children were too young to influence her to leave the 2nd time, but that they did influence her decision to return to her abuser because she knew that her abuser could afford to financially take care of her sons. Ann said that her sons had been telling her to leave her abuser for the last 7-

8 years, but she decided to stay until they were both 18 because her abuser could better financially provide for them.

Table 13: Ann's Summary of the Coding

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Change in Relationship	15	7	21	6
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 11 Abuser = 3 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Self = 4 Abuser = 3 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 20 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 5 Abuser = 0 Both = 1 Unknown = 0
Change in Support	1	3	8	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 8 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 1* Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 1* Legal = 0 Family = 2* Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 2* Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 5* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 1	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 1
Influence of Children	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Stay = 5 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0

According to Ann's summary table of the coding, Ann made high mentions of change in the relationship during her 1st and most recent leavings, as seen in Table 13. There was a slight decrease in mentions of change during her 2nd leaving. On average, Ann mentioned large change in her relationship compared to the other women in the study. Similarly, attributions of change in the relationship were made largely to self during her 1st and most recent leavings. Over time, there was a slight decrease in the attributions made to abuser for changes in the relationship. Concerning changes in

support, there was a slight increase between her 1st and 2nd leavings, with a larger increase during Ann's most recent leaving. All attributions of change in support were made to self throughout her leavings. Initially, Ann mentioned more informal support, such as family. As time went on, Ann mentioned more formal support including the legal system and the shelter program. During Ann's 2nd leaving, she mentioned a slight increase in the children's influence to stay in the relationship. During her most recent leaving, Ann mentioned a change in her children's influence regarding the decision to leave the abusive relationship. On average, Ann's children slightly influenced her to leave her abusive relationship more than return to it.

The case analyses of the individual women interviewed for this study summarize each woman's unique experience of being in an abusive relationship while identifying patterns that occurred over time. Although this information is useful, it is also important to look for patterns across individuals to perhaps identify commonalities and differences among women survivors. Once patterns across women are identified, more understanding of the complexity of the longer-term process of leaving an abusive relationship can be made. The next chapter explores these patterns that occurred across the 12 women interviewed for this study.

Chapter 5: Patterns of Change and Development Among the Women

The purpose of this study was to determine if consistent patterns of change in physically leaving and returning to an abusive relationship exist and to see if these patterns can be understood as developmental in nature. Because much of the literature and the general public tend to view returning to the abusive relationship as a sign of failure, my study tried to uncover the changes that occur during multiple leave/return events and how these changes may be part of the longer-term developmental process of leaving an abusive relationship.

This chapter focuses on the patterns of change and development in the relationship, support, and the influence of children among the 12 women interviewed for this study. I defined a pattern as common changes across at least 2 of the women. The sources for pattern seeking are the case analyses for each woman, the original transcripts, and the interviews.

Developmental theories have been used both to organize information and to guide research. According to Miller (1993), developmental theories can encourage new observations and can influence us to reexamine familiar behavior by paying attention to variables that we may have previously ignored. Development can be both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative changes are often in kind or type and typically involve a change in structure or organization. Quantitative changes are changes in amount, frequency, or degree. Both of these types of change occur gradually and usually in small increments. During development, small pieces of knowledge, habits, or skills are acquired (Miller, 1993).

Focused on development, this study is not only about change. Change is considered something that was different than before and can be viewed as good, bad, or otherwise. Development involves the notion of progress and a qualitative transformation of an individual. Development requires change, but not all change is considered development. For example, a woman may return to her abuser and experience more violence or emotional abuse than previously, which does signify a change in the relationship, but may not constitute progress if we define progress as simply a change in the relationship. The notion of progress is a controversial issue due to the question of what constitutes progress as well as, by implication, who determines the definition. In relation to my topic, a few options for what constitutes progress exist. First, a woman remaining in her relationship while reducing or stopping the violence could legitimately define progress (Campbell et al, 1998). In the interviews, I asked the women to describe specific changes in their relationship, in support, and in the influence of children that occurred during their multiple leave/return events. However, I did not ask the women to describe the change as good, bad, or otherwise. Instead, I looked at the changes described by each of the women for notions of progress as indication of development.

During the interviews, each woman was also asked to discuss attempts she made to try to stop the violence in the relationship. Although every woman indicated that they had made attempts to stop the violence, all of the women also said that these attempts were unsuccessful and that the abuse continued and often worsened. Since among all 12 of the women there was not one successful occurrence of attempting to stop the violence, I chose not to include such an attempt among indications of progress.

Another alternative for defining progress involves behaviors that lead towards leaving the abusive relationship for good. For this analysis, I defined progress as both quantitative and qualitative evidence that a woman was making changes in her life that have the potential to move her beyond the abusive relationship. Some positive changes included finding employment and receiving more education or training, since previous research has demonstrated that a woman is less likely to return to her abuser if she has her own income (Hilbert & Hilbert, 1984 and Johnson, 1992). Additional signs of progress included sharing her experiences with friends or family, seeking and using formal support systems such as the legal system, shelter programs, or counseling, securing new residence, and obtaining a Personal Protection Order when necessary to add protection from an abuser. Quantitative evidence consists of the average number of mentions of change in the relationship and in support as well as changes in mentions of change across the multiple leave/return events. Qualitative evidence consists of reported differences in the relationship overtime by the women and observations by me during the interview. Because the women in this study displayed wide variation in regard to total leave/return events in all aspects, the frequency of leave/return events was itself not included as a sign of progress despite Schutte et al (1987), who suggested that the more times a woman left her abuser, the less likely she would return to him. The number of leave/return events was not used as a sign of progress in this study because some of the women who had the same or similar number of leave/return events displayed different developmental progress. For example, both Lea and Ann had 3 leave/return events, yet Ann demonstrated significant developmental progress towards a life away from the abusive relationship whereas Lea demonstrated moderate progress.

The chapter begins by looking at the means and standard deviations that were calculated to determine the average number of mentions of change in the relationship for each woman, as well as the average number of attributions of change made to self and to the abuser. The means and standard deviations were used to look for break points that might distinguish some of the women from others in the sample and group women who show similar patterns of mentions of change in the relationship together. These break points were found and are defined and described. Based upon the break points, the women are then clustered into three groups. Tables are presented to help organize the coded data for the 12 women. Next, whether or not development occurred for the women is explored. Furthermore, similarities and differences within these separations by break points are discussed in regard to changes in the relationship, support, and influence of children. Finally, findings and new questions that have been raised as a result of this analysis are highlighted. The vignette analyses found in Chapter 4 were also used in the interpretation of the quantitative data in this chapter.

Definition and Description of the Clusters

Women were asked to talk about change during their multiple leave/return events. Breakpoints were determined that separated the women into 3 clusters using the averages of the frequency of mentions of change in the relationship over time as well as attribution of the change over time. Thus, clustering the women made it easier to see patterns of change, organizing the women according to similarities despite the wide variation that exists. The clusters are not the developmental analysis, but simply a lead up to it. The various patterns of development are better understood by organizing the women into

clusters to help make sense of the wide variation and to insure that the data are not misunderstood as 12 individual, unique stories.

Using mentions of change in relationship and attribution of the cause of the change as a basis for the cluster organization is reasonable when looking for progress. Development requires change, and one of the primary places to identify potential development is in the relationship itself.

After the clusters are defined and described, I look at number of mentions of changes in support, attribution of the change in support, type of support, and the mentions of the influence of children for patterns within each cluster.

The first research question is concerned with patterns of change in the woman's relationship to her abuser when physically leaving and returning to the relationship. Part of the interview focused on whether and how the relationship changed during multiple leave/return events by attending to changes in the woman and/or her abuser that affected their relationship. I asked the women in the interview to describe these changes in the relationship for each leave/return event. Three things were considered when looking for patterns of change in the relationship: first, the women's number of mentions of change for each leave/return event; second, the women's attribution of the change that was mentioned to herself or to her abuser; and finally, my inference of development across the multiple leave/return events.

I calculated the means and standard deviations for each woman's mention of change to provide an average number of mentions of change per each leave/return event. Mentions of changes for each leaving were added and then divided by the specific number of leavings for that individual woman. I then ordered the women according to

the mean number of mentions of change per leave/return event (please refer to Table 14).

Several major gaps in the range of means occurred, forming two potential break points.

Table 14: Mean Mentions of Change in the Relationship per Leave Event

Cluster	Name	Number of Leave Events	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Shelter Program
A	<i>Carol</i>	4	2.50 (.87)	Crisis
	<i>Sheri</i>	8	3.00 (2.94)	Crisis
B	Viv	3	5.00 (4.97)	Crisis
	Dee	3	5.67 (3.26)	Advocate
	Ina	4	5.75 (1.30)	Crisis
	Dora	5	6.60 (3.26)	Crisis
	Lea	3	6.67 (2.06)	Advocate
	Shawn	3	8.33 (1.70)	Crisis
	Doris	5	8.33 (7.59)	Advocate
C	Cora	2	13.00 (3.00)	Advocate
	Ann	3	14.33 (5.73)	Advocate
	Kay	3	14.67 (8.65)	Advocate

These break points in the means were used to separate the women into 3 clusters.

Cluster A had infrequent mentions of change in the relationship (mean of 3 or fewer mentions of change per leave/return event). Cluster B had a moderately frequent mention of change in the relationship (mean 5-8). Cluster C had a frequent mention of change in the relationship (mean of 13 or more). Two women (*Carol* and *Sheri*) were in Cluster A

group, 7 women (Viv, Dee, Ina, Dora, Lea, Shawn, and Doris) were in Cluster B, and 3 women (**Cora**, **Ann**, and **Kay**) were in Cluster C. For the rest of the chapter, the names of the women in Cluster A will be in Italics, the names of the women in Cluster C will be in Bold, and the names of the women in Cluster B will be in regular print.

When clustering the women by frequency of change mentions, I discovered that they were also clustered by the social institutions from which the women were recruited. Cluster A consisted of 2 women from the Crisis Shelter Program, Cluster B had 4 women from the Crisis Shelter Program and 3 women from the Advocate Shelter Program, and Cluster C consisted of 3 women from the Advocate Shelter Program.

When looking at Table 14, it is clear that there is wide variation in average number of mentions of change in the relationship over time. Despite the variability, similarities do exist within clusters. For instance, both *Carol* and *Sheri* have low averages for mentions of change in their relationships. During the interview, *Carol* and *Sheri* reported little change in their relationships until the most recent leaving. *Sheri* specifically mentioned that her abuser threatened her more than previously, and that she was scared for her life prior to her most recent leaving as a result of her abuser's violent behavior. **Cora**, **Ann** and **Kay** have four times greater average mention of change in their relationships than the women in Cluster A. **Cora** reported the same amount of change in her relationship at each leave event. Some of these changes for **Cora** included finding new residence and making new friends. The difference in average mentions of change in the relationship between the Cluster A and Cluster B women is 2 points, with a 4.5 point difference between the women in Cluster B and Cluster C. Some of the Cluster B women, such as Shawn, reported a considerably higher mention of change in the

relationship compared with other Cluster B women. For Shawn, some of these changes included becoming more educated about domestic violence as well as learning about the options available to her as a woman experiencing domestic violence in the United States. Other women in Cluster B, like Viv, made fewer mentions of change in the relationship than many of the other Cluster B women. Finally, the frequency of leave events shows a wide variation throughout the clusters, which indicates that frequency of leave/return events does not distinguish between the clusters.

Two important findings became clear when looking at Table 14. First, tremendous variability exists among women's average mentions of change in the relationship per leave/return event. There is a remarkable range for mentions of change per leave/return event of 2.50 to 14.67 mentions. However, within this large range there are some consistent patterns where some of the women mention very little change in the relationship per leave/return event, such as the Cluster A women, and others mention a lot of change in the relationship per leave/return event, like the women in Cluster C.

The second finding is that the occurrence of a leave/return event does not imply that change occurred. For some women, a leave/return event represents a lot of change in the relationship whereas for other women, it does not. Leaving and returning to an abusive relationship does not necessarily lead to change in the relationship for all women.

To simplify the attributions of change in the relationship, I calculated the means and standard deviations for attributions made to self and to the abuser. Again, totals were tallied for each woman and divided by her specific number of leave events. Also, the ratio of attributions made to self to attributions made to the abuser was calculated. After calculating these numbers, I ordered the women according to their means for attributions

made to self. Clear break points in the means again divided the women into the same three clusters, as seen in Table 15.

Table 15: Mean Attributions of Change in the Relationship

Name	Self Mean (Standard Deviation)	Abuser Mean (Standard Deviation)	Ratio of Self to Abuser Means
<i>Carol</i>	.75 (.43)	1.25 (.43)	.60
<i>Sheri</i>	1.00 (1.41)	1.33 (1.24)	.75
Viv	3.33 (4.71)	1.00 (0)	3.33
Dee	5.67 (6.60)	0	*
Ina	3.50 (1.94)	3.50 (3.77)	1.00
Dora	2.60 (2.24)	3.00 (.63)	.87
Lea	2.33 (1.24)	1.67 (.47)	1.40
Shawn	4.33 (1.25)	1.67 (.47)	2.60
Doris	5.67 (7.32)	2.33 (.47)	2.43
Cora	10.50 (3.50)	.50 (.50)	21.00
Ann	11.67 (6.55)	2.33 (.94)	5.01
Kay	9.67 (6.65)	2.67 (1.89)	3.62

* no ratio can be calculated.

When looking at Table 15, the women divide into the same clusters based on the ratio of attributions as they were based on mentions of change in the relationship. A closer look at the ratios for the women indicates that women in Cluster A had a greater number of attributions made to the abuser relative to self in regard to mentions of change in the relationship than to the women in other clusters. For instance, *Sheri* mentioned

during her interview how her abuser became more demanding as their relationship progressed by threatening her, chasing her, and calling her names. The women in Cluster C have a greater number of attributions made to self than to the abuser concerning change in the relationship when compared to the women in the other clusters. **Kay** stated that she called the police after the most recent violent episode with her abuser, and that she decided to prosecute. These changes were different from previous abusive episodes with **Kay's** abuser. Also, **Cora**, from Cluster C, made changes in her relationship by joining a church, getting a job, and making new friends. Finally, most of the women in Cluster B showed ratios with a greater attribution of change to self rather than to the abuser, except for one woman: Dora. Dora stated during the interview that after she returned to her abuser the 3rd time, her abuser made no promises to change and became violent with her an hour after she returned to him. Other Cluster B women like Lea found a new residence for herself and her children and reentered the workforce with full-time employment.

The clustering of attributions of change in the relationship supports the cluster of changes in the relationship since the women (Cluster C) who had greater averages of change mentioned in the relationship, also made relatively greater attributions of change to self than the other women. Similarly, Cluster A women had few mentions of change in the relationship and also had more attributions made to the abuser than to self compared to the other women. Cluster B women demonstrated a wide variation in the ratios with some of the women, like Dee and Viv, resembling the women in Cluster C while the remaining women such as Ina, Lea, Dora, Doris, and Shawn were more similar to the women in Cluster A.

Two important findings resulted from looking at the average mentions of change in the relationship and the attribution of that change. First, there is a positive relationship between the average mention of change in the relationship and the average attribution of that change made to self. As the average mentions of change in the relationship increases, so does the average attribution of the change in the relationship made to self. Although this may not be a causal relationship, it is important to consider its implications. Perhaps the ability to attribute changes in the relationship to self is a crucial step for women in the process of leaving an abusive relationship and moving toward a life without it. Once changes in the relationship are made to the self, this sense of empowerment may inspire more changes that eventually lead toward a life away from the abusive relationship.

The second finding is that there was tremendous variation in the experience of change in the relationship and attributions for the change. Huge variation existed despite a small sample, which suggests that even more variation may exist in the general population of abused women who access shelter programs. Noting the large variation in this sample and the potentially wider variation in the larger population of abused women may require a variety of ways to help support and assist women in the process of leaving an abusive relationship to better meet their needs. More specifically, some women may need more assistance with acquiring housing and employment whereas other women who have already secured employment and housing may need assistance in their own personal healing.

Because the women divided into the same three clusters when looking at the patterns of change in the relationship and attributions of the change in the relationship, I

chose to examine change in support and in the influence of children within these three distinct clusters.

Table 16: Mean Mention of Change in Support per Leave Event

Name	Number of Leave Events	Mean (Standard Deviation)
<i>Carol</i>	4	.25 (.43)
<i>Sheri</i>	8	1.00 (0)
Viv	3	.33 (.47)
Dee	3	2.00 (2.83)
Ina	4	.75 (.43)
Dora	5	1.00 (1.55)
Lea	3	3.00 (.82)
Shawn	3	1.67 (.47)
Doris	5	3.33 (4.03)
Cora	2	6.50 (.50)
Ann	3	4.00 (2.94)
Kay	3	5.67 (7.32)

Because support from others can be instrumental in deciding whether or not to leave or return to an abusive relationship women were asked about changes in support and type of support received when describing the specific leave/return events in the abusive relationship. Patterns of change in support consisted of mentions of change in support, the attributions that interviewees made to change in support, and the change in

type of support. These patterns of change in support were looked at to see how the clustering holds up in relation to the second research question regarding changes in support.

The means and standard deviations of frequency of mentions of change in support were calculated and organized within each of the three clusters of women. Mentions of changes in support for each leaving were added and then divided by the specific number of leave events for each woman to provide an average number of mentions of change per each leave/return event.

Wide overall variation exists in the average mentions of change in support, as shown in Table 16. However, women in Cluster C had more frequent mentions of change in support than the women in Cluster B, who in turn mention changes in support more frequently than the women of Cluster A in some cases, and not in others. For **Kay** in Cluster C, the most recent leaving involved significant changes in support. She stated, “That’s what’s making the difference this time around, you know, all of the little things add up.” (L: 363-364) **Ann** also mentioned during the interview that even though she was surprised to learn that domestic violence was so prevalent in the United States, the support and services available for women in abusive relationships were incredibly beneficial to her during her most recent leaving. **Dee**, **Doris** and **Lea** from Cluster B are similar in some ways to the Cluster C women in mentions of change in support. Throughout her interview, **Dee** spoke positively about the services and assistance she received from the Advocate Shelter Program, which has helped her move towards a life without her abuser. She stated, “It took such a horrible thing to happen for me to realize [I was in an abusive relationship], and it will heal and get better and when people give me

coffee and Shalimar, they have no idea the healing they are doing.” (L: 761-763) The remaining Cluster B women, Ina, Shawn, Dora, and Viv are similar in some ways to the Cluster A women who had fewer mentions of change on average than the other women. One possible explanation for fewer mentions of change in type of support may be because some of the women do not confide in others about the abuse. During her interview, Dee said, “So, um, I didn’t tell anybody, because you don’t.” (L: 208-209) Dee also talked about some of her discomfort in sharing her experiences during the interview and stated, “It was the shame and guilt that I feel that makes it uncomfortable [to talk to you], not anything that you were doing.” (L: 803-804)

Clearly, there is wide variation in the uses of support even within this limited sample. This large variation in a small group of women suggests that there is even larger variation in the general population of women who experience domestic violence and access shelter programs.

This raises the question of why does this variation exist. Women in abusive relationships often do not use available supports. For some women, past experiences with support have proven to be negative, such as a doctor or police officer suggesting that the abused woman forget about what had happened and return to her abuser. Dee said that when her first abuser hospitalized her 20 years ago, the doctor patted her on the head, said that her abuser wouldn’t do that again, and that he wouldn’t write the incident in her medical charts. Others may feel shame when they access a supportive person or organization for women who experience domestic violence because it means that they admit and identify themselves as abused women.

I calculated the means and standard deviations for attributions made to the self and to the abuser to look at attributions of the change in support. Again, totals were tallied for each woman and divided by the number of leave events. Ratios were not calculated between attributions made to self and attributions made to the abuser because only two women made any attributions of change in support to the abuser.

Table 17: Mean Attributions of Change in Support

Name	Self Mean (Standard Deviation)	Abuser Mean (Standard Deviation)
<i>Carol</i>	.25 (.43)	0
<i>Sheri</i>	1.00 (1.41)	0
Viv	.33 (.47)	0
Dee	2.00 (2.83)	0
Ina	.75 (.43)	0
Dora	.8 (1.17)	0
Lea	2.67 (.47)	0
Shawn	1.00 (.82)	0
Doris	2.67 (3.77)	.67 (.47)
Cora	6.50	0
Ann	4.00 (2.94)	0
Kay	4.33 (5.44)	.33 (.47)

Overall, the mean attributions of the change showed little differentiation among the clusters as seen in Table 17. In general, when changes in support were mentioned,

the women in all three clusters attributed the change to self instead of to their abuser. For example, when Lea left her abuser the 1st time, she called the shelter, packed things for herself and her child, and was determined to find the shelter even though she was unfamiliar with the area. The only exceptions are **Kay** and Doris, who each had made one mention of change in support that was attributed to their abuser. For instance, Doris related how she had filed a police report against her abuser because the physical abuse had become so intense. Although this resulted in a stop to the physical violence, her abuser became more emotionally abusive.

It appears to be common sense that an abuser would not do things intentionally to help an abused woman. The information from this table helps to confirm that idea. However, it is noteworthy that positive changes in support are attributed to the self. The information from Table 15 regarding attributions of the change in the relationship reminds us that not every change is attributed to the self. Sometimes women attributed changes in the relationship to the abuser. Therefore, seeking support may be an important way for women to feel empowered and eventually leave their abusive relationship.

When coding for mentions of support, the type of support received was also noted. I also wanted to see how type of support played out in relation to the clusters. To look at patterns of change in type of support, support was classified as either formal or informal. Formal support consisted of community organizations such as shelter programs, churches, the legal system, and the police. Informal support included family, friends, and co-workers. Each type of support was only counted once, even if it was

mentioned several times. A ratio of formal to informal support was calculated to examine the relationship between the two types of support.

Table 18: Types of Support

Name	Formal	Informal	Total	Ratio of Formal to Informal
<i>Carol</i>	1	0	1	*
<i>Sheri</i>	2	0	2	*
Viv	1	1	2	1.00
Dee	1	1	2	1.00
Ina	1	1	2	1.00
Dora	1	1	2	1.00
Lea	4	0	4	*
Shawn	2	1	3	2.00
Doris	2	3	5	.67
Cora	3	2	5	1.50
Ann	3	1	4	3.00
Kay	4	3	7	1.33

* no ratio can be calculated.

The information from Table 18 suggests that overall, the women in this study had fewer mentions of change in informal support than in formal support, except for Doris. All of the women mentioned change in both types of support, except for Lea, *Sheri* and *Carol*. Because Lea's family was in another country, it was not unusual for her to mention changes in formal support. However, it is interesting that *Sheri* and *Carol*, both

from Cluster A, did not mention any changes in informal support which may suggest that either little informal support existed for them, or that their friends and family are no longer interested in being a support to them. Also, the women in Cluster C had greater overall changes in support compared to the other women, which suggests that changes in support may be a crucial component of attempting to move beyond and abusive relationship. For example, **Ann** talked about the increase in formal support she received during her most recent leaving including an extended stay at the shelter, a pro bono lawyer, a new job, and plans for attending college in the fall.

Finally, I examined the role that children play in the multiple leave/return events and how this appeared across the three clusters. To look at patterns of change in the influence of children, I counted whether a child influenced the women to stay, leave, or both. Then, I calculated the means and standard deviations for each woman in the categories of stay, leave and both per leave event. Ratios between mentions of stay versus leave influence were also calculated. Again, women were arranged into the three clusters.

When looking at Table 19, again, a lot of variability is seen among the women in all of the clusters. The Cluster C women had higher means for children influencing them to leave the relationship rather than stay in it. One of the Cluster A women showed a slightly higher mean for children influencing her to stay in the relationship rather than leave it. The women in Cluster B were mixed with some women reporting more influence of children for staying in the relationship (similar to Cluster A), others indicating more influence to leave the relationship (similar to Cluster C), some reporting an even number of children's influence to stay in and leave the relationship, and some

Table 19: Influence of Children

Name	Number of Leave Events	Stay Mean and Standard Deviation	Leave Mean and Standard Deviation	“Both” Mean and Standard Deviation	Ratio of Stay to Leave Means
<i>Carol</i>	4	.50 (.50)	.25 (.43)	0	2.00
<i>Sheri</i>	8	0	0	0	*
Viv	3	.67 (.47)	1.33 (.47)	0	.50
Dee	3	.33 (.47)	.67 (.94)	0	.49
Ina	4	2.25 (1.78)	1.50 (1.12)	0	1.50
Dora	5	.20 (.40)	.60 (1.20)	0	.33
Lea	3	0	.67 (.94)	0	*
Shawn	3	.67 (.94)	.67 (.47)	0	1.00
Doris	5	0	0	.33 (.47)	*
Cora	2	0	3.00 (0)	1.50 (.50)	*
Ann	3	.33 (.47)	.67 (.94)	0	.49
Kay	3	1.00 (.82)	3.00 (3.56)	0	.33

* no ratio can be calculated.

indicating no influence in decisions to leave or return to the abusive relationship. For instance, **Cora**, **Kay**, Viv and Ina all indicated greater averages for leaving the abusive relationship in regard to influence of children compared to the other women. Viv revealed during her interview that she left her abuser this most recent time because he stole her Welfare money, which in her opinion, was as if her abuser had stolen from her children. Also, **Cora** spoke about the impact that the abuse was having on her children,

which prompted her to leave her abuser. However, **Cora** and **Kay** are very different from Ina and Viv concerning the other areas of change in the relationship and change in support since both **Cora** and **Kay** experienced more changes in the relationship and support across the multiple leave/return events compared to Viv and Ina.

When looking at the ratios for stay to leave, there does not seem to be anything that perfectly distinguishes among the clusters in regard to the influence of children for leave/return events. Therefore, the influence of children does not seem to correspond with either mentions of change in the relationship or the changes in support in differentiating the three clusters. In fact, unlike these other areas of study, no overall mentions of children's influence to stay or to leave the relationship distinguishes the clusters. Yet all of the women in this study mentioned that their children had influenced them to leave and return to their abusive relationship at some point. This is true, except for *Sheri*. *Sheri* is the only woman in this study who only had stepchildren and did not have any legal custody of them. Within this sample of 12 it appeared that the influence of children could change for the same woman at a different point in time. Given that children do influence the process of leaving and returning to the abusive relationship and that the simple presence of absence of children does not result in the decision to either stay in or leave the abusive relationship, no overall larger patterns exist to distinguish among the clusters based on the ratio of influence of children to stay or leave. What does become clear is that women with children who are in the process of leaving an abusive relationship have significantly complex factors to sort.

To summarize, there are several important findings as a result of looking at the average number of mentions of change in the relationship, attributions of that change,

mentions of change in support, attributions of change in support, type of support, and the influence of children on stay/leave decisions. First, the women in this study demonstrated a positive relationship between mentions of change in the relationship and attributions of the change in the relationship made to self. In other words, the more frequently they mentioned change in the relationship, the more likely it was that agency for that change would be attributed to self rather than to the abuser. Second, wide variation exists in mentions of change in the relationship, despite the small sample, which suggests that wider variation may exist for the larger population of abused women. Similarly, wide variation exists in the use of support by the women in this study. Most of the attributions for changes in support are made to self, which supports common sense. Most of the women in this study made more mentions of changes in formal support versus informal support. And finally, although it is clear that children do influence women in the multiple leave/return events, and that children can influence a woman to both return to and leave the abusive relationship at different points in time, no patterns in overall mentions of stay or leave influence appear to exist.

Development, Similarities, and Differences in Change Within Each Cluster

Now that the data have been organized into clusters and the clusters further described, evidence for development or its lack can be discussed. Coded frequency data for each leave/return event is provided for each of the women within a cluster to facilitate the discussion of evidence. Cluster A followed by Clusters C and B are discussed below.

Cluster A Women (Sheri and Carol)

Change in Mentions of Change in the Relationship

Both *Sheri* and *Carol* indicated minimal changes in the relationship across the multiple leave/return events (see Tables 20 and 21). The only notable increase in more mentions of relationship change was during their most recent leaving. *Sheri* reported that she started to work towards the end of her relationship and that her abuser would come to her place of employment and accuse her of cheating on him, which was a change. *Carol* reported how she returned to her abuser each time because he would be romantic and capture her heart. However, *Carol* did indicate that this most recent leaving was a change because during the other leavings, she had no intention of leaving him. In order for development away from the abuser to take place, change needs to occur. Minimal indications of change across multiple leave/return events leave little opportunity for development to occur.

Table 20: Change in Mentions of Change in the Relationship for Sheri

	Beginning	Middle	End	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Relationship	2	0	7	3
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 0 Abuser = 1 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 3 Abuser = 3 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0

Table 21: Change in Mentions of Change in the Relationship for Carol

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	4 th Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Relationship	2	2	2	4	3
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 0 Abuser = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 1 Both = 1 Unknown = 1	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0

There were a number of similarities among the women of Cluster A beyond their infrequent mentions of change. One similarity was their time away from the abusive relationship at the time of the interview. Both women had been away from their abuser less than a week at the time of the interview. Another similarity between *Carol* and *Sheri* was the total number of abusive relationships they had been involved in (3 and 5, respectively), which was more than women in the other two clusters. Both *Sheri* and *Carol* made little mention of change in the relationship, but when they did mention it, they never attributed change more frequently to themselves than to their abuser. *Sheri* reported that her abuser became more violent as their relationship progressed. *Carol* also reported that the violence became more intense over her relationship with her abuser, and specifically mentioned a time when he chained her to a dog leash and dragged her down the street. Although these were changes in the relationship, those enacted by the abuser were not positive changes. Both of these women indicated extreme and increasing physical and emotional abuse in their relationship, which may account for the higher number of attributions of change made to the abuser rather than to self.

There were differences as well. *Sheri* was married to her abuser whereas *Carol* was not. *Carol* had physically left her most recent abuser 4 times during a 9-month

period. The high number of leavings during a short period of time may have left *Carol* little time for change to occur because the relationship and her time away from it did not have time to achieve any stability. It was also not uncommon for *Carol* to ask her abuser to leave since it was easier for him to leave her house rather than her leave with her and 6 children. *Sheri* attempted to physically leave her abusive relationship 8 times during a 4-year period, but had only physically left her abuser once. Therefore, she did not have the experience of physically leaving and returning to her abusive relationship multiple times, which may account for her low average mentions of change in her relationship with her abuser.

Sheri indicated that her relationship with her abuser was over, whereas *Carol* reported some uncertainty about her future with her abuser. Regarding a future with her abuser, *Sheri* stated, “No, I don’t want anything to do with him. I hope that he will stay away from me.” (L: 546) When asked about a future with her abuser, *Carol* replied, “um, I don’t know. I really can’t say. It’s like part of me wanted to because he had asked me to marry him. The more and more I think about it, I don’t know. He would have to go to counseling and I see a change and I’m talking like a month or 2 change, 6 month change or something, then I’d consider it. He’d really have to show me.” (L: 702-705) Based on *Carol*’s response, at the time of our interview, she had not experienced any developmental progress beyond life with her abuser.

Change in Mentions of Change in Support

Because both *Carol* and *Sheri* came from the Crisis Shelter Program, their immediate needs were focused on issues such as finding a permanent residence, securing an income, and maintaining safety from their abuser. Both *Carol* and *Sheri* mentioned

minimal changes in support throughout their abusive relationships, with a slight increase during their most recent leaving (see Tables 22 and 23). *Sheri* reported that she went to the police station during her most recent leaving because she needed to be protected from her abuser. This was something that *Sheri* had never done during previous attempts to leave. *Carol's* slight increase in formal support included her accessing the shelter program for the first time during her most recent leaving. When changes in support were mentioned, the women attributed the changes in support to self. Neither women mentioned changes in informal support.

Table 22: Change in Mentions of Change in Support for Sheri

	Beginning	Middle	End	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Support	0	0	3	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 1* Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 2* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 1 General = 0

Table 23: Change in Mentions of Change in Support for Carol

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	4 th Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Support	0	0	0	1	0
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0

No significant differences were found between *Carol* and *Sheri* in regard to changes in support, attribution of the change of support, or in type of support. Seeking and or having little support may relate to the potential for changes to occur in the relationship, especially changes attributed to self.

Influence of Children

The influence of children on leave/return events among the Cluster A women was minimal. *Sheri* mentioned little influence of children in her multiple leave/return events, as noted in Table 24. However, the 4 children in her relationship were her stepchildren and she did not have legal custody of them. *Carol*, on the other hand, had 6 children of her own and was pregnant with her 7th at the time of the interview. She mentioned few changes in influence of her children in her leave/return events, but did say that her children influenced her to leave at the 2nd leaving (refer to Table 25). *Carol* also indicated that her children influenced her to return to her abuser the 3rd time because they

were starting to see him as a “father figure.” *Carol* said, “He [her abuser] did things for them and played with them. So, they fell in love with him as a father figure and would cry as soon as he left.” (L: 603-604). Overall, both *Carol* and *Sheri* seemed relatively autonomous in their decisions to leave and return to the abusive relationship independent of the influence of children. For the Cluster A women, minimal changes in the relationship and in support went along with a minimal influence of children over time.

Table 24: Change in Influence of Children for Sheri

	Beginning	Middle	End	Don't Know When
Influence of Children	Stay = 0	Stay = 0	Stay = 0	Stay = 1
	Leave = 0	Leave = 0	Leave = 0	Leave = 0
	Both = 0	Both = 0	Both = 0	Both = 0
	Unknown = 0	Unknown = 0	Unknown = 0	Unknown = 0

Table 25: Change in Influence of Children for Carol

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	4 th Leaving	Don't Know When
Influence of Children	Stay = 0	Stay = 0	Stay = 1	Stay = 1	Stay = 0
	Leave = 0	Leave = 1	Leave = 0	Leave = 0	Leave = 0
	Both = 0	Both = 0	Both = 0	Both = 0	Both = 0
	Unknown = 0	Unknown = 0	Unknown = 0	Unknown = 0	Unknown = 1

Summary of Cluster A from the Perspective of Development

Sheri and *Carol* mentioned change in the relationship and in support. Both of the women had been in multiple abusive relationships. However, the nature of the change mentioned varied little across the sequence of leave/return events in their most recent abusive relationship. Also, few signs of progress were noted since neither *Carol* nor *Sheri* had secured stable employment or a new residence at the time of the interview.

Some additional information regarding the women of Cluster A is important to aid in the interpretation of their apparent lack of developmental progress away from the abusive relationship. During the interview, *Sheri* revealed that she had grown up in an abusive household, which may have been an additional challenge for her. Although having grown up in an abusive household does not cause the abusive relationship, it may contribute to the difficulty of leaving one and may potentially contribute to psychological issues as well. *Carol* presented herself as very sweet and innocent, yet made vague mention during the interview that she had had charges against her from her abuser. Although *Carol* did not provide much detail about this event, it is clear that she has had some legal action against her. When asked if she had ever called the police because of her abuser, *Carol* replied, “No, I used to tell him I was going to call the police, but at the time, um, I didn’t due to personal reasons. Yeah, so I didn’t call.” (L: 83-84) Therefore, both of the women of Cluster A had additional struggles in their lives that, when coupled with being in an abusive relationship, may have made development away from the abusive relationship a more difficult task than for women without these additional challenges.

The women in Cluster A demonstrated few mentions of change overall. Based on minimal progress across multiple leave/return events, it appears that little development occurred for either *Sheri* or *Carol*. For *Sheri*, the slight increase in change in the relationship during the most recent leaving was not positive change, since it involved her abuser becoming more violent. The flat frequency of positive change across multiple leave/return events raise questions about why these two women mentioned so little change in the relationship, support, and influence of children over time. Despite a small

sample of only 12 women, two women expressed minimal changes across multiple leave/return events, which suggests that this also occurs for a portion of other abused women who access shelter programs. It also raises the issue about how having additional struggles, such as those faced by *Sheri* and *Carol*, may hinder the process of developing away from an abusive relationship.

Cluster C Women (Kay, Cora, and Ann)

Change in Mentions of Change in the Relationship

The three women in Cluster C more frequently mentioned change in their relationship relative to the women in the other clusters, as indicated in tables 13-15. Also, **Cora**, **Ann**, and **Kay** mentioned change with increasing frequency across the multiple leave/return events, with the most change mentioned during the most recent leaving. **Ann** reported that although she had been emotionally detached from her abuser for quite some time, she had decided to physically end their relationship because her children had grown and she had more opportunities to live as an independent women in the United States. **Kay** reported that although the most recent physical abuse from her abuser was not the most violent abuse she had experienced from him, something changed inside of her and made her decide to prosecute and end their relationship.

Table 26: Change in Mentions of Change in the Relationship for Kay

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Relationship	5	13	26	6
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 4 Abuser = 0 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Self = 6 Abuser = 4 Both = 3 Unknown = 0	Self = 19 Abuser = 4 Both = 3 Unknown = 0	Self = 2 Abuser = 3 Both = 0 Unknown = 1

Table 27: Change in Mentions of Change in the Relationship for Cora

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Relationship	10	16	4
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 7 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 2	Self = 14 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 2	Self = 4 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0

Table 28: Change in Mentions of Change in the Relationship for Ann

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Relationship	15	7	21	6
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 11 Abuser = 3 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Self = 4 Abuser = 3 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 20 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 5 Abuser = 0 Both = 1 Unknown = 0

All three of these women had been in their relationship for 15-22.5 years and had only been in one abusive relationship. Both **Cora** and **Ann** had been physically away from their abuser for at least 2 years during the time of the interview, whereas **Kay** had only been away from her abuser for 3 months. Also, both **Cora** and **Ann** had been divorced for a year at the time of the interview. **Kay** was not legally married to her abuser. Therefore, none of the women in Cluster C had legal ties to their abusers at the time of the interview.

All three of the Cluster C women indicated that they did not want a romantic relationship with their abuser in the future. At different points during the interview, I watched **Cora** physically cringing when talking about the present situation of her abuser,

as if she could not believe that she had been involved with someone like him and for so long. **Ann** also stated, “I was talking to my son the other day. Today at this point in my life, I can’t imagine how I could have done or lived with your father for 20 years in that situation. I just can’t imagine myself doing that!” (L: 1439-1441)

These three women in Cluster C attributed most of the changes in the relationship to self, particularly during their most recent leaving as shown in Tables 26-28. This cluster helps to support the idea that when more change in the relationship is attributed to self than to the abuser, the women have regained some power, control, or inner strength to make a positive difference in their situation. For example, **Kay** stated, “It’s hard when you’re dealing with work, and a daughter and 3 different courts. [What makes me ok with all of the confusion is] because it was a different kind of confusion before. I feel like I’m used to handling and juggling from the abuse so now it’s more of a positive energy kind of thing.” (L: 882-884) **Ann** stated, “When I came here in, I was trying to get a job, but I was on a visitor visa and I couldn’t do anything about it. I used to always be on the web trying to research, you know, what I can do for my situation and there was this proposed rule from the Clinton administration that DV victims could apply for asylum in this country and I did. There was my window to get my freedom.” (L: 39-43) This attribution to self during the most recent leaving may also suggest that changes in power and control had occurred over time and may have helped the women move toward a life away from the abusive relationship and their abuser.

Change in Mentions of Change in Support

The Cluster C women shared several similarities in uses of support. All three women had been actively working with an advocate from the Advocate Shelter Program.

All of these women had stable employment and were able to financially make ends meet at the time of the interview. Increasing mentions of change in the relationship coincided with increasing mentions of change in support, as seen in Tables 29-31. The women in Cluster C more frequently mentioned change in support than women in the other clusters, with most mentions occurring for the most recent leaving. For instance, **Ann** used the internet to locate resources in the United States to help assist her in her most recent leaving. Similar to both **Ann** and **Cora**, **Kay** revealed during her interview that she had previously been unaware of the outside support that existed to help women in abusive relationships. **Kay** added, “That’s what’s making the difference this time around [most recent leaving], you know, all of the little things add up.” (L: 363-364) **Cora** said, “But that’s because I never confided in anyone because I didn’t have anywhere to go. To be honest, I didn’t know there were resources that are out there that I know now. But that’s because I didn’t talk to anybody. I didn’t know there were resources and I was scared of losing my kids or not being able to support them. The 2nd time was different because I had support.” (L: 177-185)

In regard to attributions made to self for changes in support, all of these women attributed most, if not all of the change to self. As more changes in support were mentioned, more attributions of the change were also made to self as opposed to the abuser. **Kay** was the only exception with one attribution made to her abuser. Once again, enacting changes in support may be an important piece of moving towards a life without the abusive relationship.

Table 29: Change in Mentions of Change in Support for Kay

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Support	1	0	16	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 12 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 3	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 1 * Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 2 * Legal = 1 * Family = 2 * Friends = 1 * Shelter = 5 * Church = 1 * Job = 1 * Unknown = 2 General = 1	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 1 General = 0

Table 30: Change in Mentions of Change in Support for Cora

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Support	6	7	2
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 6 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 7 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 2 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 1 * Family = 1 Friends = 2 Shelter = 0 Church = 2 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 1 * Family = 0 Friends = 1 Shelter = 3 * Church = 2 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 2

All of these women more frequently mentioned changes in formal than informal support. Because **Kay** decided to prosecute, she began to receive assistance form the legal system and the shelter program, two resources she had never used before. Both

Cora and **Ann** also used the services from the shelter program to help in their most recent leaving. For instance, both **Cora** and **Ann** had either participated in or were currently participating in long-term therapy at the time of the interview. Therefore, it appears that an increase in use of formal support, such as shelter programs, the legal system, and the police may be both a marker of progress and contribute to some women's progress away from their abuser.

Table 31: Change in Mentions of Change in Support for Ann

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Support	1	3	8	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 8 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 1* Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 1* Legal = 0 Family = 2* Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 2* Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 5* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 1	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 1

No major differences were found among the women in Cluster C in regard to mentions of changes in support, attribution of the change, or type of support. However, small differences were noted in mentions of changes in support across the multiple leave/return events. **Cora** showed no significant change in mentions of support across her 2 leave events. **Cora** decided to leave her abuser the 1st time after being with him for about 20 years. Therefore, once she did decide to leave him, **Cora** got an apartment, found a job, joined a church, and made new friends. When **Cora** returned to her abuser

the 1st time, she gave up her apartment. However, **Cora** maintained her new friendships and continued to attend her church. **Ann** showed a steady increase in mentions of change in support across her 3 leave events, with a moderate increase during her most recent leaving. Because **Ann** had decided to stay in the relationship until her children were older, **Ann** experienced a significant increase in support during her most recent leaving. In her mind, there was no longer a reason to stay with her abuser. She researched the various supports available to her and chose to use them. **Kay** made minimal mention of change in support during her 1st and 2nd leave/return events, with a considerable increase in mentions in describing her most recent leaving. For **Kay**, her new awareness of resources available to women who experience domestic violence was put to use her during this most recent leaving.

Influence of Children

One similarity in the influence of children that emerged for the three women in Cluster C was that leaving the abusive relationship became easier as the children became older. **Kay** stated, “[when I left the 2nd time] I was financially strapped. [My daughter] was 7 and I had to pay for a babysitter, I was working 2 jobs, I had no car, it was really tough. [This time] financially it’s going to be different because [my daughter] is able to take care of herself and this time I have a job that I’ve been at for 3 years and I walk there.” (L: 332-338) **Ann** reported,

Frankly speaking, I stayed for them. Once the kids grew up and they really started understanding, when they got into their teens, for the last 6, 7, 8 years, they’ve been telling me, mom, get out of this situation. You don’t need to take this crap from him. It was my kids who were telling me to get out. We’ll see what happens to us. But then, because of my son’s medical problems and things like that, I waited until 18. And when he turned 18, that’s when I said, ok, enough is enough. (L: 102-107)

Table 32: Change in Influence of Children for Kay

	1st Leaving	2nd Leaving	3rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Influence of Children	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 2 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 8 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0

Table 33: Change in Influence of Children for Cora

	1st Leaving	2nd Leaving	Don't Know When
Influence of Children	Stay = 0 Leave = 3 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 3 Both = 2 Unknown = 1	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 3

Table 34: Change in Influence of Children for Ann

	1st Leaving	2nd Leaving	3rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Influence of Children	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Stay = 5 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0

Another similarity in the influence of children among the women in Cluster C was that they left the abusive relationship towards the later part of it because they became aware of the emotional effect the abuse was having on the children. **Kay** stated, “[my daughter] is 13 now and all this time I thought that I was protecting her. In actuality I wasn’t.” (L: 38-39) **Cora** stated, “If I didn’t have kids would I have left sooner? I can’t say. But, it was my kids that kept me there until it got to the point I could see what it was doing to my kids and then it was the kids that forced me to leave where I would have continued to take it for their sakes.” (L: 661-664)

Two of the women in Cluster C, **Ann** and **Kay**, did not make specific mention of returning to the abusive relationship in order to stay together as a family. However, **Cora** indicated that she stayed in the relationship as long as she did because she wanted to stay together as a family.

That was one thing that my husband would always say to me, you know, because my parents had such a bad, you know, one was married 5 times, the other was married 3 times, his parents have been married the same the whole time, so anything that would ever, he's like, oh, you're just like your mom, you know what I mean? It was like, no I'm going to prove that I'm not going to do what they did. I'm going to keep this family together. (L: 258-262)

Overall, the women in Cluster C made more frequent mention of their children influencing them to leave the relationship rather than stay, particularly during their most recent leaving (see Tables 32-34). Across her multiple leave/return events, **Kay** indicated that her daughter influenced **Kay** to stay with her abuser during the 1st and 2nd leave/return events. However, there was a significant change when her daughter influenced her to leave her abuser during her most recent leaving. Because her daughter was old enough to not need childcare and to be more aware of the abuse, **Kay** no longer saw her daughter as a reason to stay in her relationship. **Ann** did not have children during her 1st leave/return event, but her sons somewhat influenced her to stay with her abuser during her 2nd leave/return event because she needed her abuser's financial assistance. Her sons then influenced her to leave her abuser during her most recent leaving because they were both over 18 and because they had both been telling her to leave their father for the past 6-8 years. **Cora** reported that across both of her multiple leave/return events, her children influenced her to leave as well as both leave and return to her abuser.

Summary of Cluster C from the Perspective of Development

Overall, **Cora, Ann, and Kay** frequently mentioned change in the relationship with most of the changes being attributed to self. All three women also indicated change in the relationship occurring across the multiple leave/return events, with the most change mentioned during the most recent leaving. All three of these women also had frequent mentions of change in support and attributed most of the change to self, compared with women in the other clusters. **Cora, Ann, and Kay** mentioned more changes in formal support with an increase occurring during their most recent leaving. Children seemed to influence the women of Cluster C to leave the abusive relationship, especially once the children got older, rather than the children influencing them to return to their abuser. All three of these women had stable employment, a new residence, and were currently working with advocates from the shelter program to continue establishing a life without the abusive relationship. It appears that the women of Cluster C are developing away from the relationship with their abuser because they had made significant changes in their lives, which contributed to their progress toward life without their abusive relationship.

The women in Cluster C add an important insight into our understanding of women in the process of leaving an abusive relationship. Three of the 12 women in this study experienced significant changes in their relationship and in support across the multiple leave/return events, with the majority of the attributions of those changes made to self. This occurrence suggests that other women in the larger population of abused women who access shelter programs also experience greater frequencies of change that allow for progress and development to occur as well as for the transition from an abusive relationship towards a life without it. The reality that the Cluster C women made more

attributions to self than to the abuser also suggests that seeing yourself as responsible for change may also add to the process of leaving an abusive relationship by instilling or rekindling some personal empowerment.

Cluster B Women (Ina, Doris, Dee, Shawn, Lea, Dora, and Viv)

Summary of Patterns of Change in regard to Development

Wide variation existed for the women in Cluster B. To help organize the women in regard to similarities and differences within this cluster, I divided the women into 3 subclusters. Then women were placed into a subcluster based on their development or lack of development as a result of organizing their accounts of change throughout their multiple leave/return events.

Subcluster B1: Ina

The first subcluster consists of only one woman, Ina. Ina displayed little developmental progress, yet was different from the Cluster A women because she had only been in one abusive relationship and frequently reported that her child had influenced her to both leave and return to her abusive relationship and abuser. The second subcluster consists of Dee and Doris who were more similar to the Cluster C women because they had demonstrated more developmental progress towards a life beyond the abusive relationship. Finally, the third subcluster consists of Shawn, Lea, Dora, and Viv because they showed moderate developmental progress toward a life beyond their abusive relationship.

Table 35: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Ina

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	4 th Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Relationship	8	5	5	5	2
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 5 Abuser = 1 Both = 2 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 2 Both = 2 Unknown = 0	Self = 4 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 4 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Mentions of Change in Support	0	1	1	1	0
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 1* Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 1 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 1 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 4 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 4 Leave = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Stay = 0 Leave = 3 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 2 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 3

In regard to changes in the relationship, Ina's average mention of change per leave/return event was moderate compared to the other women. The frequency with which Ina mentioned changes in her relationship with her abuser remained the same across the multiple leave/return events after a slight decrement from the 1st to the 2nd leaving, as seen in Table 35. During the interview, Ina said about her 2nd leave event, "[I was] re-enrolling in school, finding a place, you know, securing residency. I was totally doing stuff. I don't know. When I'm with [my abuser], I'm totally isolated and I can't do anything. So, when I'm out on my own, I'm like so productive and then I end up giving up and returning." (L: 266-269) From Ina's comment, it appears that although

change does occur for her when she is in the relationship versus out, it is more of a dichotomous change instead of a positive change indicating progress where she is either productive or not, depending upon whether or not she is currently in the abusive relationship. Also, Ina did not take much responsibility for the changes in her relationship relative to many of the other women in the sample. Attributions of change in relationship were made equally to self and to her abuser. Ina mentioned few changes in support and reported an equal number of formal and informal types of support. Ina talked about receiving some help from her mother, yet claimed that her mother was not aware of the abuse. She felt that this was more helpful for her than if her mother was aware of the abuse, although she did not say why. Finally, Ina spoke frequently during the interview about her conflicted feelings about remaining in the relationship for the sake of her daughter versus leaving the relationship for the sake of her daughter. There was no pattern to the change in proportion of mentions of influence to stay versus influence to leave over time. Ina had not established new residence or a job during the time of the interview. Overall, Ina did not seem to display many signs of progress and it appears that at this point, little development has occurred for her. She appeared stuck, but had been placed in Cluster B instead of Cluster A because she had demonstrated slightly more developmental progress than Cluster A women. Also, Ina had only been in one abusive relationship whereas the Cluster A women had been in multiple abusive relationships.

Subcluster B2: Doris and Dee

The second subcluster consists of Doris and Dee because both of these women appear to have experienced some notion of progress towards a new life for themselves. Dee and Doris both mentioned change in the relationship with moderate frequency and

attributed most of the change to self rather than to their abuser (see Tables 36 and 37).

Both Doris and Dee significantly increased their mentions of change in the relationship when referring to their most recent leaving. For instance, both Dee and Doris talked about the importance of taking care of themselves. Dee stated, “I have to live for myself!” (L: 289)

Table 36: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Doris

	Beginning	Middle	End	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Relationship	4	2	19	4
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 1 Abuser = 3 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 16 Abuser = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 1
Mentions of Change in Support	0	1	9	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 8 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 1* Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 1* Legal = 0 Family = 1* Friends = 2* Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 3 Unknown = 0 General = 1	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 1* Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 3

Both women mentioned changes in support with moderate frequency and attributed most of these changes in support to self. Doris and Dee had few to no mentions of change in support during their early leave/return events. However, they both

had the highest frequency of mentions of change in support for themselves during their most recent leaving. Both Dee and Doris worked with advocates from the Advocate Shelter Program and were very appreciative of the support they received there. From her advocate, Doris received support for her interactions with the legal system and for her new life away from her abuser. The two women also had moderate to moderately high mentions of types of support compared to the other women.

Table 37: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Dee

	1st Leaving	2nd Leaving	3rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Relationship	1	1	15	2
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 15 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 2 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Mentions of Change in Support	0	0	6	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 6 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 1* Shelter = 5* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 1* Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 1 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Stay = 1 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0

Variation existed in regard to influence of children, yet this area did not distinguish among clusters overall. Doris talked about being more autonomous in her

decisions to leave and return to her abuser than Dee who reported that it was easier to leave her abuser once her daughter was older. Dee and Doris both had new residence and stable employment. Both Dee and Doris indicated that they had moved on with their lives and expressed disbelief that they had endured the abuse as long as they had. During the interview, Doris reported that she had been divorced from her abuser for 3 years, which coincidentally fell around July 4th. She described it as “the day I got my freedom, or got myself back.” (L: 29) It appeared that development had occurred for both Doris and Dee. As they progressed away from their relationship with their abuser, they were able to look back on that relationship from a new perspective.

Subcluster B3: Lea, Dora, Shawn, and Viv

Finally, a third subcluster includes Lea, Dora, Shawn, and Viv because they displayed some development, though not as consistently as the subcluster of Dee and Doris and more consistently than the subcluster of Ina.

Both Dora and Viv expressed minimal mentions of change in the relationship overall, yet both had a slight increase in mentions of change when describing their most recent leaving (see Tables 39 and 41). For example, Dora mentioned during her interview about her most recent leaving, “it was so frightening. I saw my life, I seen where he was taking me. I was going to end up dead being with him or just have no life at all and I just can’t. I need to focus on myself and my daughter.” (L: 732-734)

Table 38: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Lea

	1st Leaving	2nd Leaving	3rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Relationship	4	9	7	1
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 1 Abuser = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Self = 4 Abuser = 2 Both = 2 Unknown = 1	Self = 2 Abuser = 1 Both = 3 Unknown = 1	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Mentions of Change in Support	3	2	4	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 2 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 3 Abuser = 0 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 3* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 1* Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 1* Legal = 2* Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 1* Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0

Lea and Shawn made moderately frequent mentions of change in the relationship across their multiple leave/return events, with a slight decrease during their most recent leaving (see Tables 38 and 40). For Lea, her most recent leaving occurred only 1 week after she had returned to her abuser for the 2nd time. Shawn, Viv, and Lea attributed more of the change in the relationship to self, whereas Dora attributed more of the change to her abuser. Because Dora's abuser was extremely violent, several of the changes reported by Dora were changes in her abuser's behavior, which were not positive.

Table 39: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Dora

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	4 th Leaving	5 th Leaving	Don't Know When
Change in relationship	5	4	6	5	13	1
Attribution of Change in relationship	Self =1 Abuser =3 Both =1 Unknown=0	Self =1 Abuser =3 Both =0 Unknown=0	Self =2 Abuser =4 Both =0 Unknown=0	Self =2 Abuser =2 Both =1 Unknown=0	Self = 7 Abuser =3 Both =3 Unknown=0	Self =1 Abuser =0 Both =0 Unknown =0
Change in Support	0	0	1	0	4	0
Attribution of Change in Support	Self =0 Abuser =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Self =0 Abuser =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Self =1 Abuser =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Self =0 Abuser =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Self =3 Abuser =0 Both =1 Unknown=0	Self =0 Abuser =0 Both =0 Unknown =0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police =0 Legal =0 Family =0 Friends =0 Shelter =0 Church =0 Job =0 Unknown=0 General =0	Police =0 Legal =0 Family =0 Friends =0 Shelter =0 Church =0 Job =0 Unknown=0 General =0	Police =0 Legal =0 Family =0 Friends =1* Shelter =0 Church =0 Job =0 Unknown=0 General =0	Police =0 Legal =0 Family =0 Friends =0 Shelter =0 Church =0 Job =0 Unknown=0 General =0	Police =0 Legal =0 Family =0 Friends =1* Shelter =3* Church =0 Job =0 Unknown=0 General =0	Police =0 Legal =0 Family =0 Friends =0 Shelter =0 Church =0 Job =0 Unknown =0 General=0
Influence of Children	Stay =0 Leave =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Stay =0 Leave =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Stay =1 Leave =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Stay =0 Leave =0 Both =0 Unknown=0	Stay =0 Leave =3 Both =0 Unknown=0	Stay =0 Leave =1 Both =0 Unknown =0

A lot of variation exists in this subcluster with regard to mentions of change in support. Lea and Shawn made moderate mention of changes in support, and Dora and Viv mentioned slightly less overall with little to no changes in support mentioned during their early leave/return events. Overall, Lea and Shawn are both from other countries which may have contributed to their use and access of formal support systems, whereas Dora and Viv had family and friends nearby. For all 4 of these women, formal support was

mentioned more frequently than informal support. Finally, little mention was made of children influencing leaving or returning to their abuser across their multiple leave/return events.

Table 40: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Shawn

	1 st Leaving	2 nd Leaving	3 rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Relationship	6	10	9	0
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 3 Abuser = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Self = 4 Abuser = 2 Both = 3 Unknown = 1	Self = 6 Abuser = 1 Both = 1 Unknown = 1	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Mentions of Change in Support	2	2	1	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 2 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 1 Unknown = 1	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 1* Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 1* Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 1	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 1 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 0 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 2 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 2	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 1

Some developmental progress had occurred for each of the women, albeit in different ways. For instance, Viv mentioned more changes in her relationship with her abuser during her most recent leaving, and said that the only relationship she would maintain with her abuser would be based on child support issues. Viv had already accomplished this type of relationship based on child support issues when she left her daughter's father, who was also abusive, and has proven that she can maintain a

relationship with her former abuser only around issues pertaining to their daughter.

However, Viv also mentioned during the interview that she had been a student in Special Education. It appeared during her interview that she had limited cognitive functioning skills, which may or may not impede her progress towards life away from the abusive relationship.

Table 41: Coding Across Multiple Leave/Return Events for Viv

	1st Leaving	2nd Leaving	3rd Leaving	Don't Know When
Mentions of Change in Relationship	2	1	12	4
Attribution of Change in Relationship	Self = 0 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Self = 0 Abuser = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 10 Abuser = 1 Both = 1 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 2 Both = 2 Unknown = 0
Mentions of Change in Support	0	0	1	1
Attribution of Change in Support	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 0 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Self = 1 Abuser = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 0
Type of Support (*aware of abuse)	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 0 Friends = 0 Shelter = 1* Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0	Police = 0 Legal = 0 Family = 1* Friends = 0 Shelter = 0 Church = 0 Job = 0 Unknown = 0 General = 0
Influence of Children	Stay = 1 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 1 Leave = 2 Both = 0 Unknown = 0	Stay = 0 Leave = 1 Both = 0 Unknown = 1	Stay = 0 Leave = 0 Both = 0 Unknown = 1

Dora had made some major changes during her most recent leaving and had not been in contact with her abuser for 6 weeks at the time of the interview, which was the longest period of time she had ever gone without talking with him. However, her

abuser's stalking behaviors and Dora's difficulty in keeping strict boundaries with him may halt further progress at some point. Also, Dora reported that her abuser made ends meet by selling drugs, which may contribute to the volatile and unpredictable relationship between her and her abuser. Dora's unstable lifestyle due to her relationship with a drug-dealing abuser is similar to the women in Cluster A who appeared to have additional challenges that made developmental progress more difficult.

Although Shawn had not emotionally moved away from her abusive relationship at the time of the interview, she had gained new knowledge about her options. For instance, Shawn discussed how she was currently struggling with the decision to either return to her country and most likely stay with her abuser, or remain in this country as an independent woman. She was currently in the process of making this decision for herself, but it was clear that her awareness of this option was progress for her.

Lea had already moved on with her life, been divorced from her abuser, and was working full-time in addition to having full custody of her 2 young children. She spoke about being exhausted and appeared tired during the interview. Lea also mentioned that she had been in a previous abusive relationship and that she had difficulty keeping boundaries when she was in a romantic relationship. Although she had moved on with her life and did not see a future with her abuser, Lea may find herself in another abusive relationship in the future, perhaps as an initial short-term solution for her extreme exhaustion to help with financial and child care responsibilities or due to her self-reported difficulties with maintaining appropriate boundaries.

Mentions of Change in the Relationship in Cluster B

Seven of the women were placed into Cluster B because of the moderate frequency with which change in the relationship was mentioned over multiple leave/return events. However, a lot of variation exists among the women in Cluster B, which made it difficult to determine overall similarities among the seven women. Some of these women (Viv, Ina, Dora, and Shawn) had only been away from their abuser for approximately a month at the time of the interview. The other 3 women in this group (Doris, Dee, and Lea) had been away from their abuser for 2 years or more at the time of the interview. The length of the current abusive relationship ranged from 8 months to 20 years for women in this cluster. The number of abusive relationships including the current relationship also varied from one to two.

A lot of variation in mentions of change in the relationship occurred over time for the women in Cluster B. Viv, Dora, Dee, and Doris mentioned change in the relationship more frequently during their most recent leaving. Shawn and Lea mentioned change in the relationship with roughly the same frequency over time, with a slight decrease in mentions during their most recent leaving. Ina rarely mentioned change in the relationship over time, with a slight decrease in mentions after her 1st leaving.

Two of the women in Cluster B talked about the benefits of physical distance from their abuser, which may provide more insight into physical and emotional distance to an abuser. For instance, Ina stated, “[the second time I left], I remember he was begging me to come back and you know, saying he was sorry and how much he missed our daughter and things like that. I listened to him, but it was a lot easier because we had

an hour between us and I was actually able to do things.” (L: 253-257). Dora also stated, “like when I leave him right now, he calls sometimes. When he’s always around, it’s hard for me to stay away. But if he wouldn’t be around, then it wouldn’t be hard for me.” (L: 119-121) Other women, like Shawn, talked about the emotional distance that existed with her abuser even when they were physically together. Shawn stated, “these last 5 years, it was like nobody cared for anyone. There’s a gap between us.” (L: 350) Therefore, even though at times Shawn was physically in the relationship with her abuser, she was not feeling an emotional connection to him. It would be erroneous to assume that every woman who physically returns to her abuser also feels emotionally connected to him. More appropriate interventions may be used as a result of further exploration of a woman’s physical and emotional connection to her abuser.

One Cluster B woman, Doris, indicated at different points during the interview her disbelief that she had been involved with her abuser and for as long as she had, similar to **Cora** and **Ann** from Cluster C. Doris stated, “Gosh, to think of all the time I wasted for nothing.” (L: 274). This statement demonstrates the developmental progress Doris made beyond her abusive relationship since she spoke positively about the new changes in her life such as a new job, new friends, and the start of a business from her home. Once she had ended her abusive relationship, Doris was able to create a new life for herself.

The women who comprised Cluster B also had a moderate number of attributions of change in the relationship made to self, compared to women in the other clusters. Dee, Doris, Dora, Viv, and Shawn all had an increase in attributions made to self rather than to the abuser from previous leavings to the most recent leaving. Ina, however, indicated

minimal change in attributions made to self over time. Ina had indicated conflicted feelings about a romantic relationship with her abuser in the future, which may have attributed to the fewer attributions made to self. When asked about the possibility of having a future with her abuser, Ina said, "um, not in the near future." (L: 747) Ina also added, "I still care about him. I don't want him to get hit by a semi truck or anything, you know, things of that sort, but as far as reconciling with him, maybe 10 years down the road if things work out, but as far as tomorrow or the next day, it's totally not in the future." (L: 318-321) Lea made fewer attributions to self in talking about changes in the relationship during her most recent leaving. Lea, although certain that she has no future with her abuser, spoke about being exhausted from working full-time and having full custody of her 2 young daughters. Lea said,

This has been a very difficult year. Last year was very difficult with a lot of court hearings. I have to go to court tomorrow. I'm just exhausted. I'm very, very tired from just working full-time and taking care of the kids all the time. He only has them for 8 hours a week and half that time, the only time they're away from me where I get a little bit of a break is 6 hours a week because he picks them up from school at 4 and I don't get home from work until quarter to 6 and then they're back at 8 o'clock and then every other Sunday he has them for about 5 hours, from 3-8. (L: 727-733)

Mentions of Change in Support for Cluster B

The women who comprised Cluster B were recruited from both the Crisis Shelter Program and the Advocate Shelter Program. The frequency of mentions of change in support among the Cluster B women was extremely variable. Dee, Doris, and Dora had the highest frequencies of mentions of change in support during their most recent leaving: similar to the women in Cluster C. Dee describes her most recent leaving,

When I was driving away [from the shelter program with donations], I said, I feel so special. And they said, well, you are. There are worse cases, I'm sure and mine is so unique with all of the deaths. And when they said that, those little things mean so much

and get you through the day. I can't physically see my support system, but I can feel them. All of those little things meant so much. (L: 741-745)

Shawn, Ina, Viv, and Lea all mentioned minimal changes in support over time, similar to the women in Cluster A. For both Shawn and Lea, formal support was accessed from the 1st leave event on, whereas Viv and Ina did not seek any formal support until their most recent leaving. For all of the women in Cluster B, attributions of the change in support were made to self, except for Doris who once attributed the change in support to her abuser.

Most of the women in Cluster B mentioned little variation in the types of support, except for Doris and Lea who mentioned a moderate number of types of support. Both Doris and Lea had been away from their abuser for at least 2 years at the time of the interview and were divorced, which may be related to their use of several types of support, similar to the women in Cluster C. Also, both Doris and Lea were from the Advocate Shelter Program, as were the Cluster C women. Shawn and Lea indicated more frequently mentioned formal than informal support across their multiple leavings. Because both of these women are from other countries, their use of organized formal support may have been due to the lack of friends and family within close proximity.

Influence of Children for Cluster B

The women in Cluster B again displayed a lot of variation in the influence of children on leaving or returning to their abuser. For Doris, Dora, Lea, and Dee, they reported that their children had little influence on whether they left or returned to the abusive relationship. However, Viv, Shawn and Ina increased in frequency of mentions of children influencing their leaving or returning from their 1st leave event to their most

recent. Ina talked about the guilt she feels when she leaves her abuser and takes her daughter away from her father. Ina stated, "I feel guilty [when I'm away from my abuser]. Because, she's not with her dad and he's not around a lot. Because my dad was always around, you know, when I was small, so I totally know what she's missing out on." (L: 433-439) Shawn also talked about the dilemma of staying in an unhappy marriage for the children versus raising children in a single parent home. Shawn said, "I see when children are raised in a house where there is no love, it affects them. It is not good for the children. I think that if I'm a single mom and they are growing up in a place with love, that's all they need. People say it's good for kids to be raised in a house with the same mother and father, but when they are always arguing or fighting, it's not good." (L: 418-422) Although the specific influence of the children may not be clear at times, it is apparent that the presence of children can affect the decision to both leave and return to an abusive relationship.

Developmental Progress Among the Three Clusters of Women

The creation of three clusters and three subclusters within Cluster B was a means to simplify looking for patterns of development in the relationship, support, and influence of children. Because there were many differences and similarities among the women in mentions of change in the relationship and in attributions for the change, it was useful to separate the women into clusters on the basis of similar overall average frequencies of mentions of change in the relationship. These initial clusters also distinguished the women in terms of attributions of the change in the relationship and changes in support. Three subclusters were created to help organize the women according to similarities and

differences in developmental progress due to the wide variation that existed for the Cluster B women.

The movement away from an abusive relationship towards a life without it is a complex one. The women in Cluster C appear to be moving toward a new life beyond the abusive relationship and their abuser. Each of these women demonstrated that developmental progress had occurred for them, in their own way without one way being better or worse than another. **Cora** was continuing to move beyond her abusive relationship by seeking individual therapy to help challenge herself and to heal herself from years of abuse. **Ann** was in the process of starting college courses to create a new career and identity for herself. **Kay** was continuing to work in her place of employment, but showed the most progress by accessing the advocacy services that she had recently learned about. It is clear that the women in Cluster C have demonstrated that development has occurred due to signs of positive change and progress including stable employment, stable residence, a lot of support, and the ability to reflect upon their past in amazement in comparison to where they are now in their lives.

However, there seems to be little developmental progress among the women in Cluster A. They had been away from their abusers for a short time at the time of the interview. Both *Sheri* and *Carol* have a history of several abusive relationships. Both *Sheri* and *Carol* do not appear to have a sense of personal empowerment that may relate to their minimal use of both formal and informal support. Perhaps the additional challenges they face impede their own form of developmental progress.

The Cluster A women demonstrate that for some abused women, minimal changes in the relationship, support, and influence of children occur across multiple

leave/return events. There was no apparent developmental progress away from the abusive relationship for these women. The effect of the multiple leave/return events on development may be mitigated for *Sheri* and *Carol* by additional challenges in their lives, such as *Sheri's* abusive family of origin.

The Cluster C women demonstrate that some abused women do experience a significant amount of change in their relationship, support, and influence of children. These women also attribute change to themselves rather than to their abuser. This may be an important aspect of leaving an abusive relationship since it requires that the woman gains some control and self empowerment.

The Cluster B women suggest that for the majority of abused women who access shelter programs, wide variation exists in changes in the relationship, changes in support, and changes in the influence of children. The wide variation reminds us of the complexity involved for women in the process of leaving an abusive relationship and disputes the idea that the process is a simple rational one.

When looking at the three clusters of women, I found that the sheer number of leave/return events was not itself indicative as to whether or not developmental progress occurred due to the variation of leave/return events that occurred within each cluster. The large number of leave/return events does not imply that a woman is making no progress away from the relationship. Instead, the multiple leave/return events may provide more opportunities for development to occur for some women, such as the realization of new options, support systems, and feelings of personal empowerment.

An important finding included the distinct differences that existed between the women in Cluster A and the women in Cluster C also included a difference in shelter

programs since the Cluster A women accessed the Crisis Shelter Program and the Cluster C women accessed the Advocate Shelter Program. Although both programs offer both crisis and advocate services, the women using the advocacy services (Cluster C) demonstrated significantly more development than those who accessed just the crisis services (Cluster A). This raises the question about the differences between these two types of services and how they assist women in the longer-term process of leaving an abusive relationship. Perhaps the Crisis Shelter Program and the Advocate Shelter Program attracted different women. For instance, the Cluster A women had more immediate needs such as housing, income, and protection from their abuser whereas the Cluster C women had already established residence and income and were able to start focusing on how to continue to better their lives without the abusive relationship as well as maintain their safety from their abusers. This was not an evaluation of the shelter programs. Instead, the differences in the women who accessed the two shelter programs highlights the issue of different needs for women in the process of leaving an abusive relationship.

There was a slight distinction among the clusters in regard to children's influence to leave and return to the abusive relationship. The women in Cluster A had slightly more influence of children to return to their abuser whereas the Cluster C women had slightly more influence of children to leave the abusive relationship. The Cluster B women showed variation in the influence of children. However, I found that the overall ratio of influence of children to stay or leave did not seem to distinguish among the clusters, which suggests that the presence of children and the role they play can change at various points in time, with children having an influence to both return to and leave an

abusive relationship. The presence of children cannot be reduced to a simple influence on whether a woman returns to or leaves an abusive relationship. Over time it appears that children may influence a woman to leave and return to her abuser.

Considering patterns of development in the relationship, support and the influence of children is one way of better understanding the longer-term process of leaving an abusive relationship and moving towards a life beyond it. Patterns of change in the relationship suggest that time away from the abusive relationship, number of abusive relationships, length of abusive relationship, changes in the relationship over time, attributions of changes in the relationship, and the presence or absence of additional personal struggles may contribute to the process of leaving an abusive relationship and moving beyond it. Also, patterns of change in support suggest that the availability and use of formal support may contribute to moving beyond the abusive relationship. Finally, change in the influence of children suggest that the age of the children, awareness of emotional effect of abuse on the children, and the idea of keeping the family together contribute to the complex process of leaving and returning to an abusive relationship. No one aspect adequately explains the process of leaving an abusive relationship and moving towards a life without it. Therefore, it is essential that numerous factors be considered together when attempting to understand this as a longer-term developmental process.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to discuss the findings that resulted from this study. First, overall “metafindings” of this study are discussed that occurred across clusters followed by a discussion of the findings that occurred across clusters specific to change in the relationship and in support. Next, the findings of this study are related back to the literature, by highlighting the areas where this study contradicts the literature followed by areas where this study supports the literature. Implications resulting from this study are then explored in relation to theory, methodology, and practice. Finally, suggestions for future research are mentioned due to new questions raised from this study followed by a brief discussion of the researcher’s subjectivity in conducting this study.

Discussion of Combined Findings

Before discussing the metafindings and findings of this study, it is important to recall how development was defined in this study. Progress included both quantitative and qualitative evidence that a woman was making positive changes in her life that had the potential to move her beyond the abusive relationship. Some of these positive changes included establishing employment, seeking more training or education, finding housing, seeking support of friends and family, seeking formal support, and reflecting back on life while in the abusive relationship.

Metafindings

I discovered two “metafindings” that cut across all of the clusters. The first finding suggests that the number of multiple leave/return events does not appear to indicate whether or not development occurs. In this study, there was tremendous

variability in all of the clusters in regard to the number of leave/return events. For instance, **Kay** from Cluster C had left her abusive relationship 3 times and had demonstrated that development had occurred for her in several areas. However, Ina from Cluster B had left her abusive relationship 4 times and demonstrated that little development had occurred for her. Therefore, it appears that the frequency of multiple leave/return events does not prohibit or guarantee that a woman will leave her abusive relationship and transition into a life without it. This is important for clinicians working with women in the process of leaving their abusive relationship to look for additional factors that may create obstacles for development to occur.

The second important finding that cut across all of the clusters was the role of children in the decision to leave or return to the abusive relationship. Again, the overall role that children played in influencing these decisions was not cluster specific. All of the women in this study, with the exception of *Sheri*, indicated that at some point in time, the children had influenced them to both leave and return to the abusive relationship. The simple presence or absence of children did not indicate whether or not a woman would leave or return to her abuser. For some women, like **Ann**, it was easier to leave the abusive relationship once the children were older. Other women, such as Viv, left the abusive relationship even when the children were young because she considered her abuser's using her welfare money for drugs as stealing from her children. The fact that the overall influence of children was not cluster specific and that the influence changed at different points in time suggests that the presence of children is a complex issue that needs further investigating to learn more about the changes in influence over time. This

is also important information for clinicians to have to help their clients better discuss the various roles that children can play in the leaving process.

Findings

In regard to changes in the relationship, a correlation emerged between the number of mentions of change in the relationship and the attributions of the change made to self. From the clusters, it appears that the more mentions of change in the relationship, the more attributions of the change to self were made. This association between change in the relationship and attributions of the change being made to self provides a new way to conceptualize women in the process of leaving an abusive relationship. Although a woman may mention that changes have occurred in her relationship, it is important to consider to whom she attributes these changes. For instance, the women in Cluster C made more mentions of change in the relationship and attributions of the change to self than the women in Clusters A and B. When asked how she changed in the last 15 years, **Kay** from Cluster C stated, “ I’m more confident. I’m more confident.” (L: 900). Other women, such as Ina from Cluster B, talked about the changes in her abuser’s behavior following the pregnancy and birth of their child and how he became more possessive and controlling once their child became involved. Considering the association between changes in the relationship and attributions of those changes is a new contribution when looking at developmental progress in women leaving abusive relationships.

Similar to mentions of change in the relationship, more mentions of change in support positively related to more attributions of the change to self. In fact, only two of the women attributed changes in support to the abuser. Although we cannot infer causation, it is apparent that a connection exists between mentions of change in support

and mentions of change in the relationship. When more changes were mentioned in the relationship and attributed to self, more mentions of change in support were also made. Cluster C women provided the strongest evidence for this as well as demonstrating the most development. For instance, **Cora** experienced significant changes in support, which seemed to co-occur with the changes in her relationship that she attributed mainly to herself. The Cluster A women showed the weakest case with little mention of change in the relationship, attributions of those changes made to self, and in changes in support. *Carol* reported few changes in support, and in her relationship. When changes were mentioned in her relationship, *Carol* attributed more of the changes to her abuser than to herself. Finally, the Cluster B women were in-between with some of the women resembling Cluster A, such as Ina, and others resembling the women in Cluster C, such as Doris and Dee.

Based on these findings, the question remains: what does it mean to have these three groups of women in the world? For mental health professionals working with women in the process of leaving abusive relationships, awareness of these three groups can help influence the interventions used. The women in Cluster C appeared to be either more reflective or more aware of the changes in the relationship and themselves compared to the women in the other clusters. Because Cluster C women demonstrated the most development, perhaps encouraging and teaching women to be more reflective when they leave and return to the abusive relationship would provide more awareness about the changes that occur. Also, being more reflective may help women to recognize the things that appear to remain the same in the relationship since some women believe that leaving their abuser will make him appreciate her more and sadly discover that the

abuser does not upon the return. More change is not necessarily the answer, but more reflection on the change that has occurred may help assist some women in the process of leaving the abusive relationship.

From the Cluster C women, we have learned that some of the available supports for abused women are successful at assisting women in the process of leaving an abusive relationship and that we should continue to offer these types of assistance, particularly advocacy services. Also, we are encouraged to develop new ways to increase awareness and usage of these available services to better assist other abused women in the process of leaving an abusive relationship.

Because the majority of the women in this study were in Cluster B, it is supposed that the majority of abused women who access shelter programs also experience wide variation in development and change in the relationship, support, and influence of children. Furthermore, the type of services offered by the shelter programs may assist women at different points in time since the Cluster B women working with advocates demonstrated more development than the Cluster B women who had not accessed the advocate services. Learning more about how these specific services interact with each woman may provide additional insight into the helpfulness of formal support.

For some of the women, additional obstacles were present, such as possible psychological issues for *Sheri* and some reported limited cognitive functioning for *Viv*. It is important not to blame the women for these additional obstacles, but to instead consider these factors and incorporate the appropriate interventions to help overcome these obstacles and hopefully assist them in the leaving process. This realization is

something to consider when counseling women in the process of leaving an abusive relationship since it has not been acknowledged before in the literature.

Implications for the Existing Literature

Some of the findings in this study did not support the literature. For instance, previous literature has often made the mistake of trying to simplify the process of leaving an abusive relationship as a simple, dichotomous one where the woman either stays in or leaves the abusive relationship. (Frisch & MacKenzie, 1991; Strube, 1988). However, this study has shown how the process of leaving an abusive relationship may actually be a longer-term progression, which includes multiple leave/return events with changes occurring at different points in time. This study also demonstrates how changes do occur over time, even when women return to the abusive relationship which differs from the literature by suggesting that a return event shows failure. Instead, the return event may be a learning experience that contributes to the final transition away from the abusive relationship. Listening to the women's actual experiences of the specific leave/return events provides more insight into this process to increase understanding for women choosing to leave an abusive relationship and move towards a life without it.

The idea of attempting to stop the abuse in the relationship was also asked during the interviews. Although all of the women reported various ways of trying to stop the abuse, all of the women said that their methods did not work and that the abuse increased over time. In some cases, the physical abuse stopped, but the emotional abuse continued and often escalated. This reality contradicts the literature suggesting the feasibility that women can remain in the relationship and make it a non-violent one (Jacobson, et al,

1996). Although it is possible for some relationships to become non-abusive, the women in this study did not experience this option.

Some of the findings in this study supported the literature. First, the influence of children in the multiple leave/return events demonstrated that children could sway the woman to leave for various reasons, such as the emotional effect of the abuse on the children (Kurz, 1996; Newman, 1993). Also, the children can influence a woman to return to the abusive relationship due to reasons such as financial issues, childcare concerns, and the young age of the children (Newman, 1993).

Another important finding from this study supports Bybee & Sullivan's (1999) follow-up study with women receiving advocacy after leaving an abusive relationship. In their follow-up study, significant differences were found for the women at the 2-year follow-up, such as less violence over time, reported higher quality of life and more social support. These findings suggest that more changes occur over time for women who have left their abuser. Similarly, this study noted the differences in the women who had been away from their abuser for at least 2 years at the time of the interview compared to those who had been away for a shorter period of time. For example, the women who had been away from their abusers for at least 2 years at the time of the interview were **Cora, Ann, Lea, Dee, and Doris**. All of these women had secured their own residence, were able to make ends meet by themselves, and had demonstrated some progress towards life without the abusive relationship. The continued support of a formal organization, such as the shelter program, also appears to be an important factor for women transitioning from an abusive relationship to a life without it since the women from the Advocate Shelter Program all showed signs of progress towards a life without the abusive relationship.

An interesting point that was mentioned by some of the women interviewed concerned the difference between the emotional and physical connection to the abuser. Peled et al (2000) discussed the idea of a physical and emotional distance that could change at different periods of time. Once again, the women interviewed in this study demonstrated the existence of the different forms of connection to their abuser and how either the physical or emotional component could exist without the other at specific points in time.

Implications for Theory

From the critique of the literature, it is clear that a specific theory for women who leave abusive relationships does not exist. At this point, a theory to help explain this process has borrowed theories from other paradigms, such as the investment model (Strube, 1988), which rationally considers the costs and benefits of the relationship to the abused woman, but neglects to consider the emotional, social, and cultural influences. Similarly, Prochaska and DiClemente's Transtheoretical Model of behavior change has been applied to women who leave abusive relationships. However, this model has been applied to behavior changes within an individual and neglects the fact that women are trying to change within the context of a relationship (Brown, 1997). However, while borrowing from other paradigms can be helpful, applying these theories to the process of leaving an abusive relationship seems to overlook important areas such as the changes that occur over time. Therefore, this study provides a starting point for a theory to be created that specifically pertains to women leaving an abusive relationship.

Concerning theory, one of the interesting results of this study is the fact that a consequential transition can occur for women moving away from an abusive relationship

towards a life without it even though physical and perhaps emotional movement may be back and forth, and in and out of the relationship as well. It is a developmental process where changes occur in the individual and the relationship over time. Despite the fact that the abusive relationship is contrary to a life away from it, some of the women are able to eventually move beyond the abusive relationship and create a new life for themselves.

The four types of consequential transitions are lateral, collateral, mediational, and encompassing. Lateral transitions are linear and unidirectional whereas collateral transitions are multidirectional and involve an individual participating in two or more related activities within the same time frame. Mediational transitions involve the creation and participation in an activity that stands between or mediates two already existing activities. Finally, the encompassing transition occurs when individuals participate in a social activity that itself is changing over time.

Lateral transitions may occur for some women survivors who experience domestic violence, however, women who had left their abusive relationship only once or who never accessed the shelter program were not included in this study. Mediational transitions, although possible, are not desirable to occur. A mediating place that did exist to attempt to actually bridge together the abusive relationship and a life away from it would not be something that would benefit the woman survivor. Instead, outside supports frequently exist to help women move away from the abusive relationship towards a life without it. Although some women may be able to eliminate the abuse in their relationship, the women in this study were not able to achieve a non-abusive relationship with their current partner, even after personal attempts to stop the abuse.

The women in this study appeared to experience collateral transitions multiple times where they transitioned away from the abusive relationship and towards a life without it. For some women, development occurred during these transitions since a notion of progress was present. However, other women who transitioned multiple times had minimal development occur. Therefore, simply moving physically and/or emotionally in and out of the abusive relationship does not preclude development, but does allow for the potential for development progress to happen. More investigation is needed to see what relates to development occurring or not occurring during these collateral transitions.

One final note involves the encompassing transition in regard to women in abusive relationships. The abusive relationship itself is not expanding, but it disallows the woman from participating in other activities. For instance, it is not uncommon for a woman to quit her job because her abuser sees her coworkers as a threat, her abuser harasses her at work, or the woman misses too many days of work due to physical injuries. Because the consequential transition theory does not yet deal with this possibility, this study contributes to the further development of this theory.

Implications for the Methodology

In regard to the strengths of the methodology for this study, several exist. First, using qualitative interviews to listen to the women survivors' actual experiences was beneficial in learning more about changes and development that occur over time. Another important strength of this study was the focus on leave/return events since the literature has neglected to focus on the longer-term process of leaving an abusive relationship and how the changes during each leave/return event are part of the bigger

picture. Recruiting women from two different shelter programs was also an important asset to this study because it provided rich data to look for patterns of development and women with a variety of relationship experiences. The women in each of the shelter programs also displayed wide variation. By including women from these two different shelter programs in this study, I was able to represent some of the variation in the larger population of abused women. A final strength was the diversity of my sample in regard to race, ethnicity, and age, which helps to apply the findings to a more diverse group of women who access shelter programs.

Despite the important strengths, some limitations also exist. First, interviewing women who accessed the shelter program means that results can only be generalized to other abused women who access shelter programs, not to all abused women. Since many abused women do not seek services from shelter programs, it would be erroneous to assume that this specific and sometimes unknown population of abused women has similar experiences to the women interviewed in this study.

Another limitation includes the use of self-report data, which can involve some memory reconstruction. Using retrospective data can be difficult, especially when used over a long period of time. However, using retrospective data for this study was also unique as a result of the long time frame that was in question instead of just a static description of a single event.

A follow-up interview with the women could have provided more insight into the longer-term process of leaving an abusive relationship. However, time was an issue in order to complete this study in a suitable fashion. Also, interviewing abused women at different points in time can be difficult due to safety issues with the abuser as well as

having the appropriate location for the follow-up interview. Interviews with women who did not have children may have provided additional insights into the changes in the relationship and in support, however, no women without children volunteered to participate in this study. Finally, the screening criteria eliminated women who physically left their abusive relationship only once. Although this study focused on women and their multiple leave/return events, interviewing women who had physically left their abusive relationship only once may have provided further insights regarding the process of leaving an abusive relationship.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study provide several helpful suggestions for people who work with women survivors of domestic violence and for clinicians in training. One of the most noteworthy insights is the wide variation that existed in this limited sample, which suggests that the larger population of abused women also has wide variation in changes in the relationship, support, and influence of children. This variation includes women who experience little development across multiple leave/return events to women who experience significant changes across multiple leave/return events. Therefore, it is crucial that people working with women survivors are aware of the variation that can exist.

Although this interview was not intended as an intervention, several women indicated during the debriefing that participating in this experience was therapeutic for them. Therefore, the areas discussed in the interview may also be beneficial for abused women to discuss with their therapists, advocates, or group facilitators. For instance, focusing on the multiple leave/return events for each woman can help the woman

survivor identify her own patterns of change to help create more insight and awareness to her current situation. More specifically, identifying the changes that have occurred in self, her abuser, and the relationship may help the woman survivor recognize her inner strength to help empower her in the leaving process.

Another important area for therapists to explore includes the frequency of mentions of change in the relationship and how those changes are attributed. Because of the positive correlation between average mentions of change in the relationship and in the attributions made to self, these areas may be helpful to explore in order to better assess the women's potential for development. Additionally, exploring factors that may hinder or interfere with development, such as unhealthy development or addictions may also be beneficial when working with women survivors.

In regard to influence of children, it would be helpful to ask the women about the role that the children play in the decisions to leave and return to the abusive relationship. Also, it may be useful for women to know that it is common and very typical for children to influence a woman to leave and return to the abusive relationship at different points in time. This may help validate the complexity involved around the presence of children and how their influence can change frequently across multiple leave/return events.

This study also provides insights for frustrated clinicians working with women survivors who leave and return to their abusive relationship multiple times. Although it is not productive to encourage women to leave and return multiple times, reframing this experience as one where a notion of progress and development can occur may assist the therapist in working with this population. Attending to the change and development that may occur during each leave/return event may also benefit the therapy by providing new

insights that may not have previously understood or explored. Teaching and encouraging the women to become more reflective when they leave and return to the abusive relationship may also assist the frustrated therapist working with women who leave and return to their abuser multiple times.

As with all therapeutic relationships, it is essential that the therapist working with women who experience domestic violence be aware of the power in the relationship. Because power and control are at the root of domestic violence, it is important that the therapist be monitoring her or his power in the relationship with the client to prevent any additional abuse to the client. Therapists in training should be instructed to periodically evaluate the power dynamics in the therapeutic relationship to encourage a safe environment for the abused woman to process her experiences.

In regard to psychoeducational pieces involved in therapy, abused women could be provided with more information about what to expect if they decide to return to their abuser. For instance, they could be told that it is not uncommon for women to leave and return multiple times. For women who are embarrassed or ashamed by past returns to their abuser, it may be helpful for them to hear that returning to the abuser does not need to be viewed as a failure because change can still occur. However, it would also be helpful for women to know that multiple leave/return events are not required for the final transition away from an abusive relationship. Also, new prevention models for young girls who find themselves in abusive relationships could include information regarding the difficulties of first identifying the relationship as abusive and then the longer-term process of attempting to end it.

Finally, this study suggests the importance again of formal support for women choosing to leave an abusive relationship. Although, informal support is also necessary for some women to make the final transition away from an abusive relationship, the women in this study indicated more mentions of change in formal support, with some having the most mentions during the most recent leaving. Therefore, the awareness and then use of formal support needs to be increased to reach women who are struggling with abuse, yet unaware of the supports that exist. More specifically, the police and legal systems need to either begin or to continue to inform women survivors of shelter programs and the advocacy services they provide since the women in this study who worked with advocates demonstrated the most development and progress towards a life without the abusive relationship.

Future Research

This research has begun to investigate an important area by highlighting the multiple leave/return events that occur during the longer-term process of leaving an abusive relationship and moving towards a life beyond it. To further this research area, future research could continue to explore the multiple leave/return events in regard to specific changes in the woman survivor and how these relate to personal empowerment. The results of this study indicated that changes happened for the women throughout their multiple leave/return events. However, some of the women had changes that lead to progress and development whereas others did not. Therefore, the question remains regarding how to facilitate personal empowerment during multiple leave/return events and how this may relate to development.

This study consisted only of women who had accessed some service from a shelter program. Interviewing non-shelter women would increase the ability to generalize the results to other women who experience domestic violence. Additionally, interviewing non-shelter women may expose different patterns of development due to these women accessing different types of resources.

If possible, real-time longitudinal data should be collected to provide additional insights into the multiple leave/return events over time. This study focused on a retrospective account of the women's experiences of being in an abusive relationship. Ideally, it would be beneficial to follow these changes, as they occur instead of retrospectively to provide more accurate descriptions of the women's experiences as they happened. By using real-time longitudinal data, there would hopefully be less potential for memory reconstruction to occur.

This study indicated some differences among the women who accessed the crisis services and the advocate services at the shelter programs. Therefore, learning more about the specific services offered by shelter programs and how these services interface with women in the longer-term process of leaving an abusive relationship would provide more direction into offering services to assist women in this leaving process. By further examining these services, questions regarding how crisis services assist in the longer-term process of leaving an abusive relationship and how advocate services assist in the longer-term process of leaving an abusive relationship could be addressed.

Finally, questions still remain regarding the role of children in the process of leaving an abusive relationship. This study indicated that children play a complex role, where they can influence a woman to leave her abuser as well as stay with or return to her

abuser. Therefore, more insights need to be learned about this complex role that children play such as why children's roles change at different points in time and how the individual woman makes sense of the influence of her children at different points in time.

The Researcher's Subjectivity

As the researcher, I conducted all of the interviews, transcribed all of the tapes, and kept field notes to record my own reactions from each interview. Therefore, I believe that it is important for me to recognize my subjectivity that influenced my interviews with the participants as well as my interpretation of the data. From my field notes, I identified four subjective I's (Peshkin, 1988) that developed as result of interviewing women survivors who experience domestic violence. These I's include the clinician I, the researcher I, the woman I, and the mother I.

The "clinician I" was apparent since I had previously worked with women survivors who experience domestic violence in a number of settings and felt comfortable in the therapist role with this population. This "clinician I" contributed to the interviews and collection of data when the women began to cry or experience real emotions during the interview. Because of my clinical experience, I was able to help the women deal with the emotions to help validate their feelings, strengthen our rapport, and allow us to continue with the interview. On a few occasions, I found myself offering some feedback that did not lead us into another direction, but helped strengthened the human interaction between the woman and myself. For some interviews, my clinical background helped me better conceptualize the women I was talking with and understand when additional psychological factors were involved. Finally, at times, I found myself holding back and reminding myself that I was the researcher and not the therapist in this situation. As a

therapist, I may have challenged some thought patterns or focused more on the emotions that were being experienced.

The “researcher I” allowed me to maintain more boundaries since I knew that I would not be meeting with these women for subsequent session. Because our interview was a one-time meeting, my “researcher I” kept me focused on gaining clarity during the interviews instead of focusing on areas for personal growth that might occur during a counseling session. However, because the “researcher I” helped me maintain my focus during the interviews, it also may have prevented me from probing deeper at times as well.

The “woman I” was present from the conception of this study. As a woman with strong interests in women’s issues, studying the area of women and domestic violence was important to me. The woman I helped me connect with my participants because as a woman, I, too, have felt powerless before and have been treated disrespectfully because of my gender. Additionally, I have known friends who have experienced domestic violence and have been there to offer support to them. Although the “woman I” helped me to empathize with the women, it also may have contributed to me minimizing their role in the abusive relationship at various points during the interview.

Finally, the “mother I” was present in various ways during the data collection. For the six interviews with the women from the Crisis Shelter Program, I was 8 months pregnant. Although this was my first child, the women had visual proof from the onset that they could connect with me around mothering concerns. For the remaining six women from the Advocate Shelter Program, I had recently had my child. These women were also aware of my motherhood status due to the cries in the background when we

connected via phone and my own scheduling issues around childcare. Again, the presence of a child in my life was apparent to these six women and I believe helped them feel some connection to me regarding motherhood. During the interviews, I believe that my own motherhood or approaching motherhood helped us to establish rapport since I was also able to better understand the complexity involved in regard to influence of children and trying to decide what is best for them. Because this was my first child, this knowledge lead to a potential role reversal during our interviews where the women being interviewed could offer me advice about motherhood. I believe that this role reversal helped to balance out the power in our relationship during the interview.

Appendix A

Consent to be Contacted about the Study

The purpose of the study is to learn more about the struggles that women have in difficult relationships. This research will be used to better assist women having relationship difficulties.

If you would like to hear more about this study, you can call Natalie at 734-451-7487, which may be a long distance call. Or, you can fill out this form and Natalie will contact you.

Participation will require 1-2 hours of time to complete an audio-recorded interview with Natalie.

I give permission for Natalie Brohl Perelli to contact me about this study. Signing this form does not obligate me to participate in this study. I can be contacted at the following number: _____.

I can be contacted between the hours of _____
on these days of the week _____.

Please indicate if it is safe to leave a message.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

Informed Consent for Interview

You are invited to participate in a study. The purpose of the study is to learn more about the struggles that women have in difficult relationships. This research will be used to better assist women having relationship difficulties. This research is part of my dissertation as a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology at Michigan State University. I am being supervised by Dr. King Beach, an Educational Psychologist at Michigan State University.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to do one individual interview with me that should take approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours. The interview will take place at the Council Against Domestic Assault (CADA). The purpose of the interview is to hear about your experiences of deciding to leave your partner.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can decide to not participate at any time in the study without penalty. You may also refuse to answer questions at any time. Refusing to answer questions or stopping the interview will not affect your services at CADA. All information gathered in this research will remain confidential. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. The interview will not inquire about child abuse. However, I am mandated by law to report any information about child abuse that is disclosed during the interview.

If you choose to participate, the interview will be audio recorded. The interview cannot be completed without being audio recorded. Only my dissertation chair, Dr. King Beach and I will listen to tapes. The tapes will be contained in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed after 1 year. Quotes may be used in the final report, but without any identifying names or information. Overall results of this study will be made available to you upon its completion, at your request. Referrals for additional help will be provided to you if you desire. You will receive \$20 in cash as thanks for participating, even if you are unable to fully complete the interview.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, please feel free to contact Natalie Brohl Perelli at (734) 451-7487 or Dr. King Beach at (517) 355-6684. If you have questions about your role or rights as a participant of this research, you may contact Dr. Ashir Kumar from the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) at (517) 355-2180. UCRIHS approval for this project expires on January 23, 2003. Thank you for your help.

Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and choose to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Introduce self, general purpose of study, and use of tape to focus on what interviewee is saying.

What prompted you to volunteer for this study?

Probe: Any specific reasons for participating?

Baseline of relationship

What is the relation to your abuser? What kind of relationship were you in?

Probe: How did you meet? What else was going on for you at that time?

What attracted you to your partner?

How long have you known each other?

When did you decide to marry/move in with your partner? What else was going on for you at that time?

When was your child born? What else was going on for you at that time?

When did you change jobs? What else was going on for you at that time?

Do you consider yourself abused or in an abusive relationship?

When did the abuse start?

Would you describe the abuse as physical, emotional and/or sexual?

Did you confide in anyone? If so, who? Was it helpful?

Was anyone else aware of the abuse?

Have you ever called the police?

Have you ever had a Personal Protection Order (PPO)?

Have you ever needed medical attention because of the abuse?

Past

Did you ever try to stop the abuse in your relationship? If so, how?

Probe: How did this affect your relationship?

Sometimes people physically leave their partner with the intention of returning. Has this ever occurred for you? Tell me about that time or times.

Probe: Where did you go?

How long were you there?

Did this help you? If so, how?

Sometimes people physically leave their partner with the intention of not returning to the relationship. Has this ever occurred for you? Tell me about that time or times.

Probe: Where did you go?

How long were you there?

How did you decide to return?

Why is this time different?

How did you decide to physically leave your partner/husband the 1st, 2nd, etc. time?

Probe: Was anyone else involved in this decision?

Was there a critical incident that influenced your decision?

What did you do when you left your partner/husband?

Where did you go?

What did you do?

How did you decide to return to your partner/husband the 1st, 2nd, etc. time?

Probe: Was anyone else involved in this decision?

Was there a critical incident that influenced your decision?

Changes in relationship

Did your relationship change after you physically left the 1st, 2nd, etc. time?

Probe: If so, how?

Did you still have contact with him? If so, for what reason (kids, money, property, etc.)?

How did you feel about your self? (scared, worried, fear of safety?)

How did you feel about the relationship?

Did the abuse continue?

Did your relationship change after you returned the 1st, 2nd, etc. time?

Probe: If so, how?

Did the abuse continue? If so, when did it start up again?

Were you punished for leaving?

How did you feel about your self?

How did you feel about the relationship?

Overall, how has your relationship changed overtime?

Were you involved in other abusive relationships with different partners?

Probe: If so, how many?

If so, how did the other relationship(s) end?

How was that relationship(s) similar to your current relationship?

How was that relationship(s) different from your current relationship?

Were you involved in any non-abusive romantic relationships? If so, how many?

Presence of children

Do you have any children?

Probe: If so, how many? What are their ages? Is your partner/husband their father?

Were your children aware of the abuse? If they were, how did they respond to it?

Did your children influence your decision to physically leave your partner/husband the 1st, 2nd, etc. time?

Probe: If so, how?

How did your children react after physically leaving your partner/husband?

Did your children influence your decision to return to your partner/husband the 1st, 2nd, etc. time?

Probe: If so, how?

Did they miss him?

How do you feel about your kids living with...?

Present

How would you currently describe your relationship with your partner/husband?

Probe: Still being abused?

Miss him?

Think he might change?

Happier without him?

Point to a place on a continuum between fully in and fully out of relationship.

How do you feel about yourself?

How have you changed in the last 5 or 10 years?

Future

Do you think that you have any future with your partner? If so, what does that future look like?

Probe: Still together?

Not a couple, but talking because of children?

How would you describe the relationship? (friendship, romantic, professional, etc.)

Able to stop the violence?

If not, how does your future look without your partner?

What advice do you have for other women who experience domestic violence?

Demographic Information

How old are you?

Do you consider yourself married, single, divorced, or separated?

Do you practice or identify with any religion?

How would you describe your ethnic background?
How would you describe your racial background?
What is your yearly income?
What is your partner's yearly income? Or how do you make ends meet?
What is your current employment?
Have you held any previous jobs?
What is your highest level of education?
Is or has your partner/husband/ex-husband ever received any treatment for his behavior?

Regarding the interview

How was the interview for you?
 Probe: Any reactions to it?
 Anything that was difficult to discuss?

Have you thought about the patterns of leaving and returning before today?

Anything that you wish or thought that I might have asked?
 Probe: How would you have answered that?

Appendix D

Recruitment Advertisement

Looking for women with relationship difficulties.

If you have had relationship difficulties and would like to share your experiences to help other women in difficult relationships, please consider participating in this study.

Participation involves one interview for 1-1 1/2 hours.

Those who participate will receive \$20 in cash as thanks for your time.

All interviews will be conducted at CADA at your convenience.

If interested in hearing more about this study, please either call Natalie at 734-451-7487 or see Staci for a form to be contacted by Natalie.

Appendix E

Coding Schema

Research Question #1: Changes in the relationship

Change: a new or different behavior, thought, or action in the relationship.

Stated: the interviewee clearly mentions change. ex. A woman said that she learned not to cry or show emotion because the abuse increased as a result.

Inferred: the interviewee talks about change, but does not clearly say it. Ex. A woman inferred that she used to see no options for being in an abusive relationship, but wants others to know that options do exist.

None: no indication of change. ex. A woman says that every time she returned to her abuser, she felt unmotivated.

Unknown: uncertain how or if any change occurred. Ex. A woman says that she didn't know how to set appropriate boundaries and her abuser continued to manipulate her.

Attribution of the change: who was given responsibility for the change that was mentioned.

Self: interviewee was responsible for the change. ex. A woman sought a divorce during the most recent leaving to distance herself from her abuser.

Abuser: abuser was responsible for the change. ex. Her abuser stopped the physical abuse, but started to emotionally abuse her.

Unknown: uncertain who was responsible for the change. ex. A woman says that her abuser started lying to her about this drinking after she left and then returned to him.

Prompt (yes or no): whether or not the interviewee was directly prompted to mention change. ex. A woman states that her abuser got more violent after she returned to him.

Researcher Interpretation (yes or no): whether or not the researcher interpreted if change had indeed occurred. Ex. A woman says that she was always praying to God that she would stop loving her abuser and the researcher interprets this as an emotional internal struggle.

When: specifies which leave event the interviewee was referring to. Ex. 1st leaving.

Research Question #2: Changes in Support

Change: a new or different person or social organization that provided support.

Stated: the interviewee clearly mentions change. ex. A woman says that the new support she had during this most recent leaving has made a difference.

Inferred: the interviewee talks about change, but does not clearly say it. Ex. A woman says that talking to her friends didn't make her leave, but did have her questioning her relationship.

None: no indication of change. ex. A woman says that family and friend were aware of the abuse, but that it didn't keep her away from her abuser.

Unknown: not certain how or if any change occurred. Ex. A woman says that a male friend of hers is a great support, yet uncertain whether or not he was aware of the abuse and whether or not this was different from before.

Attribution of the change: who was given responsibility for the change that was mentioned.

Self: interviewee was responsible for the change. ex. A woman researches the internet to find resources available to help women survivors who experience domestic violence.

Abuser: abuser was responsible for the change. ex. The abuser knowingly violates a PPO, which provides more protection for the woman survivor.

Unknown: uncertain who was responsible for the change. ex. A woman says that she still has to communicate with her abuser due to child custody and child support issues.

Prompt (yes or no): whether or not the interviewee was directly prompted to mention change. ex. A woman states independent of the researcher that she learned about the shelter program during her most recent leaving.

Researcher Interpretation (yes or no): whether or not the researcher interpreted if change had indeed occurred. Ex. A child's comment that good things are coming out of bad things suggests that change has occurred for the child as well.

Type of support: written description of the type of support mentioned. Ex. Shelter program.

Aware of abuse (yes, no, or unknown): whether or not support mentioned was aware of the abuse. Ex. A woman states that her new friends were not aware of the abuse because she didn't confide in them.

Reaction to support (helpful, not helpful, neutral, or unknown): the interviewee's reaction to the support mentioned. Ex. A woman states that the police were not helpful in enforcing the PPO.

When: specifies which leave event the interviewee was referring to. Ex. End of the relationship.

Research Question #3: Influence of Children

Researcher Interpretation (yes or no): whether or not the researcher interpreted if change had indeed occurred. Ex. A woman states that her daughter wondered if daddy loved mommy since he hits mommy and the researcher interprets that this must have some influence even though the interviewee does not mention any specific influence.

Change in Influence (yes or no): whether or not there was a difference in the role that the children played in the decision to leave and/or return to the abusive relationship. Ex. A woman states that as her child got older, it was easier to leave her abuser because her child did not require childcare anymore.

Type of Influence: how the actual influence of the children was described by the interviewee.

Stay: the children influenced the interviewee to stay with or return to the abuser. Ex. A woman says that she returned to her abuser because she was pregnant with his child.

Leave: the children influenced the interviewee to leave her abuser. Ex. A woman says that she left her abuser because she realized that the abuse was having an emotional effect on her child.

Both: the children influenced the interviewee to both leave and return to her abuser at the same time. Ex. A woman must choose to either leave her abuser to protect her youngest daughter or to stay with her abuser to protect her other children from him.

Unknown: uncertain how the children influenced the interviewee. Ex. A woman states that she is uncertain what is better for her children: to be raised in an unloving household by two parents or to be raised by one loving parent.

When: specifies which leave event the interviewee was referring to. Ex. 2nd leaving.

REFERENCES

- Aguirre, B.E. (1985). Why do they return? Abused wives in shelters. Social Work, 30(4), 350-354.
- Beach, K. (1999). Consequential transitions: A sociocultural expedition beyond transfer in education. Review of Research in Education, 24, 103-141.
- Berk, R.A., Newton, P.J., & Berk, S.F. (1986). What a difference a day makes: An empirical study of the impact of shelters for battered women. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48, 481-490.
- Bowker, L.H. & Maurer, L. (1985). The importance of sheltering in the lives of battered women. Response to the Victimization of Women and Children: Journal of the Center for Women Policy Studies, 8(1), 2-8.
- Brown, J. (1997). Working toward freedom from violence: The process of change in battered women. Violence Against Women, 3, 5-26.
- Campbell, J., Rose, L., Kub, J., & Nedd, D. (1998). Voices of resistance. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 13, 743-762.
- Campbell, J.C., Miller, P., Cardwell, M.M., & Belknap, R.A. (1994). Relationship status of battered women over time. Journal of Family Violence, 9(2), 99-111.
- Campbell, R., Sullivan, C.M., & Davidson, W.S. (1995). Women who use domestic violence shelters. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 19, 237-255.
- Claerhout, S., Elder, J., & Janes, C. (1982). Problem-solving skills of battered women. American Journal of Community Psychology, 10(5), 605-612.
- Choice, P. & Lamke, L.K. (1997). A conceptual approach to understanding abused women's stay/leave decisions. Journal of Family Issues, 18, 290-314.
- Dobash, R.E. & Dobash, R. (1979). Violence against wives. A case against the patriarchy. New York: The Free Press.
- Erickson, R.J. & Drenovsky, C.K. (1990). The decision to leave an abusive relationship: The testing of an alternative methodological approach. Journal of Family Violence, 5(3), 237-246.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation Statistics (1992).

Fischer, K. & Rose, M. (1995). When "enough is enough": Battered women's decision-making around court orders of protection. Crime and Delinquency, 41, 414-424.

Frisch, M.B., & MacKenzie, C.J. (1991). A comparison of formerly and chronically battered women on cognitive and situational dimensions. Psychotherapy, 28(2), 339-344.

Hilbert, J.C. & Hilbert, H.C. (1984). Battered women leaving shelter: Which way do they go? A discriminant function analysis. The Journal of Applied Social Sciences, 8(2), 291-297.

Gelso, C.J. & Fretz, B.R. (1992). Counseling Psychology. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Jacobson, N.S., Gottman, J.M., Gortner, E., Berns, S., & Shortt, J.W. (1996). Psychological factors in the longitudinal course of battering: When do couples split up? When does the abuse decrease? Violence and Victims, 11(4), 371-392.

Johnson, I.M. (1992). Economic, situational, and psychological correlates of the decision-making process of battered women. The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 9, 168-176.

Kindermann, T. A. & Skinner, E. A. (1992). Modeling environmental development: Individual and contextual trajectories. (pp.155-190). In J.B. Asendorpf & J. Valsiner (Eds.) Stability and change in development. London: Sage.

Kurz, D. (1996). Separation, divorce, and woman abuse. Violence Against Women, 2(1), 63-81.

Kvale, S. (1996). InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Langford, D.R. (2000). Developing a safety protocol in qualitative research involving battered women. Qualitative Health Research, 1-8.

Launius, M.H., & Lindquist, C.U. (1988). Learned helplessness, external locus of control, and passivity in battered women. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 3(3), 307-318.

Martin, A.J., Berenson, K.R., Griffing, S., Sage, R.E., Madry, L., Bingham, L.E., & Primm, B.J. (2000). The process of leaving an abusive relationship: the role of risk assessments and decision-certainty. Journal of Family Violence, 15(2), 109-122.

McNamara, J.R., Ertl, M., & Neufeld, J. (1998). Problem-solving in relation to abuse by a partner. Psychological Reports, 83, 943-946.

Miller, P. H. (1993). *Theories of Developmental Psychology*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company.

Newman, K.D. (1993). Giving up: Shelter experiences of battered women. Public Health Nursing, 10(2), 108-113.

NiCarthy, G. (1987). The ones who got away. Seattle: The Seal Press.

Pahl, J. (1985). Private violence and public policy. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Peled, E., Eisikovits, Z., Enosh, G., & Winstok, Z. (2000). Choice and empowerment for battered women who stay: Toward a constructivist model. Social Work, 45(1), 9-25.

Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity-one's own. Educational Researcher, 17, 17-22.

Ponterotto, J.G., Casas, J.M., Suzuki, L.A., & Alexander, C.M. (1995). Handbook of Multicultural Counseling. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Schutte, N.S., Bouleige, L., Fix, J.L., & Malouff, J.M. (1986). Returning to a partner after leaving a crisis shelter: A decision faced by battered women. Journal of Social Behavior and Personality, 1(2), 295-298.

Schutte, N.S., Malouff, J.M., & Doyle, J.S. (1987). The relationship between characteristics of the victim, persuasive techniques of the batterer, and returning to a battering relationship. The Journal of Social Psychology, 128(5), 605-610.

Smith, P.H., Earp, J.A., & DeVellis, R. (1995). Measuring battering: Development of the women's experience with battering (WEB) scale. Women's Health: Research on Gender, Behavior, and Policy, 1(4), 273-288.

Smith, P.H., Smith, J.B., & Earp, J.A. (1999). Beyond the measurement trap. A reconstructed conceptualization and measurement of woman battering. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 23, 177-193.

Straus, M.A. (1979). Measuring intrafamily conflict and violence: The conflict tactics (CT) scale. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 41, 75-88.

Strube, M. (1988). The decision to leave an abusive relationship: Empirical evidence and theoretical issues. Psychological Bulletin, 104, 236-250.

Strube, M.J., & Barbour, L.S. (1983). The decision to leave an abusive relationship: Economic dependence and psychological commitment. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 45(4), 785-793.

Sullivan, C.M. & Bybee, D.I. (1999). Reducing violence using community-based advocacy for women with abusive partners. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 67(1), 43-53.

Sullivan, C.M., Tan, C., Basta, J., Rumptz, M., & Davidson, W.S. (1992). An advocacy intervention program for women with abusive partners: Initial evaluation. American Journal of Community Psychology, 20(3), 309-332.

Tan, C., Basta, J., Sullivan, C.M., & Davidson, W.S. (1995). The role of social support in the lives of women exiting domestic violence shelters. An experimental study. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 10(4), 437-451.

Walker, L. (1979). The battered woman. New York: Harper & Row.

Wilson, M. & Daly, M. (1993). Spousal homicide risk and estrangement. Violence and Victims, 8(1), 3-16.

Woolfolk, A. E. (1998). Educational psychology. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 1293 02504 4508